Oral History of Steve Guggenheimer

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 Steve Guggenheimer as conducted by Becky Monk on October 10, 2024 via Microsoft Teams. 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: Once again, thank you for doing this, Steve. What I would love to start with is what we're starting everybody with: your name and the years you were at Microsoft. Let's start there.

Steve Guggenheimer: My name is Steve Guggenheimer. I joined Microsoft I believe October 18th, 1993, and I left Microsoft in September of 2020.

Becky Monk: Fantastic. Maybe a 30-second soundbite of what you did there. What was your role? What were your roles? I know it's too much to do in 30 seconds, but let's try.

Steve Guggenheimer: I had a pretty good run for 27-plus years. A variety of roles, mostly sort of bridging technology and customers and partners. I've

got a physics background, but I'm not a coder by trade, so was able to translate, so worked on product teams, worked on segment teams. Ultimately became a corporate vice president, ran both our hardware and our software ecosystems and finished up doing a little work on AI.

Becky Monk: Fantastic, so that's the great establishing piece that we need from everybody, so no worries.

Steve Guggenheimer: Was that okay?

Becky Monk: Absolutely, absolutely. Let's go back then to the very beginning. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

Steve Guggenheimer: I was born in Massachusetts, but I only lived there till I was two and then lived overseas for four years. My dad was in the military, so I had what I call the impressionable years, junior high and high school in Southern California. Went to university in Northern California, took my first job at a laser company and went to grad school part-time where I ultimately ran into a gentleman named Jabe Blumenthal doing a case study on Microsoft and that landed me in the state of Washington in 1993.

Becky Monk: Fantastic. When you were growing up in a military family, what was that like? Were you traveling around a lot? Was it super strict? What was the family dynamic like?

Steve Guggenheimer: Growing up in a military family? It is fun. I mean, when you live on base, there's lots of kids around you. My dad retired when I was still reasonably young, and so then we just had, I'll call it a normal suburban upbringing. The funny thing I tell the kids today when I speak at schools, if you had asked me when I was in high school if I'd end up living in Washington or working for Microsoft, well it really wasn't a Microsoft. I never thought about living somewhere else or overseas for work or for all the other things that

sort of occurred in life. So you never know at that younger age where you're going to end up.

Becky Monk: Yeah. When did you find a fascination with sciences because you ended up studying physics and where did that come from?

Steve Guggenheimer: I think my life as everybody's has been mostly a journey and that starts in school. When I was applying for colleges, there was no internet, there was no online, so you kind of went to the college fair and you looked at brochures. I applied to UC Davis for an engineering degree and primarily I did well in math. I kind of liked science and my dad was a Double E, so I applied for that. I didn't get in the school... was impacted at some GPA I didn't have, but they said these other degrees are open. One of them was physics, so I was like, great. I liked physics class and so I not thinking too far ahead. I signed up for physics at UC Davis and off I went, and four years later I sort of managed to get through that.

Becky Monk: What did you think you would do with your physics degree?

Steve Guggenheimer: The question always comes up, what do you do with a physics degree? And the honest answer is I had no idea. When I started down that path, school was kind of my way out. I wanted to be on my own and be independent, and so I got into the degree I could get into and I got out in four years and when you hit your junior year, like, well, what do you actually do with this? The truth is most physics majors go on to grad school, kind of what they encourage you to do. It's either that or a nuclear submarine. I wasn't super excited for either of those. Fortunately, I'd had an internship. I kind of worked my way through college and I'd had an internship at Lawrence Livermore Labs. I worked on some lasers that were manufactured by a company called Spectro Physics Lasers, which is ultimately where I wanted to work, and so I managed to get into that company about a year after I got out of university. I worked in a physics contracting firm essentially in the interim, and that was the beginning of the journey.

Becky Monk: And so working with lasers at that time, what were the years you were doing that and what were lasers doing at that time? What were you working with?

