

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/lessons-from-failure-2>

At various points in her career, Richardson has been part of companies that have failed. She talks about the lessons she learned from those failures and how they have shaped her career.



## Transcript

Yeah, I would say one that I learned from, when I was working at B Incorporated and that is be careful.. I've said this to so many people before, advice I've given, and that is be careful of what you can talk yourself into.. Because if you're a talented person, all of you are obviously.. You know, you're here, you're Stanford, you're smart, you're bright.. You can probably talk yourself into a job you have no business doing.. And that's what I did at B.. I talked to myself into being the head of marketing, going out and taking a computer hardware and software platform and building out the evangelist piece and all that sort of stuff.. I was an enterprise software salesperson executive at Lotus.. What business did I have being in a company with ten engineers? That was it.. There was nothing to demo and if there was something to demo, I had to do it and understand the guts of an operating system of a computer..

I remember showing up my first day.. I should have known the first day of the job.. As I go into this, the offices in San Jose, there's ten engineers.. They're all working and there was a phone sitting on a table, and like there was no computer.. And when I asked about a computer, I was told, Oh yeah, you know, just go find one of those clone manufacturers down in San Jose and go get a computer.. Well, I didn't know how to do that, I opened up a phonebook, whatever.. OK, I found one.. I drove to it and when I got the computer, they gave me a computer.. It wasn't even, the disk wasn't even configured.. I mean, I keel..

Here I was, I thought I would turn it on and there'd be an email and I'd be going on sales calls finding developers.. I remember having to sit there and reformat the file allocation table on the disk.. I mean, it was so not fun.. And I talked myself into a job that I didn't really deserve.. And the second mistake was then I stuck at it for two and a half years and I didn't fish and cut bait when I realized hey I should really go to my core.. That's the single biggest lesson I learned.. Because really talented people, you can get yourself in a pickle if you're not careful.. So having that understanding and humility is a great lesson to learn.. And I know lots of successful entrepreneurs.. In fact, the founder of E.piphany, one of the four founders, had a huge failure before his success of E.piphany..

And that huge failure was a company called Rocket Science.. Got a lot of VC money, they imploded.. What he learned from that experience was what he was good at and what he shouldn't do.. So when he founded E.piphany, one of the first things he wanted to do after coming up with the first product was get brand name VCs who bring in a brand name CEO, the adult supervision around the company.. Because he knew he shouldn't do it and his partner shouldn't do it.. And he learned that through failure...