

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/start-your-career-like-an-underdog/>

Sarah Lamaison, co-founder and CEO of Dioxycle, offers advice for people who are just finishing their academic studies and entering a climate tech startup: Don't assume academic knowledge is all you need, don't care too much about your title, and overdeliver before negotiating a salary.



Transcript

- I was there before, like you, 00:00:05,100 finishing my academic studies, and, you know, the goal is to, I mean, what is success when you're starting a climate tech startup? Success is developing a company that is capable of cutting million tons of CO2 per year.. So, you know, that's the definition of success.. And so there's a lot of things that can happen along the way.. And yeah, again, these are my opinions.. So I think the first trap that we can fall into, you know, when you come out from school is that you think you know a lot of things because you went to a top school.. And so I'm saying that laughing, because, you know, it's actually a good thing sometimes to be very confident when you don't know a lot in your industry, because sometimes you probably wouldn't take the risk of starting a company if you knew like how hard it is later and how little you actually knew back then about everything that was waiting for you.. So I would say that is kind of the first trap that can happen.. And so my advice for this would be to always keep an underdog mindset.. And by this I mean, don't assume that academic knowledge is real life knowledge.. Although it's very powerful, very important to have it, there's so many other dimension in the, I mean, in the rest of the world to optimize for and that are needed to develop, I mean, to have a successful career, and to do something meaningful, that I think it's really important to keep this growth mindset and keep asking for advice all the time early on..

A second thing I have perhaps for people joining companies early on, especially in startups, is don't care too much about the title.. You know, I mean, there's always a lot of like inflation around titles, but actually what really matters, I believe is like the team you work with and you know, the mission, and like how much you believe the team you're working with is capable of delivering on that mission.. So I think that's really important.. And the third thing I would say that is also probably quite controversial about salary, especially if there are MBA in the room.. I've heard they were trained to like negotiate their salaries, is to not to negotiate too much like salaries at the beginning, but instead like get in the company, over deliver, and then negotiate.. Because we, you know, as a founder, I see that a lot of people in the company when they're in and they're delivering, they're so good at what they do, like you really don't wanna lose them.. And then they have much more leverage to actually like really ask for something.. And, you know, if you negotiate too early, I would say that it's a missed opportunity for some startup where, you know, they perhaps don't have a lot of resources at the beginning, so they wanna make sure they don't take too much risks in terms of like hiring.. And so, yeah, I think that's an interesting way to look about it..