

Oral History of Jean-Philippe Courtois

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 Jean-Philippe Courtois as conducted by Becky Monk on July 25, 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

Becky Monk: The first thing we'll do, just to get it on the record, we're going to start with the basics. Tell me your name, where you are now, and just a little brief intro.

Jean-Philippe Courtois: So, I'm Jean-Philippe Courtois. I'm living in Paris downtown, very close to Les Invalides where the games are going to start in France, the Olympic games. And I've been spending an amazing 40 years plus with Microsoft and one of my last positions, which I enjoyed tremendously, used to be President and Executive Vice President for the Microsoft Global Sales Marketing Operations. In that capacity I was overseeing all of our subsidiaries globally and all of our commercial business working for Satya Nadella in the Microsoft Senior Leadership Team.

Becky Monk: It's an illustrious 40 year career. So take me back to when you were a young man and growing up outside of Nice. How did you decide you wanted to be working in the software industry?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yeah, so as I graduated from a business school in South France in Nice, which is of course a very special place for me, it's French Riviera, I had the amazing opportunity to work for a software startup, a French company called Memsoft. So there was already a piece of software in the name of the company and for a couple of years as I was still a student of the business school with a friend of mind, we jointly developed an accounting software, what we would call today an ERP for the very first personal computers in the world. At the time many of you were not born. Maybe as you listen to this, as you watch this video, actually there was the Apple computer, Apple 2, shipping to the world and we built what you call Memsoft accounting, which has a fully integrated package software for a lot of small businesses in France, but we could package and sell.

So because of that I got in love with software clearly, and at one point, after a couple of years in a surprise, I said, well, I may actually do something else. I love the company and so on, but I wanted to keep learning more and I was actually contacted by a headhunter and the headhunter wanted me to sell some hardware products at the time, some microcomputers for the French education system. I said, well, I'm sorry, thanks for thinking of me, but I don't believe in hardware. So they told me, hold on, young man, we have a very young, maybe promising software company settling in close to Paris in Les Ulis, which is a suburb of Paris called Microsoft, say, okay, yeah, I heard about Microsoft, I heard about MS-DOS and I took the train, I went up to Paris, I interviewed with Bernard Verne, Michel LaComb, the two founders in Microsoft, France, and then from Microsoft Europe. And I took the job my first job, which was a sales engineer job at Microsoft.

Becky Monk: So you had heard about Microsoft by this time in 1984 and it was promising and you were excited to start?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yeah, I learned a bit about Microsoft of course before meeting with the founders of the subsidiary because again, the promise of the software industry and all the Microsoft also was a startup of course bigger than Memesoft. Memesoft was like 20 people. Microsoft globally I think at the time was less than a half hundred people. And in France where I joined the subsidiary, it was one of the three subsidiaries in the world, the company by the way, first three to four between Japan, UK, Germany, and France. I think that was roughly with US of course as a home ground operation and it was very clear to me that I wanted to join a startup, a new company where potentially newcomers, young graduate like myself with little experience but a lot of appetite to learn more, could do more. And the magics happened as I met with Bernard Vern and Michelle Lacomb, two wonderful leaders, two incredible people that I got to learn from and I decided to join right after those interviews.

Becky Monk: What was that first day like in the Paris subsidiary, you were working on selling products that people today probably don't even remember. So what is it you were selling and what did the subsidiary even look and feel like then?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yes, a very good question. We at the time were selling a couple of products. First of we're selling an operating system, MS-DOS, which was the godfather. Of course of Windows. Number two, we're selling development tools like BASIC, COBOL Compiler, yes for MS-DOS and even what is called CPM, another operating system. And we're starting to sell the very first productivity applications of Microsoft with the godfather of the spreadsheet industry called MultiPlan. I know many people may have heard but MultiPlan and yes, I did that. So my first job and my first days were kind of learning how those products work, so getting into the manuals, getting to use them to be able to do some demos

because I was actually hired to be what is called a sales engineer, someone who was supposed to recruit a channel of partners all across France and I had to go and demo the products, get 'em excited, get them to understand what selling software was all about, what was the value of that. And of course I got in love with that job and I got in love with that company.

Becky Monk: Who were some of the partners you were trying to convince that Microsoft was the next wave of the future?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Again, it was back in 1984, just to make sure people understand what I'm talking about at the time globally, and also suddenly in France, it was a very nascent partners industry. So we're talking about both some early developers developing on MS-DOS some applications, but we're also talking about of course the OEMs. So the PC manufacturers because of course there was the IBM PC and then we got all the compatible PCs because of MS-DOS. And it was also all about resellers able to resell those personal computers and the software that bring the value to the PCs to their clients. The people I was meeting with was pretty amazing. You had either some people coming from the mini computer industry, very few of them actually who knew something about informatics about IT. There are processing, but it was a big majority of new entrepreneurs, some coming from the entertainment industry, some coming from the media, some coming from retail who had no idea about IT it at all.

But we said, "Wow, this is a place we can make a lot of money. It looks like fun and exciting." So I had to do a lot of work sorting out the good across and the partners who actually were investing enough in people in skills and capacity because at the time the core job of our company and the core job of our partners ecosystem was actually to educate people what software was. Nobody understood what a piece of software has, and so when you show them a floppy disk, because that's the way we still work, I wish I had one of them with me, I still have some in my archives. People, and then you

insert your floppy disk into the computer, it was magic, you could see the green characters and MS-DOS and the prompt and see two points and you start typing your DOS commands and then the rest has been history, I would say.

Becky Monk: So you were just as much an educator as you were trying to sell the product?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yes, because in a way, when you start an industry, you've got first to educate, to create advocacy, to create really a community of people who can build solutions so that you can sell more. And I think I learned that lesson early on that you need to invest on education and train. Indeed, we created a lot of support and a lot of tools, a lot of training sessions to go all across the country. We also did an incredible set of road shows. It was a big event. Every time we are launching our products, we had a big road show, not just in Paris, we were going to 10 cities in France. I was taking my small Rhône 11 small car at my big compact portable, which was like 15 kilos on my shoulders and I was going all the way in all the cities, inviting all the dealers, resellers, partners and customers saying, Hey, here's Microsoft coming to your city in in Nice, in Leon, and here's the beauty of software to transform your life and your business. And it has been an amazing time for me to go all across my country and truly evangelize a new set of customers to the world of software.

