Stanford eCorner

Empowering Girls with STEM [Entire Talk]

Debbie Sterling, *GoldieBlox*

29-07-2020

URL: https://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/empowering-girls-with-stem-entire-talk/

Debbie Sterling is the founder and CEO of GoldieBlox, an award-winning children's multimedia company known for disrupting the "pink aisle" in toy stores around the world, and challenging gender stereotypes with a girl engineer character. In 2015, Sterling was inducted as a Presidential Ambassador for Global Entrepreneurship under the Obama administration and honored by the National Women's History Museum with a "Living Legacy" Award for her work to empower girls around the world. Here, she explores the strategies, pivots, and mission-driven commitments that have helped GoldieBlox thrive.

Transcript

Voiceover Who you are defines how you build. 00:00:07,900 - Welcome, Debbie. 00:00:09,930 - Thank you so much for having me, Tina. 00:00:13,780 It's so great to virtually be back on campus. - Well, it is such a pleasure for me. 00:00:18,610 I loved your talk, and I essentially assign it to lots of students that I work with. It was so powerful that it actually moved me to tears three times during the talk. And this is very unusual. The emotion came from the way that you tapped into your entrepreneur spirit to bring your really big ideas to life. And most importantly, how you overcame obstacles along the way, turning problems into really big opportunities.

Now these are all things that we teach in our classes. And so, it just was so meaningful to me. So, I'd like to start out Debbie, by playing a short clip about what you thought was gonna happen when you started your venture and compared to what really happened. So, let's play the first clip to get sort of a snapshot of how you were feeling when you began. Debbie I came up with this plan, right? 00:01:09,910 Like this is my grand master plan where I've got this original prototype that I know is just this breakthrough idea. And one day, I'm going to disrupt the pink aisle in every toy store with this idea. So, there wasn't very straightforward path to that as I had thought, but in my talk today, what I want to share with you all is sort of circuitous path that I took from having my kind of first prototype in hand to actually getting GoldieBlox onto the shelves of toy stores around the world. - In this clip, 00:01:46,630 you show a straight line from A to B or A to Z, and that was your fantasy. And then this totally circuitous random path with lots of working back on itself and tying itself in knots before you finally get to the end, if you had known that that was going to be the path, would you have done it? What would you have done differently if you had actually known? - I love watching that again. 00:02:13,470 I love thinking back to the early days when GoldieBlox was just beginning..

Because I look at that original grand master plan and knowing what I know now, it's so like beautifully naive and audacious. And I think there's like some real, like, I love the audacity of it, right? That like as a 27 year old in my living room, I so wholeheartedly believed that this idea of an engineering toy for girls should absolutely be on every toy shelf next to Barbie, right? That like every little girl around the world should have access to engineering toys just as much as she has fashion dolls. And so I think that, if I were to do it over again, I would not have done it the same way of what I know now, because now I know how difficult mass retail is and then talk about COVID, which has changed everything. And now, so much of the world is moving to e-commerce and how difficult it is to compete in mass retail against major household name brands. It makes a ton of sense why there were so many pivots and things along the way, because what we were trying to do was so incredibly hard. But on the other end, I love that that was the goal. Because in many ways, putting down that like really clear audacious goal from the beginning, and the naivete which we approached it in the early days, resulted in us doing some of the most innovative, groundbreaking things that we did that really put the company on the map. And that story of disrupting the pink aisle, which we did in Toys "R" Us and Walmart and Target and toy stores around the world. And when we achieved that in record time, and I think that that story and the ability that we had to do that really built the brand of GoldieBlox as this rebellious, like little engineer that could, that everybody fell in love with the brand and the story. And that's what really got the company off the ground.

So, in some ways I'm glad that it went that way. And I'm glad that a lot of my early mentors actually didn't dissuade me from that path. And I see myself now mentoring a lot of young people going into it. And I constantly struggle with how much

to tell them about how hard it is, because I don't want to dissuade them either. And so look, I think think knowing what I know now, and the goal now that I talk about is less about where the product or content that we create gets distributed. You know, it doesn't matter if we're selling through mass retail toy shelves or online, or in a mom and pop store. The goal really is to get young girls excited about STEM, so that's really the goal. And when you, when you make that the goal, then you can think about the best way to achieve that at the stage of the company that you're at, so that you're not trying to do something that's impossible, but you're more kind of stepping there gradually as the company builds and grows. - Very cool. 00:05:55,760 I think one of the most fun pieces of your talk initially, when you talked about when first started and you didn't know who you should share your ideas with, and this is something every entrepreneur feels is I see if I show it to people too early, they're going to scoop my ideas is the best idea in the world.

