

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/extreme-focus/>

When he began building what became PlayVS, recalls founder and CEO Delane Parnell, he moved to LA and gave himself one year to either succeed or fail. That compressed timeline, and a year of "all work and no play," he says, helped him focus on the three factors that would make the business succeed: distribution, IP and product.



Transcript

- And do you have now looking back in retrospect, 00:00:04,390 is there, is there.... There's lots of founders that have that same journey but very few founders actually succeed or take off.. Is there something that you attribute your success to now, if it wasn't necessarily having this clear vision about where things were gonna go and having full transparency into that? - Sure.. 00:00:22,313 - Was it something process or- 00:00:25,890 - Extreme focus, extreme focus.. 00:00:28,820 I think I was, I don't think I've ever been more focused than that that first year truthfully.. I moved to LA basically knowing not many people.. All I did was go to work and go home.. And even when I went home, I had a mattress, and then my entire living room was a replica of what my office looked like at the science building.. So desk, chair, same desk, same chair, same monitor, whiteboard.. And it was basically all work, no play for me..

And so, I was extremely focused on learning the industry, developing a product, talking to players, talking to educators, talking to publishers, talking to state associations, talking to people who would become future employees, just trying to figure out how we could fit into the space and build a business.. And during that time, by the way, that first year.. I guess the first eight or nine months, I never talked to investors.. Most people sort of come up with an idea, they do some initial work, and then they immediately try to start talking to investors to quote unquote, build relationships for potential future race.. I spend zero time thinking about raising capital or talking to investors.. I was super focused on putting the core of the business together and been building from there, not racing around.. - Okay, and you're glad you did that obviously just to, 00:01:53,078 that was the right- - Yeah.. I mean, look, there was no other option for me.. 00:01:59,090 This was a, I had a compressed timeline and I have to track against it.. - And did you give yourself a short-term goal? 00:02:04,880 Did you say, "At this point," I know you referenced a year before, but was there something in your mind where you were almost your own governing body where you said, "At this point in time, I'm either gonna take off or kill what I'm doing?" - Yeah, no, look in a year, I figured, 00:02:18,560 look, the business had to be off the ground, and so I had to be a real thing..

It wasn't, we didn't even have an entity at that point.. It was just like, hey, whatever the core of the business is, which I defined as distribution, IP, and product.. Those are the things that I need to build against.. So on the distribution side, I needed effective distribution into high schools and I found that the NFA, just a state association, so I needed to get that contract signed.. On the publisher side or the IP side, I needed to sign deals with publishers, and I needed those publishers to develop resources to build APIs that would actually enable online play.. And then on a product side, I needed to hire engineers and product managers and designers, et cetera, product team to build the product.. And then we, we needed to take the product to market or at least get market feedback from the product.. And so, that was sort of the objective and I just focus wholly on that..