



Stanford eCorner

Brilliant People are Not Enough

Stephen Cohen, *Palantir*

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"I don't think a people first strategy in isolation ever really works," contends Stephen Cohen, co-founder of Palantir Technologies. Cohen explains why just seeking out brilliant people is not enough, and why entrepreneurs need to surround themselves with passionate individuals who know how to get things done.



Transcript

This strategy of focusing on finding the smartest people and surrounding yourself with them, I want to caveat it with an important footnote here. I don't think a people first strategy in isolation ever really works. I don't think that's successful. And one of the core reasons is that you want to surround yourself with brilliant people but also people who are getting stuff done and doing interesting things but in general those people only got that way because they love doing interesting things and they've learned from those experiences and they've changed them. So if you kind of do this like if you take this pro networking argument to an extreme, of just trying to find the brilliant people, if you're lucky, you'll actually, you know, get in front of them, you'll talk to them but when you are there you are not going to have anything substantive to discuss. You are not going to be in the world of ideas the same way that you would be if you really cared about them and focused on the substance first and so your best case scenario is kind of having a shallow interaction with them where nothing truly substantive can come about from it. But if on the other hand you care and you are deeply passionate about these ideas, about the products, about the things that can change the world and then you also focus on finding the brilliant people who want to work in those spheres I think this is really the right recipe.