Everyone else is going to steal it. Or if you show it too early, it really doesn't capture the vision of what you're trying to accomplish. And so you don't want to show it and get criticism. On the other hand, if you're going to wait too long, then you're going to miss out on the opportunity of getting really helpful feedback and support. So I want to play this clip about which I think is just a fabulous clip about how you sort of navigated that path between being private and then learning when you had to share your ideas. So let's play clip number two. - I learned that being an inventor 00:06:43,106 means that you sort of hole up alone, kind of working on your idea, trying to come up with something. And that's what I've been doing for the last few months. I've been kind of alone in my apartment, making those sketches and prototypes. And even though it was my passion, it was what I knew I wanted to do with my life.

I was lonely. We got, I wasn't having a lot of fun. And I was too afraid to talk to people about my idea. Cause I was afraid that some big toy company might steal it. And so I was just, I was lonely. The moment I went to this social entrepreneurship conference and I built up the courage to get up and share my idea without making somebody sign an NDA, which by the way, I'd even made my mom sign one, I was so paranoid. The moment I actually is, I'm not even kidding. I have a copy of it. The moment I actually finally kind of put myself out there, like everything changed. All of a sudden I wasn't feeling lonely anymore.

I had people coming to my apartment every day, evenings, weekends, we were working on the prototypes together. They were helping me, they were giving me advice. They were giving me ideas, just volunteering because they were passionate about it. - I just love that. 00:08:00,040 I mean, it's just terrific. So I wonder what advice would you give other people, this is a question. Get asked all the time. When do you know when to set , to share your ideas with others? What sort of insights do you have? - It's so funny. 00:08:15,240 That was so true. I have so many NDAs from my early days and, that I made people sign cause I was so worried and it's so funny.

Nobody was going to steal that idea. No big toy company was ever going to try what I was thinking because it was so against all the things that they had learned over the years that work for girls, like no one was ever going to try it. And look like, I think, there are tons of ideas out there every day and there's probably a lot of people who had, had the idea that I had before. And, the point is like, it all just comes down to, who's going to put in the time and who's actually going to execute it. Right. And, I have really, I have not yet regretted sharing any of my ideas with anybody, period. I mean, even I've had many meetings now with big other toy companies, media companies who could be competitors and I've, shared proprietary ideas with them as well. And, I think worst case scenario, they copy it and or they try to copy it or they do it in their way. And then there's something out in the world that's beneficial to girls. So in my mind, that's a win.

I mean, maybe that's a stupid business thing, maybe that's a stupid thing to say for my business, but nobody's done that yet. Really. People have tried to knock us off after we've launched something that will happen with any business, but nobody has copied just an idea before it has actually gained traction in the marketplace because everybody's too afraid. So my advice is, now I'm not saying like, I wouldn't give away some like proprietary algorithm or something that you come up with. That's really novel like you don't want to do something like that. But if you have, a big idea or something that you're excited about, like, I mean, I remember reading, this book by Blake Mycoskie, who was the founder of Toms shoes. And I loved this thing that he said where he would wear two different colored shoes like around and, because he wanted to talk about what he was doing with everybody, like even a stranger on an airplane. And so by wearing two different colored Tom's shoes, like everybody would come talk to him about it, and then he could talk about his idea. And it's so true. Like I was starting to talk about GoldieBlox or I'd have some of my prototype pieces that I'd be holding or I'd have a drafted book that I was working on.

And literally in, the early days, I mean, waiters at restaurants, I would talk to about it and they would be like, Oh, like my aunt is a writer at the Atlantic. Like, I'll hook you up with her. And I'm like, really? And they're like, yeah, like I'm not, I'm not exaggerating, like talking to, when you're genuinely passionate about something and you start sharing that and talking to people it's amazing. It's like this, interesting exploration to human nature where people want to help. They almost like they want to show off like who they know right. And how they could be helpful to you. And so, I think that a lot of my early wins came from just sharing, the ideas around with, everybody who would listen. And I couldn't believe many people would just open up their rolodexes. Like, I mean, people would give me amazing connections. And, I don't think it's ever really too early to start sharing even just a rough idea or a sketch on paper.

