

Oral History of Brad Chase

Interviewed by **Becky Monk** for the Microsoft Alumni Network

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Preface

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Brad Chase as conducted by Becky Monk on August 22, 2024, at Microsoft Studios in Redmond, Washington. This interview is part of the Microsoft Alumni Network's Microsoft Alumni Voices initiative. The goal of this project is to record the institutional history of Microsoft through the recollections of its former employees, so that the information may inform and inspire future generations. Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word captured through video rather than written prose. The content reflects the recollections of the interviewee. The following transcript was edited by the Microsoft Alumni Network, which holds the copyright to this work.

Interview

Brad Chase: My name is Brad Chase. I started Microsoft in 1987 and left in 2001. I started working on Microsoft Works for the Macintosh, believe it or not. No one probably remembers that product anymore. And then I was the first group product manager on Microsoft Office. We launched the Windows version, we had a Mac version at the time. After that I got asked, and there's some great stories about that, to go work on MS-DOS and worked on MS-DOS 5 as the head of marketing and MS-DOS 6 as leading the entire project. Then I did the marketing of Windows 95. After that I did a whole bunch of internet related projects and then after that I got asked to go back and work on Windows and worked on Windows 98 and Windows Server products. And then after that I got asked to go over and run MSN and various other groups like hardware for a while. And that was the last job at my Microsoft career.

Becky Monk: Fantastic. Alright. What I would love to do is just go back to the beginning. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

Brad Chase: I was born in San Francisco and raised in the San Francisco Bay area and went to Cal Berkeley for school, worked for a few years in the office products industry, then went to business school for a year at Northwestern and then came to Microsoft.

Becky Monk: Growing up in the San Francisco area, what was that like? What was your family life like?

Brad Chase: Raised by a single mom, one brother, still close. He's still in the Bay Area. We are not a wealthy family by any stretch, so we had make our own way.

Becky Monk: How did you end up going to UC Berkeley?

Brad Chase: Well, I only really applied to two schools, Stanford and Cal because I wanted to stay in California and back then I think a lot fewer students went out of state for college and I really didn't have the money for Stanford and I got rejected anyway. And so I went to Cal.

Becky Monk: And what did you study at Cal?

Brad Chase: My undergraduate was in business in marketing and economics, but I took a large number of liberal arts courses as well because I really enjoyed those courses.

Becky Monk: What did you want to do with that when you graduated?

Brad Chase: Well, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in 19, let's see, in '82 when I graduated from college, there was a recession and I couldn't get a job and I went about six months unemployed and then I got a job in sales and worked for sales for about three and a half years or so before I went to business school, which is something I left out of the bio a second ago.

But that was a really great experience because most people sort of think of sales as used car salesman or something like that, but in reality, sales is a transformative experience and it was a great way to start my career. I learned a lot about listening, understanding customer needs, how to be persuasive, and that was a really great experience. And while I was doing that, I had a stepfather who used to build kits, electronic kits, and there was a store called Heathkit at the time, a lot of people don't know about it, but you went in there and you'd buy a kit that you could build a television or whatever.

Well, they had a kit that you could build a computer. This was very early on and he built this Heathkit computer and it was this monstrosity of a thing. It had hard sector discs, that was one unit. It had the CPU, which was sort of another unit which you booted up by pressing numbers on a keyboard, excuse me, numbers on a keyboard that was in the CPU unit. And then it had a separate regular keyboard. And so it was this big monstrosity of a thing and it ran CPM and he built it and then didn't know what to do with it. So he gave it to me.

And when he gave it to me, because I was working in office products, I got this big huge computer table that we had in our warehouse. I worked for a distributor and

I put it in the living room where I was rooming with a person and started playing with it and I decided that was the future. And then I realized what I wanted to do, which was to go back to business school because I wasn't going to become a programmer at that age and getting into the computer industry. And that was my whole focus and why I went to business school.

Becky Monk: What was it about that earliest experience with that computer that made you say, this is the future, this is where everything's headed?

Brad Chase: Well, it was sort of a reaction to the experience because when you used it for word processing at that time or simple spreadsheets or simple games, it wasn't that much you can do because there wasn't a lot of memory. And CPM was limited, but it did seem like pretty obvious to me that it would transform the way people worked and played. And it was at such a sort of infancy stage that I decided it would be a good time to get in. But as I said earlier, because I was already in my late twenties, it wasn't practical for me to go back and learn how to program. I had taken a couple courses as part of this, I took a course in basic and so I would be conversational, but it just seemed kind of sort of an obvious to me, but maybe that was just luck.

Becky Monk: So you headed off to the Midwest to go to business school. What did you learn there and how did you decide you wanted to be at Microsoft?

Brad Chase: So I went to Chicago for business school to Northwestern because I wanted to get experience somewhere else. We had never had a lot of money, so I hadn't barely been out of California and I figured that would be a good experience. So I got the student loans applied to Northwestern, a special one year program they had that I qualified for, and they only allowed in 64 students, so it was really a great thing to get involved with. And when I got there, computers were slowly starting to become much more talked about. And so I never wavered from that sort of mission. I got interested in Apple because it was from where I was from and I thought maybe I could go back. And I was researching the industry and got interested in Microsoft and there was a person working, sorry, a fellow person studying it at Kellogg named John Neilson. And when I got the interview with Microsoft, I went to John because I had heard he had already had an offer for Microsoft. And John gave me some good hints on how to do the interview and things to think about with Microsoft and insights and that was very helpful. And John and I were friends until sadly, he unfortunately passed of cancer many years later after working at Microsoft for a while.

Becky Monk: What were some of those tips and what was that interview like?

Brad Chase: So my Microsoft interview was crazy. The tips I got from John were, don't forget to talk about GUI, the graphical user interface, because Microsoft's whole strategy at the time was about betting on the transformation from MS-DOS and the character

user interface where you typed in DUR and stuff like that on the computer to control it to a graphical model like Windows and even the Mac and the graphical strategy was what also led Microsoft to do Microsoft products for the Macintosh as well as Windows products. So I learned about some of that stuff on my own, but John reinforced the importance of it. And then when I came to Microsoft to interview, well actually let me go back. I first interviewed on campus with a guy named Phil Welt who was the Excel product manager at the time. And when you interview, you have sort of your pat answers for different questions and lots of people would ask me, well, how do you handle pressure?

And I had this very, what I thought was compelling answer, and I talked about how I officiated high school basketball and I get yelled at by coaches and I took really hard classes and I did all this at the same time and I was really good at handling pressure. And that answer always worked well. Everybody thought, okay, this guy knows how to handle pressure except for Phil. And Phil looked at me and he said, well, I don't mean just like pressure at a moment. I mean ongoing continuous pressure every day, every month throughout the year. How would you handle that? And I must have answered that question well, because I got the callback to Microsoft. I had a full day of interviews with a whole set of people ranging, ranging in different job functions, Tandy Trower, Pradeep Singh, there was lots of people I interviewed with.

And then I interviewed with Jeff Raikes and then I got a call the next day, they weren't sure about me, so they put me on the phone for an hour and a half with a guy named Bruce Jacobsen for another interview. And I actually was in the area interviewing with Oracle at the time. I didn't like Oracle. And so I got back to Northwestern and they called me again and asked me to fly out a second time, which was pretty unusual. And the second time I interviewed with a bunch of people, Charles Stevens, Pete Higgins, and then Jeff again, and I got the job offer.

Becky Monk:

Nice. Okay. And Pete Higgins was talking a little bit in his interview about some of the things that they put the people through. So interesting, some of those questions. Okay, so you land the job after that second trip out to Seattle area, you land the job, you move here. What was the first day at Microsoft? What was your first job and what was your impression when you actually started working for the company?