Becky Monk: That sounds like it had to have been very exciting for someone who was young and just in the business. What was the experience for you personally, to go out and meet all of these people and bring this to life?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yeah, I would say it was an amazing learning curve for me. I mean, one, it was about learning actually software. And so learning the way we develop, we bring the software to the market and the way our customers could use. So take Multiplann spreadsheet, well we built and it was building myself a bunch of templates or do you

do a budget or do you do a financial planning or do you do this and that? And I was of course consulting with developers doing all of that. So a lot of, again, training, education and so on, I learned how to sell. I must say there has been a wonderful school for me, and Fortunately, Michel Lacomb, we used to be my manager at the time and it became eventually the general manager of Microsoft France and then the president of Microsoft in Europe and in EMEA after Bernard Vergnes, he really taught me a lot about, I would say the customer religion.

I love meeting with customers and what I learned from Michel at the time was you need to earn the right to sell to a customer. It's not just something you get to do. So you need to establish a deep relationship. You need to establish the trust so that they can actually value the work you need to do so that they can actually trust you to help them achieve more with your software. And understood that step by step witnessing and actually being with Michel sales meetings with a very wonderful smile he had, which was one of my first sales lessons on a beautiful and meaningful smile, not a commercial smile that some people sometimes have. Rather I'm talking about genuine smile of someone who cares, who truly cares about the client issue, the client chance opportunities and who delivers again that who can actually delight the customers step after step, product after product, deployment after deployment, and so on and so forth. Those have been some of the key learnings of course early on in my career.

Becky Monk: When you moved up in responsibility with the company, how did that evolve for you? What you learned from those early mentors? How did you work with that with the people that you then were mentoring? Because to a person, almost everyone I've interviewed or met here has such wonderful things to say about your leadership style,

Jean-Philippe Courtois: It's kind of you. I would say I've learned by growing myself by learning from others and by making mistakes and all of that together. So first of all, I would say I always had the passion to learn more about connecting with people, creating relationships that are meaningful and again, really building that trust with the customers all the time. I learned as well about the art of selling, but I also learned about the art of managing step-by-step. And I would say I've been incredibly lucky because the company and my managers gave me incredible responsibility when I was very young. So as an example, when I was I think 26 years old, I was tasked by Michel Lecomb to take care of all the business development of our markets in the Benelux, in Spain, in Portugal and Greece. So basically to prepare the ground for opening Microsoft subsidiaries in those countries.

And while I was still very young, I started to prove a little bit myself as a seller in France and the partners and more and marketing as well. But hey there, I was asked to become the ambassador and ambassador of Microsoft in those countries and to start building local teams with partners first before we open the ground for subsidiaries. So I truly enjoyed a lot by both, again, as I said, witnessing people like Michel, Bernard, and also international leaders of course step by step because my career has been 40 years, so the incredible privilege to work with amazing leaders all of my life, but also having the curiosity to understand the impact I have on people. And I think what I realized maybe not immediately for sure, not because I made some mistakes on managing people of course many times as well, is as you truly understand the potential you can create with your people and your team, then you realize that you have an unlimited potential with the company and the organization you lead with.

And so in a way I've been always very much investing into people development as a big, big capacity building exercise for me because I knew that it will make me better, it will make the

company a lot more successful if I was surrounded by smarter people than myself, people who could keep setting and raising the bar even higher for the company. And people truly with the growth mindset. I know we've been using that for the last 10 years, but at the time we never used actually a term gross mindset didn't exist because the book from Carl Dweck was not there yet. But there was this incredible curiosity from the teams and the people.

Becky Monk: How did that curiosity, that desire to forge those relationships help you in your role as that ambassador, as you say, as you did build subsidiaries throughout Europe?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yeah, I would say almost by design. I recall as an example, my vertical visit in Spain and I was speaking some Spanish, which was helpful by the way. That was very needed. I was able to better understand the needs for the company as an example to localize our software. It seems obvious today, but at the time, well, our products were in English of course, but most people in most countries, the world would not actually use software in English. They would not. And the level of English speaking was not the same either of them today. So it really had me to learn and invest, understanding the local culture, the way people work in a community like Spain as an example, which actually is different if you're in Madrid versus in Catalonia. And I remember some stories with my distributor, who was a Catalonian company, with a different culture than my distributors in Madrid and the way they were negotiating terms, the way they were expecting you to do things differently and so on and so forth.

So learning cultures one country at a time is something I love doing actually I loved asking questions because I didn't know of course about those cultures, the way people work, the way people value the partnership, the way people value also I would say the return investment they have as they buy and invest in your company in your tools. And that's something I'd be investing in by also

developing of course a lot of local talents because there was no way I would become myself a local leader and I would need to be surrounded by incredible talents from the local teams. And so all of that started early in my career, which was a wonderful opportunity because I was 26 years old, I was traveling in five, six countries in Europe already and I was really so much hungry to basically learn more one country at a time.

Becky Monk: I love what you said. I want to talk about localization, but I want to stick with this theme now about the culture being so different in each of the places. How did you bring the Microsoft culture to each area? Or did each area have its own culture that affected Microsoft? Can you talk a little bit about that? Because Scott Oki was here the other day,

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Scott, yeah.

Becky Monk: And he was talking about when he would come visit, they were so used to working around the clock and sleeping under their desks and things like that here in Redmond and they would get to Europe and it would be different and they had to adjust. So can you just talk a little bit about those differences in managing those differences?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: No, for sure. I mean this has been certainly one of the most exciting and really rewarding, I would say learnings on my leadership journey is to learn from all those. I think I counted actually visiting at least 120 countries in the world across my professional life, so many different places and cultures. I think first of all, I think it starts honestly by understanding the why of the company always. And the beauty of Microsoft is we had the "Why" super well defined since day one. And when I joined a company it was super clear to me this was the place where I was going to enable the world to have a PC on every desk in every home, which has been a rallying cry for us for decades with our founder Bill

Gates. And that is so critical and so differential compared to many of the companies in the world.

