



Stanford eCorner

You Can't Lose Authenticity

Tristan Walker, *Walker and Company*

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Tristan Walker, founder and CEO of Walker and Company Brands, discusses the value of entrepreneurs bringing authenticity to their venture. Walker, a Stanford alumnus, recalls realizing that his true calling as an entrepreneur came when he discovered that "I wanted to fundamentally feel like I was the best person in the world to solve that problem."



Transcript

So I joined Andreessen Horowitz in the summer of 2012-God, time flies-and I realized I wanted to start a company. I had no idea what I wanted to do, but I need - I knew I needed some time to figure it out. So Ben Horowitz, he said come spend six to nine months with us trying to figure it out. I like to joke that I spent the first seven months of my time there kind of wasting their time and what I mean by that is I was chasing things that I probably shouldn't have been chasing. I set after Twitter and Foursquare, Andreessen Horowitz, like what's the most ambitious thing that I could build. I wanted to build a bank, I wanted to fix childhood obesity, I spent three months of my time there trying to figure out a company that would fix freight and trucking in this country, of all things. Only to realize that I probably wasn't going to be the best person in the world to solve those problems and I felt like if I was going to dedicate the next 10 plus years of my life to anything, I wanted to fundamentally feel like I was the best person in the world to solve that problem. When you look at like a lot of the entrepreneurs that either you're inspired by, certainly for me, they had this one thing about them that kind of carried with each one. They had this unique authenticity to the thing that they were trying to build. And one thing that you'll realize if any of you kind of want to become entrepreneurs, like you have no idea how much of a competitor advantage that is relative to anyone else.

There are a lot of entrepreneurs that are entrepreneurs for the sake of being entrepreneurs, but once you have that authenticity you can't - it's very, very hard to lose. So fast forward seven months later, I came up with this idea based off two views of the world that I had, that I think few people in Silicon Valley really understood. The first view of the world that I really believe to be true centered around this idea of culture. So if you really think about it and I really believe this to be true, most international global culture I believe is led by a lot of American culture, which is led by a lot of black culture in the U.S. When you think about food, music, dance et cetera, more recently Latino and Asian culture. And a big frustration of mine is, I live in the earliest adopting region in the world and it knows very little about the earliest adopting culture; like that discord didn't make much sense to me. And then the second view of the world that I had was related to health and beauty companies of all things. Dealt with like this frustration of my having to go to CVS, having to go to aisle 14, it's the ethnic aisle, but it is not really an aisle because it's a shelf, then I have to reach to the bottom of that shelf for a package that's dirty and then there is a photo of like a 65 year old bald black guy in a towel drinking a Cognac in a velvet robe, and they assume that I should buy their product. Like that entire second class citizen experience just fundamentally needs to go, especially considering how much money we spend on that stuff, how culturally influential a demographic we are in this country, and we will be the majority of the country in 20, 30 years. So I wanted to build a company that puts two views of the world together to build a very special CPG company focused on the needs of black, Latino and Asians.

CPG? Consumer Packaged Goods; health and beauty company. Thank you.