



ROB MURDOCK

FORMER INNOVATION LEADER
AT YETI

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Rob has experience with technology, fitness, and outdoor brands as a product innovator. He is passionate about designing products that excite people.

WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE GENIUS?

"My willingness to trust my gut, to try unconventional approaches, and to appreciate that the outcome of any experiment is unknown."

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN THIS CAREER?

"I thought for sure I could get a job in soccer at Nike—I didn't. I went to work at Intel in technology and I realized I love making products, but Intel was making things that weren't super interesting to me. If I wanted to make things that I cared about, I needed to get more education. I went back to business school, and ultimately ended up in consumer products."

"Success and failure are really two sides of the same coin. And luck has a lot to do with it."

IN WHAT WAYS IS YOUR CAREER A PERFECT FIT FOR YOU?

"When I started out I was making the pieces of products. They were things that I didn't really love, but I fell in love with that process. When I went back to school, I wanted to make tangible stuff that I could understand and get passionate about."

WHAT DOES A DAY IN THE LIFE LOOK LIKE?

"Often I would spend time in the field, talking to consumers, trying to understand what it was that motivated them. Beyond that, I spent a lot of time in design reviews and gate reviews—the process by which you decide which products you're going to do and you manage the development."

WHAT SKILLS DOES IT TAKE TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN YOUR JOB?

"Financial fluency and the ability to manage a spreadsheet. In addition, [you] need to be process oriented. You have to be able to figure out how to manage the development of many things across multiple geographies, and do it in a way that successfully produces repeatedly."

[You need to be] willing to fail in front of people and embrace the fact that that's okay. In an innovation job, when you're trying to create new products, it comes down to trying a lot of things, and not all of them work."

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU KNEW WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER?

"Everyone who tells you the story of their career does it with the benefit of hindsight. They make it sound like every decision was made with a purpose. In my experience, that's not usually true. Fate and accident go into making decisions in your career. It's hard to predict where you'll end up but, but if you're true to yourself and what you care about, then you end up with a career path you can describe with the benefit of hindsight."

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WHAT'S IN YOUR PORTFOLIO?

"My portfolio looks like me figuring out how to go from making the pieces parts of stuff, to making stuff that I cared about. I went to Nautilus and made lots of fitness equipment. Then, I went to Yeti where we changed the outdoor brand game and took the company public."

WHAT IS THE COOLEST PART OF YOUR JOB? WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR JOB?

"There's something super exciting about knowing how much work it takes, knowing all the people involved, and then seeing that work being embraced and have a passionate following."

The hardest thing about doing an innovation job and making new products is there's a lot of failure. You can't always make a hit. That's the hardest part of the job—managing those expectations."

WHAT IS THE ONE THING THAT PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR FIELD/JOB?

"The thing that most people don't realize is sometimes it's an accident of timing. The consumers get to vote what matters most, not companies or product innovation leaders."

WHAT WAS A DEFINING MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE?

"The defining moment in my life was probably my parents getting divorced when I was in fifth grade. I went to live with my mom and she didn't have any money. She worried a lot and I was kind of forced to grow up really quickly. I worked hard at my career and became successful in large part because I didn't want to live a life of worry."