So that to me was a starting point of course of I would say the foundation of the culture of the company, the why, the mission, why we were here altogether, and of course the mission needs to be nurtured with the culture, the way people work and the way people work. Of course when you're a global company headquarters in Redmond, Washington state and at the time actually it was more Bellevue as well, you have certainly to take into account that this is an American company. This is an American company which is starting to work in your base in France, like nine hours after you. And so you got to get used about the cycles of the moon and the sun across the world, which I did pretty early on as well in terms of time zones and the way you work, but also in terms of the way you work with different cultures.

I appreciated a lot the fact that with my colleagues and France in the US, it was a very clear direct communication style about the stuff to be done, the goals and targets to be reached and the way we're going to do that in a very explicit way. And it's when you study and you learn the way you work across cultures, you'll find out that cultures are very different between what you could say, the explicit, versus the implicit cultures. As an example, French people are probably in between, I would say very explicit culture like Americans would be and versus some Asian countries like in Japan or Korea, which would be a lot more implicit. What it means, it means there will be a lot less said directly to you, a lot more not said, but in between the lines or between the worlds and a lot being processed in the minds of people but not being said to you.

And I learned early on because of that, my duality of French citizenship of course born in my country, but working with Americans since I was 24 years old that it was actually a nice complimentary of cultures and I think there was a very unique touch

of course locally where I could relate to French people, I could relate to the challenge and issues of the country, the communities, governments, later on of course, customers and more because of course of my DNA and who I am. But the same time I could really combine again that unique mission of the company, the way people work globally with the way we embrace the local culture locally. And so since that day I've been really trying to bring always the best of both cultures. It's not about one against the other, it's about the way you combine a company's global culture, which I believe strongly into it.

And I've done tons of interventions across the world based on the Microsoft culture while respecting and really applying the local cultures in the way people work and the way people enjoy working together and deliver results for the company. And I think as you are able to do that to unpack some of the nuances, then you're starting to be a lot more effective between the messages coming top down from Redmond to Tokyo to Berlin in Germany, to Seoul, to Lagos in Africa, whatever. And the local receivers, I've been always fascinated between basically the people who are up there sending you some bowls and the people who are the catchers downstream in the subsidiaries receiving. It's been always that kind of dual relationship between Redmond and the subsidiaries. In my functions I've been always someone trying to connect those two pieces together to basically bring the best of the global scale of the company, which is amazing and unique, the global innovation coming out of Redmond and spreading into the world and the local innovation, the local creativity, the local relevance and local trust that our people on the ground in all those countries crave with the customers eyes to eyes head to head one day at a time.

And that's been to me the key and the magic of what we can accomplish as a company globally and locally.

Becky Monk:

I love that. I love that. Can we go back to the localization and the importance of that? I know that that was very important in France. Can you explain a little bit for everybody who doesn't know what localization is, but then why it was vital in France and then I've got a follow up for that, but let's start there. Yeah.

Jean-Philippe Courtois: So yeah, we have to go back in ages, right? In the '80s I said I joined a company on May the 2nd, 1984. So in the late '80s and very early, I would say '90s as well, Microsoft subsidiaries were fully independent. What I mean by that, they were of course subsidiaries of the mothership of Microsoft in Redmond. But think about the following. In the subsidiary when I used to be the general manager, Microsoft France, which had became eventually back in 1994, I grew up in different jobs and one day I was given, which was incredible, was very young, the fullest ability of the subsidiary at the time, Microsoft in the countries, actually a little bit before that actually, to be honest, exactly in terms of the dates, we were actually building and packaging the software locally, physically. Because at the time software was packaged software, it was shrink wrapped in boxes and we had for many years in Les Ulis, our own warehouse and inventory of products.

I mean that seems like crazy today. And we had the same in all in different countries in the world at the time, had the privilege to decide the price of the Microsoft products in the country and guess what? We're actually charging the customers more than our friends in the UK, a lot more in the US and when Scott and others are coming to France say, what are you guys doing? It's like crazy, but actually it sells really well. Of course he helps the company in terms of revenue, profitability, we were also leading and driving our own marketing. We had our own, we had the same logo of course, but the tagline and the communications was local. At some point we had a wonderful company which was a big impact in France with a butterfly and the butterfly was a symbol of actually how easy it is to use software.

It was really the subtle of the easy life. We wanted to show the agility, the flexibility, and how beautiful it is to use software. So we had assembled a butterfly in all of our marketing. Everywhere there are some butterflies flying across the country, but that was just a Microsoft Friends brand, it was not a Microsoft corporation brand at all. And so at the time, long story short, we were in charge the full accountability of product building, shipping, selling, price, distribution strategy. We even started honestly defining the very first commercial contracts, what we call afterwards, the licensing contracts. Some of them, the very fair ones were actually designing France because at some point we started selling to large customers and they told us, "Jean Philip, we have enough of all those packaged products, we cannot store them anymore. It's crazy. We need to buy licenses." Say, "Oh, that sounds like an interesting concept."

So we dig into that and of course our friends in Redmond, we started testing a new concept of what became eventually at the time and of course disappeared, the open license which was a license where you could actually sell many products at a discounted price to a company which was committed to your products. And then came of course the enterprise agreement and all the rest is history. So all of that is something we could actually create locally, which was amazing and of course incredibly empowering as you can imagine, but there's some limits as well. And this is when became the second era of Microsoft in the '90s, and I recall that actually because when I became then gm, Microsoft, France back in '94 was after that Steve himself, Steve Ballmer, at that point was actually before that the head of sales and marketing globally. And what he did before he became the CEO, which was incredible, he went and relocated himself two months in Paris and two months in Tokyo.

He lived outside of Redmond. I can tell you to my long memory of Microsoft, I don't know of any other senior exec that did that in a

global CEO type of job or even some global executive job. People traveled, yes, but two months and what he did in two months was pretty amazing. He spent a lot of time not just with me in France with my peers in other countries and he really studied the way we're selling marketing, supporting the customer and so on. And at the end he said, you know what, you kind of do the same but of course very differently and we may need to rationalize and basically bring all of that together. And this is where came a big project called Saratoga, which was a project to basically globalize Microsoft truly and having the same operating model in every part of the world.

