URL: https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/do-the-work-then-talk-about-it/

Should businesses driving radical change focus on perfecting their product or telling their story? Reflecting on her experiences at Matternet, an autonomous drone delivery startup she co-founded, GLASS founder and CEO Paola Santana advises founders that while it's important to tell their story to the larger world, the first priority is building a product and going the extra mile to put it in front of the customers they're after.

Transcript

  - For all the founders that actually wanna go 00:00:04,500 after deep change, if you're doing a software, a classic software company in Silicon Valley where there's an existing software stack, you identify a very tactical problem, and it's pretty easy just to get to product-market fit and solve that short-term problem.. If you're going after long-term change, where in your case, there's no regulatory framework to operate, you need to create new technology, these drones, you need to actually create these networks that need to exist before even these applications can be fulfilled, it can be a very existential threat if you're trying to build a real long-term infrastructure play type of company to survive.. I wanna make sure that the takeaway about what to focus on is clear for the founders that wanna do more ambitious ventures.. What is the, is the advice in the early days in terms of thinking about what you need to focus on if you're trying to build a deep change company, is it marketing? Is it to build your brand so that the Papua New Guineas of the world discover you and then you solicit funding, so you're selling the vision before you build a product? Or is it to just focus maniacally on the core challenge that you're trying to solve and find short-term wins with that challenge to market and brand and promote, or something else? - You need to focus on doing the work.. 00:01:23,070 And doing the work is being very close to the problem and following that client and that user to where the client is.. These things that we say all the time, like get out of the building, it's like, I spend so much time creating perfect surveys, creating the perfect interview, and when I go on-site, I'm so focused on asking my questions, that I'm missing the point.. When we went to Bhutan and to Papua New Guinea, the perfect plans were not important anymore because we were on-site and before imposing our tech and our plans, we had to do some reconnaissance and really understand what was going on there.. These people, and I think also, it's important that we give credit to the people that have been trying to solve problems for awhile, for decades, actually.. You go there and the first thing you need to do is to really understand the problem and get close to the people that have been frustrated, because those are the skeptics of the thing and of the new solution that you bring.. If you follow the problem, you've done 80% of the work..

  However, I have to admit that I don't know if the prime minister of Bhutan or the Doctors Without Borders or UNICEF would've heard from us if we wouldn't have had a TED Talk.. It's a mix of doing the work, but then, you need to make sure that the people out there that is looking for people like us that are doing the work, that they can find you.. And this applies to fundraising, this applies to people that is trying to raise money and they are a minority or they are a group that traditionally hasn't built this type of technology or built this type of startup or raised this amount of money.. You need to do the work, but

then, you need to talk about the work you're doing.. Not the opposite.. Many people go out and talk about things before they're actually putting the work, but you do need to do both.. I think that was critical for the people that were looking for solutions to understand that there were those type of solutions out there.. You need to do both when you're bringing something new.. You need to educate about what you're doing and then, you can solve the problem very closely by doing very fast proof of concepts.. We had to get on-site..

It was not about talking on the phone.. It was not about Zoom calls.. We had to go to these places with whatever technology we had that was very rudimentary back then.. I have a couple of pictures that, if you Google literally Matternet Bhutan or Matternet UNICEF, you will see how our technology evolved in the early days of Matternet, 2013, '14, and '15...