

Tool 18 - Comfortably Confused Genius

Here are some genius individuals and companies who didn't know what they didn't know for a long time—until they did

Success rarely comes from having all the answers at the start. It often comes from asking questions, making mistakes, learning from what didn't work, and keeping going.

1		Amazon - From Books to Everything Jeff Bezos didn't start with a massive success story. Amazon lost money for years while it figured out what customers wanted.	Time Frame: 1995 - 2001 (about 6 years) • Started in 1995 as an online bookstore. • Lost money for years while testing, learning, and improving. • Became profitable in 2001 and grew into a global company.
2		Dyson - 5,127 Prototypes James Dyson struggled for years to create a vacuum that didn't lose suction. He built thousands of prototypes before finding a design that worked.	Time Frame: 1978 - 1983 (about 5 years) • Built 5,127 prototypes. • Failed many times and spent years improving the design. • Finally launched a successful product in 1983.
3		Thomas Edison - Thousands of Filament Tests Edison didn't find the right light bulb filament on his first try. He tested thousands of materials before he found one that worked.	Time Frame: 1879 - 1880 (about 1 year) • Tested over 6,000 different materials for a filament (some sources cite up to 10,000). • Most attempts didn't work. • Found a practical incandescent light bulb in 1879 and continued improving it.

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WD-40 - 40 Failed Formulas

The creators of WD-40 were trying to develop a rust-prevention solvent. It took 40 failed attempts before they found the right formula.

Time Frame: 1953 (40 attempts)

- Tried 40 different formulas.
- Finally found one that worked.
- Originally created for aerospace, later became a widely used household product.

5



Albert Einstein - A New View of Gravity

Einstein didn't solve the theory of relativity quickly. He spent many years questioning, struggling, and refining his ideas.

Time Frame: 1907 - 1915 (about 8 years)

- Worked on the ideas for many years.
- Faced incorrect assumptions and had to rethink parts of his theory.
- Published the final form of general relativity in 1915.

6



LinkedIn - Early Struggles

LinkedIn didn't become popular overnight. It took years to gain users and find product-market fit.

Time Frame: 2003 - 2006 (about 3 years)

- Launched in 2003.
- Grew slowly at first while testing and improving.
- It took a few years before user growth accelerated and the value became clear.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Not knowing at first is not a weakness. It's part of the process. Stay curious, keep asking better questions, and learn from what doesn't work. That's how real progress happens.