



Stanford eCorner

It's OK to Look Back and Cringe

Susan Koger, *ModCloth*

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Susan Koger, co-founder and chief creative officer of ModCloth, shares a lesson learned since launching the online retailer of women's fashion in 2003: Your first attempts at something new are bound to be less sophisticated than later versions, which inevitably reflect advanced skills and taste. You may make mistakes, but at least you're taking action, she adds.



Transcript

This has been a really important lesson for me as a creative entrepreneur. I think especially as you started out in your career, it can be really scary to be vulnerable and to put your work out in the world. You want everything to be a 100% perfect and I don't think this is just, you know, when I say creative I mean like, I am definitely, I spent a lot of my job and all of my times thinking about statics and thinking about you know, design and these sorts of things but I think this is just as applicable to if you are a code or whatever you're are doing, whatever type of product you're building like, when you are starting out in your career, you're are not going to be good and you are hopefully going to get better, which means that you're going to look back and your taste are going to be better and you're are going to know so much more, and you're cringe on your earlier work. So, you have to just like get out there and do stuff. This is one of my favorite quotes by the author Neil Gaiman, like if you're making mistakes means you're out there doing something. And I think, it can be hard sometimes, right? Like you want to just like, you want to wait until it's absolutely perfect and I'm not advocating by any means that you should not care very much about what you do and not have like real attention to detail but I think that this like, having this permission of like no matter what, I'm going to get better and I'm going to look back and cringe on my earlier work. I think it's really freeing. So, it's something that, you know, it's one of those lessons that's like easy to listen to and maybe to understand intellectually and it's harder to actually put to work in your life as entrepreneur, it's something I am still trying to work on and it can be tough quite honestly to find that balance of like having that attention to detail and not wanting to release anything until it's perfect and just getting in out there and like knowing that it's going to change and you're going to move on and you're going to look back and you're going to cringe one way or the other.