

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/finding-your-first-customers>

David Allemann, co-founder and executive co-chairman of On, shares some of the innovative and unconventional ways he and his co-founders connected with their first customers at marathon expos and local running stores.



Transcript

Interviewer How did you go to customers 00:00:03,870 or how did you find the right customers to test the product with and how did you then eventually convince them to go with you versus say, a Nike, which then I mean, has so much more legacy? - Yeah, super, super important question.. 00:00:17,640 That's exactly what we asked ourselves in the beginning.. And so we said, hey, let's first go out to all the marathon expos and do a little stand there, kind of put some shoes on the table like here and convince people that they should try our shoes.. And so at the beginning we found out that if you go up to them and basically say, hey, want to try our shoes? They were kind of, ah, not so interested.. And then we printed T-shirts and the T-shirts had on there, don't ask me about the shoes.. And then of course people were starting to come up to us and say, hey, why shouldn't I ask you about the shoes? And I said, I'm not going to tell you anything before you have tried the shoe.. And that was at the very beginning, our acquisition model for making people curious.. And then they got into the shoes and said, wow, that really feels different.. So different was the word that we heard the most and feels light, it feels like on clouds.. And actually we immediately stole that on clouds and then we called it Cloud Tech..

And so these were the very early days.. And then we thought about who.... So if we shouldn't talk about our shoes, who should? And so we said, hey, probably it's the best marketing approach if we don't tout our shoes, but we have somebody else talking about our shoes who was very credible.. And who are the most credible people to talk about a new shoe? Isn't that kind of your local running store? You know, a little bit the running geek that used to be a marathon runner and she has opened that store in your neighborhood and that's where all the runners go to get their shoes.. And so we called them up and of course they weren't interested at the beginning.. And so we traveled to the respective city or village and we called them up and said, hey, we're just here.. It's before lunch, don't you come with us to a lunch run? And they said, hey, you don't even know my shoes size, hey, isn't it a nine? We just have your shoe here because of course we did before a little bit of intelligence.. And that led to great shoe run, it was a very healthy moment in our lives because we did a lot of runs over lunchtime and that was the initial phase.. And then it grew really grassroots level from there...