



Stanford eCorner

An Immigrant's Perspective

Alon Cohen, *Houzz*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3460/An-Immigrants-Perspective>

Houzz's Alon Cohen, who emigrated from Israel, describes the isolation he first felt from not having the same shared experiences as his American co-workers. He then says a colleague reframed Cohen's situation, of coming to the United States and succeeding in Silicon Valley, as the epitome of the proverbial "American dream."



Transcript

Let me ask you first - how many people here were not born in the U.S.? Okay, so like more than half, right? So it's kind of hard to talk about those things, but sometimes you feel a little bit, as an outsider in some situations, and I think for you guys it's actually a lot easier because you came here when you - while you are still young and you go to school together and that actually helps a lot. I came in when I was 30, right? And when I was around engineering folks, it was a lot easier because we speak engineering. But when it comes to situations where you work with a lot of business folks and especially when I was not here, now I'm here for 15 years, but when I was here just like for a few years, and they talk about their experiences from school or sports or other things I wasn't really into, you really feel like an outsider. It's not their fault, it was my fault that I was feeling that way or at least that's how I thought. And so I shared that with the group and then one of them told me something that I will never forget. And he said you're looking at it the wrong way, you're really the American dream. That's really what you are and that's how you should feel about it. You came here and now you're part of a successful company and you're doing so well. And that stayed with me, right? That actually helps a lot to see that, sometimes the things that you imagined aren't really there.