URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/product-innovation-first

David Allemann, co-founder and executive co-chairman of On, advises aspiring entrepreneurs to remember the product has to come first. He shares how he and his co-founders prototyped their first shoes, then embraced machine learning to more rapidly iterate.

Transcript

- Of course, when you head into that journey, 00:00:08,550 as you all know, as engineers, as product designers, product has to be first.. Innovation has to come first.. If there's not something novel, something complete, unique, you don't have anything.. And so of course, Switzerland has a little bit of a history in engineering, whether it's watches or putting holes into things, whether it's mountains or cheese, or even our shoes.. So there's a little bit of.... There's a little bit of engineering innovation there.. And we worked very, very hard and working hard involved also being scrappy.. So we had found a carpentry workshop somewhere close to where Olivier lived, and we brought a big team of athletes who were our friends, including Olivier, of course, to that carpentry workshop.. And we started to drill holes into different outsoles.. And at the end of the day, we probably had 20 different prototypes, and then we narrowed down to five prototypes, and then we test run and so on..

So it was a very, very fast process at the beginning.. Now, 13 years later, Hellen Obiri has just won the New York Marathon last year, the Boston Marathon, now for the first time in 20 years, the second Boston Marathon in a row in on.. And this is our latest secret development, which gonna be fully unveiled during the Olympics.. And people are speculating on social media, "Is it a boot?" "What can it do?" And so there is a little bit of mystery out there, what has come out of the innovation lab as the latest development.. I can't explain too much here, but watch this space, watch the Olympics, because you're gonna see a lot of athletes in the newest development that came out of this innovation lab and who led Helen to an incredible win, third win in a row, New York, Boston, Boston again.. Now it was great in this carpentry workshop, but then we thought, "Hey, can we do rapid prototyping" probably even a little bit more rapid?" And so our team started to enlist also machine learning, so that we said, "Hey, it's an engineering principle.. How can we tweak these holes in a way that they're even more effective in how they close and how they give you a super smooth ride and a super smooth rolling motion?" So we started to build a foot and then also an outsole with finite element analysis and going through hundred thousands of cycles to optimize.. And so the Cloud Surfer is the first shoe that was really actually prototyped by a computer and came out of that.. And now that's driving our whole next evolution of the Cloud Tech platform as we call our technology platform...