



## Stanford eCorner

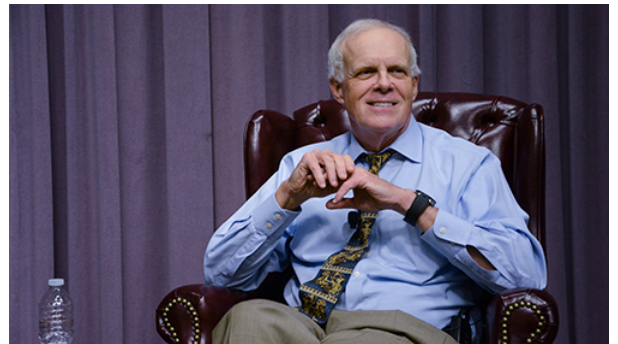
### 'The Accidental Entrepreneur'

John Hennessy, *Stanford University*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3854/The-Accidental-Entrepreneur>

Stanford University President John Hennessy recalls when he transferred pioneering computer technology from academia to industry as an entrepreneur in the 1980s. In conversation with Tina Seelig, professor of the practice in Stanford's Department of Management Science & Engineering, Hennessy said he learned the fundamentals of business and management along the way.



#### Transcript

- I think leadership's broken around the world. I think right now leadership is broken. It's broken in our political system. It's broken in many corporations. If you look at the set of things that have played out in corporations in the last few years, where the CEO knew about what was going on, it's broken. It's broken, I think. Partly it's broken because people don't like to tell the truth when the truth is difficult. They don't like to tell the truth when the truth is difficult. It's easy to tell the truth when it's easy, and it's not hard, and you don't have to contend, it's harder when it's a difficult situation, and I think we have to learn how to do that in a way that is empathetic, still very human, but also tells the true story. And this is something I had to learn along the way.

When you get asked a question as president, and often that question involves, "Can you do something for me? "Can you give me resources?" I only say "yes" when I mean "absolutely yes". And I say "no" when I mean "no". And if I say "maybe", it means I'll do my best, but there's no guarantee. I never say "maybe" when I really mean "no" and there's no chance it's gonna happen. But I'll tell you that a lot of people who mean "no" say "maybe". And a lot of people who mean "maybe" say "yes". And I don't think that does any organization a lot of good.