Stanford eCorner

What Are Simple Rules?

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April 29, 2015

Stanford Professor Kathleen Eisenhardt, co-author of "Simple Rules: How to Thrive in a Complex World," outlines the basic commonalities of the simple rules that worked for the individuals and organizations she and MIT Senior Lecturer Donald Sull write about in their book: They are specific to a person or situation, but go beyond platitudes, and are limited to a few so they are easy to remember.

Transcript

There are three key features of Simple Rules. The first one is Simple Rules are simple. That means Simple Rules are maybe two, three, four, five rules. Second, Simple Rules are unique. You're rules aren't necessarily my rules and then finally Simple Rules relate to something defined activity, not so sort of general thing like be nice to your mother, although with mothers they're coming up, I am into that. Let me give you an example what Simple Rules are. Michael Pollan, Michael Pollan, he is the Berkeley Professor and Author of Botany of Desire, Omnivore's Dilemma, other great books has some Simple Rules for eating. Eat real food that you're grandmother would recognize, eat mostly plants and not too much. All you have to do. Not too much plants and things that are not processed.

So, you can eat blueberries, kale cantaloupe, whatever you want. It's simple. Second idea is Simple Rules depend on the person with a situation. Stanford Football Team versus Michael Pollan -- Michael Pollan, middle-aged guy. He's got his rules. Stanford Football Team, this portion control is not really working for them and there is no protein, it's not really working for them. Rather what are their rules, their rules are more around always be hydrated because they are busy boys, hardworking. Their second rule is to eat breakfast because the students they have a tendency to stay up late and get up late and then rush to class and skip breakfast. So second rule is always eat breakfast and the third rule is to eat things that you can pick, pluck, or kill so again non-processed but you can move past plants for those guys. So it depends on who you are and then the third idea is that Simple Rules so I will give you one more example, I give you Indiegogo and Kickstarter -- so it will get you more into the entrepreneurship realm here.

Indiegogo -- both of them crowdfunding sites. Indiegogo is from, again from Berkeley actually and it started with the mantra of the internet is for everybody or everybody deserves a rich uncle and that's your crowd sourcing friends. What are the rules at Indiegogo for projects? You can put anything on Indiegogo, if it's legal. You want to fund your root canal, go to Indiegogo. You want to fund your in-utero child go to Indiegogo. You want your start-up you want to be the Jamaican Bobsled Team you go to Indiegogo. Indiegogo does not curate. Indiegogo instead has an algorithm to pick their favorites and it's based on effort which they regard as very important and it's based on what the popularity of the project is to the crowd. Contrast those rules with Kickstarter. Kickstarter starts out actually in film.

They have is their analogy, we want to be like Amazon. Amazon starts in books, we start in films and then add categories but not everything can be on Kickstarter. No root canal is on Kickstarter. Rather the way Kickstarter works is your projects are curated, they're put into 13 buckets, and about 25% of the projects they're submitted, don't ever appear on Kickstarter and then how do they curate in terms of what's the popular picks of the staff, the staff actually picks not in an algorithm. Overall, the point is two ostensibly the same businesses using fundamentally different rules. The Android rules of Indiegogo versus the Apple rules of Kickstarter -- open system, closed system. And then finally the idea is that Simple Rules relate to a defined activity --

choosing the right food or picking crowdfunding project.