

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/importance-of-common-sense>

Scott explains that it is important to “do the thing that makes the most sense”. He uses JFK’s lesson from the Bay of Pigs to illustrate this point.



Transcript

The last point is the single most valuable thing that I would urge you to grasp and rely on is your own common sense.. No matter what somebody tells you, if it makes sense to you, then that's a good thing.. You should act on it.. If it turns out to be wrong, you'll probably figure it out before anybody else will and you can fix it.. But if it doesn't makes sense, you know, my favorite story about this is not a Silicon Valley story.. When President Kennedy took office in '61, the first thing he was told to do was invade Cuba and something called the Bay of Pigs.. The entire Armed Forces staff of generals, the Army, Navy, Air Force said, "Don't worry.. We can fly in there.. No one will know it's us and will take out the whole insurgency." And he said to himself, "You know, that doesn't make any sense to me.. Because I don't understand how we could possibly fly these airplanes and all these troops in there and have no one know it was us." But who am I? I'm the youngest president in history and here's all these general and admirals and Secretary of Defense..

Everybody saying we've been working on these plans since before you got here and it was captained by Eisenhower and look what he's done and how much he knows and who are you? PT boat captain.. So, long story short, he authorized the invasion.. It was a huge disaster.. It was the first major decision in his presidency and it was this incredible catastrophe.. One of the things he said after that was, he said, "I will never ever again do anything that doesn't make sense to me." I just thought that was really a good thing to remember because your own common sense is a really useful tool and it will get better whether you pay attention to it or not.. It will get better over time.. But even on its first day, it will be worth listening to if you're trying to decide between A or B.. Do the thing that makes the most sense...