Becky Monk: Was there a time when you had to go head to head with the folks in Redmond to say, no, no, no, no, this is why we want to do marketing this way versus the way you are doing it? Was there a moment?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: I mean there's been so many moments like that for many years, particularly at the time I was mentioning where we had a lot of, I mean a very high level of independence. So think about the time where we had a butterfly, we're super proud. We were showing measuring of course the impact in terms of brand awareness and success. We were super high in terms of market share. Interesting enough with our products multiple and which I talked about early on, where the only market in the world left was in France. We were number one against Lotus 1, 2, 3, which was crazy. And France in the US didn't understand what we did, said it is crazy, Lotus has been killing us, we need Excel. Of course we're building Excel at the time. And so at the time when we had to concede that we could not add any more butterfly and local brands, that was a huge disappointment, a huge deception. He was kind of suppressing a part of our self-identities, but of course we understood why and the rational that a global company to come together at the end, which I fully understand, but it was pretty emotional and so we had a lot of discussion back and forth at the time with the heads of marketing

of the time and while they applauded the creativity, they didn't like the fact it was diverging from the mothership.

Becky Monk: So when you were Vice President, Executive Vice President and President of Microsoft Global Sales, Marketing and Operations, you had to bring all of that together and make sure it was harmonious. How was that for you? What was your day when you were in that role? Were you constantly back and forth to all of the 122 subsidiaries around the world?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yeah, I must say I had again this privilege of growing through the ranks, right? As I told you, I became the general manager of Microsoft France. Then I was asked by Steve and actually Jeff Raikes, a very good friend of mine to go and work with Jeff in the US and Jeff at the time was the head of sales and marketing and for a couple of years I was in charge of all the business planning, the infa media reviews. I can come back to that story later on because I killed the media reviews many years after that.

It is ironic because it was one of the first ones to help co-designing the media reviews alongside Steve and Jeff and I saw the value of that for many years, but when I ended up being the head of global sales market operations, I realized that that was overkill and that we didn't need all the drama of these kind of assemblies we had where we're locking ourself for seven weeks in a room in Redmond and having all of the subsidiaries business of the world coming to us, preparing for weeks because it was such a drama to go through the media reviews and while it was tons of value, it was time to stop it. So I did stop it. So anyway, it was a short story of the media reviews, but back to your question, I grew up, as I said, from France and I was asked to run EMEA, Europe, Middle East, and Africa, which was the biggest region in terms of number of countries in the world by far because variety in Africa, Europe, middle East altogether, and I learned a ton at the time for five years flying like crazy in all those countries to learn the local setup, the customers and so on and so

forth, and learning a lot about the way you lead at scale through those different cultures and the way you do that, I would say with the full power of a Microsoft corporation behind you, so being also not the messenger, being the advocate of the world back to Redmond, to Microsoft and being a strong voice on the opposite, not the opposite side, but on the other side when traveling of the Microsoft culture, the Microsoft strategy, the Microsoft goals and so on globally.

So I did that for EMEA. Then I was asked to do that for international, which was all the countries in the world, but US and Canada, eventually I did US and Canada for the GSM role. So when I did all of that, I already built a leadership management system at scale where I'd been able to learn number one how to find and pick some of the best talents you can find in the world for the company. Amazing local leaders coming from the outside, some number of them that I grew up in the company and taking leadership positions and creating one integrated team who could have one voice and could have their individual voices as well, working in a better harmony with the folks building products in red because at the end of the day, it's been always the same, right? In any large company, in particular tech company, how do you create harmonious valuable relationship and construct between the people who build the products you're going to sell and the people who are sending the products that you built.

That seems trivial. It is not. And creating the context, creating a common language to connect our product development teams our R&D team or enduring teams all the way to our sellers as we call them the frontline people, has been a work of my life for many, many years and suddenly bringing that voice every single day of my life remotely, sometime physically and remnant, but also in the countries spending days, weeks, months in all those countries in the world to truly capture the essence of the needs of those markets. The uniqueness of some needs in some case. Absolutely. And being

the ultimate advocate back to Redmond, to the senior leadership team of the company on the way we can better respond and raise aspirations in Japan, in Africa, in Brazil, and bringing also the investment needed to those countries to go and keep growing the company and keep growing the reputation of our company as well.

Becky Monk: I am just trying to get my head around doing that on such a big scale and I know you talked about hiring and bringing in teams that really that was a key. How did you find the right people? What is the key to your success in hiring amazing people?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Well, first of all, I decided very early on to dedicate time to people and talents. So on my calendar for many years, I know because I've been very religious about time management for many years I learned that from Bill himself, from Steve and others of our CEOs and I've been very determined to spend at least 25-30% of my time truly dedicated to people, meaning really picking talents, development plans of people, coaching succession, plans of organizations, leadership developments of managers circles. I created for many years, for 20 years I guess where it is, been called the country manager community, all the CEOs of subsidiaries as one organization globally, and I invested that time because I knew that was so critical to create that common culture, to create also that common trust so that when things are getting tough, which happens in business, you can support them.

They know that I've got their back and they know that I'm going to be the extension of their voices again, back to Redmond, vice versa. So I think I learned how to do that by assigning equal time to people and of course to the business, spend a lot of time in the business all the time, not just managing the business but with real customers, a lot of customers as well. I think as long as you keep yourself true and honest about who is going to drive the customer success, this is our people and the fact that if you deserve to succeed and if you deserve to serve the needs of the customers,

you need the very best people, you need the very best people who are genuinely passionate about that and this is the reason why I invested so much on people, talent development, succession, rotating talents across the world. I send so many people over, some folks from the US in unlikely places in India, in Asia, in Africa, others in China, others, many of them would tell you stories about improbable places I ask them to go to grow as leaders and of course to help the company and the localization as well to get to the next level up. Yeah,

Becky Monk: I mean that's fantastic. Like I said, so many people have just praised the way you do, you manage and you lead. And so I think people are excited to learn some of those tricks and not tricks, but what is it you're looking for? What is it when you saw someone who was going to be what you thought would be a great manager, a great hire, what did they all have in common?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: So there would be a few threats I would look into honestly since day one and much after day one actually, as they execute, as the lead, as they drive, one is their passion, genuine passion and a passion which has multiple shapes and forms, passion of learning. You got to have people incredibly curious all the time, number one, to learn our products and technology because they are not curious about that. Guess what? They're not going to do a great job evangelizing the world. Being curious as well and learning of course about the community, the countries, the business, the industries that where we can and where we should have an impact as a company. So it means having that intimacy with our customers. It means you need to learn the business of your customers, you need to learn the industry, you need to learn sometimes the political issues happening in your countries to understand the way you're going to shape public policies and so on and so forth.

