



Stanford eCorner

Clarity of Mission

Joshua Reeves, *Gusto*

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ZenPayroll Co-Founder and CEO Joshua Reeves discusses the importance of creating space for periodic introspection to reflect on one's journey and core values. Reeves says practicing this allowed him to see that he wanted to start a business that either helps people make a living doing something they love or empowers them to do something they've always wanted to do.



Transcript

The power of introspection. I meant I went through a period afterwards for a few months of really trying to understand what I enjoyed doing in the previous several years, what I wanted to do different, what had worked, what hadn't worked. And this is a message in general, not just related to in between startup chapters. I think one of the beauties of school is you have these quarter systems where basically every -- in between every quarter you have to decide what classes did I like and what classes didn't I like and which classes I want to do different next quarter? And if you can imagine when you start working, those quarters go away. You can have 10 years of work pass by without ever taking a step back to determine do I like what I'm doing. And a lot of folks that don't take that time end up being unhappy even though they're "successful professionally", because they haven't taken the time to really think about, just what they want to spend their time doing. So my biggest advice here is even when you graduate, set up your own quarter semester system. It could be weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly whatever cycle you are on. This is a photo of Palo Alto Foothills Park. I used to when I lived down here, go down there every Sunday.

It's just over Page Mill. And it's a gorgeous park, but for me nature is a place to find solace. Whatever it is that gives you that place to think more deeply about what's working, what's not working, make sure you set aside that time. Otherwise, life will just pass you by. So for me that introspection led to a pretty extensive kind of thought process around what had been missing in my prior startup? Why had I even though it was succeeding "financially", why was I still kind of feeling like there was something missing? And the answer for me was it didn't feel like a mission. When I had started the nonprofit in college, and we were building this movement around helping students in the U.S and China, go do social projects together, get to know each other better, try to help other people. I would be working till four or five in the morning, I would be recruiting students, we built up all these different chapters, and it didn't feel like work. It just felt like something that I really believed in and I really cared about and I was happy to talk to pretty much to anyone I met. And so I kind of went through this introspective process to figure out what are the types of problems I really cared about and this was the outcome of that. It was really understanding that these are the types of missions that I could get behind and were going to influence how we wanted to spend the rest of my life.

And so to go through the three and again these are just personal to me, they could be very different for you. It was number one businesses that help someone make a living doing something they love. That was kind of why I had joined Zazzle in the first place. It was incredible to empower someone to follow their passions and be able to then live in a capitalistic world with the capital they need to survive. Two is businesses that help someone do something they have always wanted to do, more from an empowerment standpoint. It's one of the most amazing aspects of technology is the ability to kind of take things that previously used to require tons of equipment, or tons of money or tons of people and now literally one person can do it. I mean, what's happening with drones right now for photography and videography is incredible. I have a lot of friends that are really enjoying some of those technologies. And then the third was kind of back to my earlier point on being bothered by inefficiency. Any kind of product solution that just brings massive time savings, massive cost savings to the world was something that I could really

get behind.