



Stanford eCorner

No One is Just a Resume

Mike Rothenberg, *Rothenberg Ventures*

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Mike Rothenberg, founder and CEO of Rothenberg Ventures, cautions against pursuing career opportunities based solely on how they would look on a resume. Drawing from experiences in his own life, Rothenberg also explains that the silver lining in failure is that it gives you permission to start anew.



Transcript

This is where it gets interesting, because a lot of times we have an opportunity to present ourselves to people and it's very hard to do that except in a resume fashion and so what I just gave you was a resume. And everybody is more complicated than that. And whenever you think that somebody is just a resume, you definitely don't know them. There is nobody that I have encountered who is just a resume. And partly what this moment is here is for me to try to explore some things that are harder to talk about than a resume. And at Harvard Business School, like Stanford, it was an opportunity to reflect and take stock of what was going on. It was - you can kind of go up a level and not be in the fray and it's a wonderful opportunity to actually think about what I was doing because it's very hard to do that if you don't pull out and think about it. And so, when I was 28 and in my first year I went through a divorce and it was incredibly hard on me personally. And that's actually - that's a learning moment, because it's okay. And so what happened was there was a - there was an intense personal thing I'm going through and it was very hard on me.

And then on a career front, I didn't necessarily find the things I had been doing to be fully fulfilling. And it's - if you listen too much to people outside what they will say is that's a good job and they mean that, because there is a lot of things about those jobs that I mentioned and things like them that are good. And so - but what you have to decide is what are your values, are they good for you? And are they really what you should be pursuing and in a place like a classroom is a good place to reflect on that. And so what was interesting is I wasn't finding it to be very fulfilling in my - the jobs I had done or the jobs I was considering, I had worked for and received an offer to go to a hedge fund and live in a place that I didn't necessarily care to live in, but be able to pay off student debt expediently that's always attractive. So if you have student debt and you have these jobs that other people call good, it's just very easy to go down that path and there is really nothing wrong with it, but I really want to kind of encourage people on the spirit of entrepreneurship to question that though in terms of what it - make sure that it aligns with your value system. And I had a value system of mentorship. My first company I started here was a tutoring company. I had 25 of my classmates I was coordinating to tutor half of Palo Alto and it was fulfilling. I really enjoyed being on that - being able to coach and mentor and train. And I wasn't really doing that in my professional services jobs.

I really cared about innovation, I really cared about things on the cutting edge. I wasn't really doing that in these jobs. I really cared about exploration, creativity and trying to help people at scale. And I wasn't really doing all the things that I really wanted to do. And so what is really great about something that is perceived to be public failure such as a divorce or not being satisfied in your job or things, is that it does allow you - it gives you permission to reset when maybe you didn't give yourself that permission, because you're already there. You are already at a place of public judging and so now you say fine, if that's going to happen, then let me just go ahead and figure it out.