



Stanford eCorner

Public Servant Turned Entrepreneur

Jay Kaplan, *Synack*

December 07, 2016

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/4869/Public-Servant-Turned-Entrepreneur>

Synack Co-Founder and CEO Jay Kaplan talks about launching his cybersecurity startup after attending George Washington University under a Department of Defense scholarship program. He went on to serve as a cybersecurity expert in the department, and here, recalls the moment he realized when the skills, experience and colleagues gained in government could be leveraged to start a company.



Transcript

- I went to school in Washington, DC. I went to GW. it's one of NSA's Centers of Academic Excellence, at the time there were only a few. They funded me through school and then ultimately I went to go work for them, so it's kind of like ROTC for cybersecurity geeks like myself. I left in 2009 after getting my Masters and joined as a global network exploitation vulnerability analyst. Kinda described what that was before. I didn't really know too much at the time what that job entailed or what it meant, but I went through quite a bit of training, obviously was exposed to unbelievable projects, unbelievable missions, and I can say, without a doubt, I saved a lot of lives. The question at the end, in 'bout February, March 2013, when I realized that there is such a huge problem in this world as it relates to cybersecurity. I had a revelation that, I think I could solve this problem. I think I could solve it and I think I could pull out one of my really good friends at the agency at the time and maybe we could start a company that addresses the big issue.

And I'll tell you more about how we're gonna do that. I was also thinking, maybe I should go to business school, maybe I don't have the right experience or maybe I need to learn more about how to run a company. Never really ran a company of this caliber before. Or maybe I should just stay in the government. It's such a cool job. I was exposed to so many interesting things, I was saving lives. I honestly think it's probably the coolest job you could possibly have in the federal government as a computer nerd. I ended up starting Synack. I left, joined an accelerated program out in Boston called Techstars, very analogous to Y Combinator. Went through that for a few months and then ultimately moved out to the Bay area in the middle of 2013 after raising a seed round out here.