

Education reform born in a closet

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Some revolutions start small ? not even a blip on the proverbial radar ? and yet are remembered by history as watershed moments that changed everything. Such may be the case with Khan Academy, the startup that began with founder Salman Khan looking for a way to tutor his cousin from afar, and now intends to offer anyone with an Internet connection a free, high-quality education.



Salman Khan, founder of Khan Academy, an internet startup that is aiming to provide a free, world-class education to anyone in the world, speaks to a town hall meeting at the University of New Orleans, cosponsored by the NewDay Social Entrepreneurship Speaker Series at Tulane. (Photo by Guillermo Cabrera-Rojo)

Khan told his story to a rapt audience of students, educators and Khan Academy users on Monday (May 20) in a town hall meeting held at the University of New Orleans and co-hosted the [NewDay Social Entrepreneurship Speaker Series](#) at Tulane University. He detailed the path that took him from tutoring his family members to making videos in the only space available at the time ? a closet ? to reaching 80 million students who have completed 1 billion lessons at home and in more than 30,000 classrooms.

Khan said he was resistant when a friend suggested that he post his tutorials on

YouTube saying, "YouTube is for cats playing piano, not for serious mathematics." But shortly after posting the first set of "very rough" videos, Khan said it was clear that people other than his cousins were watching, and using this free resource. After that revelation, Khan began to make more videos to the point where it began to "take over his life." He quit his job as a hedge fund manager and founded Khan Academy.

Fast-forward, and the non-profit founded by the Metairie, La., native who has three degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an MBA from Harvard University, has more than 4,100 video tutorials available on YouTube, and has been called "Bill Gates' favorite teacher" by CNN after the billionaire invested millions in Khan Academy.

Khan says he believes that we are in a "special point in history," and that the Internet may be the most important tool for offering education to everyone.

"Maybe we can go to a world where this thing we call education, this thing that is historically the key determination between the haves and the have-nots, the thing that is traditionally expensive and scarce doesn't have to be."