I really don't, I have not yet had an experience where a half baked idea of mine got stolen by somebody else or executed any better than I would have. - I couldn't agree more. 00:12:21,100 It is so much more likely that someone's going to help you,

that they're going to steal your idea. And, I just, it's wonderful that you discovered that that's so early and we're able to really tap into your network of friends to help you really early on. And in fact, you did some such creative and bold things early on that allowed you to really reach escape velocity. One of the most inspiring is of course, as you were a small startup, and you've heard that there was a way to get a super bowl ad and how you set that as your goal. I want to play this clip about how you ended up getting a super bowl ad. And maybe you could add some more color commentary afterwards and tell us a little bit more about that. So we'll play the third clip about your scrappy advertising, - Even though we're this teeny tiny team. 00:13:11,410 We're only five people like how do we get the word out? And we found out about a contest being run by Intuit where one small business had the chance to win a free super bowl commercial.

So I'm like, okay, there's our national TV advertising. We got to win this. And so again, it sounds crazy like how could we win a super bowl commercial, but we just put it on the wall. And we said, this is our goal. And our team of five people every single day, tried to get creative of how are we going to win this? And so we emailed our Kickstarter backers. We emailed our fans just begged every day, vote for us, vote for us, vote for us. And sure enough, out of 30,000 small businesses who applied GoldieBlox was the grand prize winner. And so we had a commercial in the super bowl. - Incredible, 00:13:56,710 I mean, really, incredible. So how did you design the commercial and how did that work? I mean, once you dead said like, okay, we have an ad in the super bowl, what does that ad look like? What did you do? - So it's so funny because, 00:14:10,482 the voting period for, the super bowl commercial contest was right around the holidays of 2013.

And, separately from us applying to win the super bowl ad. We had also, been working on our own commercial that we were going to launch. Of course we couldn't afford to put it on TV. So we were just going to. And by commercial I mean, YouTube video That, we were making ourselves, to try to drum up excitement about GoldieBlox over the holidays. And so our team, we really wanted to make a viral video. And, we put a ton of like, we didn't have a lot of resources at the time, but we sort of like put all of our chips toward this viral video. And the concept that we had was making a giant, a Rube Goldberg machine out of stereotypical princess toys. And, we kind of just put all of our focus on that to try to make like the best piece of content we possibly could, that we thought would be so Epic and would hopefully go viral. And these things like you can never guarantee viral, but I think we just made an incredible piece of content and it actually did go very viral.

And it actually resulted in a lawsuit with the Beastie boys, which that lawsuit in and of itself went very viral all during this voting window of the super bowl campaign. And so I think part of the, a big part of the reason why we won was because the company was so well known and talked about because of this viral video that we did so much. So much so and Tina I think a lot of people looking back think that commercial that we made with the rube Goldberg machine was the super bowl commercial, because it's what everyone remembers. But the actual Superbowl commercial was now, I'm going to sound horrible for complaining about a free Superbowl commercial. Like I can't like who could ever complain about it, but my team was so excited. We thought that we would get to make our own super bowl commercial because we had made such viral videos that we practically pulled an all nighter brainstorming all of our ideas for our super bowl commercial and, low and behold the, intuit, and the ad agency that they were working with had long before had been planning. Of course, they were going to make the super bowl commercial with our input, but, they had already planned out the Superbowl commercial even before we knew we had one. So, the super bowl commercial that we got, we worked in partnership with Intuit's ad agency and it was cool. It was cool. It was like a, bunch of girls running through the streets, building a big rocket ship out of their princess toys and shipping it off into space.

And it was super cool. And, it was really unique for the super bowl because Superbowl usually is like, beer and chips commercials. So it was like very standout and certainly like a rally cry for girls and girl empowerment during the super bowl, which you almost never see. So it was awesome. I just like, I always, wished we could have made our own super bowl commercial. So now maybe someday we will. - Maybe there's still time. There's still time. 00:17:52,570 So I'm really curious, the, you were super scrappy because you didn't have anything, but once you started getting money and you had resources, was it able to, were you able to stay so scrappy? I know that's often a challenge, when you don't have anything, you don't have another choice, but when you do have resources, there's a tendency maybe to spend more than you need. How would, how do you think about that and how did you approach it? - Well, I think for us, 00:18:23,640 being scrappy was never like staying scrappy was never the problem.

