

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/confidence-without-arrogance/>

When she was first considering an investment in DoorDash, explains Pear VC managing partner Mar Hershenson, she was skeptical of the business model. What convinced her was a meeting in which DoorDash co-founder Tony Xu pulled out some whiteboards, and answered all of her questions with a calm confidence that was based on facts and data, not arrogance.



Transcript

Okay, the sixth one is you have to be confident, but with knowledge.. And I think confidence is a really touchy thing, because you can be arrogant if you're too confident, and you may be not paranoid enough if you're confident, but it's important to be confident if you wanna take people with you on your trip, right? Remember, you're a founder, and people have to give you money, they have to buy your product, they have to follow you.. So I'll tell you a story of one of the persons that I believe has confidence with the best level.. This is DoorDash, we invested in DoorDash in 2013.. And my partner Pejman, he was really gung ho from day one, he was like, "We should do it, we should do it, Mar." And I'm kind of like the analytical person in that office, and I was like, "Oh, I don't know, food, who knows, "I don't know, it's really hard to deliver food.. "I'm not even sure it's a high-tech business.. "And did you see all the companies "that are doing food delivery? At the time there were all these companies, and probably more, I couldn't find all of them, I was like, "That was a really bad idea." So basically, I took it upon myself to prove Pejman wrong, and I went and did a lot of diligence.. I met with a lot of restaurant owners, and I was like, "Well, I don't know, "what do you think of DoorDash?" everybody loved it.. And kind of the last thing, the last test for us was to go talk to Tony the CEO.. I had a long list of questions, okay, so very VC-like, so, "What's your unit economics, and what's your growth, "and your competitors and blah, blah, blah, blah?" And we went to their office, and their office was this place in Stanford Avenue..

They had a house, student house at the living room, dining room area is where they worked, and they had all these whiteboards behind them.. So I went in with my list and Tony's like, "No problem, "let me get some whiteboards," so he got like three whiteboards and wiped them all out, and he basically answered all my questions with extreme confidence, fact-based data, and me, that I'm an engineer, I was completely sold.. I'm like, "Okay, it does work, I should do it." So he basically sold me that I should definitely give money to this company, right? And he was confident without being arrogant and he took the time to actually write by hand everything that I wanted to know, so that's the story...