

CRAIN'S SILICON VALLEY

IF I KNEW THEN...

In this ongoing series, we ask executives, entrepreneurs and business leaders about mistakes that have shaped their business philosophy.

Kon Leong

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By **Corey Saathoff**



About the company



other electronic content. The company's principal product, Unified Archive, is used by large enterprises to consolidate all unstructured data into a single repository for the purposes of compliance, legal discovery, records management and storage optimization.

The Mistake:

Taking the lessons learned in business school too literally and foregoing my entrepreneurial spirit.

If I had known then what I know now, I'd burn all of my textbooks from business school. While the strategies and principles learned in higher education are important, each startup is unique. In today's diverse business landscape, it's important that entrepreneurs feel comfortable deviating from traditional teachings.

An example of a lesson I've taken too literally was allowing marketing teams to dictate the timeline for product development. Instead of letting the technology evolve and innovate naturally, I tried to control the timeline so that marketing efforts were provided adequate time to align. This also happened in the reverse, with marketing efforts rushing product development in order to attract new customers.

The cycle was unnatural and inevitably made driving innovation difficult. The process did not provide the most conducive forum for driving innovation, especially for an industry that requires brands to pivot as quickly as possible.



The best strategies for your company may not come from a textbook.



The Lesson:

It's important to carve out your own path and recognize that there are some strategies that might be effective for one business or individual that may not be for another. It's also important to understand that the best strategies for your company may not come from a textbook. Companies need to be able to pivot and carve out their own path.

~~We probably make more mistakes than right choices. The trick is to adapt, experiment and find~~



ZL Technologies, we transformed from a secure messaging company to a company leading what may be the second coming of ERP (enterprise resource planning).

In archiving, I've learned that no one really takes care of that "cradle to the grave," and you really need to do that. It's a very big space and a hard problem to solve. We're furiously doing research and development.

I would encourage making mistakes, because that way you get better, faster. Let go of that fantasy that you have enough information to make rational business decisions.

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Pictured: Kon Leong. | Photo courtesy of ZL Technologies.

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