



## Stanford eCorner

### Mercenaries and Missionaries

John Doerr, *Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1274/Mercenaries-and-Missionaries>

Doerr views entrepreneurs as missionaries rather than mercenaries, and gives examples of both groups, including drive and paranoia (mercenary) and passion (missionary).



#### Transcript

Eileen and Kleiner Partners were here because we have a deep awe, genuine awe for the power of entrepreneurs. A couple of my partners have been entrepreneurs and I've tried to start one or two companies in my own career, but entrepreneurs are clearly to be revered. They are the provocateurs. They are the risk takers. They are those in our society, women and men, who focus on really getting great big rapid scalable change. And by definition, an entrepreneur does more than anyone thinks possible with less than anyone thinks possible in whatever field they're working on. And importantly, at least for my values and those of my partners, entrepreneurs are not mercenaries. They're missionaries. If you've read Randy Komisar's book *The Monk and the Riddle*. I know he's been a guest from time to time.

Anybody read that book? It talks about Lenny and Funerals.com and one of the first concepts that is introduced by Randy is the difference between drive and paranoia which would be a characteristic of a mercenary and passion which is the characteristic of the missionary. More differences between the mercenaries and the missionaries. Well, the mercenaries are opportunistic; always interested in the pitching the deal and they're kind of sprinting for the short run. As opposed to the missionaries, who are much more strategic. They focus on the really big idea in forming a partnership that will last and they know that this business of innovating is something that takes a long time. They look at it more as a marathon. The missionaries are obsessed on the competition. They create a kind of aristocracy of the founders. They're not inclusive of the rest of the team and they're really driven by their financial statements, as opposed to their mission and value statement, for example, or obsessing on the customers. I won't read all of this slide to you but I think it's the difference between an attitude of entitlement and an attitude of contribution.

It was not very many years ago during the boom when a Fortune reporter interviewed a graduate, second year student, I think, at Stanford Business school and he said he felt his career would be a failure if in three years he had made \$5 million on his start up. Well over half the plan was writing the business plans for the half the class. He was writing the business plans for their new ventures. I think writing the plans for the new ventures is fine but to be sure, if the reason you're taking on a mission or an opportunity is for the money you'll make, I believe you'll fail. You should find your passion, find that mission and take it on even if no one paid you anything for it. Because then, you and your team would be motivated to succeed. Somebody asked me the question, what satisfied you the most in your life? And I want to get to that in a second. But I do think the difference between a mercenary and a missionary is the difference between someone who's living the deferred life plan, I'll put off until the future having a full life, and the whole life plan when that works. The difference between the lust for making money and to be sure, the interest in making money. But really at the final accounting, a lust for making meaning out of your work.