Brad Chase:

I think it was sort of like a deer in headlights. When I first started working for the company, I didn't understand the lingo or what it was like to be in that industry yet. One of my first meetings was a staff meeting. Valerie Houchens was my boss at the time, and I was a product manager and Microsoft worked for the Macintosh. And when I'm in a staff meeting and I'm quiet just listening and they start talking about something and Valerie says, well, let's take that offline. I'm thinking to myself, what the heck does offline mean? But slowly I learned the lingo and we figured it out. At that point in the company, I worked in the marketing group, all the marketing people worked in the same organization and Jeff Raikes headed that organization. Valerie went on maternity leave not too long after, so I ended up working for Tandy Trowers and then Mike Slade and then so on through my career. Many different people. Yeah.

Becky Monk: Alright. You talked about it was a totally new industry. When you had done sales, you were doing sales for Boise Cascade, right? Right. Again, how did you decide, again, totally different industry. So how was that path and how did that story come about?

Brad Chase: When I worked at Boise Cascade Office products division, it was my first sort of job out of college, and you quickly learned that all industries have their own language. When I went to Microsoft and started working at Microsoft, I learned a whole new language, but I had done a lot of research as I indicated earlier about the industry and where it was going. So I was able to pick things up and everybody was pretty friendly about helping you out and understand, and I slowly sort of got my arms wrapped around what it was like to be a product manager at Microsoft. And I came in with a class of students too. So there were others, Melinda, sorry, Melinda French Gates, Melinda French at the time was part of that class. And other people like John Reel were part of that class and Hank Vigil. And so we also helped each other out. John Neilsen, who I mentioned earlier, was a part of that class as well. So we also helped each other get going and understand what was going on.

Becky Monk: When you all came in as like you said, a class, was it everybody kind of starting at the same day and going through training together or was it just, oh, you all started in the same year at different times? What was that early culture of starting? Because I've heard people talk about their class.

Brad Chase: Well, starting in Microsoft early, there wasn't a lot of formal training, but there was one story I can tell that I think was sort of formative. So when all of us got hired, we weren't starting, we didn't start at the same time. I actually started worked for a month or two and then went and got married and then came back. But before we started, all of us that were in that class, like Melinda, like Hank, like me, Jon Reingold, John Neilsen, et cetera, all of us were asked to come to an offsite that was happening in Seattle before we actually started. It was in the spring, I think before we started. And the offsite was the Microsoft applications marketing offsite. And the reason they asked us to come was to help us understand the company's strategy and how that background would impact our job. So we went to this set of presentations and strategy discussions, and there were lots of people there who were giving talks.

Jeff Raikes, Jeff Sanderson and many others, Phil Welt. And they outlined how the whole applications, division strategy was to bet on GUI and Windows because at that time, Microsoft had a great business with MS-DOS. Windows was not much of anything at that time. The applications division had great revenue from the Macintosh applications where we were number one with Word Excel works, but on the MS-DOS side, we were behind Word perfect. We were behind Lotus 1-2-3, and the company had decided that the strategy to try to beat those companies with another better MS-DOS product wasn't going to work.

User just weren't going to switch. You have to have a really compelling reason for users to switch. And so they outlined the strategy at this retreat that if we got the world to move to Windows and came out with great Windows apps, then maybe since they were already switching to Windows, people would switch to Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and what of course later became Microsoft Office. And so that was a formative experience before actually we even started. That was amazing because of course we came to work at Microsoft and then watched that strategy that was outlined before we even started play out and come true. And as we sort of saw a computer on every desk in every home running Microsoft software, we saw the applications division have great success with that strategy. And ironically, the systems group tried to get Word Perfect to do an app for Windows and tried to get Lotus 1-2-3 to do it not for Windows. And they either never did it or never did it well, and the rest is history.

Becky Monk: Well, and you were really part of making those plans work, so really bringing that forward. How did marketing all of that go? How did you persuade all those people that this was the right direction?

Brad Chase: So getting people to get onto Windows was not an overnight process. We still had people using MS-DOS for a long time. In fact, I got recruited from running the Microsoft Office marketing effort to go over to work on MS-DOS first, and then maybe I should chronologically tell that story first. Sure, let's do that. So Mike Maples was the head of the applications division, a great guy, and he came from IBM and in fact, he came over from IBM, did a bunch of interviews with everybody and then announced a big meeting and everyone was scared that he was going to make us wear suits, and he had the agenda set out of what the company was going to do, and at the end of the agenda, he put attire and everybody was whispering, oh, no, Mike's going to make us wear suits because none of us wore suits of course back then.

And Mike said, no, we're not going to make you wear suits, but I'm going to wear a suit because I'm comfortable in the suit. Just dress up nice for customers, otherwise I don't care what you wear. So it was a big relief for a lot of people back in the day. Mike called me into his office after I'd been working on Microsoft Office for a little while running the launch of Microsoft Office for Windows and Marketing, Microsoft Office for the Mac. And Mike said, Brad, they want to interview you to be the group product manager for MS-DOS. And I said, but Mike, I'm on Office. It's the future of the company. MS-DOS is in its final years. Why would I go do that? And he looked at me and he said, change is good. And I went back to my office and I was mad.

It felt so trite to me to say change is good, but I got the message that one of my mentors was telling me I should go interview for this job. Now, by the way, with the benefit of hindsight, Mike was very wise, and I found myself later when I was a senior executive giving the same advice to other people. That change was good, so I was wrong about that. Anyway, I went and interviewed with Brad Silverberg, who became a great friend and great mentor and a great partner, and I worked with him for a long time at Microsoft, and I interviewed for this job on MS-DOS and got the job and knew that the company wanted me to take it. So I took it and we did MS-DOS 5, we did the MS-DOS 5 upgrade, which was an incredible product because for the first time you could have a computer with MS-DOS and upgrade it to another computer.

And that experience was transformative, and I could talk more about that later if you want. Then I did all of the marketing of MS-DOS 6, then we went and I worked on Windows 95. Windows 95 was the version of Windows that was easy enough to use and so well done by the development team that it really ushered computers into the mainstream. And that's I think what really got people onto Windows. To answer the question you asked earlier, I don't think I get credit for that by any stretch of the imagination. I give the most credit to the development team for the great product that they built. We did do an awesome job marketing it. My team was fantastic, but they built a great product. And in the end, you could help a great product be more successful if you're a good marketing organization or a good marketing team, but you're not going to take a bad product and get people to use it and be successful with it. So I give a lot of credit to the job that Brad Silverberg did leading the whole team, David Cole, John Ludwig, and the other development leaders and the people on the development teams who really, they listened to our feedback of what customers wanted. They were in tune with customers themselves, and they wrote great code and wrote a great product.

Becky Monk:

Fantastic. Okay, let's go back to MS-DOS because you were there, your manager there, but as you said, it was phenomenal project product. So how did you help it have the success it did in the marketplace?

Brad Chase:

So the first MS-DOS product I worked on was MS-DOS five and previous to MS-DOS five, the only way you got MS-DOS was on a new computer. MS-DOS five was the first time we were building an upgrade product. We called it the MS-DOS five upgrade. And that meant that you can take your current computer that had MS-DOS four, MS-DOS three and upgrade it to Lays version of MS-DOS. So we added some nice features to MS-DOS that people wanted, and we packaged it in a way. And back then we had packages the cloud existing really. So we packaged it in a way that people could go to the store and buy it. And we did a lot of clever marketing tools to get people excited about a new version of MS-DOS. And when we launched, it was a frenzy egghead software, which was a big retailer at the time, decided to sell the MS-DOS five upgrade very inexpensively and to start the sale at midnight.