Number two is looking at people who are also honestly role models, role models in terms of excellence in execution and

excellence in people leadership. To me it's been always the ying and the yang coming together and I was never confused about the fact I could have incredibly strong sales leaders delivering and beating their sales quotas, which was wonderful, but did the same leaders as country managers an example, we are not building the pipe of talents, the organization capacity we need as a company to grow from \$50 million to one day very fast to a billion and multiple billion of revenue that was going to break. And so I've been always judging, assessing, and really making clear fictitious people that the best way for me to judge on leadership of course is about the ongoing results behaviors they have, the way they lead their people and grow, but it's about the legacy they leave behind them and we know is very diligent in work looking at the legacy one year after a leader leaves, not the day after because the day after the trend keeps going.

Most of the time sometimes it collapses, but there's another story and then you see that the leader has developed a very strong team. The leader has developed a succession plan who is actually someone taking over or doing a great job and already capable of driving through and not holding us back as a company. And so to me that's been always another trait I was looking into, which is this people leadership to grow organization capabilities and to grow more talents for the company. So I'm always looking at leaders who not only been beating the numbers like crazy wonderful and they got the big cups in MGX and big events, which I love to give with them and our CEOs of the companies. It was about the people were able to bring on the stage the years after some leaders that learned from them to get the company next level up and that to me was the most important legacy always of those leaders.

Becky Monk:

That's wonderful. I love you. When you were talking a little bit about it's important for them to understand the global politics and what's going on around them in the world. During your time at Microsoft, the company itself became an important player on the

world stage. Can you talk a little bit about that evolution and how you saw it?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yeah, again, it would take a lot of time. I would say there's a couple of different eras in the company's history and in the first era really the start of era I talked about before, which was like amazing eighties and nineties, all the way from PCs to windows, windows 95 of course on the internet, incredible amazing. Then with the internet came of course the broader story that we know about: the internet tied as well and of course builds memo and the way we suddenly respond extremely fast and well as a company on the internet that we could have missed and we could have actually probably have gone down as a company completely. And as we did that we learned the hard way and I learned firstly the very hard way myself in 2000 as it was named as the CEO president of EMEA, Europe, Middle East, and Africa.

That was the year, that was the years where Microsoft was almost going to be dismantled by the DOJ in the US and by the EU in Europe because windows was actually judged as a monopoly. And as a monopoly, you've got some big challenges as a company and at the time, I'm not going to get into details. Basically as the company had to settle on a number of issues on basically the software integr into the windows, the browser access data, et cetera. What I learned the hardware at the time as I was the head of Europe, Middle East, and Africa is it was not fun at all. He was not anymore the wonderful, lovely startup company called Microsoft. The years before we were the mighty, we were the bad Microsoft. That was the reputation we had as a company who were basically competing widely with the others, were actually taxing our customers with the Windows tax as you was called at the time because the monopoly and it was super hard we're super hard

on all of us, including myself and the people, even society, you would go outside for a cocktail party, people say, oh, Microsoft and

truly. And so this was a time where as a company I learned the way we need to earn back and the permission to operate as a company. And I'm not talking about just the legal things you have to do and that I think we learn that, but the way we build, again, a trusted relationship in each one of the countries where we operate, this is a time where I decided to invest on the very first plan of basically social responsibility and citizenship of Microsoft in Europe. And I built a plan with a small team of leaders across EMEA and I presented the plan to Bill to Steve, to Craig Mundie, to all of our executives because I need some support saying we need to go beyond that image of the company, which is just the sales machine selling.

Of course we are here to sell, I'm not confused, but we need to build the trust and we need to build trust is by showing that we invest in the local communities and countries. We need to show that we enable more value, economic social value to develop. As an example, working with software developers. So we create big forums working with ASVs and get them to emerge as bigger companies, successful stories across Europe of French, German, Spanish, UK, British companies that were supporting Microsoft to go globally to sell their products globally. We did the same on social stability, at the time as I developed a number of initiatives and skilling people globally as well across EMEA to get them to see investing in research with some of the research centers in Germany, in France, in the UK to show that we care about the research generally create Microsoft and local academia.

And many of the things which were honestly not parallel of the P & L performer I was supposed to run. But anyway, I got the permission, which was wonderful within the construct of my P&L to invest, I would say in all of that, to enable us to actually build and earn the permission to operate as a company. It took us years, but eventually it was a big turnaround and a big, I would say, of course, evolution of Microsoft image reputation after those '90s into the

2000's and more. And of course you could if you fast forward now into now where we are as a company, which is pretty amazing. And over the last few years of my Microsoft professional life, I've been equally, I would say passionate about what I've called national transformation partnership, which has been a continuation of the work I've done for 25 years.

It is about creating, again, anchoring the companies into the local fabrics of the economic and the society and work in partnership with our teams in Redmond, on skilling, on philanthropy, on basically startups as well on research to create some programs that enable all of our subsidiaries to show that Microsoft cares about the country, the Microsoft is here for the long haul, not just to deliver quarter by quarter, which of course we know we need to do as salespeople, but to show that it drives economic value into the countries. And as you do that and as you show, it's not just marketing, it's actually something you do and you care about. You create friendships, you create allyships, you create ambassadors, you create people who love your company and that helps you tremendously when it comes to growing, when it comes to earning the respect again in a country,

Becky Monk:

I guess how important is it to the company as a whole, the social impact work, the social responsibility versus the innovation that has been happening from those first days of MS-DOS and Fortran from back then to now the AI and quantum computing and everything in between, that recovery from the DOJ, the evil empire, from the recovery of that, how much has the social responsibility played versus the innovation?

