



Stanford eCorner

Develop Operating Range

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Entrepreneur Sukhinder Singh Cassidy argues the judgment to know at what level to examine your business at any given moment is a vital leadership quality. Using a short anecdote from her time at Google, Singh Cassidy explains successful founders and executives must understand the tactical drivers of a business to effectively manage from the top of an organization.



Transcript

Operating range I think is the single most important leadership characteristic you can find in an entrepreneur and in an executive. And for me operating range is really about the ability to fly at, 500 feet and then at 5,000 feet and then at 50,000 feet and the judgment to know when to do each, right - the judgment to know when to do each. So when I think about operating range, I think there are people who fly tremendously well at 500 feet. There are people who fly tremendously well at 50,000 feet, right. The unique challenge of a founder and in fact even I think of people in the Valley running large organizations, is who has the ability to just keep going up and down, up and down right. I remember distinctly when one of my early days at Google sitting at an operating committee review with Larry and Sergey. And they fundamentally wanted to understand the nuance on a CPC in some small country in this kind of vast - array of countries that I managed. And I watch the person who was in charge of that region fumble for an answer. And my fundamental thought was how do I trust you to know the big stuff, if you don't understand the key drivers of your business, okay. So it's great that you want to be a large executive and work for a great brand like Google, but guess what? At the end of the day when the founders walk and ask you, what is the difference in CPC between this vertical in country X and country Y, you damn well better know the answer, right.

This is a Valley and a place driven by data, right. The same thing holds for a founder, if you all were founders and hope to we will go out and raise money, right, what is a venture capitalist looking for? They're looking for your ability to exhort a vision, right, that sits at 50,000 feet. And then they're judging your ability to fly really low, right and manage at 50 feet, right. And to understand of all the methods you could possibly look at the five that matter and have complete command of that data, right. But you can't stay at 50 feet, right, because again the best and I think most successful leaders of any ilk, entrepreneurs or executives know exactly when to pull back up, right. And it's the art of pulling, flying high and low, that in my mind is one of the key characteristics of great entrepreneurs.