



Name in English: John S. Chen
Name in Chinese: 程守宗
Name in Pinyin: Chéng Shǒuzōng
Gender: Male
Birth Year: 1955
Birth Place: Hong Kong
Current location: California
Philanthropy: Yes

Corporate Leader

Profession(s): Electrical Engineer, Entrepreneur, Presidential Advisor

Education: Bachelor of Science, Electrical Engineering, Brown University, 1978; Master of Science, Electrical Engineering, California Institute of Technology, 1979

Awards: Top 25 Notable Chinese-Americans in Business, Forbes Magazine; 2007, Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year in Northern California; 2007, New Silk Road Award, California-Asia Business Council; Honorary Professor, Shanghai University, Honorary Ph.D. City University of Hong Kong & Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Contribution (s): John S. Chen served as chairman, chief executive officer and president of Sybase, Inc. from 1998 to 2012. Under his leadership, Sybase went from being a highly troubled company losing nearly \$100 million yearly that one business research firm pegged as having a 70% chance of failure to becoming the largest publicly traded software company in the world, earning over \$150 million net income in 2007 through enterprise infrastructure and mobile software. 13 years after Chen's takeover, the company that had started with an estimated net worth of just \$362 million in 1998 was bought for \$5.8 billion in 2010 by SAP before Chen left the company in 2012. As he described the turnaround to the New York Times in 2006, "People were laughing at us for getting into mobility so early and they were saying there's no money there, wireless is just a dream and everyone's losing so much money. We are now the largest enterprise-software provider in wireless technology."

The key to the turnaround was reviving the morale at Sybase and concentrating the company on its core competencies. Unlike many other takeovers of failing companies, Chen didn't start his time as CEO of Sybase with layoffs to cut personnel costs which would have further depressed employees as so many other managers would have done. Instead, he redirected people into niche fields that other major companies had neglected and cut the non-core tasks they had been performing. He also decreased the size of business units so that each could respond more quickly to changing marketplace conditions.

A Reuters article said about him that, "Chen is known to be a straight shooter who does not have patience for finger-pointing or complaining about something without suggesting what he feels is a legitimate proposal for fixing it."

"One former employee says that Chen got riled up when a manager suggested changing the name of a product to boost lackluster sales. He responded by asking if it would also make sense to change the names of your children if they got bad grades in school."

Born in Hong Kong as the child of poor Shanghai parents, Mr. Chen maintained an upbeat attitude that carried him to Brown University in the US where he studied electrical engineering to leadership in corporate America. Before joining Sybase, Mr. Chen held positions as president of the Open Enterprise Computing Division of Siemens Nixdorf, and chairman and CEO of Pyramid Technology Corporation.

He is actively involved in international relations, being one of the first American business executives to come out in Congressional hearings in favor of permanent normal trade relations with China. In 2005, U.S. President George W. Bush appointed him to serve on the President's Export Council, a bi-partisan committee that is made up of prominent business leaders, cabinet secretaries, and members of the House and Senate, to provide advice and recommendations to the government on export and international trade policy. In 2006, he was appointed co-chair of the Secure Borders and Open Doors Advisory Committee (also known as the Rice-Chertoff Commission). He is a strong advocate of increased border security but relaxed restrictions for skilled immigrants who will create American jobs.

Mr. Chen was elected a director of the Walt Disney Company in 2004 and of Wells Fargo & Company in 2006. He is also a director of the United States Chamber of Commerce and the Committee of 100, a trustee of the San Francisco Symphony, and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

In November 2013, it was announced that John Chen would be appointed as Executive Chair of the board of directors and Acting Chief Executive Officer of Blackberry, the once successful maker of wireless handheld devices that had fallen on hard times. Fairfax Financial Holdings and other institutional investors wanted a proven turnaround specialist as head in return for their \$1 billion investment in the failing company. The decision was made to reject several buyout offers for the various individual components of the company. "I know we have enough ingredients to build a long-term sustainable business," Chen said in a telephone interview with Reuters. "I have done this before and seen the same movie before."

Philanthropy: John Chen's extensive and varied philanthropic interests include support for a scholarship fund targeting women and girls in rural China, a variety of other children's organizations, and the Chang-Lin Tien Centre for East Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

External Links:

<http://www.asianight.org/JohnChenRemarks.html>

<http://www.brownhen.org/2008/08/interview-with.html>

http://www.committee100.org/aboutus/member_bio.php?member_id=21

<http://news.yahoo.com/blackberry-says-no-plans-shut-down-handset-unit-162832468--sector.html>

<http://www.theverge.com/mobile/2013/11/4/5065280/blackberry-interim-ceo-john-chen-profile>