Jean-Philippe Courtois:

The thing to me, which is again the core we are as a company and why I think we are a very special company, it's about the fact I think we are truly a mission led company. And I talked about the first mission of the company. I've not talked yet about the second mission. We have many too. And so when Satya became

CEO of course and I worked alongside Satya, we embraced the second mission of the company, which was a reset, a hit refresh of the company, which is about empowering every person and every organizational planet to achieve more. If you just stop there and pause on what those words mean, it means wow, it means we're not here just for the sake of selling. We are here because we mean to enable people and any kind of organizational world to truly achieve more in their lives, in their businesses, in their destiny.

And as you really internalize that for every Microsoft employee, whoever they are, whatever job they do have from engineering to support, to finance, to anything, each one of us had always and has today an opportunity to make people achieve more across the world. And I think because of that, the notion of social and symbol is very different. It is not, and I've never believed it's an add-on, kind of a "nice citizen" thing you put on the side. Otherwise people feel it's not genuine. It's not actually true. It's fake. It's kind of nice marketing you put aside. It is got to be actually part of the way you deliver the value in your business as a company. And I believe as an organization we've been showing and we still have a lot more to do by the way, we are not, I'm saying perfect by any means, but I think we are showing and our people care a lot about the way we use those incredible powers we have, and we all know this quote, of course, "With big powers come bigger

responsibility." Indeed, I think there are symbol is very big, not just in terms of policies and respects of policies of course, but in terms the way we behave, in terms of the way we translate the innovation lever we have that we put into the hands of our people with Gen-AI to the Copilot and more to achieve a lot more from a societal standpoint and from a community standpoint as well. So that's my strong belief on the way you bring that all together one day at a time, one person at a time, one country at a time.

Becky Monk:

I love the way you put that. Can we talk a little bit about Microsoft's culture and how did it feel to be a part of the company as it grew? Well, and you were very instrumental in that growth, but you did get to be part of just an amazing growth, an amazing evolution of a company. What did that feel like to you?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: You always felt privileged since day one when joining the company . Truly, I mean whatever was my job and was 24. And of course now I've got a few more years. I always felt privileged of being there in this very special place. I feel privileged because if you love innovation again for the greatness of the world, the greatness also of the results you can bring to the world and you can only love the company for that matter. If you also love working with incredible people, you've got to love our company. I mean we have the privilege to work with so amazing talents. It doesn't matter about their titles actually people, junior people, entry level people all the way of course CEO of the companies. It's always something very interesting. And when I meet with Microsoft alumni who left the company years back, they told you, JP, what's missing the most is the quality of the people, the talents we had as a company.

Truly we don't realize unless we are outside the company, the density of the talents, the people as well you love. So I got this privilege really early on to learn about innovation, to learn the impact we can have in the world. Impact of course in selling, impact of using our software and services today of course is Cloud and AI and the way you can bring your small share of added value to the place where you live as a citizen as well. And to me, this is part of the lives of all of our people. They are Microsoft employees, but they're families. They're part of communities. They live somewhere in the world, in this global world and this sense of pride I had, I think is shared by so many of our people, this pride of being in such a special place again, where they can learn, they can innovate themselves, they can actually add more value to the company, but they add more value because of the way they translate innovation

into a meaningful reserve for people and organizational lives in the world. And I think that's very unique and that's very, very special.

Becky Monk: It absolutely is. Let's talk about what you are most proud of in your career. I know there's probably several things because 40 years, but what would you say you're most proud of?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: This is one of the shots we should retake probably as I think more about it. But anyway, I think a couple of things I feel the most proud of. I will always start with people, people, people, people. What I feel the most proud of after those 40 years is the amazing people I got to work with. I got to support, I got to mentor or coach for a number of them as well. When I see them years after, when I see them not just within Microsoft, after Microsoft, everywhere in different lives, and the kind of leaders they are, the kind of people they are and I'm saying, wow, that's something I feel a bit part. Of course I'm not the only one, I'm the naive because we working with many talented people, Microsoft and elsewhere as well. But somehow I think being part of that journey with a number of those people, and again, different levels, not necessarily just the country managers, but many, many talents I'm still connected with across LinkedIn and many other social media these days.

That to me is one of the thing I'm the most proud of, is the quality, the values of these people and the way that they've been positively impacting as well others in their countries or globally. That would be one thing. The second thing I would say probably is this unique relationship with the company, number one as a non-American French European citizen proudly, and being part of senior leadership team for many years in the company and being in a way that only kind of non-American voice bringing the world into Redmond into the company. And I think that's something incredibly important for the company today and tomorrow. It is the way we embrace the world truly, and making sure we keep ourselves honest about the reality of the world with the people we have on the

ground and not design everything from Redmond with the pre-definition of the way the world should work from Redmond view standpoint, but truly infusing into Redmond.

I think the wonderful, I would say knowledge and vibrancy of the world into Microsoft corporation in Redmond. So that to me is something I've been always passionate about, the way I could bring that to life, I would say in a constructive way, in a stimulating way, in a pushy way from time to time for sure as well, to make sure that again, both ends of the companies come together as one. When we talk about one Microsoft, that's the way I think about my run with Microsoft. I think about those 220 plus countries in the world actually where we have Microsoft people, partners, agents, whatever and beyond the subsidiaries we have in the world and the way we're truly impacting day by day so many lives in the world. And I think that global awareness and ability to be relevant everywhere is pretty amazing and we need to keep developing that capability as a company.

Becky Monk: Have you been the voice that is constantly on Bill and Steve and Satya's shoulder going "The world, one Microsoft, the world"? Have you been that person that is the global voice in their ear this whole time?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: I think I've been, because when you think about the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of country visits I've done in my life, which is mind blowing and which I love doing all the time, which were basically weeks of visits where like 12 to 15 meetings a day with customers, partners, media, governments, people, town so on. I was presenting the world of Microsoft in each one of those country visits. I was not confused, never. And I knew I was bringing that global view of the world of the company and people talking to me, to JP in my different capacities. Were talking to a global executive of the company and that to me has been always something I was very sensitive to, very much appreciative of. This is

also where, as I said before, I try as well to embrace the local culture and relevance into the globality. We said, you are part of the globality and what you bring there right here in Japan, right there in South Africa will make a big difference to the big global Microsoft. And we need to hear your voice, we need to support you, but you need as well to bring along the Microsoft culture, Microsoft values in your countries. And when you realize that and you bring the magic of those two factors of vibrancy, you get something very special.

