URL: https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/what-makes-a-great-ai-founder/

Andrew Ng, managing general partner at AI Fund, observes that great AI startup founders have technical depth and the ability to make decisions quickly and responsibly, which he illustrates with an anecdote about the CEO of an AI Fund-financed company.

Transcript

- And are there any skills that separate out 00:00:04,230 the great AI founders? I know AI right now is like, it's a sea that's rising all boats.. But, if you separate out the great ones from the good ones, are there any salient skills that you notice that the great AI CEOs or founders have that the good ones don't? - Maybe, since you say AI, 00:00:22,500 I would say is often technical depth.. Speaker Yeah, okay.. 00:00:24,166 - It helps a lot.. 00:00:24,999 But now I wanna give a different answer if you say great founders around great AI founders.. Speaker Okay.. 00:00:29,070 - But I feel like AI is evolving rapidly, 00:00:31,890 and we definitely have lots of entrepreneurs that, you know, pitch the VCs without really knowing what they're doing.. And the smart VCs can sniff 'em out quite quickly.. And it makes a huge difference.. I think the technology, unfortunately, you know, is like somewhat complicated for a lot of applications..

So, teams that actually knows what they're doing will execute an AI project 10 times faster, you know, than a team that doesn't.. And 10 times is not a made up number.. I literally see people take a year to do something like, oh boy, I know that other team would've done, performed this level in two weeks or maybe a month.. So for many AI startups, application startups, infrastructure startups, you kind of have to know what you're doing.. So, it doesn't have to be you.. If you're a technical co-founder, maybe that's okay.. And then second thing I see among many of the great founders, is speed.. I find that as a startup, you'd be surprised when you hang up, the great founders, the sheer speed of decision making.. And you know, I sometimes talk to people from big companies, and they'll say, "Oh, we move so fast." But when I kind of sit them side by side, how long does it take you to make the decision? Did I talk to great founder? How long does it take to make the decision? Maybe here's one story.. I was chatting with Meeno's CEO, Renate Nyborg, former CEO of Tinder..

I was on the phone with her one day, and she was making a major architecture decision.. This architect thing, you know, there basically two architect, two major software architectures under consideration.. And the team had laid it out.. List us some pros and cons.. So, they gone with the team with me and some of my friends and said, "These are pros and cons." And then, one of my, I see two of my friends and I said, "You know, we're not sure, but here has some reason that we prefer architecture A." And then Renate said, "Okay, guys, done.. Decision made.. Go and implement," you know, "architecture A." And after I thought, "Whoa, did Renate just make a massive engine decision in basically 30 seconds?" And she did.. And I realized after it, I don't think there was a better way to make it because it's not as if, you know, if the company waited another

week it would've been a high quality decision.. And if it was wrong, I'm sure they would fix it, you know, the next week.. But until you've lived through the speed of a great business, most people, I know so many people that think their organizations are fast, but if you stack them up to the real speed of a fast moving CEO, they have never actually seen speed in their life..

One important caveat, do be responsible.. I know that, move fast and break things sometimes, you know, is the wrong approach.. So, tremendous speed when you are not being callous with people's lives and livelihood, and things that could cause real harm.. But, so long as there's an important caveat of responsible AI, many of the great CEOs move faster than most people realize people can move...