

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/mindset-to-move-theory-into-action>

Using his fellow co-founder as an example, Ayasdi Co-Founder and Stanford Professor Gunnar Carlsson discusses what he sees in students who are interested in putting academic theory into action in the world



Transcript

You see many sharp, smart students around Stanford and other universities, but there is another aspect of things which is not only you need to be smart but you need to want to do something and to carry something out and to actually solve a problem, as opposed to writing a paper or finding a pretty piece of theory.. And that's what I saw with Gurjeet because I started talking about these ideas which, I am a mathematician, they were sort of only formed to a certain extent.. And Gurjeet got them right away, and then said "furthermore I want to implement this" and not only that he come back in two days and there would be some kind of prototype going.. And so that I found extremely impressive.. And to me it's something that I've now understood.. After the fact in pure math that stuff doesn't apply somehow.. In pure math, you're just trying to do something clever, if someone is clever, they will do whatever they can do.. But now when I look at students I think about a lot of different aspects of what they do.. Yes, they can be smart theoretically, but also it needs to be, yes I want to do something, I want to do it quickly, I want to prototype, maybe with the rough and ready prototyping, let's just get out and see how this theory works a little bit in some simple situations.. And that's the thing that from my point of view is kind of often missing on the math side..

We kind of, and other sciences too, we want to kind of build up the science in a very pretty and systematic way, but without checking at the end whether things are going to actually work and do something.. So what I would say is that the better idea might be that, let's do a little bit of theory just make some guesses at it, and then try to see does it actually work or does it get close to working or does it capture anything that we're trying to capture?..