



Stanford eCorner

Always Start Simply

Kevin Weil, *Instagram*

May 10, 2017

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/5274/Always-Start-Simply>

Instagram's head of product, Kevin Weil, shares a core principle that guides work for the popular social media platform: "Systems only get more complex as they grow. So you have to start simple," Weil says. "If you start complex, you're in trouble." He also says starting out simple allows for low-cost experimentation before full product investment, as well as quick iteration.



Transcript

is to do the simple thing first, and I think it's an incredibly valuable thing to take with you through life. Systems only get more complex as they grow, so you have to start simple, 'cause if you start simple, it will get more complex. If you start complex, you're in trouble. So the idea of doing the simple thing first is boiling down the the problem you're solving to its most sort of essential pieces and making sure you get that right, before you worry about all the other details. It also, you can also use it when you're trying to build something. You know, we have a lot of ideas, not all of them are good ideas, but you don't know at the beginning as you're starting to think about it which is which necessarily. And so doing the simple thing first means sometimes also building the simple thing first, seeing if your hunches are right, seeing if it resonates with the people that use Instagram. And if it doesn't, because you built the simple thing first, you can throw it away and you haven't invested too much time in it. If it does, you can continue to build on it. So it leads to this sort of quite iteration cycle where you test ideas rapidly and you hopefully converge to the right thing, to something that's meaningful to people quickly.