



Stanford eCorner

Be the Warthog

Steve Teig, *Tabula*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3206/Be-the-Warthog>

Taking cues from the animal kingdom, entrepreneur Steve Teig explains why you don't have to be a "far-sighted visionary" to adapt to changes in the environment and build a successful venture.



Transcript

Another point I'll make is that I've learned that making a decision at all and making it quickly and clearly often matters more than making the right decision. The fact of the matter is you're just not that smart, and I am not that smart and Steve Jobs wasn't that smart. We work on incredibly complicated stuff in an incredibly complicated ecosystem, but the good news is that ecosystem is full of local optima. I just came back from safari in South Africa just a few weeks ago. And you see all kinds of really bizarre creatures when you are on safari in Africa and you see giraffes with their long necks and elephants with their long trunks and the rhinoceros with their horns, warthogs, very strange looking animals and so on. Well let's take the warthog, no the warthog is not a lion and it's not a leopard but it's been successful being for at least 25 or 30 million years. It's found a niche, it is a successful business, so to speak in the ecosystem of the animals that are on the savannah. And yes, it's possible that the original warthogs looked more like pigs and then they were being eaten too frequently by lions and leopards and so some of them were lucky enough to have tusks to defend themselves, excellent. So release 2.0 had tusks and allowed them to be more effective at being warthogs. You don't have to be a leopard, you can be a warthog and have a really successful business if you're willing to respond to your environment quickly.

The key is figure out what you want to be, go after that. And if you see that the environment changes in front of you or that you picked wrong, change course a little bit. There are local optima to be found all over the place, you don't have to be in this ridiculously farsighted visionary to see the whole picture at once. Have the picture, have a vision but be prepared to change your mind.