We did get a lot more resources. Our problem was we were trying to do too many things with too few resources. So we always, in the early days we really just had a focus problem because, the vision for Goldieblox was so big. It was not just, I want to have toys. It was like, I want to have toys and a TV show and a feature film and mobile apps. And I want, eventually I want to have, stores and, it was just, I wanted it to be a global franchise, as big as, Barbie and Disney princess and American girl. And, in the early days we were just trying to do so much. So, what ended up happening was we had like what we should have done, which is, hindsight 2020, but like, what we really should have done was sequence it out a little bit better so that, we really nail one thing first. And then once that's sort of, that part of the business is stable and up and running and profitable, then we layer on the next thing. And then we layer on the next thing.

But instead we had like five projects at a time all of which were under resourced. So we always, stayed really scrappy. And what's kind of amazing about it. And what I've learned though through this is, for example, we decided we wanted to launch a mobile app, which could have been its own company. In and of itself. Right. And for us, it was just sort of like an add on cause, we wanted to have, we wanted to get into the app business. And so, we had this tiny scrappy team. I mean, we literally had

like a friend of ours, from Seattle who we knew could make apps. And he like moved into my husband and my apartment and like lived and slept on our living room couch for two months, all pulling all nighters, working with a team in Poland to make the app.

I mean, it was like insane. And, but it ended up winning IOS app of the year. And I was on stage doing a keynote at WWDC. So like, it's like, I think what, I've what I've learned here. One like, yes, like properly resource, the projects that you do and kind of sequence things out so as you're not doing too much. Cause that's like what every startup messes up on and ours was very much so. But on the other hand, I have learned that keeping it scrappy can be a really good thing because I've had other examples of projects where you would think like, okay, well we have a bunch of resources. Now we have more money. So you start growing the team and putting more people on it. And then all of a sudden, all of these people bog it down.

And, I've found that, and we do this now when we're working on a project, like even my toy team is very small. Like my internal toy team is very amazingly small, you wouldn't believe. But we, bring in contractors and new ideas and thinking, but the in house team is very small and that enables us to move really quickly. - Really cool. 00:21:50,620 Well sometimes, things don't, even in that situation, they end up going the wrong direction. There's a story you told that was, I think probably the most powerful story I've heard in all of the ETL history and I, I'm not being hyperbolic. It's the one that you talk about in this next clip. And it's where you basically shipped all of these toys. And then there was a problem and the blocks weren't fitting together. Like, so you've got all this attention, you built this market and this buzz and this audience and these customers, and then the product didn't work and the way that you handled it, not only was clever.

It was brilliant. I mean, this was such an example of turning a problem into an opportunity. So I'm going to play this clip. And then I want you to tell us about how you shifted your mindset from like, Oh no, like this company's going out of business. This is a total disaster. How did you switch that to, okay, how do we turn this into success? So let's play this clip and I get your reflections. - We getting complaints in that the blocks were 00:23:05,050 not fitting right. A little bit too loose. And I was just so upset. I could barely handle it.

So we thought, okay, what, would we do? What would an engineer do? When you have this big, hairy problem, let's break it down into simple and manageable steps right? So what do we need to do? So first we need to fix the block hole. Okay. Can we do that? Great. We know how to fix it. Now, we've been able to manufacture better blocks. The problem is solved, but now how do we go back and tell all of those people like, Hey everybody, we fixed the problem and you should trust GoldieBlox again. Let's try building again. And so, yeah I made a pretty major executive decision and we were a small startup at the time without a lot of resources, but I thought there's no better way to deploy our resources. Then going back to all of those customers, telling them that we fixed our blocks and giving them new ones. And so we did a huge campaign where we reached out to everybody to tell them about our new blocks, filmed a video myself kind of being vulnerable and talking about the mistakes that we've made, but what we were doing to fix it.

