URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/skills-for-starting

In response to an audience question, venture capitalist Geoff Yang explains the skills he values in entrepreneurs, particularly around technology startups. Yang describes the importance of getting the right mix between engineering knowledge and product knowledge that can serve as the voice of the customer within a venture.

Transcript

So my observation is that the best - almost all great entrepreneurs I think have a real product mentality.. And by product I mean product or service, okay.. And the best I find are people who have the technical background, but really understand kind of - can put their heads and be the voice of the customer whether a consumer or it's a - an enterprise.. And so I always look for people who are great product people, ideally.. So you look for engineers and you look for engineers that aren't just technically skilled, but also like - I know a bunch of great engineers but they have no product sense, right.. And that's not great.. If you are like that, then marry yourself with someone who has really good product sense.. I know a bunch of product people who aren't technical, but they have a really good sense of what could be done if I could just do it this way, they just don't know how to do it.. If you are that kind of person, I'd marry yourself with a technical person.. But those are the best people that start companies..

They tend not to be the finance people, they tend not to be the manufacturing or operations people, they tend not to be human resources.. It tends to be some form of technical or marketing, but the common theme is product.. Really heavy product orientation and you want somebody who's really the voice of the customer or the consumer...