

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/hardest-question-first/>

To be a successful innovator, says Pear VC managing partner Mar Hershenson, you have to get used to tackling the most difficult questions first. For startups, she finds, there's always a weakest link. "I want the founders to just work on that," she says, "because nothing else matters."



Transcript

Okay, the third one is do what really matters first.. And this is goes completely against human nature.. We're naturally procrastinators, and if you have something that is hard to do, you leave it until the end, you don't wanna do it at the beginning, right? So it's the opposite, we're actually looking people that want to do the hard stuff first.. I would say that I was a great test-taker, I'm sure many people in the audience are great test-takers and you took the SAT, or GRE, or whatever, and you know that when you take this test, what you do is you're have to go and answer as many questions as you can really, really fast.. every question is worth the same, so if you find the hard question, you basically don't answer it, and you come back to it, that's the strategy.. But in a startup, it's actually the opposite.. You should take the startup test by doing the following, you walk in, and you read the test, and you find the hardest question and then you answer just that question, and then you pass.. Because if you don't answer that question, you will not pass, right? So when I look at a company now in our portfolio, I'm always trying to figure out what is the weakest link in this company, what do we have to do to ensure success? And I want the founders to just work on that because nothing else matters.. And there's always ways to keep you busy when you're in a company, always ways to keep you busy, but there's only one thing that typically matters...