

19 year old Melanie Perkins identified a need in the visual design industry while working with expensive and complicated technology. As a design major, she could see how much the complexity and massive amount of time needed to learn *how* to use the software inhibited good design. With that problem in mind, Perkins sparked the idea of Canva, the graphic design company that provides easy access to thousands of customizable designs. Melanie Perkins' story inspires me--not just because of how young she started her dream, but because of her determination, passion, and future-oriented mindset.

It took Perkins and her co-founders three years to find investors to believe in them. Three years where she could have given up her entrepreneurial vision or decided to pursue another project. Instead, she stuck with her idea, believing in herself with the hope that there was an audience eager for her product. Perkins' confidence in herself and determination to see through her product even when no one else had faith motivates a similar mindset in me. Although my dreams in technology may be far off, I will always believe in my work's potential and strive for the day when--not if--everyone else realizes the same.

Perkins not only founded an extremely successful unicorn startup, a privately owned startup that is valued at over a billion dollars, she took the success she earned and extended it to advance others. Observing the considerable gender gap for women in technology, Perkins made it a core mission to narrow this divide and increase diversity in her company. Canva is now a roughly 41% female company, which is much larger than the average corporate gender ratio. Perkins and her husband, additionally, have decided to present a majority of their 30% share in Canva to the Canva Foundation whose mission is to do good in the world. I am constantly inspired by people whose goals grow with them. Perkins could have easily been satisfied with her personal prosperity; however, her mindset is the same as when she was 19. She identifies a problem and works toward it with dedication and confidence. This is what transforms her from just a successful woman in tech to an inspiring one.

My current ambition is to someday launch a company like Perkins. I am interested in brain computer interface technology, and I hope to work on making medical technology more affordable and accessible. BCI technology can assist patients with paralyzed limbs, trouble communicating, intense memory loss, and even neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. The need is there--now, the work begins. To me, being a big name is not just personal--there are plenty of lucrative women in the tech industry. Those who stand apart from everyone else are those who create a lasting impact on the lives of others. Building a charity, increasing diversity, and reducing inequality are all the steps of a leader focused on building a better society. Women with legacies are those who leave behind a better world than they experienced. I want my mission to be the same--to be remembered as someone who brightened the future, one person at a time.