



Stanford eCorner

Have a Sense of Urgency

Mike Maples Jr., *Floodgate*

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Floodgate's Mike Maples Jr. sums up the story of how NASA's first moon landing was the result of many teams who overcame resistance all along the way through sheer will to achieve the mission. Maples says entrepreneurs must work with just as much intensity: "The goal is super-important and you can make it happen. And in fact, if you don't make it happen, it won't happen."



Transcript

So NASA landed on the moon in 1969. And people were like, how the heck did that happen? HP didn't even have a pocket calculator yet. And they discovered that there were some teams that were 1,000 times more productive than normal teams. One team had to put an antenna on top of a mountain, and there were no roads up to the mountain. So like, what do we do? They say, let's ask our boss. We're behind. We've got to do something. They said, oh no if we ask management, nothing will ever happen. So one person says, who has the biggest helicopter in the entire world? And they say, I don't know. I don't know.

So they find out. It turns out it's the US Navy. They say, hey it's NASA. US Navy, can you loan us a helicopter? Navy says, screw you, NASA. You don't get my helicopters. They say, OK, here's the deal. If we don't get your helicopters, we can't do this antenna. And if we don't do this antenna on top of the mountain, we're not going to land on the moon in 1969 like JFK said we would. And so they say, how many do you need? So flew all the parts of the antenna on top of the mountain, assembled the antenna. And the NASA moon landing was 1,000 examples of that.

And so when you're in a startup, you want to have that vibe of, the goal is super important and you can make it happen. And in fact, if you don't make it happen, it won't happen. Forget performance reviews. Great startups have hot teams that cut through the crap and get through whatever obstacles are inevitable to come along the way.