



Stanford eCorner

The Upside of Obsession

Michael Moritz, *Sequoia Capital*; Lisa Sugar, *Popsugar*

January 20, 2016

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3637/The-Upside-of-Obsession>

Michael Moritz, chairman of Sequoia Capital, describes seeing the telltale traits of successful entrepreneurs in Lisa Sugar and her husband, Brian, who co-founded the women's interest site Popsugar. Those qualities include a clear sense of product, a strong connection with the audience, and an obsession that drives entrepreneurs to devote everything they have to building their business. Emily Ma, a lecturer in management at Stanford, interviews.



Transcript

So you saw the market opportunity. What did you see in Lisa and Brian? What character traits did you see in them that gave you the confidence to invest? What we see in a lot of other successful founders, which is a real sense about the product, or service in this case, that they wanted to build, and a real connection with, in this case an audience, but other times you'd say customers or, well, consumers, and so that they had a real sense and purpose. And they're able to explain, as Lisa just did, the sort of product that they wanted to build, why people would-- and why they were confident that there'd be lots of people that would care about it. I'm going to ask a slightly more pointed question. You read about finding the people who are obsessed. How do you determine if somebody has an obsession? It's a good point, and it's one that I wrote about with Sir Alex in this book, and I think it's a characteristic of the most successful entrepreneurs, which is that they, certainly at the beginning of their company, and often for a very good long time, are able to shut out the rest of the world. And just devote themselves to what they're really interested in doing and shut off all the other distractions, because there's really only one thing that they care about. And that care is deep, and it's genuine, and it's the sort of thing that they go to bed, go to sleep thinking about and they wake up in the morning thinking about. Do you agree? I do. Our first tagline for POPSUGAR was insanely addictive, and after some marketing team folks came in, they said no one wants to be insane or addicted.

But we just felt it really worked, and I think it was what fueled just to be able to write about all the other verticals, to keep going, and figure out what people wanted to hear from us about, and what we weren't covering, and what we had in our sight and vision from the beginning, and add new things that we added in along the way as well.