

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/talk-to-clients-but-dont-just-talk>

Sarah Lamaison, co-founder and CEO of Dioxycle, advises tech startup founders to talk to clients early to make sure there's an actual need, then use technology to develop their product. But, she warns, climate tech founders in particular must remember that solving problems in a cost- and energy-efficient way requires scientific and technical skill.



Transcript

- The second trap, I think, 00:00:04,380 especially when you're a technical founder, is to start your company, not talking to client until your product is ready.. And so, you know, like in that case, I think, you know, you can get in the trap of, you know, working on your own to perfect the tech for a lot of years and actually going in the wrong direction, spending a lot of resources, and actually doing something that doesn't answer any needs.. And so my advice for that would be to just like start talking to client, and have this like very nice cycle where you talk to client, you make sure there is an actual need for what you're doing, then you look at technology as a mean to get there, and really as a mean to develop a product, and then, you know, based on that, you get some contracts or letter of intents early on that allows you to raise funds and attract talent to have more resources to develop your technology.. And so as a result, you're improving your product and scaling it up, and you go again, you go back, see your client ask them if this time your product is answering their needs, and you improve based on that.. So that was for the second trap.. The third trap, and again, I think quite controversial is, you know, you've done all these things, now you've talked to all these clients, you've start pitching this to a lot of venture capital, and now you like talking too much, and you lose sight of what you're here for.. And so I think it's important to remind that, you know, climate tech needs much more science than talk.. And by this I mean, you know, it's not a type of industry where, like making an iPod, where like the idea of the product itself is quite genius.. Like here, the problem and the need to solve is quite obvious.. Like we have to reduce a carbon emission..

Industrial players are happy to do so, but they need something cost competitive, that's quite simple.. And the question is, who can do it? Like cost efficiently, energy efficiently, so that they will adopt that at a price that is competitive with what they used to do before.. So this is, I think, quite important.. And I would say, you know, based on that, the main thing if you want to work in that field to do is to really get technical.. And by, by this I don't mean just scientifically technical, just like knowing your industry, understanding your industry, understanding even how like sales are done in your industry, but like really understanding your industry from like a process perspective, et cetera.. And so I think that, you know, in climate tech, and it's pretty obvious, but technical breakthrough are domain unfair advantages.. You know, you're always asked, oh, what is your unfair advantages? In climate tech, I have hard time thinking of any other, like any other unfair advantage other than a technical one.. So that you have something that just is actually better.. The second one, I mean, the second thing also is you, I mean you see that when you talk to VCs and you talk to client.. A working pilot, you know, is much more convincing than a slide..

So it's also why I think really like trying to deliver technically very fast is really important...