

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/the-privilege-to-take-a-risk/>

David Allemann, co-founder and executive co-chairman of On, shares how he and his co-founders acknowledged that because of their privilege, they could afford to take a big risk when they started their company. He encourages aspiring founders to be calculated, but adopt a “nothing-to-lose” mentality.



Transcript

- Now, that also all looks great, 00:00:05,580 but that's how I felt when we started out.. So it felt pretty much like a cold shower because we were sitting there.. We had no clue of the shoe business or of the sports business.. So how do you do that? How do you produce that crazy shoe where Olivier just had taken a garden hose.. And so Olivier there in the middle, Casper on the left, me on the right side.. We had to find a way.. And in a perfect entrepreneur story, we would have started the next day.. But that was, of course, not reality because we all came from kind of solid careers, kind of, you know, McKinsey, solid careers in advertising and so on.. And so we were a little bit wary and we fooled around and said, "Hey, are we really gonna do this? "Isn't this too crazy?" But then probably two months in, we went on a long hike, a hike up in the Swiss mountains.. And now you have to know Switzerland, there are mountain people kind of often living in the dark valleys, so it's a little bit a narrow perspective..

And so we hiked up in mountains in the Engadin Valley, and the more we moved, the higher we got, the broader the perspective got.. And what we started to ask ourselves on that hike is, "Hey, we're coming from one of the safest places "on the planet, one of the most privileged situations.. "So if we can't take full risk, who can?" And so who feels privileged in this room? So here's a thought.. If you have so much privilege to sit here, why can't we go all in? Despite the fact that it's probably crazy, take the full risk.. And that's exactly what what we did, and we put ourselves in a nothing to lose mentality.. It's still a very calculated risk.. It's not exactly Columbus setting sail to discover the Americas.. And so we didn't know where it's gonna lead us.. It led us in '21 to an IPO where we actually didn't go in our suits but we ran with all our team to Wall Street to do the IPO, but that was not the goal.. That was just a stepping stone on this explore journey where it's unclear where the end will be..

But we are on this journey, and it's incredible, exciting, because we chose to go all in, nothing to lose, and risk it all...