

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/its-not-about-checking-off-boxes>

"There's a bunch of different paths to success," says entrepreneur Drew Houston. Here the co-founder of Dropbox explains why founding companies is not about "checking off boxes" from a list, and encourages entrepreneurs to embrace the fact that they won't have all the answers.



Transcript

Throughout high school and college I had worked at a bunch of different startups and more than anything else working at a startup was the most kind of informative experience for me, the thing that prepared me best for this kind of whole journey and that was a little counterintuitive because especially if you go to a competitive school, you grow up and life is all about checking these boxes right? First you got and you go get the right test scores, you got to get the right GPA, you got to do these different things to kind of be prepared and sort of look good, be good enough to be admitted into a good school.. And so if you kind of carry that logic forward you imagine that the right path to startups would be something like well, what got me here was checking out these boxes and I can think of all kinds of other boxes that I should check off before I'm like really ready to start a company.. Among them maybe I should get a bunch of graduate degrees, so I'm a really good engineer, maybe I should go get an MBA, so I know about business, maybe I should go work at a big company, or like a tech company like Google, then maybe I should work at a medium company, then a small company, then sometime in my 30s, 40s, 50s, I will be prepared to start a company.. And empirically, there is no, I mean, one thing about this whole world is a bunch of different paths to success, but empirically it's sort of surprising that so many other companies, you would think about in the hall of fame, were started by people who were basically had no idea what the hell they were doing either.. And so if you have that feeling, it should be of some comfort that Amazon, Google, Facebook, Apple, all these things were started by first or second time entrepreneurs who were really figuring it out along the way too.. And so don't be too daunted if you don't have all the answers...