

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/gaining-startup-skills-and-mentors/>

Maria Barrera, founder and CEO of Clayful, advises aspiring entrepreneurs to consider what skills they are missing and find a career that can help them build those skills before starting their own company. A career is also an opportunity to find mentors, she says, and offers tips on finding mentorship.



Transcript

- What I'm curious about is for all the founders 00:00:05,250 that are wrestling with what to do post-Stanford, whether to start a company or join another company that's already sort of at a certain scale, or join a larger company and build a functional skillset, can you share your insights to answer that question about when to take the red pill and jump into the founder journey? - It is a journey.. 00:00:25,650 So my dad always told me, learn with other people's money.. So that's why I decided to do what I did.. I knew I wanted to start a company at some point and going, basically, my decision point was, okay, I could, I did my undergrad, I did my masters, I can do this right now, there's not a problem that I feel super passionate about yet.. So, and you know, I could do it today, but what skills do I need? And like, what am I really, what am I missing? So instead of going into it right away, I decided I'm gonna actually go and start a career journey that would help me get the skills necessary to do that work.. And I was really lucky in that first job I had out of my master's program, my former boss, who was the CEO at Nearpod, he asked me, you know, "What do you wanna do in five years?" And I said, "I wanna start my company." And he's like, "Great, we're gonna help you get there." And every six months, we would have a conversation around what skills do I have? What are the next skills that I need to build? So really it's, I think, yes, finding that scaling organization that can help you get those skills is really important.. But more importantly, it's that person who's gonna help you develop those skills and who really believes in you and will sort of push you through that trajectory.. - And any tips on that? 00:01:40,207 On finding the mentor? Did the mentor find you? Did you proactively, deliberately have a strategy to find a mentor? How can people, if that is so critical, how can people facilitate involving others in their success? - It's a little bit of both, I would say, right? 00:01:54,840 I've been very lucky throughout my whole career to have a lot of different mentors and to find mentors in real people as well as in books and in media and in, you know, videos of Steve Jobs that I'll watch.. So there's a lot of different ways to like, think of mentors, if you will.. But I think the main thing is can you find someone who just like, believes in you and sees something in you that you don't even see in yourself? Because sometimes, especially when we're earlier in our careers, I mean, imposter syndrome is real and we never think we're, you know, ready for it, to take that big leap..

But having someone that does really, I think makes all the difference...