



Stanford eCorner

Elite Degrees Don't Equal Success

Stewart Butterfield, *Slack*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3566/Elite-Degrees-Dont-Equal-Success>

Stewart Butterfield takes exception to the practice of companies hiring only candidates with degrees from elite universities. "The confluence of factors that have to come into play in order for something to be successful is tremendous," says the co-founder of Slack and Flickr, in conversation with Andrew Braccia of Accel Partners.



Transcript

There was this pretty well known bias at Google towards hiring people from a pretty small subset of all of the world's universities. Because a lot of the people who worked at Google in the very early days were from here or from MIT or from Harvard. And so they thought, hey, we're super successful and we're hiring all these people from these great schools. Hiring people from great schools will make us successful. And it could have been that everyone at Google had red hair. And then they would think, well, all we've got to do is find more people with red hair and we're definitely going to be successful. Or everyone who works here is under 5 foot 8, so we're just going to hire a bunch of short people, and then no problem. We would fit in there. The confluence of factors that have to come into play in order for somebody to be successful are tremendous. So it's like the quality of the design, the technical infrastructure doesn't fall down.

Your ability, again, to tell the story in a way that people are going to understand is incredibly important. The alignment that you have to get among a group of people. That's something that's still, I think, at 42 years old still learning as a manager, is like the degree to which alignment matters more than the exact direction in which you're aligned.