



Stanford eCorner

Democratizing an Industry

Julia Hartz, *Eventbrite*

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Eventbrite Co-Founder and President Julia Hartz describes how she and her fellow co-founders, including her husband, Kevin, looked to democratize, not just disrupt, an industry through technology. She also speaks of the “eternal optimism” essential for entrepreneurs.



Transcript

Yes, I'd like to point out how crazy Renaud was to start a company with a couple. And we weren't married at the time. We were actually engaged. We had never been in the same room at the same time for more than two days. So we got engaged. We moved in together. We started Eventbrite and we got married in the first six months. So if that's not trial by fire I'm not sure what is, and then had a child a year later. So for us, the three of us unsuspecting Co-Founders sort of all -against all odds I guess, put our heads together, and really thought about what kind of industry we could disrupt with technology? And it wasn't about just being disruptive. It was about the idea of democratizing in industry.

So when we thought about ticketing, we thought about the ways in which people could access great live experiences and how important live experience just like today are important to human connectedness. We thought about how technology would either fuel or kill the live experience, the offline experience. And our bet was that the advent of technology would actually make it easier for people to gather offline. We weren't sure how, because again this is very early social media days. Kevin was actually an investor in one of the first social media sites Friendster. But we had no idea what role online would play in these offline gatherings. But we had a hunch that we could build a product that would be self service and would effectively enable anybody to gather others around a common cause, a passion, an interest. When we started Eventbrite, we actually started in this warehouse, in Potrero Hill. And let me point out our office was a phone closet in the back of the building and I remember pushing sawhorses and doors for desks into this tiny little phone closet, three days after I'd just packed up my window office on the 42nd floor of Fox Plaza in Beverly Hills and I thought, why is Kevin so happy? I mean, he was giddy. His feet were barely touching the ground and I thought -and I thought I could maybe trust that the giddiness, there was something behind that.

And it's actually the eternal optimism that entrepreneurs have. And that was the beginning of -for me of learning how to adopt some of that optimism. And also tapping into what I would always kind of known about myself which is I love to learn by doing. And so that's what we started to do. We just started building. There was never a time in the early days when we sat around and talked about things or pondered things or were hesitant. We just jumped right in. So I was the marketing, customer service and finance department. I found our customers, I talked to them on a daily basis and finance. I'm great at numbers, but we really didn't need a balance sheet, because we were not making any money.

Kevin was product development. So I would take our customers feedback and send it to Kevin, who would then develop our product and Renaud built the site and we all QAed and we did that for two years. So it was just the three Co-Founders for two years and we bootstrapped the company. We actually spent less than a quarter of a million dollars in the first two years of building Eventbrite and getting it to a breakeven status.