



Stanford eCorner

Take the Shot

Jeff Church, *Nika Water*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2935/Take-the-Shot>

Nika Water Co-Founder Jeff Church encourages individuals to fully embrace opportunity when it shows up at the door. To avoid regret later in life, people must take the shot to do something extraordinary, says Church.



Transcript

Towards my - the end of my late 30s, I began to really think I want to go off on my own and I want to take that entrepreneurial plunge, I want to do that. My wife, who is a Mediterranean, and first generation American, has the risk tolerance of Richard Branson. So she is always pushing, pushing, pushing, to kind of do that, but I grew up kind of Midwestern-ish and I had a very risk averse, somewhat risk averse profile. But I knew I kind of wanted to do that. I knew I want to do that and I felt like I was standing on a high board blindfolded wondering if there was water in the pool beneath me. Knowing that I want to take that plunge, but I just can't quite take that plunge because I wasn't sure if there was water in the pool. And then to make matters worse, my mom piled on and she wanted me to do it. And then when your mom wants you to do something, you know maybe it's a bad idea, right? Because I remember when I played high school football, we lost a game 42 to nothing and I had a horrible game and I came into the house, and she said, well, I thought you played good, honey. So, I just wasn't quite there, but I was - one night I was channel surfing late and I came across an interview and there was an interviewer who was going around, he was interviewing about 10 people, senior citizens. And he was asking them what did they wish they've done differently in their careers? Every single one of those people said they wish they've taken more business risk.

They wish they had kind of put it out there a little bit further. And the last thing you want to do is get to that stage in your life and feel like, jeez, if only I had kind of taken that shot. I'd much rather take the shot and be able to look back and say, hey, I took the shot, it didn't work, but I took the shot, I gave it everything I got. And I realized at that time that I had switched my paradigm from that high school football example of being more afraid of failing. Now I was more afraid of being mediocre than I was of failing. So I worked out a deal with my employer to leave and I spent three months basically working with them on a transition plan, I was running a \$200 million business and I worked out a deal with them and I felt really good about that deal I was - took a tremendous amount of integrity in doing that, I would really encourage any of you to the extent you leave somewhere, you only have your good name in life to really live as your legacy and it ended up as I left. After I left, I wanted to go find a company to buy and build. And there had been a company that we passed on in the company that I was at just before I left. And I was out looking for businesses and I remembered that company. So I went back to the CEO of the company and I said, hey, do you mind if I contact these guys? We passed on them previously.

And I said, yeah, no problem, it was a - it didn't make sense for us in that particular situation. And that was the company I ended up buying. So really not burning bridges, really doing things right, it was really so important.