So there was midnight madness everywhere, and the MS-DOS 5 upgrade was selling out at storage, and there was mayhem and it was kind of nuts. And we did a launch event with Dave Brubeck, the famous jazz musician who played Take Five, actually got on a side note to see him record a special version for us, which was super fun. And the launch event was on a boat in New York, it was called DOS Boat. And it was super, super fun, and everyone there got a disc because we had CDs back then of the song that Dave Brubeck had recorded and he performed. Bill gave a speech, Steve Ballmer and I did the demo. And so MS-DOS was the first time we had marketed MS-DOS to consumers, MS-DOS five specifically. And that was really an amazing experience, and it was very successful and worked very, very well.

And then we decided that MS-DOS 6 would be the last version of MS-DOS as Windows started to gain notoriety. Brad Silverberg asked me to be in charge of the entire project, so not just marketing now, but development and test and program management and so on. And so we did that project and we added some cool features like disc compression because at that time there was sort of a point in history where people's hard discs were getting full before the industry was creating larger hard disks and other nice features. And that product sold very well, and that was the last version of MS-DOS six. And at the end of that, I didn't have a job because MS-DOS was done, and Brad asked me to come over and reimagine the Windows 95 marketing team. And other people I respected a lot, like Pete Higgins asked me to come over and run Microsoft Word and run the entire development team in marketing effort for Microsoft Word. And after some very hard nights thinking about it, I decided to go on Windows 95.

Becky Monk:

And I'm guessing you're thinking in hindsight, great choice.

Brad Chase:

Yeah, it turned out to be obviously a transformative experience, and it was the right choice.

Becky Monk:

I want to go back just real quick to the MS-DOS 5 upgrade because just kind of putting it in perspective, you said this was the first time people could buy software and upgrade it. So for everybody else, that meant they didn't have to go buy a brand-new computer to get the next operating system, right?

Brad Chase:

Correct. For the operating system business specifically, the only way to get a new version of MS-DOS is when you bought a new computer. So we worked with what we call the OEMs, the original equipment and manufacturers, compact and Dell and companies like that. And they licensed MS-DOS from us and licensing MS-DOS from us, therefore allow them to install it pre-install it on their computer. So when you bought your computer and turned it on, you got MS-DOS. And of course, that's a key part of the Microsoft history that people forget back way back in the day, even before I started at Microsoft, IBM announced they were going to come out with a PC, and that was a pretty big deal because IBM was the definitive technology leader in larger computers, mainframe computers. And when they

announced they were doing a PC, they decided they were going to release it in one year.

And at that time, with the position IBM had in the marketplace, everyone knew that the IBM PC would be the new standard for PCs. As PCs were so becoming more popular. So IBM needed an operating system, they needed a language, they needed some things to put on the computer, and there's all these great stories about how they went to the guy who created CPM and he blew them off and didn't show up for the meeting. I don't know which stories are urban legends and which ones are not. But what I do know happened was that they came back to us and Bill realized the importance of the operating system, and if we could get that on the IBM PC, that would help the business a lot. So they had a relationship with a company in town that, I think it was called Seattle Computing or something like that.

I'm getting the name wrong. And they ended up buying that product and turning it into MS-DOS, which for IBM was called PC-DOS, and we basically gave it to IBM. But when other people wanted to create IBM compatible PCs that they could sell like Dell and Compact and others, they needed an operating system. So since IBM had chosen it, we got to sell MS-DOS to them. And so every computer basically came with MS-DOS except of course for Macs, and those computer manufacturers licensed MS-DOS from us, and that built an incredible business. And then over the years we did updates MS-DOS, and by the time we got to MS-DOS five, my first experience with MS-DOS, we had this install base, all of which could not upgrade to a new operating system without buying a new PC. So the MS-DOS five upgrade was a nice business opportunity and a nice opportunity for users to get updated features.

Becky Monk: A real chance for consumers to spend a little but get a lot more power and a lot more advance their computing.

Brad Chase: That's right. It was a nice way for the MS-DOS five upgrade was a nice way for users without buying a new PC to get new MS-DOS features. And people perhaps don't know or realize or remember the history and how transformative it was for Microsoft to have that MS-DOS. It was the revenue cash cow for Microsoft for probably a decade. I don't know exactly how long, and it was fundamental to the strategy. At the same time, one of the special things about Microsoft and the reason it's continued to be in an enduring and successful company, company's had the ability to grow and adapt and learn and implement new strategies as the market changed. So as MS-DOS was getting old, we basically were there with Windows. And that's happened many times in Microsoft's history. We haven't gotten everything perfect, but in my experience with Microsoft, one of the things that's helped it be successful is it's been able to change and shift strategies as the market and technology has changed.

Becky Monk: Yeah, really good bets at the right time.

Brad Chase: It's all about bets. That's what I talked about in my book, "Strategy First," actually is successful business starts with successful strategy, and it's all about the bets you make, the fundamental bets you make. Microsoft made a fundamental bet on MS-DOS. It led to great success. Microsoft then actually helped Sunset MS-DOS by betting on Windows and GUI, and that was a big success. And Microsoft's made other big bets, whether it be the cloud or AI or whatever. I'm not close to it anymore, but those bets, the correct bets are fundamental to the success of a company. Yeah.

Becky Monk: Let's talk about that Windows 95 bet because it was really a game changer. Can you put into context for everyone watching Windows was up until that point, and what Windows 95 really helped consumers do, why it was the game changer?

Brad Chase: Windows 95 was a game changer for several reasons. One was the whole user experience was improved dramatically, and the team did a great job with that. We had a good product with Windows 3.0 and Windows 3.1, but by introducing the Start button and that whole sort of experience and doing that at a time when computers themselves were getting more capable and more powerful, and also led by the strategy that Brad Silverberg and David Cole and others had focused on, which was to make sure the product was compatible with the programs, you were already using all of that combined. So it was like this coming together at the right time of all the right ingredients. You had a great product, you had computers getting more powerful, you were compatible with the old products, and the product was very well done. It was just really well done and it had other really important features, plug and play so that you could just add a printer without having to learn about printer drivers and stuff like that.

And there was a series of Windows 95 features that were just really helpful for regular users. And so you put all that together and Windows 95 was really the ushering of computers into the mainstream. And as a marketing team, I wrote a strategy, I called the Educate, Engage, and Excite Strategy, the three E's, which was all about making Windows 95 a consumer phenomenon to take away the fear of upgrading to a new version of Windows or buying a new computer with Windows 95. And to make it so exciting and have so much press about it that you just couldn't get away from it. And we succeeded on that strategy. The team I led did an amazing job, and I remember when we had a week of comic strips from Doonesbury lampooning Windows 95, I went to my team and I said, we achieved our goal to make Windows 95 a consumer phenomenon.

Becky Monk: I absolutely remember those. And I remember being that non-techie person who, because of what Windows 95 could do and because of the education around it, that made computers seem very accessible to me. Talk about some of the fun marketing that you did because it was everywhere. Talk about some of those campaigns.

Brad Chase:

Yeah, the marketing for Windows 95 was just an experience that is hard to summarize briefly, but it was a transformative experience. We had marketing plans for every segment. So my team was divided. I had a business team focused on Windows 95 to business, which focused a lot on issues. How do you move an organization that's already using other PCs to win those 95? We had a consumer group focusing on marketing to consumers. We had a group focusing on working with the PC manufacturers. We had a group focusing on working with software developers. So we divided it by customer segment and the things we were able to do and the excitement we were able to create was amazing. We did consumer shows where we went around and previewed Windows 95 before it was even available. We worked with the development team and Brad Silverberg to take the beta process where we had the largest beta of a software product ever.

And also use that as a way to make people feel more comfortable with Windows 95 and honestly hype it up a little bit. So we had lots of people using pre-release copies of Windows 95, and that was sort of another thing we did. We did tons of PR interviews. I was interviewed all the time. Bill was interviewed all the time. It was a constant theme. So everybody knew Windows 95 was coming and the product was late too. So in a weird way, that extended the hype time. And of course, we just did some things that were sort of unique. We had the first commercial that Microsoft had ever done for a single product. The Windows 95 Start Me Up ads, and I'll tell that story in a moment about how we ended up with the famous ads with the Start Me Up Music, but we had a whole set of things and just word got out and everywhere you went, you couldn't get away from Windows 95 in one case.

