

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/the-power-of-founders/>

It's no coincidence, says Stanford Department of Management Science and Engineering lecturer Ravi Belani, that four of the biggest tech companies — Apple, Amazon, Microsoft and Alphabet — all had founders who stayed on as CEOs long after the companies went public. He suggests that there's more than just intellect at play here. Any company can hire brilliant strategists, but something about going from "zero to one" and navigating the rough water of early venture development enables founders to think differently, and pursue opportunities that don't seem at all linear or obvious.



## Transcript

we were, we started talking about billion dollar businesses, let me now end by talking about trillion dollar businesses.. So we have those four examples, Apples, Amazon, Microsoft, and Google, our alphabet, that are now trillion dollar companies, and there are a lot of companies that have, there are a lot of companies that have a lot of smart minds, that can learn everything that I'm saying and hire the best, smartest minds, and don't become trillion dollar companies.. I think one thing that's hard to argue with is that all four of those companies, not, besides just having and going after network effects, they all, and this is informed from a piece of deeper analysis that Geoff Moore did about five years ago on Apple and Amazon, but they, all four of those companies had founders at the helm as CEOs when they were publicly traded companies for a long period of time.. I think that is not a coincidence, because there is something about a founder that has the earned authority of its employees and its constituents and its stakeholders, that can move companies in directions that even the smartest minds can't.. There's something about the founder experience, of starting from zero to one, where you go through your own journey of getting knocked down and knowing who you are, and being able to actually get in touch with that core, enviable spirit that exists in bad times or good, and this is sort of a time of reflection.. It's sort of a time of really getting actually in touch with that spirit that becomes an indomitable power, even when you become famous and big.. Really, these companies aren't just companies.. These are companies that build other companies, and I think that's, you know, if you think about how Apple has moved from a desktop company to all these, becoming the biggest music company, the biggest phone company to now the biggest payments company, or how Amazon went from an online bookstore to the biggest utility cloud computing company and now the biggest home AI company, that is not a simple, linear, academic map.. There is something else going on.. What I want you to understand is that the essence of all of this, there is an entrepreneur behind these great big, fictitious seeming companies that are unicorns, or trillion-corns, that is the indomitable spirit that is impossible to replicate or copy..

So really the lesson that I would have for you today is to get in touch with what that means for you, because you, anybody can copy your technology.. Nobody can copy you.. So don't worry about trying to be somebody else.. Just get in touch with what your best self is, and then courier the resources around you to have that vision be realized...