

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/think-long-term>

To build an enduring enterprise, advises Zeus Living CEO and co-founder Kulveer Taggar, it pays to play the long game and think in terms of 20-year plans. He advises avoiding opportunities focused on salary or prestige, and instead focusing on opportunities to learn and build networks. Those future-focused decisions, he's found, will compound and become much more valuable than decisions aimed at instant gratification.



Transcript

So in terms of thinking long-term, you know, there's a few dimensions to this.. On the one hand, something as simple as if you want to accomplish something, if you want to gain mastery, if you want to, you know, achieve something, it actually just takes longer than you think.. It takes actually quite a bit of time to get really good at something.. So I was definitely very impatient, and I remember even, you know, I went on this entrepreneurial path, I was one of these people that thought that hey, the best way to become an entrepreneur or to learn how to be a CEO is to just like become one, and now I think I've shifted my thinking a little bit.. I actually think if you do want to do a startup eventually, it can actually be really beneficial to go work at a startup, a fast-growing one, and like observe from others and learn for a while before you sort of take the plunge to yourself.. I now believe that really what determines, you know, the success of your startup is essentially getting to product-market fit, and anything else that's not focused on getting to product-market fit doesn't really matter, and it can just take time for you to have insights or ideas that can lead you down that path.. Now, also related to this, I think, is the idea of, you know, not really chasing instant gratification.. So as you graduate, maybe there are job opportunities that come with a lot of prestige or maybe they come with a lot of money, and then there might be other opportunities that maybe index a little bit higher on what you're going to learn or the network that you're going to build, and I actually think, you know, what you learn and like the network you build, that compounds, again, so much over time that, again, I wouldn't sort of go for the sort of short-term sort of perceived, I don't know, external success, and you know, when I talk about compounding, I don't really think our brains are super well set up to just really understand the full magnitude of how things compound over time, and especially now with the Internet and technology, I think it's kind of even crazier.. So coming back to, you know, the Facebook story I referred to earlier, I wanted to share something.. At that time, you know, when they were negotiating with us, Facebook was valued at \$15,000,000,000..

That was their market cap.. They had just done a deal with Microsoft.. I think they were selling some ad inventory that Microsoft wanted to buy for Bing, but I remember at that time thinking \$15,000,000,000 as a valuation for Facebook was just absolutely insane.. You know, we were coming out, this was still sort of coming out of the dotcom crash, but the guys at Facebook, when they were negotiating with us, they were like, well hey Kulveer, you know, absolute worst-case for us, we're gonna end up a company, say, the size of Yahoo, and Yahoo at that time was valued at about \$30,000,000,000.. So they're like, there's still the sort of two X upside to joining our company, and they're like, you know, on the upside on the best-case scenario, you know, maybe we'll end up something like Google, and at that time, Google was around I think 100 to \$125,000,000,000 market cap.. They had IPO'd in 2004 at about \$25,000,000,000 market cap, so they've sort of four x'd over four years, but I remember like Google was this sort of once in a generation company, pretty much invented the best business model of all time, and so that's how they were sort of pitching the opportunity to us.. Before I came down, I looked up Facebook's market capitalization.. It's now \$630,000,000,000, so it was actually 40 X what it was back then, and even for the people that were there in it, you know, it was kind of unfathomable to sort of think about it.. I actually first sort of heard this advice actually from Mark Zuckerberg speaking at Startup School here at Stanford, and he sort of just said that when you're thinking on a longer time horizon, I feel like you just end up playing a different game to your peers, whether, you know, you think about the competitive dynamic as a startup or even just the choices you're making in your life.. I also did some research on Jeff Bezos when I was studying Amazon, and I'm pretty sure he went into starting Amazon with like a 20-year horizon, and I almost sort of think like if you're thinking about starting a startup, you know, ask yourself would you want to work on this for about 20 years? I also have a theory that Obama pretty much had a 20-year plan to become President..

Apparently, in one of his legal internships, he said this, you might sound crazy if you walk around telling people you want to be President so early in your life, but I actually think there are people that sort of work to that timeline...