I remember telling my team, we've got to actually dial it back a little bit because people were starting to believe Windows 95 was going to cure cancer. I mean, I'm being dramatic, but people thought Windows 95 was going to be able to do everything. And then I was worried about we could never meet that high bar of expectations, but wild things happen. For example, one day I was at the office and I got a call, I had to come down to somewhere around, I dunno, somewhere around a year I think Microsoft was doing an announcement with Dreamworks. And it turned out that a beta tester of Windows 95 was Steven Spielberg. And he wanted to talk to me about Windows 95 and he wanted to talk about how he had this idea for a commercial for Windows 95. And he started telling me all about that, and it was great experience. He said In the Wizard of Oz when it's all black and white, well then later it turns to color. Well, black and white is the old windows and the color part of the Wizard of Oz is Windows 95, and you should do that. And he was super nice and very creative, and we had all these kind of experiences. It wasn't a bad idea for commercial, by the way, although Start Me Up ended up being better.

Becky Monk:

Okay, so, okay, so you got to meet Steven Spielberg and got advice on how to do commercials with Steven Spielberg, but you ended up going with Start Me Up, which everyone now hears the opening notes to the Rolling Stones song and thinks of Microsoft. So how did that all come about?

Brad Chase:

So the Windows 95 Start Me Up Story is just a gem of a story, just amazing. So back in the day when we had commercials, we wrote a creative brief about a one- or two-page summary of what we wanted the ad agency to know about Windows 95 and what we wanted them to communicate in the ad. So the way it worked is you gave 'em the creative brief, then they presented you concepts and you would approve or not approve the concept. So they presented the first set of concept and I was like, no, you're not on strategy. And then they came back the second time. This was Wieden+Kennedy, the ad agency, and they were on point again, I think they came down a third time. And then I rejected the concept three different times. And it wasn't that they weren't smart or trying hard, it's just my whole strategy about having a consumer phenomenon and what we were trying to achieve and to educate, excited and engage my three E's that drove everything we did.

They were just not quite getting there. So the third or fourth time they came and they presented the concept and they presented the idea for Start Me Up. And I loved it. And Brad Silverberg may have been with me that meeting too, I don't remember. And I think he loved it too if he was there. But anyway, I loved this concept and they said, but there's a problem. I'm like, well, what's the problem? They said, we can't get the rights to the song unless we're willing to sponsor the next Rolling Stones tour for \$10 million. And needless to say, I was angry. They knew we didn't have \$10 million to spend on this and I wasn't going to sponsor the next Rolling Stones tour. So I was pretty upset. And I'm like, okay, you present me a concept that's on strategy builds on the iconic Start button is perfect for what we're trying to achieve to reinforce this consumer phenomenon, but I can't use it.

Why did you present me a concept I can't use? And they said, well, we were hoping you would negotiate with the Rolling Stones. And I'm like, oh God. Because my days then every minute was scheduled and it was really hard, but I agreed because I liked the concept so much. So I flew to Amsterdam to meet with the Rolling Stones personnel. We were in an old ornate hotel and the fans were outside mulling around trying to see if they could see the stones, but we were negotiating with their team that really actually managed their concerts as opposed to the managers. And we negotiated all day and we weren't making much progress. And I had to get back. They said, well, let's negotiate all day tomorrow and then you could come to the concert. I'm like, what's the concert? Well, the Stones were playing the equivalent of an unplugged concert.

That was a big thing back then. MTV Unplugged concerts where a lot more acoustical and smaller crowds and very cool stuff. And I said, well, I can't stay. And they said, well, we have a dress rehearsal tonight. Why don't you come for the dress rehearsal? So I went to the Paradisio, which still is a really cool venue in Amsterdam, and I got to watch a complete run through of the concert. They played everything. They stopped periodically to give each other a hard time. I remember Mick Jagger giving Ron Wood a hard time about smoking too many cigarettes and stuff like that. And they did this unbelievable concert and I was one of only two people in the entire place that wasn't Stone's personnel. So it was really a special experience, a experience I'll remember the rest of my life. And at

the end of the concert, this amazing, amazing concert, they came to me and said, so do you want to meet the Rolling Stones?

And I thought to myself, well, this was like a once in a lifetime experience. I can meet the Rolling Stones, it could be great, or I can meet the Rolling Stones and they could ruin the experience because they're not very nice people. I don't know. And I didn't really, after you work at Microsoft, you're not that starstruck anymore. I'd met many famous people, so that wasn't really a big deal to me. And also I was still negotiating, so I didn't want to seem too overly eager. So I said, no, I don't need to meet the Rolling Stones. And half the people I tell the story to tell me that I was the biggest idiot ever for not meeting the Rolling Stones and the other half tell me that I was very wise, pick your position, I don't know. But I didn't meet the Rolling Stones and we continued to negotiate by phone now because I was back in the States.

And eventually I said to them, I had a number, the number was what Bill, and I had agreed was the most we would pay. So, I had a budget, and finally I gave them my best offer and said, "You have a week getting close to when the launch was going to be." And the team had to produce the commercials, and they were really nervous. We had a backup plan just in case that we couldn't get the rights to the song. So, they called me up and agreed and hooray. So, the team went scrambling to do the commercials. Two days later, day later, I don't remember, I get a call from the team, Cynthia Krass was on my team. She was running the commercials working with Russ Stockdale. And Cynthia says they sent us the wrong version of the song. They had sent a later version, so they didn't have to pay one of their band members who was part of the band when they did the iconic version. So, I had to call them up and say, sorry, that doesn't work. We need the famous version of Start Me Up. And they agreed. And I found out later that at least I was told whether it's true or not, I don't know that Mick Jagger didn't want to do it, but that he was afraid that his partner in crime, Mick Jagger, I mean ick. Let me do that again.

Can I start anywhere? Doesn't matter. Okay, so let me get my bearings to where I wanted to start. So, we agreed on a price and then they sent the wrong version of the song, not the iconic version. And the reason they sent that version of the song was they didn't have to pay one of their previous band members if they used a later version, but we needed the famous version. So, we got the famous version of the song and said to them, look, we need it. And they agreed. And I heard later that Mick Jagger didn't want to do it, but that he was afraid to piss off Keith Richards who really wanted the money. That's the story I was told. So, they agreed, they sent us the real version, the team did an amazing job, Wieden+Kennedy, Cynthia, everybody working on it to put together the commercial.

And they came to show it to me for my approval. And I remember I just had one comment. I said, you guys did an amazing job. The only thing I'm asked is that you make the ending more dramatic because the ending of the commercial just didn't quite live up to the wonderful nature of the entire thing. And so they added an ending where a young girl turns around and looks at the camera just as sort of the commercial's ending, and it was perfect. And that commercial ratings were off the charts, and that was really maybe still one of the most famous Microsoft

commercials ever done. That's sort of the story behind it. But that didn't end there actually. So, after we got the commercial done and it was ready to go, we got a call that the manager for the Rolling Stones, who had only been in the background for me, wanted to find out what this Microsoft company thing was all about.

And he was an old British investment banker. His name was Rupert Lowenstein III, but actually his whole name was like Prince William Rupert, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah III, he had 14 names. He really was a prince. And so he came out, he had a baby blue suit, manicured nails. He had us get a limo to take them from the airport to Microsoft. And he gave him a tour of Microsoft for the day. And he told a great story about how he got to know the Rolling Stones. They had a manager who was taking them for a ride early in their career. I think his name was Alan Kaplan, but I'm not sure about that. I might be getting it wrong, remembering wrong. And so he got a call asking if he wanted to be the manager of the Rolling Stones, and he said he put his hand on the cradle, the phone cradle, no cell phones back then.

