



Stanford eCorner

The Act of Getting Started

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"The act of commitment is not about thinking about it in your head, it's about literally leaning forward and taking the first step," says JOYUS Founder Sukhinder Singh Cassidy. She describes how the simplest way to start working on a new venture or idea, particularly for young entrepreneurs, is to engage in the basic mechanics of discussing and planning with others.



Transcript

So when you think about starting a company, I think one of the most daunting things is the fear of the unknown. And I don't know how else to describe it but to say when I was in my final year of school at Western, up in Canada at business school, an undergrad business school, I feared finance. I was never very good at it. Wasn't I wasn't great at numbers, I was good at numbers, maths, sciences, physics, but you know, corporate finance sort of alluded me a little bit. So what did I do? I went and got a job as an investment banker. And two years later numbers became something that - I mean I've always loved numbers - but numbers in finance specifically, balance sheet, income statement, all of these things, became a very known art to me, right. And I think it's of the things today that I hope differentiates me as a leader, is just my ability to understand financing, debt structures, equity structures what have you. But I think the same thing applies to being an entrepreneur. I think simply getting started, the act of commitment is not about thinking about it in your head; it is about literally leaning forward and taking the very first step. And for me that involved: who do you tell about it; what do you do about it; and how do you get the first person, the very first person, to take a step with you? I don't care if that person is the person who creates your first logo.

I don't care if it's the person sitting beside you, who you share the idea with, who agrees to help brainstorm it with you. But the simple act of involving someone else in something that's inside your head is the point at which you start being an entrepreneur. And I think if there's anything to sort of message to you, as you think about how to get started on your journey, it's simply this: start. Tell one other person, lean in, and just by doing the mechanics, of starting something, whether it's writing a business line, whatever, you will in fact start. And what is such a mysterious art will become very known to you very quickly, simply by the active of engaging in it. And I think everybody talks about being an entrepreneur. For me the second time being an entrepreneur on my own, starting another company after Yodlee, was a lot harder than I expected. At 27 I did it without any thought to it. I got this opportunity to partner with four great engineers and I was - I just jumped right in. The second time around for me I was 42, no 41 - 40.

I'm now 42. But really, I sat at the precipice, and you would think having done a number of startups within Google and having done it once already it would have been easy. And it was remarkably difficult. And the thing that was difficult the second time around for me was ego risk. I'd been successful, I'd been an executive, people had a defined path that they thought I would take. And instead I was like 'wow I'm going to go all the way back to the beginning. I know I could be a growth company's CEO, I know I could go back to a really great executive position, and I choose to go back to...' basically proving I can make something of nothing and rub two sticks together and make fire. And that was a very risky decision, not from a financial perspective; from an ego perspective. I would submit to all of you that the most precious thing you have right now is the opportunity to go do it for the first time. There is no ego risk; you have the opportunity to dive right in.

And I think that's actually one of the most remarkable things about being an entrepreneur at a relatively early age. There is

like - there's nothing holding you back other than the simple act of getting started.