



Stanford eCorner

Choosing the Path That is Right for You

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Find what you have a passion for and find a company that represents that, says Raikes. Life is too short to focus on money. Interviewers look for three things: high energy, high horse power, and the ability to get things done. It is nice to have relevant experience, but it is more important to be really passionate and willing to learn quickly, he adds.



Transcript

The question was, one of the most important decisions any of you in the room will make is, what company you decide to create or what company you decide to work for? How did I go about making that decision? What was it that attracted me to Microsoft and why I'm still doing it today? Is that a reasonable paraphrase of the question? I mentioned one of the most important elements. I fell in love with software. I just thought that software was cool. When I was at Apple Computer I worked on this account. This account was truly the first spreadsheet, and my job, because I was involved in mathematical modeling here at Stanford, my job was to build this account and to me it was like a puzzle. You know, people would come to me with what they consider to be the toughest spreadsheet problem. The thing that they didn't think could be done on the spreadsheet. And I would frequently find myself staying up all night trying to figure out how you could manipulate this account. To do this thing, a PERT chart was a great example. And when you come in the next morning and you show people that you could solve the problem that they didn't think could be solved, or show them how to do it, their eyes light up.

And to me that is still my same passion for software today. It's just that it's now much bigger. You know, tablet computers, PocketPC phones. What we're doing in business applications, it's still the magic of software. So for me that's what grabs me. And as I mentioned earlier, I recognized that Apple Computer was a great company but they work on software as much as they were about hardware. And so, I found a company that represented the thing that I was passionate about. And that's the most fundamental thing I could recommend to you. You know, making a lot of money is great. It provides a lot of advantages but life is too short just to focus in on the money.

And I think during the late '90's, so did the dot-com bubble. We had too many people who are just focused on trying to make a lot of money and not enough people who were truly following their passion for creating great things for people. And in the end that sort of superficial motivation shows through and I think it was part of , not certainly all of it, but part of the dot-com bust. So the number one thing I'd recommend to you is to find a company or find an area that really captures your enthusiasm because life is too short to do things that you don't love to do. Another thing especially because you're Stanford students and I truly believe this about the Stanford student body. It's just fabulous to be around smart, energetic people who like to get things done. I give a little tip. If you're interviewing especially if you have an interview with me. There are really three things that I look for: high energy, high horse power, and get things done. It's by far the most important thing.

I hope you have a certain set of experiences that are relevant. The more important to me than the experiences are: Somebody gets passionate about what they do. Somebody who has the IQ, the horse power. Doesn't necessarily have to be

you know sort of SAT horse power, or IQ just horse power, street smart horse power is more important. Somebody who is willing to learn and learn quickly. Thus, for most of our business career what we've been doing is things that never been done before. So we make a lot of mistakes. If you don't have people who quickly learn from their mistakes and adjust, it will lead to the failure of our business. If I may have learned that I used to put the emphasis just on the first two, high energy, high horse power but I hire a couple of people who were, wow, they worked a lot of hours! And they certainly seemed enthusiastic but they just never got anything done. I'm sure you probably work with some groups of folks like that.

So I decided you got to have all three. You got to find people who are track worker, the results, making things happen, getting them done. So find a company. We have those kind of people because I suspect you're that kind of person. And that will carry you for a lot of years. I still love software. I still love the people I'm working with and that's really what makes the difference for me.