And he went up, yelled up to his wife who's upstairs and said, honey, they're asking me if I want to be the manager for the Rolling Stones, who are the Rolling Stones. He was a classical music buff. And he said his wife yelled down and said, take the job. And that's how he became the manager. So, he was happy with Microsoft and felt more comfortable with the deal. And that happened. And then the commercial launched at the launch event with Jay Leno, another amazing personality we had involved in Windows 95. Jay did a great job. He was just like he was on tv, super nice, easygoing, and the commercial launched and that was history.

Becky Monk:

So launches were a big thing. You said there was a big launch on DOS Boat out in New York with jazz musicians, you had Jay Leno and music with the Rolling Stones. How did the big production launches come about?

Brad Chase:

How did the big production launches come about? Well, I can only speak for how I sort of launch them, and it was a reflection of what the strategy was for the product. With the MS-DOS five upgrade, it was the first time consumers could upgrade to MS-DOS. So you had to get enough attention to get people interested. And that's how that one started with MS-DOS six. It was sort of an iconic last version of MS-DOS. And in fact, that launch was done to user groups and simulcast. And there's a great story there too. So for the launch of MS-DOS six, it was in the Moscone Center in San Francisco. Bill and I flew down, and then Bill went off for meetings to I think at Apple. And I came to the Moscone launch event to make sure everything was going great. And we had a demo that we had set up. And you're always careful with your demos. You don't want what we used to call demo hell when obviously in a launch event. So in the launch event, there was a point at which Bill was supposed to say to me, Brad, what happens if I unplug the computer? Because we wanted to prove that a disc compression process would work even in the case that the power went out. So he was supposed to unplug the computer during a disc compression, then we would plug it back in and it would

work. Well, Bill, at that time, this is when he announced his engagement to Melinda and the press was even more crazy than normal. They were following him everywhere. And Bill came back from meetings with Apple and he was just in a really set of giddy mood that day. And unlike Bill wasn't really paying attention when we were doing our run through, and I was really concerned about how the launch demo was going to go in the event, and this was thousands of people in the Moscone Center and people all around the world watching on simulcast tv.

So we get to the point where the demo's going and we start the disc compression and before he's supposed to pull the plug and Bill says, so what happens if say, my kid pulls the plug and he pulls the plug? And I don't know what got into me, but I said, Bill, you don't have any kids. And the underlying message was that joke was that Bill had gotten engaged because Melinda was pregnant, which obviously wasn't true and no one was seriously implying that by any stretch, but the place went wild when I made the joke. They all got the sort of implication of the thing. I mean just nonstop laughter. Meanwhile, they're laughing like crazy on my joke and I'm worried about whether the disc compression is going to work when I plugged the computer back in. So I plugged the computer back in and it worked and we were fine.

So that was a close call. So the big launch event was just something that was strategic for MS-DOS 5, for MS-DOS 6 for Windows 95 for Windows 98 that I also came back to lead for Microsoft, they asked me to come back to and for some of the Internet Explorer products, I did launch events with Bill. I probably did more launch events with Bill and anybody in those eras. But like on Windows 98 when they asked me to come back to Windows 98, they had a huge launch event plan. I think Reba McEntyre was going to play. And I said, guys, this is not going to go well. This is too much hype for what the product is and we're going to get pushback. So let's dial it down a little bit. We put Reba on tape instead of live at the event. We made the launch event fit the sort of product Windows 98, which was an excellent product, but not the transform into product of Windows 95 or the sort of new type of product like MS-DOS five upgrade was. So the launch event strategy had to fit the overall product strategy, and many times it just called for this big event. I don't know exactly. It may have been Steve Jobs with Apple that pioneered the big events like that, but I don't remember. It's just what fit the product strategy.

Becky Monk:

And it was really how you grabbed people's attention to this point. Through Windows 95, there was no internet. You couldn't text somebody on the cell phone. You had to gain eyeballs in a very specific way.

Brad Chase:

Jon Shirley used to say that PR was the best marketing tool because it was free or not almost free. And so you're right when you say that back in those days, especially before the internet was a big deal, you had to get in Business week and the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times and all the millions of computer magazines and to get the attention to get people to focus on your product. So having big launch events helped that. Now to be fair, it wasn't ever a marketing plan just based on big launch events. There was lots of work done behind the

scenes to educate consumers, educate businesses, get key influencers, knowledgeable about the products that were involved. So whether it was Windows 95 or MS-DOS, I did a million press tours and was always traveling the country. And we did seminars and we did ads and magazines and the big television ad for Windows 95. And so there was a lot of effort beyond the launch events, marketing software in those days, as I'm sure there is today. But it was very different. We didn't have the internet for some of the early days.

Becky Monk: I want to go back, you mentioned a little bit about, for Windows 95, it was the biggest beta that to that point had ever been done. Can you talk a little bit about what was normal and well, what is beta, what is normal and what happened for Windows 95 with this?

Brad Chase: The beta was a way for us to test our products by getting them in the hands of real users. We always had very significant test teams, but for a lot of products, when you were going to get a lot of usage, especially you wanted to get them out in the hands of users before you actually shipped your final product. And back then again, because we didn't have the internet, it's not like you could roll out releases all the time. I mean, when you ship a product, it's in a box. And for people to upgrade to a new one, they needed discs basically back in those days. So you really wanted to have solid quality because upgrading the physical packages is expensive. So beta testing was a way for a lot of products to do that. And there always were a lot of enthusiast users who were very excited about playing with these products before they launched.

Now, normally you'd have a few hundred beta testers. For Windows 95, we had I think over 10,000. We had a lot and we had sort of the official product development beta test, and then I added a marketing beta test because we could only process so many bugs coming in. Right? There was only so much. So the marketing beta test, I think people paid, if I recall, I think we had them paid like 20 bucks. Whatever the cost was, it wasn't a money maker to get to play with the product early. And of course we've warned people, this is not finished product, be careful back up, do all that stuff. But the beta test proved to be a great way to help build quality products back then, especially and in the Windows 95 case. It also proved to be a great marketing tool.

Becky Monk: Thank you. Alright. All right. Windows 95, highly successful. People standing in line again, midnight at Egghead and other software stores around, how did you celebrate?

Brad Chase: How did I celebrate Windows 95? Probably with some sleep. So the launch event was a big deal. It wasn't just Jay Leno, we had a carnival. All the software developers and PC manufacturers had booze. We had a Ferris wheel, we had all sorts of craziness going on. And I remember after the launch event ended and went so well, I went to the local egghead to watch the midnight madness, and then we must've celebrated the next day or something. I don't remember. We did have a great launch party for Windows 95 with the whole team. That was

craziness. People got really nuts. There were people in the fountains and there were motorcycles going through the always and all sorts of craziness. But I don't remember exactly how I specifically celebrated the launch of Windows 95 besides just in a way being so relieved. And for us, for the product team, they were kind of key milestone.

You ship it, then bugs come in and you have to do little upgrades eventually. But for us, the market team, we were still on the train. I remember for example, windows 95 had been out for several months calling Walt Mossberg the influential and super thoughtful and nice reporter and columnist for the Wall Street Journal and saying, well, you wrote in your column that you liked Windows 95, but the jury was still out. And you'd get back to your users and tell them whether they should upgrade. And I think we've proven now that the upgrade's safe and people are enjoying it. You should tell people they can upgrade. Walt's like, ah, I'm not going to do another review of Windows 95. He said, but Walt, you and I go back a long ways. I was one of first Microsoft people to ever meet him back in the MS-DOS 5 days. I'm like, Walt, you have a connection with your users. You told them you were going to get back to 'em. You really do need to get back to 'em. He's like, yeah, you're right. So he wrote another review, but all our work to teach people about the product continued to help them with upgrades, to help businesses understand how to do mass upgrades for the market team. Our work continued for a while and I continued on Windows 95 for a period of time before we all sort of reorganized and went into different places.

