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Lever co-founder and CEO Sarah Nahm describes the “hacker-in-a-hoodie” stereotype that took root during her time as a Stanford undergrad: A young, confident coder with an uncompromising vision that propels them into the future. She proposes an alternative template for entrepreneurial leadership that involves learning to reinvent oneself and focusing on creating success for others.



Transcript

- You know, my freshman year was the first year that Facebook was available to incoming students.. And this kind of notion of the young entrepreneur wasn't even really a concept, right? And very quickly in that period, we went through all this incredible transformation in the tech industry.. We obviously saw the rise of sort of the hacker in a hoodie.. We saw just this incredible kind of transformation of a whole bunch of industries.. We also saw the 2008 bubble, kind of come in for tech.. And really, I think, coming out of that we had a lot of really incredible mythologies about technology.. I think the whole world was looking at Silicon Valley and they saw these paradigms, these tropes, these stereotypes, dare I say, of what it meant to be a successful entrepreneur.. There was, I think, a prevailing idea that you were a coder, that you had a ton of confidence, that you walked around with this vision that propelled you into the future and you didn't care what anybody else had to say or think about it.. And, you know, I think now, when you scan the headlines there's a really different story about that kind of entrepreneurship.. And I'm super excited to be up here because I, personally, feel really passionately that we as stewards of a technology community, we need to create a much richer and more diverse set of role models for leadership..

And that's not said lightly.. Because, frankly, following a pattern of success, like the pathway that others have created, that's actually, literally, the way that venture capitalists make investments, that's literally why a lot of you are probably showing up, to hear from someone like me.. To hear about the wisdom and the knowledge of the people that came before you.. So it's scarier and it's harder to invent a different template for success.. Right? It's actually riskier and it puts more of yourself at stake to actually go out there and try to lead in a way that is different.. And I've had that tension and conflict in a lot of my key moments that I've had leading up to where I am today.. And I'm hoping to share some of that with you, overall.. But I mean, if I were to just describe what my journey has been, it's very much been about learning to reinvent myself but to actually kind of have ownership over that.. It's been learning how to believe in others who believed in me.. And then lastly, I think it's about learning how to kind of tie my own success to creating success for others..

And that's really been the three chapters of my journey to get to speaking in front of you today..