

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/articulating-success>

A panel of Stanford alumni who have gone on to entrepreneurial careers describe what success looks like for each of their startups. In conversation with Stanford Professor of the Practice Tina Seelig, the panelists talk about celebrating everyday victories instead of holding out for a singular end goal, but also striving for major impacts like reducing greenhouse gases, improving cancer detection and innovating the way athletes practice.



## Transcript

- What does success look like for you? When will you know when you've gotten there? (laughter) - I would answer it a little bit differently.. I don't think, the journey is so hard to be honest that you can't just be looking for one moment in time where you say, "I've done it.. I'm successful." I think a lot of CEO's will tell you, like the moment they IPO that's when they think they'll really feel it and I think that's true, I think it's a great moment but then it's done and then like, what's next? So, I think really to get through all the hard times 'cause it will be very hard, you have to enjoy every moment of it every day and all of the struggles.. You have to want that.. Believe in what you're doing and enjoy the process and so I'd say there are very hard times but every day I'd say you want to make sure you're successful that day and that's what will push you forward and don't, I wouldn't try to look for one moment in time and just aspire to that 'cause that may not get you through all the really tough times.. - [Tina] So what was your goal today? - My goal today is to inspire lots of Stanford students to go out there and start awesome companies and not worry about how many people tell you that you can't do it but just, if you wanna do it, go for it and what you end up doing will probably be very different than what you started doing but that's fine and that's important and that's how it should be.. - [Tina] So who else wants to jump in? - I think for us, success is very clear.. What we're really trying to do is change the paradigm for how cancer's detected.. So through that journey, we are building, actually we've already built what will be the largest sequencing facility in the world by the amount of throughput.. We're putting together the largest clinical trials that have ever been conducted in the history of medicine and building an incredible team with disparate skill sets that have not come together very frequently before..

And what we're trying to do is really find cancer early when it's cured.. When you can find cancer early in the stage I or II phase of the disease, it's possible to cure it by surgery and radiation.. Most cancers are detected late stage so, at that point, it's typically palliative and it's really not curable and so what we're trying to do is entirely shift the paradigm of how cancer is screened for and so you can imagine going eventually to your annual check-up and having a tube of blood drawn and through an analysis of that blood be able to tell, do you have cancer, yes or no and if so, where is it in the body, is it at a point in time when it can be locally treated? - Yeah, so I would say at Opus 12 we seek to make CO2 great again.. (laughter) We define success bigly, we are gonna build a company, it's gonna be the greatest company ever.. No, for me, the ultimate success is actually 10% reduction in greenhouse gasses globally by 2030.. That's kind of my big vision.. Clearly, there's smaller goals in between there.. I mean, we need to prove out our technology, we have to de-risk it.. We have to show that we can run stably for 1,000 hours, then 5,000 hours.. We need to prove out the market..

We have an initial market that we're going after which is a smaller market where we're producing chemicals for a small chemical manufacturers and then we have our larger market where we wanna produce cost-competitive CO2 nutrafuels.. So we have many goals along the way but what keeps me going and what I'm in this for is to make the ultimate impact of making a dent in the amount of CO2 that's in the atmosphere.. You know, there might be more, there might be more profitable opportunities in kind of smaller markets but for me, what drives me is impact.. I really want to build this company to make an impact on climate change.. So that's how we set our goals.. - Yeah, for us, success, we hope is already happening which to us means better decision making.. So for professional athletes, we are targeting being on the field and being able to practice as well off the field.. So using virtual reality to potentially even do things like reduce injuries.. So for us, being able to kind of replicate that sense of I can mentally practice in a similar way and not have to my body at a physical risk to do us, to us that's the dream is to reduce that risk of injury for athletes and potentially be able to reduce practice time and help those athletes make better decisions off the field..