Becky Monk:

So as you've launched, there's also some new rumbling going on in the company because the internet was just coming out or not coming out, but really coming to the forefront and the company itself was saying, okay, we need to shift. There was a big tidal wave memo. What did that mean for you?

Brad Chase:

So the internet was really starting to become a big thing as we got towards the launch of Windows 95. And in some ways controversial. There was a set of us, I remember Brad, myself, others who were saying, look, this is going to change computing again and we need to be on top of it. And there was some even in Microsoft, some skeptics. So the first thing we did was we got working on an internet and launched with Windows 95 in the OEM version and then later as part of the upgrade and our browser wasn't really that good. The first version, the Netscape Navigator browser was a lot better. And not surprisingly, they gained tons and tons of market share, but we all realized at different levels, people like Brad and I, yeah, we got to just totally focus on this and other people, some skeptics a little bit less, but we all realized in the end that the internet was going to change the whole computing industry again.

And it was just this incredible wave. And we knew it even before the internet tidal wave memo because we were sort of on the forefront of things. And so we started working on all sorts of stuff to make a better browser, to make other products to go with it. And I ended up working, the team I had after Windows 95 was the Internet Explorer team, developer relations, a bunch of other internet

technologies that I worked again with Brad on because the browser and all the internet technologies became so paramount. We were really worried, legitimately worried that the browser would become a new platform. No one would build apps for Windows anymore. They would just build internet apps basically. And so it was a very big concern at the time. And of course that led to the anti-trust case and all these other things as we included the browser with Windows.

And of course we said, look, the browser has to be a part of the operating system. I mean, you wouldn't buy any product today like a phone or a tablet or computer without a browser. I mean it'd be like a car without a seatbelt or something or an engine. So there was a lot of politics involved in all that and our competitors trying to find ways to distract us and limit our success. But we really started working hard on the internet stuff and by the time we got to internet sport three, we had a better browser.

Becky Monk: How did you guys think about the business opportunities with the internet? Not just that you had to have it as a platform but as business opportunity?

Brad Chase: Well, the company did lots on the business opportunities for the internet. Of course we started MSN as a AOL type sort of service, which was its own ecosystem and that was a mistake. But later that whole division was working just on internet products. And then of course there was all the stuff you could do with consumers and building internet products for consumers and what we can do there. And that, I think Patty led that team and that was the consumer division or something like that. I forget what we called it at the time, but there was also lots of inner opportunities in the systems division where I was at to sell products that would take advantage of the internet. So it went beyond the browser and that was an exciting time because it's sort of like we went from MS-DOS to Windows and from Windows to the internet as all these key milestones in the history of computing.

Becky Monk: And I know this is sort of out of order, but there was another bet that you were a part of and it was just servers. Why was that important? Can you talk a little bit about what you did there and why that also was another big bet for the company?

Brad Chase: So the server bet was a big bet because client server computing was critical and Microsoft was really though I was a big part of the consumer efforts for Microsoft, Microsoft's really more of an enterprise company, especially now. And the whole client server relationship was the way businesses were doing computers computing, I should say. And so you would store documents on the server, you would use it for printing and you would have apps that got built based on the server. And I got called in. So back in the day I was working on the internet stuff and I got called to Bill's office and Bill said, I want you to go back and work on Windows. Brad Silverberg, my friend and mentor was on leave I think at this point and eventually left Microsoft and Jim Allchin who had really launched the server

business, was running the Windows business client and server at that time. And I didn't really want to go back and work on Windows again. I'd done that and had obviously a transformative experience on Windows 95.

But Bill asked me to, so I went back and did that. Bill wanted someone who could run the marketing team that Jim wouldn't have to worry about so Jim could focus on the technology. So my main contribution to the server business came much later. Other people really get more credit for that. My main contribution to server business was for us to rethink the business of the server business. At the time we had one server product Windows NT Server, which became Windows Server later on. That was another thing I had to work on at one point was getting rid of all these Windows names and have it just be Windows. So we didn't have Windows NT in Windows, but that's another story perhaps for another day. So my concept was, look, you can't have one window server meet all the needs of all the customers and it's also not a good business strategy to try to sell one product.

You're going to sell it too expensively for some and too inexpensively for others. So I had the team, Mike Nash was the person who worked for me on the marketing of the server business and I asked him to go put an exercise together about how to build a family of Windows Server products that would make more sense than just having one. It would be a better business opportunity for us. It would better meet the needs of customers. So we built did that and that was my main contribution to the server business, was helping us think through the next evolution of the Windows Server business. There were other technology things like NetWare was a big deal at that time. And the team said, oh, we have this great product that will allow people to go from NetWare to Windows Server, and I didn't believe them. So I organized this demo test and then they put me in front of computer and I had to upgrade a product from NetWare to Windows. And of course it was a disaster. So there were some product things that I influenced to help, for example, make conversion from competitor easier. But mostly my contribution on the server side was the business as I mentioned earlier, and other people really deserved the credit and for building the Windows Server business. And it was important to Microsoft because it was a key part of enterprise business and a key revenue opportunity for us.

Becky Monk:

I want to be very mindful of time. I want to talk a little bit about what were you most proud of during your time at Microsoft?

Brad Chase:

I'm probably most proud of in my time at Microsoft, of the people I met and the teams I helped build and the people I helped hire and how being a part of that really transformed all our lives. There are people who I hired who meant their spouses here, who have children here who moved here because I hired them or who got to work on products where I recruited them to be a part of. And that's an amazing experience and I feel like I had a small piece of that. And of course we had amazing camaraderie because while when things go well and you're the leader, you get credit. So I was the greatest marketing guy since sliced bread, but all a bunch of baloney. The reality is I helped set the strategy and the direction, but it's the quality of the team that makes all the difference. And so while I think I was a good leader and people enjoyed working for me and I was good at setting

strategy and I had a lot of good ideas, it wasn't me. It was a group of people. And so if I have to pick one thing that I'm most proud of Microsoft, it's the people I worked with, the things we did together and the people I helped hire and their experiences in Microsoft and how that impacted their lives.

Becky Monk:

It's really a common theme. You talked about comradery. If you had to describe the Microsoft culture when you were there to everybody, how would you describe it?

Brad Chase:

The Microsoft culture is very hard to describe. On one level you could describe it as relentless. There was a never-ending search to make things better, which meant that culture was also quite critical. It was very extreme. I mean, how many times Bill would say, oh, that's the worst idea I've ever heard. And so we never focused too much on our successes. We always focused on what we can do better. And it was also a very candid culture back, at least when I was there. People weren't afraid to say what they felt and had honest and sometimes very heated conversations about where the right direction was for a business or a strategy or a product. So it wasn't a culture that had as much experience. We were younger, I'll tell you a story about that. So most of us didn't have families when we first started.

I was married, had no kids and then had kids now have three adult sons. But when I was in charge of Windows 95, when I was first put in charge, I had to combine some teams and I had the big meeting where I announced a new organization, I put up an org chart and on the org chart at the top was my kids and then my wife and then Nancy who was my assistant and partner in driving many businesses that I worked on and then me and my direct reports. And so the culture also evolved over time. That relentlessness, that hardworking where you worked, incredible hours, that candor, that sort of never ending focus on trying to achieve our mission also evolved over time to appreciate other things outside of Microsoft and the importance of family. And for example, that org chart somehow got all around and for years people and even today I still once in a while find someone that says, I remember your org chart or I heard about your org chart. So the company also evolved. So a culture is not static, it doesn't stay the same over time.