Steve Guggenheimer: I was pretty fortunate during that period when I got to work at Spectro Physics, these lasers were used for research, so they were used at Lawrence Livermore National Labs. They were used at most universities. These were high power tunable, short time period pulsed lasers, and they used for a variety of experiments, heavy in chemistry, heavy in biology, heavy in physics, all the sciences. So I got to travel and go to different universities, national labs. I was a hands-on that worked on sort of special projects. So when a customer asked if it could do something unique, could you make the laser do this or that? My job, I ran a lab and we would do hands-on testing to see if we could make the laser do what the customer was asking for. And so I mean, that was fun stuff. It was when I graduated would've been from like '87 to essentially '93, or '88 to '93, is when I worked there. And I was pretty fortunate while I was working there, they had a program that HP had actually started where you could go to graduate school. And so I actually went over to Stanford part-time, went from work every day over to Stanford and worked on getting my master's degree. It took about three years to get a one year degree, but I was able to do that and work full-time at the laser company. And again, that's part of the journey on the way to Microsoft.

Becky Monk: And so how did Jabe Blumenthal end up finding you at Spectrum? How did that relationship develop?

Steve Guggenheimer: Well, to be fair, he didn't really find me per se. It wasn't much. What happened was is I was at grad school at Stanford and we were doing case studies and we did a case study on Microsoft and Jabe flew down for the day to listen to each of the groups in the class present their sort of view on the case study and their solution to the case study, and that was fun. And then we all went

and had lunch. So we sat around a table outside and had lunch. So I sat at the table with Jabe and it turns out it was towards the end of the year that was the final project, and I was going up to Washington in the summer to visit my roommate from Davis who was living there at the time. And so I said, "Hey, Jabe, I'm going to be in Washington this summer. I'd love to get a tour of Microsoft." That was my sort of... I was curious what the campus looked like and Jabe said, sure, and over time we traded some notes back and forth. So the next thing I know when I'm heading up to Washington, I'm set up to see him and I should say about halfway up the drive to Washington, I get this note that says, well, if you're going to be here, why don't you interview? And I was like, well, that sounds like a great idea though. I'm in Oregon, haven't done any prep work, and I'm like, I guess I should do some studying on Microsoft. I really didn't know the company that well at the time.

Becky Monk: So you did end up interviewing when you got up to Redmond. The interview process at Microsoft is notoriously challenging. What was your interview process like?

Steve Guggenheimer: So when you think about the interview process at Microsoft, I'm sitting in Oregon, I really, again, I don't know much about the company, honestly. I was using a Mac at the time. I used a piece of software called LabVIEW to run the stuff I was doing. I used obviously Office, but that was about it. So I'm like, I better do some research. And I bought a book on Microsoft and I was reading about it, but there was no knowledge of the interview process at that time. Today, you look online, you understand what the process is like. There was none of that. So I kind of show up. I've got some stuff that I worked on, I had with me and I'm ready for the interview and my wife drops me off at campus and they tell you you're going to be done at noon.

So I'm like, "Hey, come pick me up at noon and at the Guard Gate," or wherever we were at the time. And I start the interview process

and it is as challenging as they say, you get all kinds of different questions. And it's funny. I thought, "Oh, they'd want to talk about my background marketing or physics." Whatever. We spend zero time on that and all these abstract questions. And so the day keeps going and I spent the morning with the consumer group, which is where Jabe was at, and then in the middle of the day not knowing what's going on in the background, I get sent over to the Windows team and I spent my afternoon with the Windows team. Well, the first thing that occurs is my wife comes back at noon to get me. There's no cell phones in those days and I don't show up.

And quite honestly, she was getting pretty frustrated. I'm not coming out. And finally the security folks were able to tell her he's still interviewing and she ended up sitting out there for about four or five hours not knowing what's going on. I ended up going through with the Windows team with Rogers Weed and who else did I go with? And I ended up in the Windows half of the house, and long story short, three weeks later, I think I had an offer and three weeks after that we were moving up, but I found out afterwards I'd gone through the interview process. The Consumer Group had said, Hey, it seems like a reasonably smart person. He's a little cocky or a little arrogant. And so the Windows team said, well then send him over, I guess. And so I ended up with the Windows team. I might've been a little bit too brash at the time for the Consumer Group, but I fit right in Windows apparently. And again, six weeks later we were moving up to Washington.

Becky Monk: I love it. I love that I can kind of see that happening, right?

Steve Guggenheimer: Yeah, it was a pretty funny time. I only got that story years later and we had a good crew on Windows. It was super interesting interview process. I remember if you were worked for Avis or Hertz, what would you do with the cars to make yourselves more differentiated in the rental pool market? And I'm like, okay. I mean

these are the types of questions you ended up with, but super funny.

