



Stanford eCorner

Becoming a Media Company

Brit Morin, *Brit + Co*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3609/Becoming-a-Media-Company>

Entrepreneur Brit Morin describes how Brit + Co pivoted away from building an app-based business to becoming a media company, based on data showing the popularity of its content. Morin also discusses her decision to name the company after herself, in order to give it an identity that the press and public could relate to – adding that the "Co" stands for "community."



Transcript

A few months in, like I told you, we were creating these apps and thinking about this whole strategy as content marketing for the apps. The content itself was becoming really popular, and we paused halfway through the air and decided, let's actually just focus all of our effort on growing this company as a media business, instead of an app business, and see what happens. We actually started testing commerce as well, so DIY and creativity are the essence of what we do. We decided to create DIY kits as a subscription business like Birchbox for DIY. So every month, people would get a different project with all the supplies and components they need to put it together in a kit. We, right off the bat, had hundreds of subscribers. So it was going pretty well. Started going on television. I put my name in the company, primarily because I wanted people to understand that I was authentic as the person behind this brand, that I cared about it, that I was the target consumer and could relate to our demographic that we were reaching. But I called it Brit + Co, and the Co stands for community.

And I wanted everyone else to feel like they were part of that community, as well. So our community today consists not only of all our users, but of designers, makers, artists, all kinds of creative people who we highlight around the site, and I'll talk more about that later. Anyways, it did help me though secure different types of press opportunities, because there was a face to this brand. So The Today Show called up midway through the first year and asked me to come on, and it was crazy to think that my childhood dream of going on The Today Show could come true. And it happened, and I was so nervous about it. And then they kept asking me back. So that was a big highlight of the first year. I think overall though, the first year of a startup is just ups and downs. Every single day, I'm a very numbers driven person, I would constantly be tracking our analytics. And if it was a bad day, I literally wouldn't talk to anyone the rest of the day, didn't want to go out to dinner at night.

I would just go home and sulk. If it was an amazing day, I would have dreams about selling my company and thinking everything was going to be amazing. So it was just like this all the time. And of course, we were scrappy. I remember fond memories of ordering the toilet paper and thinking, why didn't we have an office manager yet? Why am I, the CEO, doing all of this? And that's just how it has to be in that first year. So my learnings, data, data, data. We use that data to understand that our content business was by far and away, growing faster than the app business, and decided to really focus our efforts there. That leaves to the second point of keep your mission. Don't be afraid if your execution tactics need to change. And if you think you should fire someone, it's already too late.

I had to make my first fire that first year. We had an engineer. Literally, he brought in a six pack one day to work, and just kept drinking. And I was like, what is happening? And he was a really amazing engineer, but had a really terrible attitude. And in Silicon Valley, amazing engineers-- there many of them. But it's really hard, when you're small startup, to attract them. So it was a really hard thing for me to have to let that person go, but it was right for the company. And be a waffle. There's this book called Women Are Spaghetti, And Men Are Waffles, which is basically about how our emotions interact with each other. So the

point of this, from the author's perspective-- the women have all these emotions, and they're loosely framed, and men just compartmentalize things and can easily move from one thing to the next.

And I learned in that first year that you really have to control your emotions, and you have to be able to fire someone one minute and step into an interview with The New York Times the next minute and be extremely positive and happy about everything going on in your life. And that's just the way that business works.