And we also actually wrote a letter from Goldie to each kid, which we had personalized with their name, talking about how engineers don't always get it right the first time. But that doesn't mean that you give up. It means that you keep going, you keep iterating and you make it better. - I love that. 00:24:35,100 The idea of basically saying we are modeling for you, that you were how to recover from a mistake. I thought that was brilliant. So how did you get into that mindset and how long did that take? - So I think, 00:24:52,370 a part of it, I got into the mindset because it was sort of like, I remember even before I started the company. I mean, before I quit my job and really jumped in, I was weighing the pros and cons of even doing this at all. And my, my biggest fear other than like, oh what if I fail or the company goes out of business or something. An even bigger fear that I had was like, what if I launch this product And people don't think it's good.

And it frustrates like girls, and then it makes them not want to do engineering like, what if that like, that was probably my worst nightmare like that. And so I was living my worst nightmare when this happened. And so the headspace that I was in was okay, this is like fixing this or getting this right or recovering from this is literally our top priority. And, thank God we raised a bunch of money because we can afford to go and fix this, which we may not have been in that situation. Cause we had to spend a lot of money, manufacturing over a million blocks and, doing these big outreach campaigns to try to get ahold of everybody and ship them blocks. And we went, I mean, just the effort that we took to even get people, to submit that they wanted it and get their actual kids' names so that we could personalize letters to their kids It was like, I look back on that now I'm like, Oh my God, I can't believe we did that. And three years later, I'm like, I'm really proud of it. I'm really proud that we did that. I don't think a lot of companies would think to go to that level of detail and care. I know I certainly haven't had, any companies kind of treat me that way.

And I think it was, I think it came from this real genuine place of like, Oh my God, I'm living my worst fear. How, do you recover from that? The only way to do it is to do it with this much thought and care - Really amazing. 00:27:13,590 I mean, I, can't even believe it. I think it's such a wonderful example. Now. I want to turn to questions that we have from the students. They have a lot of them, first of all, one of the students, basically wanted to say that you are an incredible inspiration, and literally just thank you. So, you're getting, thank you notes, even in the Q and a, there were a bunch of questions about, patents and intellectual property. Let me read a few of them, so you can maybe answer them together. I've been warned about blocking patents from fortune 500 companies.

Did you use design patents? There are other ones about, Where there some of the obstacles you faced in getting a patent. Can you talk about that? Did you have any intellectual property? So we have, there are a lot of people that were curious about that. - Yeah. 00:28:08,530 One of the reasons why I raised a seed round before I launched my Kickstarter campaign is I wanted to initiate the patent process because once I went live on Kickstarter, that was kind of open to the world and anybody could copy it. So I did, right away pursue, patents on my construction toys, because there were a bunch of novel things going on design wise and those design patents, as well as functionality patents. And I do have now a few, quite a few patents on those construction toys, which is pretty cool cause we need more women, getting patents. And, that process, I'm not gonna lie. Like it's expensive and you need, a good well-priced patent attorney to work with. And, but it's important and they can really be worth a lot. And, have a lot of value depending on what type of company you're building.

So, it's important to do. And, that's one of, when you're starting a company, in the early days, probably a big allocation of capital is shoring that stuff up. The other types of intellectual property, that we had to pursue in the early days were around, trademarks for the company name and trademarking certain things, as well as, I think really the big one was trademarking the name GoldieBlox. And we knew that we wanted to build a multimedia company that had toys, but also clothes and apps and entertainment. And we knew we wanted it to be global. So that starts just adding up. It's really expensive, but it's also super important. So, I, think one of the things that we did early on, cause initially we had like a pretty high priced law firm, a corporate law firm that was handling everything, but they're really expensive when it comes to like trademark and patent staff. So, we were able to find the more affordable, law firm for those specific things, which I just highly recommend because it just, it's very, costly. But there's also things that you can do if you can't afford it.

I think just making sure you're not infringing on somebody else's patent or trademark, I think is good. It something you really want to do if you can't afford yet to go through all of those steps, at least knowing that you're not infringing on somebody, else's like we launched something once where, we did like a cursory search and, we did find someone else who was using the name, but we were like, Oh, this is some, no, nothing, whatever. We're not worried about it. And they came back and they were like the most unreasonable party ever. And we ended up like wasting a ton of legal time and money having to like navigate that. So, being careful about not like it's free, you can go to S pto.gov and for free, you can go and look and see who's covered where and what, and what's existing. So you don't have to pay legal bills for that. And as long as you're not infringing on what somebody else already owns and you start picking whether it's the name of your company or whatever your product is, if you begin demonstrating use of that, even if you can't afford the expensive legal bills yet that's still is actually pretty good protection. And then the last thing I'll say is like copywriting is cheap and, copywriting is like pretty self-serve. So, that's something that, we did as well, like all of our books that we publish and that sort of thing, we copyrighted, everything.