Becky Monk: Absolutely. Absolutely. Was there a moment where you realized the impact and the scope that Microsoft was having on the world? Because when you started, you were selling and you were trying to make those inroads, but where was that moment when you realized, hey, we've got something here and it's huge?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: I think there were a number of moments. I mean, first of all, I would say, and again, it's something that people realize after they leave Microsoft, even when they join other big companies, we have this incredible privilege. When you say I work for Microsoft, I can tell you that opens so many doors, so many doors to all the tops of the business community, to all the tops of government leaders to all the tops of thinkers and so on and so forth. And I've seen that early on. Of course, this phenomenon has grown up and has amplified year after year, given where the company, of course the company evolved, I would say it was a moment where I realized that something big was having in the world of course, was the, of course epic Windows 95 launch, which was like an amazing moment to realize physically in French stores of retail PCs and software being sold, people queuing outside to buy their package copy of Windows 95.

And then you realize, wow, at the time as well, I remember when Bill was visiting France as an example, and he got to meet with the president of the country. He got to meet with, I mean the most

prestigious people in the countries and you could see the, not just the attractiveness, the incredible attention of some of those top people, of those countries listening to Bill, listening to Microsoft vision, listening to the view of the world we had beyond just the software. And I realized early on at the time that this is a very particular power we have. This is a power that needs to be again, really protected, really nurtured, and really making sure we never lose sight of the reality of that huge privilege and the way we need to take care of it responsibly because this is an incredible, again, opportunity we have that you cannot waste that opportunity with people and you cannot waste their trust. You cannot destroy their values. So you've got to truly deliver extremely professionally in every shape or form with each one of our customers all the time.

Becky Monk: What can the folks who are leading the company from here on your 40 years are done now, but what can they do to keep that alive, to keep just that momentum going forward?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yeah, I would say a few things coming to my mind. The first one is always connect your personal "raison d'etre," as we in French, so you understand that your purpose, your "Why you're here," with the why of your customers, the why of your countries and the why of our company. To me it's critical that each one of our people, whoever they are, whatever the job is, believe and see the incredible power, again, incredible capacity. They have to grow themselves, fulfilling themselves, fulfilling their mission in lives through their jobs. The job they have is not just a job. This opportunity to again accomplish their mission with the back of our company, with the support of the platform of our company. And in doing that, it would enable the missions of a company to be achieved with our clients and customers. So to me, in order to continue the way our company has grown, evolved our culture, we always need to really take care of that personal sense of belonging of our people, one by one, on the "why" they decided every day to show up in their jobs and Microsoft.

And that why has been to be clearly lived by the people one by one and the way they see our companies achieving its mission every day and the way they contribute to that. That to me is the most important piece in many ways by far. It's always about the "why," we decide to be here or not there. And if not as sat here, recall our people, it's okay, move on and move on with your life somewhere else. The day you are not convinced anymore that this is not the way you realize your "why." And that to me is the beauty of what's in the company to preserve for the future.

Becky Monk: I love that. I love how you talk about the "why" every time, and I think I'm going to start talking about it that way because we do need to think about that for the Alumni Network, for Microsoft, for everything we're in our "why" is what drives us. It is like you said, the purpose. It is the purpose. If you could go back and talk to that young man who started at Microsoft in 1984 on that first day, what would you tell him now that you have these 40 years of wisdom behind you?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Well, I would tell you actually never waste any minute of your time not learning something else, something new. Always. I would say I don't think I wasted so many minutes of my time not learning, but I could always have done more in terms of learning. Learning from different angles, learning from again our engineering teams, learning from our customers, learning from our, again, support functions and so on and so forth. So that'd be something I would really push a lot more probably. I would also tell that young man, yeah, go around the world. I've done that a few times for sure as you know. But go and explore different places of the world and maybe relocate there as well. I relocated once in the US in Redmond a couple of years, my family, and it's been truly a transformational experience for my family over was just two years.

But it's still ingrained in the minds of my kids who at the time were super young because of they have a much better accent myself.

They're truly bilingual, which I'm not. And there they all have an incredible pleasure to go back to Seattle area and being there. So in a way relocating, exploring not just Redmond of course, the US, but elsewhere in the world as well, because so much into your own development you can learn by immersing yourself in a very different society, you and your family as you do your jobs and go outside of your area of comfort as well. So do that. I mean if not most of the time, do that, do and explore more than you think you can do. Actually allow yourself to explore and take more risk actually.

Becky Monk: Is there anything during your career at Microsoft that you wish you would have done that you didn't explore that you didn't get to do?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Yeah, one point because at some discussion to be candid about not moving to the US, which I did, but actually taking a pretty big product marketing job in the company, so working with a product and engineering teams at the time, and that's something I've been debating with myself afterwards saying, wow, maybe it's something I should have done. I don't have any regrets by the way. I'm not someone living with regrets in my life, never ever. But it's something I would say overall and still today, I would always really highly recommend our people and also leadership team by the way, to encourage and support career moves where we move people, not just across the world, which is a good thing to do by the way, but across functions. And particularly if I oversimplify between again, the field, the Go To Market teams and the engineering teams. And I think there's a number of ways to do that and we've done that from time to time, but there are very few people who truly have been really living in both worlds and have a deeper position of each one of the worlds. And I think it's something the company will need a lot more moving forward. Any global company that is innovative needs to really create an incredible harmony between the people, again, building innovation and people selling that innovation. And so when you can have those people moving across

to learn from the organization doing it, I think that would be actually a great bonus for the company.