Becky Monk: So what job did you land? What were you actually hired for?

Steve Guggenheimer: I do. The very first job I had, I was working with partners. I did most of my career with not most, a decent amount of my career with partners. So in those days there was something called solution providers and solution developers. I was on the Windows for Work Groups team. We were working on Windows for Work Groups 3.11 — Project Snowball — about a month to ship. I landed in October and I started working on materials for the partner groups. I think Alan Yates was over there at the time and a couple other folks. So I was again working on the marketing slash/sales/whatever materials were relevant for the partner ecosystem. I remember I landed in October, whatever it was, 18th or so, and November I was off at Comdex working in the booth and busy using the software, learning how to use Schedule Plus, doing more email and starting to develop materials. Materials to be used by partners at that time for Windows for Work Groups 3.11.

Becky Monk: So what was your favorite part about joining Microsoft in that first year, those first few days when you got there?

Steve Guggenheimer: Yeah, the first few days at Microsoft, obviously you're pretty nervous. It's like in a completely different world. I wasn't used to doing everything through a lot of things through email. We didn't have a calendaring system where I came from the notion of schedule plus I had to get my computer set up. I sold the Mac I had at the house, went down to the Gateway shop in Redmond and bought myself a Gateway PC. And so I was getting the machine set up and loading builds, loading daily or weekly builds of Windows for Work Groups at the time, trying to learn everything. I was reading voraciously, talking to all the different folks around, trying to figure out a little bit what your job is and then trying to learn the

product and technology at the same time was trying to figure out what your job is and Microsoft was moving fast at that time.

There was still an MS DOS team floating around where Windows 95 hadn't kicked off yet, but that was going to be what was next. So we're starting to have a little bit of stuff on the side for that. My memory is I think there was some early networking work on T-C-P-I-P or some of the stack that was done in Windows for Work Groups 3.11, which is a precursor to 95, so it was really getting a feel for being in a bigger company, the pace and that amount of work that was going on and just finding your way around, getting your feet underneath you.

Becky Monk: Yeah. What was your next big gig with Microsoft?

Steve Guggenheimer: The nice thing about Windows for Work Groups, that project is, it ended not too long after I got there and we rolled off immediately to Windows 95, and so I was on the ground from day one with Windows 95, which was, as many people know, sort of a turning point project for Microsoft, and that was an incredible year and a half, two years. Chicago was the code name. I was doing all kinds of stuff for on, again, slightly the technical side of marketing. We wrote a Windows 95 resource kit. Myself and Brent Edington and others worked on that Yusef and Keith White, and we did, we built something called the Windows 95 preview program where we essentially got early, builds out to hundreds of thousands of IT professionals, got system put together, got 'em to pay for it. As part of the preview program, we did Windows 95 tours. I mean, we'd come in every weekend. The developers were all there. A lot of us were there working head to the cafeteria for lunch. It was an incredible period of time, both in terms of work intensity, work output, and then what was ultimately delivered.

Becky Monk: What was it, I know we talk about Windows 95 changing the world in a big way. What was it like to be part of something that big and

did you think it was going to be as big as it became when you were working on it?

Steve Guggenheimer: We were working on Windows 95. I didn't have as much of a sense. I hadn't been in the computer industry that long, obviously of what a changing or turning point would be for the PC market. The whole notion of plug-and-play and the ability to have lots of different pieces of software run on lots of different pieces of hardware and have all the interchangeability. I think it was at that time a dream for…dream's an overstatement… but something very positive for IT professionals and with Office 95 on top of it and the rest of the software ecosystem. I mean, David Cole did a great job. I remember him driving a truck in with every piece of software he could buy at the local store, and so the testers could run through all of the software. I mean, you don't know when you're in the middle of it, you can only look backwards and say, wow, the impact of that was bigger than you thought when you were working on it and more memorable as experiences go. That was sort of one of the most unique teams and one of the best sort of training ground for me in terms of everything about how, not just the company operated, but how the ecosystem, the OEMs and the ISVs operated and then sort of how to build and ship software at scale.

