



Stanford eCorner

Solve Problems Worthy of Your Time

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Natera Founder Matthew Rabinowitz explains the importance of identifying problems that are worthy of your time to try and solve. The course of human history is proof new problems will always arise, says Rabinowitz, so focus on finding solutions that will actually improve the quality of life.



Transcript

Once you have given yourself some space to really think about the problem that you want to solve. The message that - the main message I have learned is to then focus on a problem that is really worthy of you, worthy of you for several years because these things always take longer and consume more of your life and not to focus on a technology that you want to apply. And that's also about irreverence and letting go of your ego, because you've come out of Stanford, a lot of you are PhDs or postdocs, you've been published and you are respected in your field and you know so much about it and very often it's just difficult to pry that technology, that particular know-how out of a person's hand, so they actually focus on a problem that the market needs to be solved. It's very hard. You got to let go of your ego and look at the market and the problems in the world and say what do I really want to work on and learn what I need to learn to solve that problem. And there are always problems to solve. Everywhere you look there is problems and as technology becomes more advanced society evolves around it and there are new problems and that process of refinement of the problem has no limits. I have a personal bias on problems that I think are important over the next 10 years because the best companies so far out of Silicon Valley have been the IT companies. They have certainly been the biggest companies. But if you look at the life we lead today, if communication networks get much faster and we get much more processing power and we're able to render all images in 3D holographically, and we find new ways of making things go ping on the Internet and making things go ping on your friends' social network pages, I just don't think it's really going to change the quality of life so much.

But when you look at life, when you look at the problems of biology and health, your physical health, mental health, the problems of ageing, there are so many challenges out there that are really worth solving and are going to be solved. When you look at that world, it's like that Shakespeare quote where he says, it's Edgar in King Lear where he says, "World, world, O world! But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee, life would not yield to age." And there is so much out there that requires intellect to be solved.