That only cost, like a couple hundred bucks or something to do that. - So it's interesting. 00:32:21,530 It reminds me of the discussion I had with Kevin Systrom about starting Instagram. And he talked about the fact that running a company is only a small fraction dealing with the product. There's all the other things that I have to do with keeping the company going. And this is a perfect example. The intellectual property strategy and implementation is really important. So we've got a whole bunch of new questions here. One that a bunch of people are interested in is about your Kickstarter campaign. You were super successful at the beginning.

Can you talk about that and how you were able to make that so successful early on? - Well, I think for GoldieBlox specifically, 00:33:01,230 the Kickstarter campaign was all about my ability to deliver a very effective, video speaking to camera from the heart about what I was doing and why, and really making the ask, like asking everybody, if you believe your daughter is more than just a princess, then please support me, buy this toy, buy it for your daughter, buy for your friend's daughter and, really like, pitching the sale, and, that is, it's hard to do that, it's, I'm now like pretty media trained and I can speak on camera back then. I was, super awkward and nervous about talking to the camera with all these lights on my, in my face, like trying to deliver an authentic, what I was trying to do was how do I replicate when I go sit with someone for a cup of coffee and I tell them what I'm doing, my passion just exudes out of me. And then by the end of the coffee, they're like, Oh my God, I'm so excited. How do I get involved? And that's what I was trying to do with the Kickstarter And after several attempts. And the funny story there is like, we had our first attempt, which was very staged and scripted and like, it was just trash. Like I just throw it out because it wasn't genuine. And so, we had to completely reshoot the whole thing and I had to drink almost an entire bottle of wine to get comfortable enough to get that performance. But I really think that that was what did it on the kickstart I really do. It was, because it's not like the product prototype was that great. I mean, it was a very beta, it was a good, it was fine.

But it was more, it was the big idea and, - You were selling the vision. 00:34:56,860 - It was the vision that really struck a chord 00:35:01,330 and Kickstarter was the perfect platform to do that because it basically enables you to create an infomercial. And you can't do that if you're just like a package on a shelf. I mean, I really, I mean, I don't know what would have Kickstarter really did kickstart us because the story needed to be told, if we had just made the toy and got it on some toy shelves, nobody would have understood it. I'm just, I'm a huge fan of it. Anytime any entrepreneur asks me whether or not they should do it, or they're thinking about it, I'm like, do it, because I think it even just crafting what that video would be, whether you launch it or not is such a useful sales tool and useful for you to really figure out how to communicate your vision in a way that would get people, onboard wanting to, back it, wanting to support it, wanting to be a part of it. And the other thing I'll say about whether it's Kickstarter or go fund me or any of those other sites, it's really cool now. I mean, you have, we

have the ability nowadays to sort of crowd fund ideas, crowdfund companies. And when you have that, it's like we had over 5,000 Kickstarter backers who, and they still, I mean, I meet people all the time. I meet people, whether I'm at a conference or an event, they're like, Oh my God, I backed you on Kickstarter.

Like they feel like they part own the company. And that's so cool to have people like that. I mean, those were the people that voted for us to win the Superbowl commercial. Those were the people that, showed up when we asked, when we needed help on a photo shoot and we needed kids, but we didn't have any money. So, I highly recommend it. I think it was a great experience. - So it's also, it's just wonderful 00:36:54,680 because you can do it even before you have product to just gauge whether there's any interest. Right. It's a great way to sort of test put up a trial balloon and see if people show up. So there's a lot of interest in, in this next question, which is about, you have been an inspiration in closing the gender gap in STEM, and also you've done a great job with racial representation and you've really worked very hard at, all of this.

What can companies and organizations learn from your leadership having to do with diversity and inclusion? - Oh, that's a great question. 00:37:29,606 Well, a couple, I think a couple of things. So from me, first I'll speak to product perspective, very early on, I think we recognized the need to have, really strong representation in our content and in our toys and how important that is for kids. And, we really made that a priority. And it immediately, I mean, immediately we saw the effect like we, very early on introduce Goldie's best friend Ruby rails. Who's an African American coder and right away. I mean, like we started seeing little black girls posting pictures, playing with our toys. And prior to that, it had been all of us, all little white girls. I mean, it was that simple. But then it's also incredibly important, to prioritize diversity for the team itself and the company.

