



Stanford eCorner

The Career Path of a palmOne Executive

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Ken Wirt, senior vice president of Worldwide Marketing at palmOne, graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in the psychology of kinetic media - the evolution of how one media, such as television, turns into another, like computers. He worked for a couple small companies before attending business school at Stanford. He then got into computers at Atari, handheld devices at Apple, and online music at a startup called Riffage.com. Following this, he came to Palm Inc., which is now palmOne.



Transcript

Just a few words about my background, some of it's in the handout there but sometimes you get to a place that's it is not always obvious how you would wind up there so I'll just talk a little about that and when we get to the questions afterwards you would feel free to ask me questions about what I'm going to talk about or Palm or some of the things in my past. I have an undergraduate degree in the Psychology of Kinetic Media in the University of Michigan. You might wonder what Kinetic Media is, I kind of did too wondered what Kinetic Media was but it was about the evolution and how one medium turned into another medium. So in other words how television developed out of radio and out of movies and I particularly focused on cable television and computers. This is in 1973 I guess and how I thought computers we're going to become a medium and it turned out they kind of did become a medium so I guess that part worked out for me. I worked for a couple of little companies and then I went to business school here and after that I got involved in the computer industry and worked for Atari in the early 80's on the home computer division, I was in Sales and Marketing there and I did a start-up after that, a artificial intelligence software, natural language understanding software systems. In Connecticut I worked for NEC doing the very first CD-ROM drive, this is when it costs about \$1200 and video games for NEC and then I worked for Apple in California, I was in charge of marketing for the Newton, so that's how I got involved in hand held computing. After that I worked for Diamond Multimedia Systems which made PC peripherals, so we wound up making the very first portable mp3 player, the Rio PMP300. Got sued by the music industry which is kind of interesting, unlike a lot of other companies we won our lawsuit against the music industry, that was an interesting time. I did a start-up that Tom was talking about which was called Riffage.com, it was an online music company.

We had some offline assets also, we own the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco and from there I came to Palm when it was Palm Inc. and now it's palmOne so that kind of brings you up to the current time.