Becky Monk: Yeah, well, and it feels like that was the model that things followed on from then on. Am I characterizing that right or not?

Steve Guggenheimer: Windows 95 was a piece of a puzzle at the time because at the same time Windows NT was being built and Office 95 was being built. So 95 got a lot of a play. We did a little tree. It was a little bit more of the end user system, but NT we're busy going after the corporate side as well, and ultimately Windows NT server and Network. So I think the model was similar, but what you find over time in terms of shipping large scale is there were more teams doing it. I mean, office and Windows were the big teams at that time, but then we flowed into Internet Explorer. The Windows NT

team picked up, there were other server products coming along. They started working on Exchange. So I think it was a very strong model for what occurred over time, but that one was a little bit unique. It was just the scale and the focus and then just the buzz that occurred on the consumer side. I think the next closest consumer buzz was Xbox.

Becky Monk: When you did a good chunk of your time there as an evangelist really helping sell and tout the company, what was that like being a spokesperson for the company?

Steve Guggenheimer: One of the things that I got from the Windows 95 team or learned or you're exposed to was speaking and demoing for whatever reason, it's not anything I ever studied, but I did okay at doing demos and we started doing these Windows 95 world tours, big theaters with people in them, and there's funny stories about demos, but that became a part of sort of my persona over time is I ended up doing demos and then I ended up doing demos for Bill and for Steve and for Jim Walch and for other execs, Paul Maritz. And so there was, in the early part of my career, I was just sort of the demo person working along with the executives. And so you build demos and you'd work on, you'd learn the product and you do a ton of that and ultimately somewhere along the line that transition into not being the demo or but being the speaker.

Then over time, my last 10 years at Microsoft, I did a lot of keynote speeches somewhere. I have hundreds of badges from all the talks that I gave. I did a lot of EBCs, super interesting. It's something I still do today in other venues, and it is a great piece of the opportunity I got at Microsoft or many of us had at Microsoft, which is to be a spokesperson to do pr, to do on stage, and it's scary at times and there's a lot of learning to do, but the ability to connect the products that we built and the technologies with different audiences through storytelling and through demonstrations and through trying to connect with the audience was awesome. And a

lot of the early part of my career, how I met other people and how you end up sort of broadening your network was by being backstage at big events

Becky Monk: When you're trying to explain and convince others of the new products and what it can do for them. What were the big challenges at that time? The hurdles, because it was sort of still an early time in computing.

Steve Guggenheimer: I think when it comes to speaking and sort of evangelism Bomber said, I remember one MGX or whatever we called it at the time, that everybody in the company's an evangelist. Your part of your job is to represent the product and the company, and I know I was fortunate I got to do that. I actually used to, I ran the evangelism group for a while and the ISV outreach, but part of the trick in all of that is connecting with the audience. You have to figure out who you're talking to, what their level of connection is with either the products or the company or whatever conversation you're trying to have. And I always think of a speech or a talk much more as a conversation. I really want to have a conversation with the audience. I want to make the tone conversational. I want to make it personal.

I want to maybe tell, I don't want to say tell a joke, but start off with something light. Get everybody comfortable. Do something that relates to the audience so that they know you sort of understand where they're coming from and then have a conversation about the products or the services or the company or whatever the relevant topic is to help bring them into the tent and into the conversation and make them feel comfortable in the dialogue. And then that leads to either more conversation or more questions, or in many cases, a deeper understanding. The last few years I was there, I did a bunch with AI and early on, most of the EBCs and most of the customer conversations and the talks were, what is ai? I should you think about it? How does Microsoft use it, how do we think about

it? And just helping people come along the journey on something that's pretty new. They didn't have a really good grasp on, it's not the most straightforward of the technologies that have been built before. And so again, how do you help people relate to the technology or the conversation by bringing them in and making it a conversation.

Becky Monk: Yeah. How were you doing that when you were running the OEM business?

