

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/preventing-organizational-inertia>

Drawing from his leadership experiences in industry, Stanford University President Marc Tessier-Lavigne explains how bureaucracy can stifle entrepreneurial fervor in large organizations. He gives an example from his time at Genentech, where meetings needed to have a clear goal and decision-maker. He also points to the importance of maintaining a culture of discovery and publication.



Transcript

- Working to reduce bureaucracy is really important.. And actually, in an organization that big with a lot of teams, there would be so many meetings.. Meetings, meetings, meetings, right? So we actually had to deliberately have rules about meetings.. You can't have a meeting unless it's clear what you're going to achieve and who the decision-maker is.. No decision-maker? No meeting.. Because otherwise you could just spend your whole day in meetings.. So we had to do things to try to prevent bureaucratic creep, on the one hand.. On the other hand, we, a combination of bringing in new blood, young people are always sort of really stirring things up, on the one hand, and so it's really important to do that.. That's why Genentech maintained a postdoc program.. Very unusual in the private sector..

100 postdocs, you know, to the 1400 employees.. Very unusual.. Certainly in the biopharma sector.. To bring in that fresh blood, those new ideas, and so on.. And also maintained a culture of discovery and publication.. You know, the same thing as in academia, that scientists were evaluated not just by what they did on their projects but by where they published...