

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/trust-your-vision>

"Trust your vision," exclaims Accuray founder John Adler. In a lively discussion with his son and fellow entrepreneur Trip Adler of Scribd, the two expand on the idea that ultimately no one knows your company better than you. Though there's no shortage of advice from those older and more experienced, both agree that trusting your instincts and making your own mistakes are vital parts of the learning process for a new entrepreneur.



Transcript

Not the best advice, but one of the consistencies of advice I get from people that really build big companies is to have a vision and to trust your vision and to not sway from that because as the company gets much bigger, it really gets hard to keep everybody somewhat aligned.. And everyone has their own sort of plan and direction they want to take things and just really sticking to one vision and having a long term perspective on that too.. It's really easy to let other people influence you.. I've really learned to trust my own instinct over the last few years.. Some of the biggest mistakes I've made were when other people were telling me what to do particularly older, more experienced people who have a very good track record and I just say, "Oh, this person has 20 years experience.. They must know what they're talking about." But that usually makes big mistake.. Ultimately, you need to really follow your own internal vision.. You should listen to other people and hear what they say, but in the end, you need to make your own decisions.. Let me ask you.. Both of you are incredibly confident at this point in trusting your guts..

Is this something you always have done? Have you always felt as though you've had good judgment? Because there's some people who's judgment might not be the same as yours.. Is it something that every founder should trust their gut or it's just people who have a good track record? Yeah, I think I've gotten much better at trusting my gut.. When I was a young college student, I think I was too influenced by everyone else around me.. And I had to learn through mistakes not to listen to other people.. That sounds weird but I think that once you start actually coming up with their own idea, implementing it and see what happens, you start to get a good internal sense of when you're right and when you're wrong.. And you just get better at it overtime.. John, what about you? I think what Trip said is very true and it's very real.. And maybe it took me even longer.. I was very confident in my judgment as a neurosurgeon but I was far more intimidated by the big names in the business world who are all these professional managers who wrap decisions in a lot of business talk.. And I shouldn't have been because the end of business is really very simple..

Make a product that your customer base really wants and you'll be successful.. So, I say, "Yes, trust your gut." It's not that I'm saying I'm smarter than these experienced people telling me to do.. It's just that they don't have the same experience that I have and the same view of the company that I have.. I understand the company better than all these people who just check out the website for an hour and tell me what to do.. So, everyone has to kind of figure out for themselves the path you're going down.. And even early on, if you just trust your instinct, you're going to mostly make mistake but you're going to be learning along the way.. So pretty soon, you will develop a good sense on what to do.. I say trust your gut within your area of domain.. I'm not hear to tell you whether you should buy electric cars or hybrids or something or diesel or something.. But within the realm of my world of neurosurgery, I come to appreciate it..

Damn it, I know as much as anybody in the world! No, I know more than anybody else in the world.. And in this area, I will have strong opinions in this area.. This is where my vision is going to prevail..