



Stanford eCorner

Take Risks Confidently

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JetBlue Technology Ventures President Bonny Simi explains the importance of self confidence when taking risks. Citing widely known data on how men and women assess their qualifications for a job opening differently, Simi recalls how determination got her through her bumpy start in luge and eventually allowed her to become one of America's top athletes in the sport.



Transcript

- Some of you may have heard, particularly the women in the audience, that men tend to apply, will apply to a job if they're 60% qualified. That's the stats, you may have heard these, there's various studies on this. Women mostly wait until they're 100% qualified. Why is the difference? A lot of different reasons on a lot of different studies, but a lot of it is women tend to take less risks, tend to have less confidence, tend to think, well and also tend to follow the rules a little more. Rules say, "These minimums you need to do." But in the end of the day, it gets back to you just need to take the risk and step out there, and this is the next part of the sentence. Once you put yourself out there, if you believe that you will pay off, others will believe in you too. You exude that confidence, and that multiplies your chances of it paying off. So, I didn't know starting the luge that I would end up in the Olympics, I did. I just had the confidence, and just displayed the confidence, and the coaches helped. In fact, I went over to Germany right after, so it was my freshman year, I did the sport, it was a two week beginner's camp, came back to school, and I said, "Well, if I'm gonna get good, "I have to go to Germany," because the Americans weren't very good at the time.

And so, bought a ticket to Germany the following fall, stopped out from Stanford again, took me seven years to get through my undergraduate degree, 'cause I kept stopping out. But I showed up in Germany, and didn't know a whole lot of German. I'd try to explain that I was just a beginner, but they figured I came all the way from the U.S., so I must be good. (audience laughter) One of the best in America, I didn't even know who one of the best in America was. So they put me in with the German National Team, and I proceeded to crash. I only had two weeks in the sport. But, I obviously figured it out pretty quickly. (laughter) I crashed 52 times in a row. No, you don't get too hurt in the sport. It does look crazy, but when you crash, you actually only fall this far off, because the sled is that close to the ice even with the centrifugal force.

But I was so determined, and the coaches had mercy on me, or else I would kill myself, they thought, but then really, but I had the confidence, and I wasn't gonna leave. And because of that confidence, the kept coaching me. And by the time I finished that three months, I came back and became the best in the U.S. So it really is around that confidence. And it begins to pay off.