

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/innovation-by-observation>

The early days of Lever, says co-founder and CEO Sarah Nahm, were all about observation. The founding team spent 9 months embedded in high-growth companies, studying recruitment and hiring processes like anthropologists. She describes how the team embraced “being innovative through listening,” building entrepreneurial success around humility and empathy rather than a relentless pursuit of a singular inner vision.



Transcript

- So our first nine months as a company, we spent embedded inside of hyper-growth companies, mostly technology companies, watching them as they went through an incredible amount of scale.. So we were really employing user research methods and sort of like, almost anthropological style observation to make sure that we weren't those entrepreneurs that were just saying, this is what we think is happening in the world, and then blindly following it.. We chose, instead, to actually observe and watch kind of the entire process of what it really took for an organization to hire, and study that patiently for nine months, in order for us to even get an inkling on what we wanted to do, or how we were gonna disrupt something, or how we were gonna be different.. And in doing that, I think we founded the company on a premise of really, you know, debunking this idea of the startup founder that has this idea descending from the mountain, and really kind of embracing the humility of being innovative through listening, and being innovative through empathy, and being innovative through our ability to believe in other people's ability to see the future.. And I think that's why, for me, believing in other people is a huge mechanism where I have entrepreneurial success.. You know, I think that a lot of our mythologies about startup founders tell us that these are people that are just relentlessly in pursuit of some sort of inner vision that comes from inside of them.. But I personally have really embraced, multiple times in my career, the idea of drawing from others, and being more connected to others, being the strength of my superpower, so to speak, and certainly, when it comes to literally innovation, and literally coming up with new ideas for founding a company or building a new product, we found that embedding ourselves inside of organizations and studying the way that they hired was, in fact, a really, really profound way for us to start the company...