

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/bioethics-from-the-beginning>

Trevor Martin, co-founder and CEO of Mammoth Biosciences, observes that while biotech companies can't predict where their technology will lead them in the future, they can build an ethical framework from the beginning by using the company's values as a lens for decision-making. Ursheet Parikh, partner at Mayfield and investor in Mammoth Biosciences, adds that an ethical culture involves making employees feel empowered to point out problems without repercussions.



Transcript

Ravi Belani Are there any bioethical standards 00:00:04,140 that you guys have set as a company or exercises that you're going through from the very beginning to think about? Because, you know, we had Hemant Taneja who's also a VC on, and he wrote this book about how, you know, there can be these unintended long-term consequences; that everybody with good intentions wouldn't want to do, but that the company can end up in if you don't think about them from day zero.. Are there any exercises like that that the company engages in or that are relevant here? - I think the most relevant one is just, 00:00:35,460 what's the culture you're building at the company and being very intentional about that.. Right? 'Cause it's hard, I haven't read that particular book, but it's hard to probably predict 10 years from now.. Ravi Belani Yeah.. 00:00:52,980 More generally as like a company and like what do you value? Like are you, to the very beginning of this conversation, right? Like, are you trying to save as many lives as possible? Are you trying to maximize the use of the technology? Are you trying to make healthcare as accessible as possible? You can choose your function and then making sure that you stay true to that.. Like, it can be updated over time.. Like, the way we think about our values and some great advice I got early on is that you should always use your values as a lens for decision-making.. And that's how they become real.. So you can have them on the wall or whatever, but whenever you're making a big decision, you should be going down each value and saying, "Okay, if I really believe this, which direction should I be going?" And hopefully those microdecisions and macrodecisions lead you to a good place in 10 years, even if you don't know that from the very beginning.. - Ursheet, you wanted to comment? 00:01:37,650 We have 30 seconds..

- Alright, so quick thing is, 00:01:41,970 I think, you know, I do see this move fast, break things, don't worry about the end product much more endemic in software-driven innovation companies or tech-driven innovation companies.. I think, you know, companies like Mammoth tend to be way more, sort of grounded there.. It's much more about being real about like the progress, the problems, that set of things, right? And so the culture is at the core in either of them, and you have to kind of find the balance between innovation at this point.. Pretty much, if something is wrong, people in the org have to be able to raise their hand without the fear of any repercussions to kind of get that message up.. And so the culture is at the core, right? Well, somewhere along the way people will know if something's not going right, and people have to feel empowered to be able to look and go ahead and bring it up without the fear of being shot down by the leadership..