Becky Monk:

The mission statement, I think we talked a little bit about that at the beginning, but how did that influence or provide sort of a guiding principle for you? Or did it or did it matter that much that everybody had a mission statement out there and it was maybe fluffy and just some words out there? Or was it something that you really worked toward?

Brad Chase:

I think the Microsoft mission statement was very influential with a lot of people, as much about providing a sense of the future possibilities as anything else. I mean, we really did believe that computers would transform how people worked and played. And having a computer on every desk in every home running Microsoft software was a way to see that come to fruition. So I didn't sit every day

and think about the mission, of course not. We just loved our work and we were working really hard and thought great things would happen. And on reflection with the benefit of wisdom in hindsight, I feel like all of us who worked in that era not only laid the foundation for today's Microsoft, but we got to participate in a transformative part of society, of our world, the rise of computing. And there's been so many things that have happened from DOS to Windows to mobile to, of course the internet is a key part of all of that to the cloud, it never ends right now AI, we could go on and on and on about the various different sort of key inflection points, but I feel like all of us who were in that key area, key sort of beginning era of the growth of computers and of Windows and of the internet and of sort of a change in the way we all worked and played, got to be a part of something very special and very fundamental in the whole world.

And that's kind of amazing.

Becky Monk: Was there ever a time when, a moment in time when you thought, oh yeah, we're doing it, we're changing the world.

Brad Chase: I think there was many moments in time where I thought we were changing the world. I mean, you never do it on your own as we've sort of discussed on this. And it wasn't just Microsoft, other companies participated and other people were key to that change, but you felt like you were an important wheel in that and cog in that wheel. So I don't ever have such ego to think that I was that special in it, but I felt like I was an important piece of it as was all the people working in that time.

Becky Monk: Maybe if we take it up to the company level, was there a time when you thought the company had achieved that point? Maybe that point where Oh yeah, things are different now. We've sort of made it, we are the one to beat. We are the ones that are changing everything.

Brad Chase: So one of the things that happens in business is everyone likes to root for the underdog. So when I started IBM was the big bad guy and Microsoft was the up-and-coming underdog and everyone loved Microsoft. It was crazy. We'd go to user groups or whatever back in the day and we got huge crowds and people were super excited. And I could tell you funny stories about when I was at user groups or one time when I was with Bill at a user group and all the nuts things that happened, people wanted to take pictures with us, whatever. So people were rooting for Microsoft. And then there was a point, I'd say after Windows 95, probably in the later '90s, '97, '98, when all of a sudden it was clear we were now sort of the big dog and now all of a sudden we are getting the criticism, we were the monopoly, we were using bad business practices, we were what IBM had been. And I think that's sort of a standard arc, right? Microsoft was not perfect, it made many mistakes, but there's sort of this standard arc IBM was a bad guy and then IBM sort of made a little bit of a comeback. Microsoft was the star then we

were sort of the bad guy. And then Microsoft sort of now I think over the last five years or so has made a comeback.

Becky Monk: I want to hit on legacy. When people are thinking back on you and your time at Microsoft, what would you like them to remember about you in that role?

Brad Chase: I've never really give a little bit of thought.

Becky Monk: I know that's a hard one I think for everybody to think about. I know there are so many stories. I there one other story among all the stories that we haven't hit upon that you'd like to get into?

Brad Chase: We haven't talked about at all about MSN and all that experience when I led that. And we could skip that if you want to. It's not that big a deal. But there were also some mistakes there, which are unfortunate. I tried to get Bill and Steve to focus on search or I was focused on search and they didn't agree with me. And that ended up being a big, that's one of the reasons I left and I turned out to be right on that one. I was wrong in other things, but we haven't talked about that.

So you asked me about some of the special things. I have a cabinet of things at home. For example, the pass I have at home that got me into the Paradisio for the Rolling Stones concert. I brought this today. This is the second copy of Microsoft Windows 95 upgrade that was ever produced. This is what says on this sheet here, and it was produced in a special box with these black stripes that you can see here. And you never sold that. That was only given to people at the launch event and this was the second one ever done. So I brought that. I also brought the gold disc from Windows 95 upgrade from August 24th. This is the one Bill signed. And so this was a gold copy of the production disc.

Becky Monk: Can you hold that back up a second? I want to ask a quick question because it says, in addition to having Bill's name signed on it, it's got something else written.

Brad Chase: It says, "Amazing." Bill wrote, "Amazing."

Becky Monk: What's the significance of a gold disc for everybody who doesn't know? That's not how software is delivered these days.

Brad Chase: No. Well, I think this was a special edition sort of done for the launch event, but I don't remember honestly why I think that we did this gold one for people involved in the team, but actually I don't remember. We didn't do sand or do gold disc. So this was a unique thing, but I honestly don't remember the reason why. I mean, we did so many funny things. Anyway, this I'll go back to, I have another story to tell that you might like. So the Windows 95 experience was transformative across

so many things at the time. One of the things we had to do was of course get the Microsoft sales team excited about Windows 95. And we had sales meetings and every speaker got raided. And it was always my goal to try to beat Steve Ballmer because Steve was so dramatic and charismatic and loud and exciting and I only beat him twice in all the years.

I did sales presentations for whatever product I was on. And one of the times I beat him was on Windows 95. I got a higher score than he did. He probably doesn't remember this, he probably gave me a hard time about this. But what I did was we had Windows 95 and then we had this product we called Microsoft Plus. And Microsoft Plus was an add-on for Windows 95. So when someone bought Windows 95 at the store, they could buy Microsoft Plus and it had a bunch of little features, cool screensavers and stuff like that that you could add on. And one of the things that had was themes. And the themes were like they changed all your icons and everything, your bitmaps and all the sounds so that it reflected the theme and there were themes like space and other cool things. So you could personalize your computer a little bit.

So for the Windows 95 big launch presentation to the sales team, I secretly had a Steve Ballmer theme created. Steve did not know. So I went his wife Connie, and we got all these pictures of Steve when he was like a kid and pictures at Microsoft and we got all these recorded sounds of Steve, things like Windows, Windows, Windows and all these things. And we put those sounds into the theme so that if you clicked on different things, then those sounds would come up. So we did the presentation on Windows 95, Steve and I to the sales team, thousands of people, whatever. And then unbeknownst to Steve, I had this Steve Ballmer theme. So I called Steve back and I said, Steve, I got one more thing to show. And he's like, well, what's that? And I said, well, we had a special thing made the Steve Ballmer theme, and I presented this Steve Ballmer theme.

And it was of course to the sales folks who were close to Steve and knew him well, just they were rolling in laughter and it was super fun and very funny. And then at the end, I finished it off and Salesforce went crazy. It gave us multiple standing ovations and they had Start Me Up playing in the background and everything and it was a lot of fun. So there were lots of internal stories where we did really fun things that were a part of the Windows 95 experience as well. That one just happened to come to mind that I just remembered.

Becky Monk: I love that. I can hear that, which is just hilarious. Do you still have a copy of that laying around?

Brad Chase: I have a copy of the video of it somewhere, and it's also in the Microsoft Archives and it'd be worth you guys playing it, maybe interjecting it because there is some really funny moments. I also made a little fun of Brad Silverberg in that Windows Microsoft Plus sort of custom Steve Ballmer theme.

Becky Monk: Alright, before we go, I do want to ask a little bit about what you think, what you want people to remember about your time at Microsoft. If they think back on your contribution, what do you want them to remember?

Brad Chase: When I want people to look back, I don't think I want anyone to think of me in any sort of special way, but to think back about what all of us in that era did to the lay the foundations for, I mean, I feel like I helped contribute in some amazing ways, whether it was early days of being on Microsoft Office or works or being in early days of OS or Windows 95 or Windows 98 or later on MSN, which we won't get to today probably. And I don't know that I have a legacy so much, but I think all of us have a legacy. And that's the one thing I think would be great for people to be aware of that history and what those people and those teams did to lay the foundation for today's Microsoft success and to lay that learning in history because Microsoft's going great today.

