



Stanford eCorner

Co-Founder Communication

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April 24, 2013

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3138/Co-Founder-Communication>

Pulse Co-Founders Akshay Kothari and Ankit Gupta offer their perspectives on effective communication between co-founders. Kothari discusses his views on the optimal number of founders, while Gupta emphasizes how co-founder relationships impact the larger culture within a startup.



Transcript

I would say a few but I think like there is a lot of - I think the cool thing about now is there is a lot of information online. And so, I think you should definitely read every line of Venture Hacks because it has everything in terms of details of how these are structured. I think the other advice I would say, particularly with founders is actually - I actually think one it's extremely hard like just actually being a single founder. I don't even know how a single founder does it because there is so much stress on a daily basis. Two is actually for me it has been ideal, like just working with Ankit has been really fun because there has been times when like I've been really, really hit low in terms of all the things that went wrong today and Ankit is like in the medium and so we kind of like balance each other. And then there has been times when Ankit has kind of hit low and I am doing okay because maybe the sales are okay. And so, I think two has been really good for us in terms of just kind of balancing each other's energy. I think beyond two, I think three is probably still okay but I think four is too many. And so actually like keeping your founders to maybe two ideally or three is good because then I think you have a couple of brains to think about, someone to argue something. If you're only founder, it might not have enough people to kind of really bounce ideas off of, but with four actually we were thinking about like our personal issues more than we were thinking about ideas about the startup, right.

I think it was just too many cooks in the kitchen at that point. Yeah, and the founder culture becomes really important, right. That actually creates the company culture in some sense. And that's why being very transparent with each other, giving open feedback, being constructive about each other's ideas, all of that happens very smoothly when you are two people. But when you are three or more it just breaks down because there is too many connections happening. Yeah, I think like open feedback is really key. I think like Ankit and I started that in the first two months when we were working alone, and actually in the company everybody can give feedback. We have an internal forum called AAAAA which is essentially like Ask Akshay And Ankit Anonymously, which is this like simple anonymous Google forum which anybody in the company can ask random questions to us like, I don't know, like why the toilet is not working and then - What happens in board meetings... Or what happens in board meetings. And Ankit and I have to answer that every Friday.

So every Friday before we do "I like, I wish, I wonder" we actually go through all the questions people have asked and everybody has access to this doc. So they can see all the questions that other people are asking. And then I think that open feedback loop is really, really important because I think one of the ways I think about it is that these like small tremors like are good for the earth. Like you don't want kind of the pressure to build and have a massive earthquake, right. Like you want this kind of - you want the pressure to be released every now and then so that you don't actually have kind of a big outlash against anyone.