URL: https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/scale-the-bright-spots/

Maria Barrera, founder and CEO of Clayful, observes that her company found places to scale by examining where they were actually helping students. A challenge of EdTech, she says, is building products that work for students but are sold to school district leaders — but it's possible to solve both needs with one solution.

Transcript

- If you have hit that moment 00:00:05,310 where you now know that Clayful will be a success, can you distill when that moment occurred and what evidenced that for you? - So there's this, one of my favorite authors, 00:00:15,780 or yeah, they're two authors.. The, I'm blanking on it.. It's "Switch" and "The Power of Moments" are their two books.. They're brothers.. And they talk about this idea of bright spots and how do you, when you're looking for solutions and seeing what's working, you always look for the bright spots, and then you scale those bright spots.. I love that so much.. So as we're kind of wrestling with this very big problem of 40% of students feel hopeless and sad, how do we make, how do we help them feel better? We look at, "Where are we having an impact "and what is actually helping?" And one of the big points initially where we saw that this could be something is we're testing the size with, our earliest prototype literally built it in a day and a half 'cause we're like, "Is this actually gonna work," (laughing) right? And we have this conversation with a 14-year-old boy from Texas.. He's a football player, and he's having a fight with his mom.. And he says, "I don't know if she loves me "because she has to because I'm her son "or because she actually likes me as a person." And that happened like five minutes into the conversation.. And that moment I was floored..

I'm like, "There is something here," right? "If we're able to get students to open up, "and realize these really hard, deep things, "and work through them, "there's something really compelling here." And so that was one of the first ones, and that's on the student side.. And then on the business side, right, the great thing about education is you have to build for an end user, the student, but you have to sell to a very different user, which is the district leaders.. And in one of our first sales conversations we're kinda getting feedback on our product, and he says, "I have a million dollars allocated "to hire eight counselors.. "I've hired zero.. "I can't find them, there's not enough people.. "So what do you have 'cause I'm desperate?" And that moment right there, we were like, "Oh, there's a staffing problem." Again, very different problem from mental health, but very related obviously.. We're realizing that the different stakeholders have very different needs and you can solve both needs with one solution.. That was an "aha" moment.. So those two were really early moments where we realized, "Yes, there's something worth building here." And then over the last two years, we've been scaling that out...