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If you see a problem, get angry and try to solve it, says Ryan Petersen, CEO and founder of Flexport. He encourages entrepreneurs channel their energy into finding a solution to the problem, and not to turn a blind eye when challenges seem too big – you could be missing out on a huge opportunity.



Transcript

- I didn't start Flexport until 2013, as Ellen mentioned.. In that window in between, there was an eight year period.. And that's a period I would like to talk about for a minute.. I had seen the problem, I had experienced the problem first hand.. It made me mad and I didn't do anything about it.. I think that's a pretty common experience.. And one that might be avoidable if we just let ourselves get a little bit more pissed off sometimes.. When something's not right and it's broken, you should let yourself get angry.. You should be like, hey this shouldn't work like this, this should be easier.. I was guilty of what Paul Graham, the founder of Y Combinator, my first investor, my friend, he has a great essay called Schlep Blindness..

It's a great Paul Graham essay, you should read it if you haven't already.. A schlep is a Yiddish word for an arduous journey.. And schlep blindness is when a problem seems so big and overwhelming that your conscious brain just shuts down.. It's like, there's no possible way I could solve this and you don't even think about it.. In the essay, his example is Stripe, where anyone who ever sold anything on the internet, who's sold something on the internet before? Did you use Stripe or did you use some platform? If you had run a website before Stripe, you had to setup what's called merchant processing.. And these were done by banks, usually like Wells Fargo, is my merchant processor.. You had to apply and some three months later, they would give you permission to charge people credit card fees, to charge people money with a credit card.. You'd have to get permission.. You had to apply, please let me sell something.. And what's interesting about this is every internet entrepreneur in the world went through that process..

By definition, if you sold something on the internet, you had to go through this process.. So all of us saw that process, saw how painful it was, and then went on about our business and sold cookbooks, or in my case dirt bikes.. Or whatever you sold on the internet, you saw the problem.. It stared you in the face.. This is way too hard to accept credit cards.. And it's now, I read today, a \$20 billion market cap company.. There was this idea that just stared everyone in the face.. \$20 billion.. And we all saw it, every single entrepreneur on the planet saw it and didn't seize that moment.. And Paul's new favorite example, at least in private, in an email that he sent me is Flexport, which is anyone who ever imported anything, which look around, almost everything got imported from another country..

And every single one of these businesses and entrepreneurs saw this, experienced this.. It's way too hard to ship stuff, and just went about their way selling stuff instead of saying, hm maybe I could be the one to fix this.. And I think that that's a very important lesson whether you're starting a company or working for a company.. That you take that and say, hm.. Your brain is gonna shut down when it sees a problem being too big.. Doesn't have to be in a company, by the way.. You see it everyday if you live in San Francisco.. What are we gonna do about homelessness? Or other causes, other problems that we have in society.. You should get pissed off about this stuff.. And know that if you're not gonna solve it, who is? There's not someone else that's gonna come and solve our problems in general...