

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/where-wont-you-compromise>

One of the benefits to being an entrepreneur, observes BetterUp co-founder and CEO Alexi Robichaux, is that you get to "set the gameboard." For BetterUp, this meant taking an uncompromising stance on data confidentiality, and choosing investors who could accept a path that didn't involve being acquired by another company. Robichaux recommends setting honest, clear intentions with investors and board members to help ensure a sustainable and positive relationship.



## Transcript

You gotta be clear on your values, and you have to be vocal about them.. You are starting something, and part of the beauty in building something, and I wish I was even more courageous around this in retrospect, is you get to set the game board more than you think as an entrepreneur, right? Sometimes, not always, you'll get to pick your investors, and we were fortunate.. So I think to the heart of your question, what we did is we were very clear about what mattered to us and what we would not compromise on, right? We knew we would not compromise on the individual confidentiality of data.. So it's just not gonna happen.. In fact, Ryan, our CTO, joined me from VMware at BetterUp on the condition we would never be an enterprise company, because we were just so convinced based on our enterprise data experience, no company would let us help their people and not want to see, "What did they talk about?" And it turns out, when we just told companies we will not compromise on that, the people were like, "That's awesome.. "We wouldn't want you do.. "We actually want that confidentiality." And so we found that same for our investors.. So as we thought about investors, we were fortunate in our rounds to really pick who we got to partner with.. Then it was a question for Eddie and I of what matters most, and what mattered most to us was the alignment around our moral mission in the world, it's the mission, to help people flourish, and that we need to be aligned to doing that in an efficacious way, an honest way, and data and science can help us have integrity there.. And so, the litmus test we used to always ask ourselves is, "Hey, if I had to show up to a board meeting one day "with a big report from our labs team "and said, Hey, guess what, we actually found out "that everything we're doing, people love, "they use the heck out of, but it's bad for them, "but they don't know that, they'll just keep paying us, "they think this is amazing, would that investor say, "We support you in hitting stop "and rebuilding the whole company?" If that investor would say, "Well, I mean, is it really that bad? "Your MR looks pretty nice right now..

"Can we just use that to fund?", we wouldn't work with that person.. So it was kind of litmus tests like that, where we really were saying, "Is this person thinking "about long-term value for the business, "by thinking about long-term helping people?" There's almost a Hippocratic lens to our business that we were able to optimize for.. So we've been very fortunate in I think just having the greatest board in the world, but I think part of that, to be fair to Eddie and I, is that we really made sure that they were aligned with our goals, not just those goals I would say from ethics, but even economically.. Eddie and I were clear from day one, we're not interested in acquisitions.. We think we need to be an independent company to have the moral agency to do what we wanna do in the world.. Our investors aligned with that, and that's a really serious conversation I have with every new investor, that this is a very binary outcome.. "We could go public one day, "or you could lose all your money.. "I don't really see a lot in between there, "and are you okay with that?" And if they're okay with that, great.. I find that just taking that time as an entrepreneur to be very crystalline and clear, it can be a little intimidating, but what you find is it's almost cathartic for the investors and the board members, and it just removes all these, "Oh, I thought you meant that, "but oh, I get now that you meant that." Everyone on the board's aligned around that.. They all know that...