



Stanford eCorner

Take Your Time

Tristan Walker, *Walker and Company*

April 09, 2014

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3311/Take-Your-Time>

Tristan Walker, founder and CEO of Walker and Company Brands, urges students not to feel rushed about launching a startup, and to absorb all that surrounds them on campus. Walker, who graduated from Stanford, warns that people can get so focused on the future that they miss opportunities in the present.



Transcript

The second thing is, especially for you folks who are thinking about what you want to do next, you guys are really lucky. Like I would say you take your time. This is coming from a guy who always wanted to do things faster. I graduated university early, I left Wall Street early to come out here, I tried to figure out the Silicon Valley thing as quickly as possible, when I was in Business School I wasn't as social as I probably should have been because I wanted to really get to this. On my post-it note I have three things and this really speaks to how I want to build my company and things that I tell our employees. The first kind of lesson which I think is important is not letting your own lack of context like drive all of your personal decisions and judgment. So what I mean by that at least in our start-up context, don't let my lack of context drive our kind of business decisions, like speak to customers, speak to customers, speak to customers. When I think about kind of your experience here, a lot of folks are in a rush to start the professional thing. But don't let your lack of context kind of drive that decision. You got to speak to people like me, because the grass is always greener.

You have no idea how good you guys have got it, to be here, to be able to kind of be among some of the smartest people in the world. Like soak that up. The second kind of thing that's on that post-it note is a lot of people especially out in Silicon Valley think so far into the future that they forget kind of what's the opportunity in the present. There are so many at least in the context of my start-up, a lot of folks are like Tristan, like why aren't you building a flying car, you have the potential to do it, but you're making like shaving products, that doesn't make any sense. And I say no, because there is a fantastic opportunity in the present and your kind of lack of context is blinding you from the opportunity here. So at least as it relates to your guys' story, don't be in that rush. You're in one of the best places in the world to be your best to you. When I was at Stanford I was so lucky. It was the best Business School in the country, one of the top Law Schools in the country, Medical Schools, Engineering Schools, your ability to just walk across the street and speak to these people for free, well kind of for free. It's pretty profound.

So think about that. And the last kind of note that's on my post-it note, I watch the Wire a lot and I kind of guide a lot of my thinking through like quotes from the Wire and there is one special scene in there where they just talk about product. And what I say on my post-it note is that it's just all about the product. Like no one is going to buy our stuff if the product sucks. If the product is weak, nobody wants it. So what does that mean for you guys? Like you are the product. There is no need to rush, like build your own product. Again, you have the best Law School, Business School, Engineering School all the stuff, like work with each other to build your own product but don't be in a rush. And it's always - I always dreaded that experience of having like the old dude in the room come back and say like don't speed up your life. But I mean it.

I would give anything to potentially soak up this experience again, because it's a pretty special one. So take advantage of it for as long as you can.