



Stanford eCorner

Gradually Entering Entrepreneurship

Alon Cohen, *Houzz*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3458/Gradually-Entering-Entrepreneurship>

Alon Cohen, co-founder and president of Houzz, talks about how becoming an entrepreneur later in life is just as viable as starting a company as a young adult, pointing out that experience leads to knowledge. Fundamentally, success depends on building a useful product and continuously working on it.



Transcript

Sometimes it seems like there is - there are two options for people that - for students, just are about to finish their - just people in university, right? One option is you drop out of college and by the age of 25, you become a billionaire, right? And then the other option is you finish your school and then you go work somewhere and then you do that for the rest of your life and forget about the startup dream, right? Well, it's not really like that and we met this when Houzz was starting to get more steam, we met with a bunch of entrepreneurs and one of them is a guy named Amosvile Nayi and he has amazing story where he started his company in his 50s, okay? So that's when he started his company and became hugely successful. He went public, he sold his company for - eventually for \$4.5 billion. And so he really was successful even though he started very late. So it's never too late. I mean obviously, it's easier to do it before you have kids, Adi and I are doing it with - now three kids, when we started we had two, which is not easy. But there are some advantages too and one of those advantages is that you can actually learn on the way if you go work in some other places. So I joined eBay in 2001 and I have been there for a while. Originally, what I wanted to learn is why eBay became successful, right? How come the community kind of got together and became what it is. I was never able to figure that piece out. So it's kind of hard really.

Now, in retrospect, when I look at Houzz, I kind of understand that it starts with building something that's useful and then there is just additional steps along the way. It happens kind of day after day, it doesn't happen overnight. But at the time I was really trying to figure out what's the secret sauce, what's the magic that makes it happen, right? And there really isn't at the end of the day a magic, right? It's just something useful and then just keep going at it, right?