

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/know-when-to-change-yourself>

Clara Shih, CEO of Salesforce AI, encourages founders to re-interview themselves and rewrite their job descriptions at the pace their company is evolving. She describes a trajectory that leaders often follow and explains how this helped her understand when it was time for her to move on from being CEO of Hearsay Systems.



Transcript

- You need to change yourself, 00:00:04,980 and write a new job description at the pace that your startup is changing.. Which is usually pretty darn fast.. And you have to re-interview yourself.. Maybe it's every six months, maybe it's every 12 months.. It depends on your space and how, again, how quickly your startup is evolving.. But generally it follows this trajectory.. And I love this slide from another entrepreneur friend of mine, Bob Tinker.. He wrote, he's a serial entrepreneur, he's a founder CEO of MobileIron.. Took it public and he now has another startup.. But he wrote this book called Survival to Thrival..

And one of the key concepts in here is that to be successful, to go from zero to one, you start off as Davy Crockett, right? You have like the machete and you're like going through the forest, and you're just doing whatever it takes.. You're being that Jack or Jill of all trades, you and your co-founders.. And you're the pioneer.. And you're blazing the trail.. And it's just you because you haven't raised money yet.. Then, you raise your seed round.. And now, you've got a band of superheroes who you're trying to rally.. And everyone, you know, it's like kind of a motley crew.. And so you're Joan of Arc, or you're Braveheart.. And you're like, you know, charging..

And everyone's like following you.. And you know everybody, they know you.. It's, you're the warrior.. But then at some point, your company grows to be 350 people, or 500 people, or 10,000 people.. And you can't act like that anymore.. It just like doesn't scale.. You kind of have to shift your mode to a completely different personality.. You have to be the architect, right? You have to think about building a system.. You have to think about managing managers of managers of managers of managers.. You have to be a leader..

You have to do it playing both the air game and the ground game.. And for me, after 11 years of that, I realized that I wasn't fit for the job.. And so I transitioned myself out of the company, and I passed the torch onto our COO Mike Boese in 2020.. And I'm still the board chair of Hearsay.. And, but it was painful, right? 'Cause I didn't realize that was what was happening.. But it was important to, in retrospect, to think about that...