



Stanford eCorner

Strive to Remain Agile

Tom Conrad, *Pandora*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2443/Strive-to-Remain-Agile>

Despite the company's growing size, Pandora CTO Tom Conrad states that his company resists the urge to make any long-term plans. In fact, they never plan an operating schedule more than three months in advance. Though this practice makes some operations more difficult, the flexibility allows the upstart enterprise to remain nimble and responsive; traits, Conrad states, every start-up should try to maintain as long as possible for maximum market advantage.



Transcript

The next one is to be agile. This is a word that's thrown around a lot in software development these days, but I think it's a pretty good descriptor of... one of the best opportunities you have as an entrepreneur in a start-up environment, and that's that larger, more established entities can't move as quickly as you can. And success and scale and size all fight against this. And I would encourage you, for the longest possible time, as you sort of start your own companies, to look for ways to stay agile. Pandora has been...well, the company's been around for six years focused on this radio problem. We've been in the market for five years. There's all kinds of momentum. We have about 180 employees these days. But we're still very focused on staying agile.

And I'll be a little bit specific about how we do that: we don't have any long-term plans. We don't have any medium-term plans. I know what we're going to do for about the next three months, and beyond that, I can wave my hands a little bit, but I can't tell you anything specific about what comes next for Pandora. And that's very much on purpose. It's not for lack of ideas. I mean, we have a list of ideas that's a thousand lines long. But we resist the temptation to take those ideas and put them on a calendar for the next year or 18 months. And believe me, there are lots of dimensions of the business that would benefit from us doing that. We are an advertising-supported company, and when a big consumer package goods company like Procter & Gamble comes to you and says, "We want to run an ad campaign with you, Pandora," well, they're going to talk to you about an ad campaign that's going to run nine months or 12 months from now. And so what they want to know is, "What can we be doing with you in a year that will be novel, that will be new?" and I have to tell them, "I have no idea." They don't like that.

So that's just one example of many where people are going to want you to make long-term commitments to plans.