



Stanford eCorner

Teaching Creativity and Entrepreneurship

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2267/Teaching-Creativity-and-Entrepreneurship>

Tina Seelig, Executive Director of Stanford Technology Ventures Program, speaks about the lesson that is the crux of entrepreneurship: All problems are opportunities, and the larger the problem, the grander the opportunity. Furthermore, she talks about the challenges that arise in the methods for teaching these concepts, and the necessity to get people out of their comfort zone in order to encourage creative problem-solving. This clip also includes a video quote from Vinod Khosla.



Transcript

OK, so as part of my role at STVP, I have the incredible honor of teaching a course on creativity and innovation. In fact, I see some of my students in the room. And the entire overarching theme of this class is that all problems are opportunities; the bigger the problem, the bigger the opportunity. Anyone in my class would probably be able to recite that in their sleep, right? Any problem is an opportunity. The bigger the problem, the bigger the opportunity. And what I do is I give students problems. They start out as really small problems and over the course of the quarter they get bigger and bigger and bigger until finally they just get extremely comfortable taking on challenges and looking at them through the lens of possibilities. Now, don't just listen to me, I mean why should you listen to me telling you that problems are opportunities? This is something that is embraced by the entire venture capital community and the whole entrepreneurial community. In fact, I'm going to play you a video clip that I play all the time. It's one of my favorites.

It's by Vinod Khosla. Do you guys know who Vinod Khosla is? Who is he? Founder of Sun Microsystems, successful venture capitalist, and this is a 27 second long clip where he talks about problems as opportunities. Vinod Khosla: One thing I would say is..To me, every big problem is a big opportunity. If you think about it, no problem, no solution, no company. Very simple. Every big problem is a big opportunity. If you don't have a big problem, you don't have a big opportunity. Nobody will pay you to solve a non-problem. Tina Seelig: In fact, I see that was a talk where Tom Byers, my colleague, was introducing him, interviewing him. And this is a clip that we play in all of our classes because this is the essence, the core of entrepreneurship.

So how do you teach this? How do you teach people to turn problems to opportunities and look at the world as opportunity rich? Is it like this? Is this what you do? You line people up in rows and columns right? In fact it kind of looks like this room right here. Everyone lined up in rows and columns, the chairs bolted to the floor. God forbid you actually talked to anyone else or move around. It looks like everyone is taking a multiple choice test where they are filling out one right answer to every question, filling it out with the number two pencil. Is that how you teach creativity? I don't think so. This is the way you teach creativity. You get people out of their comfort zone. You get them jumping off of perfectly good cliffs. You get them to feel it in their gut. It's not necessarily a completely intellectual experience.

You need to be able to take risks to do things you haven't done before to take on problems that no one knows the answer to.