And, I'll tell you like, it's, something that has to be a priority. And you have to have the executive leadership team on board. I think the biggest thing that we did, to increase diversity at the company is any time we hire any role, we always need to have at least three final candidates for that role. And, there need to be diverse candidates for every role that we hire ever. And if the hiring manager can't bring diverse candidates for a role, then they need to keep looking because all, we have to have to have diverse talent. At that final level before the company makes the decision of who to hire. And for me, I think that's like the biggest thing that we've done a lot. We've done a ton of things. I mean, and I, don't have time right now to list all of the things, that we've done in terms of like bringing in people to come talk to the team and this and that, and like, investing in organizations, but I don't want to underplay that all of that stuff is important, but the most important thing is hiring people of color, hiring, men and women actually creating a very diverse team with different backgrounds. I mean, that's, the way to do it.

And there's no like sugarcoating or talking around that. And, in order to do it you just, you need to prioritize it. And there's so many excuses that companies make, especially tech companies talking about how, Oh, well the candidates just aren't there. And I just, it's just not true. It just takes longer. And when you're, it just takes longer to go find that talent. And sometimes it might take a little bit of a leap of faith in bringing in somebody and, providing a little bit of mentorship or getting set there, believing that somebody has like nine out of the 10 things that you need, then they can probably, learn that the one thing that they would need to be successful. So you just, you have to prioritize it. - So that is really inspiring. 00:40:56,670 And the fact that you've been thinking about this for a long time is, really, meaningful.

So what, is GoldieBlox up to now? What are you, doing? And what's your vision for the next five years? So, well we moved the company to Los Angeles, which was a huge move, but, we really wanted to be in the epicenter of media and entertainment because, in addition to the great toys that we create, where kids can kind of have hands on STEM learning, what's just as important. If not even frankly more important is that they need to seek characters and role models in STEM and in their media that they consume to get them interested in the first place. So if you think about, Bob, the builder Handy, Manny Bill Nye the science guy, Sid, the science kid, Lego man. I mean, the list goes on and on of all of these male engineer characters and, it's really long overdue that we see, female inventor, builder maker, coder characters in children's media and the characters in children's media and the toys and the play pattern. They really go hand in hand. So, now, our company's based in L.A. We have, our own production studio where we produce our own kids' content. We're pretty closely partnered now with YouTube and specifically YouTube Kids, which, is frankly where more kids are watching content than even traditional TV. And, we're building out all kinds of shows and different types of entertainment for kids on top of our toy business. And then the other interesting part of our business is we partner with, companies who share our mission.

So there are a lot of big companies whether it's Nike or I'm trying to think of Sony Pictures or Chevron. I mean, you name it. It's almost every major company has, a corporate social responsibility around either STEM education or girl empowerment. And so, we've found a really exciting opportunity to partner with those companies on mission driven marketing, as well as creating content to hit the social mission that we both have, bring revenue to GoldieBlox and just expand our reach. So, our corporate partnerships business has been now maybe 18 months in the making. So it's fairly new, but it's been really exciting. And just like one quick example of that, that's pretty cool. We recently partnered with Nike where we sent a young girl to their headquarters to meet all the women who designed the Nike shoe. So it was just like, it's pretty fun. Cause it's like Nike gets to market their new shoe.

We got a great piece of content. Everybody wins. So, we're continuing to build toward that big, audacious, if the, if our first goal was disrupt every toy store, I would say our new goal is really, getting every, girl around the world, excited about

STEM and that is audacious enough. That's going to keep me up at night for easily, the next five to ten years, to keep on building this and, hopefully if we continue, and it feels like am at the point now where am eight years in and its fun to do this talk today, looking back three years ago and just feeling like, wow I have learnt so much, and I'm still learning. And as long as you just keep on learning and, being really open minded about that, you can just continue to improve and eventually achieve what you set out to achieve or realize what you had initially set out to achieve, was actually the wrong goal post but, that's okay you just redefine it and you move on. (gentle music)..