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Emily Melton, partner at the venture capital firm DFJ, discusses the challenges entrepreneurs face when they hit a plateau. Once the excitement of scaling is over, Melton advises entrepreneurs to push through the tediousness and focus on tackling obstacles one at a time.



Transcript

- Like, okay, I've got this, the worst is behind me, and now I'm gonna be able to move forward, and it looks accessible.. It looks like something, I could almost touch it, right? That perspective has changed, but it's close enough I can almost touch it.. This is very true of professional careers, I don't know how many of you read Angela Duckworth, or Grit and different.. The first trajectories of any kind of learning a new skill, getting into a profession, it's the steepest.. It's also the most kinda thrilling, 'cause your just moving forward.. You're putting it all out, you're giving it all, to just getting to that next level of success.. And then you hit a point, where it often feels like a plateau.. This, where you think it's actually the good part, is actually one of the most dangerous parts of any journey, or any professional trajectory, and that's because you want things to be easy.. You think 'cause you've gotten to a certain point, that you deserve it.. You can see it, it should happen..

And often times people don't actually push themselves beyond it.. So you can see there's a little dark kind of blip, in that, that has an arrow.. It was about a mile of this.. That little blip in the distance, you couldn't actually see.. There was no trail, it was completely just of rocks, and every single step, was one where you could sprain your ankle.. It wasn't as treacherous as the climb.. It wasn't as physically exhausting, right? But it was a slog.. And you felt that that phase seemed to take forever, because you did not feel like you were moving forward.. This is something that happens pretty frequently in life, and it's really hard, and sometimes you just have to remember that even though it feels like a slog, and you don't feel like your making nearly as much progress as you would.. You're putting it all, you're putting it out there, but it's just one step in front of the other..

Just remember forward momentum, it's okay.. In the same way you couldn't see from that slide before, it didn't look like there was a challenge.. This is often time what I see with a lot of the companies that I'm involved in, is they go through this scaling thing.. They've raised tons of money, they have great board of directors, they've got revenues.. And everyone from the outside thinks this is easy peasy, it's just gonna be a path.. And scaling businesses, hiring lots of employees, the problems become different.. The problems become a different kind of complexity, and it's not as sexy, it's not as fun, and it feels like a slog.. And it's hard 'cause from the outside, everyone thinks you should do is racing up to the top of the mountain, but you've been slowed down.. So, when you hit one of those periods of your life, and you will, you will get through the rock field.. It is possible, but take time, don't sprain an ankle...