Our history is fantastic. We learned a lot from it and we made a lot of money and we made a lot of friends and we helped a lot of customers and that's all fantastic. But Microsoft's still going forward and doing amazing things. And though I'm not close to it anymore and I left many years ago, decades ago now, the one thing I would like is for that history to be something that people are aware of and learn from and that legacy be an experience that helps drive the future for Microsoft. Because in the end, what's past is sort of past and what you learn from the past and what you enjoy from the past helps drive a great and bright future. Yeah,

Becky Monk: Is there a lesson that the people who are getting into the industry now should take forward with them?

Brad Chase: There are many lessons I learned from my experience at Microsoft that I like to impart to others. The first and biggest one is the importance of business strategy. You could have great people, you could have great products, but if you're not making the right bets, it doesn't matter. If we built a Windows 95 product that no one cared about, it wouldn't matter if it was a great product, but we built a product that met what customers were looking for. And so you can be charismatic, you can be dynamic, you could be smart, you can be empathetic as a leader, but if you don't make the right bets and you don't do the right strategy, then you will not succeed. Now you still need all those other qualities, no question, right? You want to execute well, you want to have great products and so on, but you need to make the right bets.

Windows 95 was the right bet. What we did with MS-DOS was the right bet. What we did with the server business was the right bet. What we did with the cloud business was the right bet. What we did in mobile was the right idea, but the wrong bet, what we did in some other areas of the business was the right idea, but the wrong bet, right? So no one gets all the bets right all the time, but that's one of my most important learnings is that strategy is job one. And then another key learning for Microsoft is that in life we all get upset and stressed about many things, but it turns out that most of those things you forget about shortly

thereafter. There are a handful of things that really matter in business. It's a few key bets you make and how you execute in life.

It's your family and the things that are important to you with your loved ones and the things that impact those things are really important. But these other things, we tend to overreact. So stay cool, stay composed, and just think through the issue, work through the problem, and you'll generally be just fine. Don't panic, don't overreact. That was another key thing about Microsoft, and of course it's all about the people, and we've talked about that many times, and that'd be another key learning is that having the right people, building a quality effort with people you enjoy being with. I mean, life's too short. I mean, in the end, we don't get that many times to do this. So try to do it the right way with people that you really enjoy that will together make the whole greater than the sum of the parts.

Becky Monk:

I'm going to do just one more quick question. And this may or not have played into your time at Microsoft and your big memories, but the social impact work that the company did, the Giving Campaigns ... I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts, fond memories, or if it impacted you and your life or not?

Brad Chase:

I actually do have some fond memories and thoughts about Microsoft and philanthropic endeavors. One story I will tell is I was once one year asked to give the Microsoft Giving campaign speech, and that was one of the largest, I mean, there was, I don't know, five, 10,000 people who were listening to this speech. And I remember thinking through with the team about how are we going to give this speech and make it compelling. And at the time, we used to show this Windows chart, how we had windows for all the different types of Windows, embedded windows all the way up to Windows, server windows on the desktop. This chart showed a whole range of Windows products and everybody knew that chart. And so I adopted that chart for The Giving Campaign. So it was like, okay, you could give a little at the Windows embedded level, you can give a lot at the Windows Server level.

And I sat on a stool and had a more informal presentation than a lot of people used to do for those things. And we set some record numbers that year. And so I felt really good about that contribution. But the broader point I want to make about Microsoft in philanthropy is my sense, and I can't validate this with data, but it's what I observe, is that Microsoft Alumni are some of the most giving people around. I don't think you're going to go find the amount of philanthropy at say, Oracle Alumni, that you find it from Microsoft Alumni. There is a spirit of we were very fortunate, which we were, and that we should share some of that good fortune with others. Now obviously the foundation and what people like Jeff Raikes are doing and Steve Ballmer are doing, those are numbers I can't contribute at those levels, but they've done amazing work.

But it's not just them is my point. There seems to be a culture of giving back that permeates a lot of Microsoft alumni and it's permeated Judy and I, my wife Judy, and we consider ourselves very generous. We care about a lot of important issues that I think are hitting our society today, whether it's democracy reform or climate change or many others just to name a few. So I don't know exactly how Microsoft

helped influence that thinking, but it does seem evident to me that the charitable work of Microsoft Alumni is among the better charitable work of any organization's alumni.

Becky Monk: Anything else you want to touch on? I know there's just so much, but anything else?

Brad Chase: Microsoft Languages actually worked for me for one time, Tom Button and Dee Dee and those guys. And I kept saying to Brad Silverberg, I don't know if we're still filming, but I saying to Brad Silverberg, look, Tom Button's a great guy. He's doing a great job. I'm not as technical as those guys are. I should not be leading the languages group. And he's like, well, you have some experience and wisdom that I think will help Tom and whatever. But I kept telling Brad, I really think he needs, they need to be working for someone else. And then eventually he hired Paul Gross and Paul Gross ran the languages group, and those guys went and worked for them. But I even managed that stuff. I hadn't even forgot about that. There's so much stuff.

Becky Monk: Your history is Microsoft's history. It's woven throughout the company.

Brad Chase: Oh well, that's true. Even more for a lot of people. But yeah, I'm still friends with a lot of Microsoft folks. We just had dinner the other night with Robbie and Pauline, Robbie Bach, and Robbie and I worked together the big days and Judy and I, and Robbie and Pauline are still close friends, decades and decades and decades later. I was just texting with Brad Silverberg. So I'm not in touch with everybody anymore. Most of the people I know aren't here anymore, but Satya is still here. He worked for me. Yusuf Medhi worked for me a long time.

Brad Chase: Yes. Satya Nadella worked for me in around 2000. It's kind of a fun story. I think Steve came to me and said, I want this guy to work for you and get some experience. I think he came from an acquisition that Microsoft made, and I was running MSN, and I just started running MSN and MSN. It was a mess. It came in last in all the employee survey ratings, in terms of morale, it had no strategy. I don't know exactly how it got that way, but it was really, really, really messed up. So I was touring around first just to get an inventory of what was going on. And it turned out we had bought some assets that were languishing and one company called Link Exchange. And after a while I realized that I had a number of small business services for the internet that were just sitting there.

And so Satya worked for me and I said, okay, Satya, I'd like you to see if my instinct is correct. Do we have enough of a set of small business services or maybe enough to get started that we add more to that we can create a internet set of services for small business? So Satya working for me, took that ball and ran with it and ended up launching something called B Central and B Central existed for several years. And it was this side service that Satya actually ran on my behest ran, and he worked for me, I don't remember how long, maybe a year. I don't remember. So B Central started to get a little bit of momentum and I was

spending a lot of my time on the core challenges of MSN. And Steve came to me, Steve Ballmer came to me and said, I really think B Central fits better with the Office group and some of the business groups as opposed to you're really more of a consumer group.

And I had to say that made sense. I didn't disagree with that. And my group was big enough, I didn't need more people or whatever. I had 4,000 or 5,000 or 3,000 people working for me at that time. So I said, okay, that makes some sense. But I said, I don't think Satya knows this. I said, but is there any way I could keep Satya? Because I really liked Satya. I can't say I knew he would be the CEO later. But he was smart and honest and technical. A rare combination. And Microsoft, some of the best leaders combined those skills. They understand the technology, but they also have good business sense. And Brad Silverberg, for example, was a great example of that. Well, Satya had those skills, rare combination of just thoughtfulness, business savvy, but also understood the technology. Of course, I really couldn't be serious because Satya obviously had to go with B- Central and B- Central moved, and then that helped launch his career. So I don't take an iota of credit for such a success, but I did have the pleasure of working with them.

Becky Monk:

That's such a fun story. I'm glad we captured that. Brad, that's all we have time for. I can't thank you enough.