



## Stanford eCorner

### Facing challenges

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1441/Facing-challenges>

Lee reveals how he started his company, the hardships he faced and the persistence that drove him to achieve his goals.



#### Transcript

I started my life exporting American goods, exporting into Japan because I had no money being here. So exporting as a broker I made a pretty good money. I have two kids, I have three kids but two, they are good examples. The elder one is a daughter, the younger one is a son. So in 1980, I bought my daughter Apple IIE machine. You know Apple, Apple C, Apple II, Apple IIE and then Macintosh. So I bought Apple IIE for my daughter and the younger one is son, the 1981 IBM introduced IBM PC. I bought him IBM PC because he will be getting into business. So IBM PC has some old business application than educational. And there was that Apple machine.

All elementary and the secondary education in this country equipped with the Apple machine, Apple, Apple C, Apple II, Apple IIEs. I didn't come up with the PC in 1981, I went to school look how this wonderful machine do compared to Apple. And the school district see a point in their office and they watch what the IBM PC does but hey, what will we do with the Apple sitting on here. That's the problem of inter-education over this country. I didn't know this problem. When I'd realize there's problem in my family. My son having IBM PC always spend a lot, until one o'clock and then two o'clock in the morning in his sister's room. What do you do there? Oh, we enjoy with the computer. You got a better computer. IBM PC is better, you know, twice expensive than Apple IIEs.

Hey Dad, IBM is great in some application but not as many as software. Apple does. Oh really? As a non-engineer, I only knew one thing, that's Apple was an 8-bit machine and IBM PC is a 16-bit machine. Because I'm not an engineer just like, you know, just came with the idea that, hey I don't think you can put the 16-bit machine into 8-bit but I think we can put 8-bit machine into 16-bit. Plus IBM PC if anyone will recall first version earlier version always had eight slots in the motherboard. So I realized this might be a great idea getting into business. Running Apple tool software on IBM PC. I thought I can save America's education. I started it. I was excited.

I stopped my exporting business. I looked around for an engineer to hire. I ran into one very bright Korean engineer in Korea. I brought him in. I teamed up the team about four start with around him. We estimated the hardware can be done within 12 months, save a half million to maximum one million investment. I think I can afford it. We started. It took six years. Why? There are over 100 copyright and patent on Apple machine and the software.

There are about almost 20,000 software by vendors. Because tool says Apple was so popular we have to circumvent all of this copy and patent took six years. I can tell you now I'm not a smart guy. If I were a smart I would have evened it up all year.

I'm stubborn enough I stick on this. And my family life reveal. My wife telling me you should stop it. You could pin this guy, I know, you'll reign into wrong area you don't know. So I ended up divorced. So I have to share half of what I had.

My bank account light up, credit company took my credit card away. I ended up going collecting cabbage that are from the grocery store, that freshness is so good to you that they have to throw it away. I'll pick it up, steamed it, I eat it. No money. No money at all. I am the one ended the Korean guy I brought. Everybody left me. My family, my wife, everybody left me except this guy. Why this guy stick with me? He was applying for green card with my company name. So he cannot leave.

I promised him. I promised him. I owed employee tax \$480,000, employee tax. That is not my money. That's government money. IRS came, they showed me a hand cuff. We came here to arrest you. And what I did, I made up excuse. I am trying to save America's education. This what I do.

This is how I spent all my money. I'm still stick with it. When this program comes you will save elementary and the secondary education. Always IBM close to our PC clone manufacturer those days are RadioShack, number two or number one clone manufacturer and then number two PC manufacturer after IBM. When they make a PC goes to school, they show what school cannot buy. Finally after six years of my struggle. RadioShack came to me, I want to buy your product. RadioShack, number two PC manufacturer of those days. And then eight months later, IBM came to me, I want your product to distribute. By that time we all went through copyright and patent.

I had to hire a lawyer with engineer to communicate with Apple just what we have. So we are legally free. We notify Apple, then IBM came to us. We'd like to distribute your product. So that is how six years of miserable life, loss of families, and then being paid off. Thank God I was stubborn enough to still stick on this stupid program.