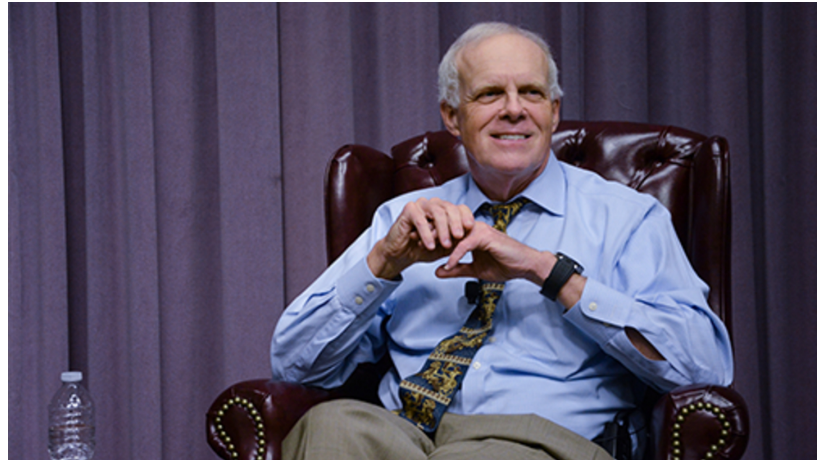


URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/experiential-learning-in-industry>

John Hennessy, Stanford University's 10th president, describes how his experience as an entrepreneur in the fast-paced tech industry taught him skills that served him well as an academic leader, such as dealing with difficult issues quickly. "The faster you can move through it, the better and quicker the organization heals and moves forward," he says.



Transcript

- In any start-up environment, time is money.. Prolonged decision making, long cycles of waiting for things to occur, is death to a start-up company.. One of the challenges that exists in a university, it's a very complex organization with multiple constituencies, if you took every problem that came to the president's office and put it through an academic decision process we'd still be waiting to build the arts district, we'd still be waiting to build the engineering quad, we'd still be debating whether or not the business school should stay where it is or should move.. So you've got to put some value on making decisions and be comfortable making decisions when everything is not black and white, because that's what happens in any complicated organization.. And that's something you learn in a start-up company.. You also learn how to go through the cycles that occur naturally in a start-up company.. I worked on my first layoff when I was at MIPS and learning how to do that there made it a lot easier when we had to go through a financial crisis in the university.. I learned the most important thing about dealing with a crisis, the faster you can move through it, the better and quicker the organization heals and moves forward, so completely contrary to the way universities usually think about budget crises.. They think, well let's see if we can just hold out and wait for this to go away and maybe things will get better on their own.. But of course, when the endowment dropped 25% things were not going to get better on their own overnight, right? That was a hundred or two hundred million dollars worth of income to the university every year, we had to solve the problem..

Having done it at a start-up company, it's a lot easier to think about how you do it in this environment...