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Focusing on a distant goal right away can be discouraging. Verge Genomics founder and CEO Alice Zhang examines her early "number of drugs discovered" benchmark, and describes how more intermediate goals—for example, around technical accomplishments rather than completed products—sometimes make better benchmarks for young companies with long product development cycles.

Transcript

   - So it's kind of funny and why you go into (mumbles) you meet in these groups and they tell you to set metrics every week and so every week we were going in, other people were like oh we have like this 30 percent week over week user growth and our metric initially was number of drugs discovered which was always zero (laughs) so it was always like yeah zero drugs discovered this week, same last week, and same next week.. And actually that was a really I feel like a key lesson for me to understand that actually metrics for all companies are not the same and wanted to adopt (mumbles) and one to ignore it or one to adopt a different form of advice.. And so for us the metrics were always around technical risks, so I think obviously if you can create a drug that works, every pharma company will want it and every patient will want it.. The kind of question is how do you actually create a case that your technology works.. So a lot of our early milestones were technical, it was showing okay we made this prediction, can we put it in some sales and show that it actually works which actually in and of itself is a big step because of the style of those computational teams kind of infrequently actually test their predictions and then if you put it into a living animal, could we actually see an effect and then could we actually make a drug that was safe and non-toxic.. So a lot of our milestones are very much assigned to (mumbles) and then another big one was the team and we actually recruit a team that really bought into the idea enough to join and that's actually a big de-risking factor for people, because no one knows the technology more like engineers and scientists so if you have really high quality scientists that are coming into your company that are all in, that's also a really positive signal for other folks as well...