URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/tackling-a-startup-idea-without-sector-expertise

Reshma Saujani explains that when she founded Girls Who Code, she didn't know how to code herself. She's observed that a lack of sector expertise can actually be an advantage for founders, letting them look at problems with fresh eyes.

Transcript

   - I think that we think 00:00:05,370 that to start a company we have to be an expert.. And I really think you just have to have passion for solving the problem.. So when I learned that there's this gender gap in computer science, I was just passionate about it.. And so I almost wrote a business plan and like a memo and it really detailed, when did this happen? Why did it happen? What are the interventions for closing the gender gap? And every day, for two years at breakfast, lunch and dinner, I would meet with somebody and I would learn.. You know, I would meet with educators to understand why there was a gender gap in K through 12.. I would meet with those who were basically doing their PhD in computer science.. I met with, you know, founders to say, why aren't you hiring, what's going on? So I basically just learned and became a nerd on everything about women in tech and then figured out what the right intervention was.. And so when I started Girls Who Code, you know, it was a pilot, I handpicked 20 girls.. I put them in a conference room.. I found this amazing woman to like develop the curriculum and we just experimented..

   And I thought, I remembered with those first 20 girls, I paid them $50 because I thought that they would never like spend the entire summer, Boston pizza every day.. But not only did they learn how to code, they like blossomed and they learned and then they told their friends, and then it built and then it built and then it built.. But, you know, I think the thing is it's follow your passion for solving a problem.. And then second, to get really nerdy and smart on learning about it.. Because sometimes the best founders are ones that actually don't know much about the problem.. So they're not attached to outcomes.. They can actually come at it from a fresh perspective.. And so people say this all the time, the reason why I was able to successfully build Girls Who Code and actually make a dent in this problem was because I wasn't a coder and I didn't come at it with any bias or previous experience.. But I also was honest that I didn't know what I didn't know.. And I found the experts to come in and fill in those gaps...