Becky Monk: Why is that vital in your mind?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: To me it's vital because as you are selling products and services, which I've done for 40 years plus of my life, I think you never realize and appreciate enough the art and the challenges of building today cloud services and providing them. I mean you get some more understanding after year of course because you discuss many of those people and so on that as you've never been really leaving kind of their lives in middle of their orgs day and night. You don't fully capture what it takes in terms of the cycles, in terms of the decision making process, in terms the way the customer feedback looks, makes sense, or not at what point they would actually get involved with clients, the way you recover from outages and big issues or cybersecurity issues, which obviously is very critical and very challenging for everyone in the company and outside of the company. So that's something I would highly recommend us to do more of actually.

Becky Monk: I love that. What do you think the company's legacy is right now?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: I believe our company has a shot to leave an incredible mark in history. And the starting point to me is the fact Microsoft is a mission led company and what it means to me. It means that as we all enter this fascinating, exciting, amazing new generative AI era, we have the opportunity. Microsoft has the opportunity to truly empower every person, every organization, every country, to realize its potential by harnessing the power of AI to truly be in service to the people, to humanity, and to the world and the planet.

Becky Monk: What do you want people to think about your legacy for the company?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: The thing I'm the most proud of after 40 years in a company... it is definitely the people. It's the privilege I had to work with and work for very amazing and special people. It is the hundreds of talents I've been able to hire across 120 countries in the world. But more importantly, it is the quality time I could dedicate to their coaching development, to learning from them [00:00:30] as they were stepping up, taking on big leadership roles in our company. And sometimes that's a of our company as well. But at the end of the day, what matters the most to me is when I could see them - and I can see them today - embodying the core values of Microsoft and truly leaving our culture day in and day out.

Thinking about your own legacy is very humbling, especially in a company at Microsoft. So, if I could have, for any kind of legacy, I would definitely opt for embodying a positive leadership at a global scale. So, what do I mean by that? I mean really three things. First of all, it's about really deeply connecting the personal mission of every employee with the broader mission of our company. Secondly, it's about modeling, coaching, and caring for every person, but also every team and all the teams of teams. And last not least, it's about really bring together this positive impact to our customers or partners or countries and driving that altogether.

Becky Monk: I think all of those people that have talked to you and told you that really you're right, they are your legacy. That is amazing. In our last few minutes, is there anything else that you really think we should talk about?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Well, I think in a way, I don't know. In a way we have learned as well in the company at Microsoft, we talked a lot about, again, the way I think about that social environmental kind of value we deliver at the call of the business and the generosity we can have as a company as well somehow is something I learned a lot from. I learned a lot from founder Bill Gates and other people, amazing

people like Jeff who was actually having dinner with Jeff and Trisha just two nights ago in Paris here, which was wonderful.

And you see someone like Jeff who's doing a wonderful job with his foundation and some other people and I'm must say is been an incredible learning for me as a person on the way I feel the needs only for a number of years now, which I started to do. And I will do a lot more to give back, to give back to many others in the world, to give back to many others who don't have the privilege I had who don't have all the access to incredible ecosystems of people and support and help that I had that it could benefit from in their lives. So in a way that maybe the last, maybe it could be the last topic in a way we could discuss.

Becky Monk: Absolutely. I know so many people, I love that you mentioned Jeff and Tricia Raikes and Microsoft does have this amazing legacy of social impact and the giving campaigns and corporate philanthropy, and I'd love to know how that impacted your life and how you carry that forward because you were involved at the company, but how does that affect your personal life?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: I must say have been really incredibly inspired very early on by well, our founder Bill himself. I recall flying over country with Bill when he were still the CEO of the company and the last few years of him as a CEO and you were sharing with me some incredible readings he was having on Malaria, on medical science and research on the work he was about to do with his foundation. He was already, you could say Bill's incredible passion, intellectual capacity, of course is outstanding. And you could see him already going there with his mind, which he did. And years in advance, he said, at this age I would pass the bat. He did it, which is pretty incredible. And he dedicated his life to do what he do and Billy is not the only one, as we know, he's an incredible example. We have tons of incredible people at different levels of the company who love to give back, who love to support and help others.

And so that has inspired me a lot and I've been able both within the Microsoft roles I had, as I said before, to launch some amazing initiatives where we could bring the best of our company, of our peoples back to society. And then I decided to then myself as well with my own foundation in my home country in France called Live For Good, which I created with my family nine years ago in memory of my late son Gabrielle as well. And where we decided as a mission for this foundation to reveal the potential of use from works of life through search entrepreneurship. So in other words, to help use from all horizons coming from suburbs disabilities, but also graduate and so on and so forth, to get them as a community to learn how to build an impact startup and to do that at scale and the time I've been spending coaching those young people from all across my home country and being inspired by them as I coach them as well.

So it's like a two-way coaching relationship in a way with reverse coaching as well has just been amazing. And so clearly I think one of the big legacy I have from the company, which is a wonderful gift, is I've been learning that caring, I would say dimension, that all of our people are in themselves and the way we can bring into the world, both in our jobs, by the way, at the core of the company. And I'm not naive about what the jobs are we have to do every single day, but we have ways to do that, but also in our lives as we have the choice in visually, collectively to make a positive impact in the world. And that's something that being incredibly grateful about in terms the learning and for so many decades. Looking at some amazing leaders, amazing people who again, across the anti-company and across the world doing that day in and day out.

Becky Monk:

You summed that up so beautifully. Can you just one more time, maybe in 30 seconds, tell me what Live for Good Foundation is doing?

Jean-Philippe Courtois: So Live for Good mission is to unleash the potential of use from all works of life through impact entrepreneurship. So what we do, we bring cohorts of 15 young people at a time and we do that during nine months and we develop their positive leadership and we develop their ability to get started with an impact startup, a startup that has a positive impact on environment, on social inclusion and governance as well.

Becky Monk: Perfect. Alright, thank you. I know it's late, very late there and I appreciate you taking the time. Have a good evening and have a wonderful time with all the folks that are coming in to celebrate with you for the Olympics.

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Thanks a lot, and thanks for what you're doing. It's fantastic to get not just me obviously, but all those Microsoft people's legacy and have some video archives of that I think is wonderful.

Becky Monk: Wonderful. Well thank you. Thank you. And it's been a pleasure to meet you. Have a good night. Same as well.

Jean-Philippe Courtois: Take care. You too. Bye-Bye bye.