Steve Guggenheimer: Yeah. One of my roles was running the OEM business, which was a super interesting one. It's a very large part of the company at the time, and it's very dependent on the number of PCs that ship and then having the legal windows on it and you end up in instead of a big conversation with a lot of people, you often end up in a big conversation relative to the impact with a few people, the heads of Dell, HP, Lenovo, ASER, ASUS Compound, Quanta and Vtech, Samsung, Lg, et cetera. And then those conversations were always pretty interesting and pretty deep. There's a real balance between what the new version of Windows or any of the technologies we're building would do in conjunction with their hardware, what the pricing is, because pricing is obviously a key component of that. What all of the tools are that are used that go along with pricing in terms of incentives, we were regulated at the time, so I managed the Windows business when it was still regulated coming out of the DOJ, so those conversations were very different.

They were very high impact back and forth, and of course if they didn't like the answer, they're going to either go to Kevin Turner at the time or Steve Ballmer. Steve Ballmer knew that business inside and out, especially the numbers. So I worked hard on the relationship side, having very good relationships with the OEMs, working with them, trying to find the best balance between their objectives and our objectives. And those were much less, I'll say evangelical conversations and much more business conversations

that aligned with win-win between the technologies we were building, the technologies they were building, and ultimately our end customers.

Becky Monk: To kind of put this into perspective at the time, what were the challenges of getting Windows on the computers? What was the competition? Maybe paint that picture for people who don't know what was going on at the time.

Steve Guggenheimer: Yeah, at the time I stepped into OEM, I mean it was close to a $20 billion business across Windows and Office, so it was a big chunk of revenue with very high gross margin. We were a small team. The challenge we had at that time was piracy. So under the [DOJ] consent decree, we had to have uniform pricing policies. You couldn't price one OEM different than another OEM. So when we were running into challenges with piracy in India, piracy in China, piracy in other markets, and then you're also running into early days of Android and then you're running into the early days of Apple products competing at the higher end. And so our challenge was with a uniform set of pricing rules, how do you incentivize OEMs to not pirate? So what are the programs, what are the ways you can give more benefit for licenses that are sold, machines that are sold in a country that have legal windows licenses on them versus not?

And so is a pretty hard problem because again, you're dealing with a very rigid construct and there were creative ways you'd get credit for the equivalent of five licenses for every one legal license you would buy in a country was one way to do it. There were other sort of tools in terms of marketing. Ultimately there was a number of things tried. There was a period in time where we tried as a company to just let people know they had a pirate version, so just turn the background black. That sort of backfired because then governments knew we could basically have an impact on Windows remotely, so that's when Craig Mundie had to work on a program to make sure the governments had the source code. We worked on

our different pricing mechanisms that were all underneath the umbrella of the consent decree. We worked on marketing programs, we worked in market, so those were hard challenges, and at the same time, you're starting to compete with whether it was an iPad or whether it was an early Android devices, non-Windows devices, and so you had to do marketing there and ultimately the surface devices came from our inability to get OEMs to build sort of machines that were competing with the Apple at the high end.

Everybody was sort of racing to the bottom with high-volume, lower-cost machines versus taking on the higher-quality, high-end machines. And so that's where that came from at the time, was that want to have Apple compete at the high end, we need to have lower cost machines that performed at the low end versus Android and we had to go and fight against piracy in other markets. Those were kind of our big challenges

Becky Monk: And still to this day, I'm sure that everybody's still dealing with that as we go into. You've moved out of Windows 95 and you worked on a number of other programs. I know when I was talking to folks about talking to you, they said, oh, we think of him as the cloud guy, but what was your run?

Steve Guggenheimer: My journey through Microsoft was super interesting and not a linear path. I started on the product side, so I started on Windows for work groups, then Windows 95, then we worked on Internet Explorer 2, 3, 4 and then sort of pop back to Windows 98, windows me. But then I ended up doing some segment work. I ended up on a small business. I sort, how should I say it? I went from product and then actually there was a period in time where we were working on customer and partner experience, CPE and I went over to the UK for a year. The UK had not had great CPE scores. Sorry, let's start this one over. I'm out of order.

So my journey through Microsoft was not a straight line, but a ton of fun. I always wanted to be sort of in the center of the whirlwind,

wherever the action was, and I learned that coming out of Windows 95 because that certainly was center of the whirlwind and I went straight from 95 the week after we shipped. I think I was product manager number one or two on Internet Explorer and myself and Yusef and a bunch of other people went into IE and IE 2, IE 3, IE 4, so did Internet Explorer for a while, ended up on Windows 98, Windows Millennium Edition, so sort of stayed on that side of the house for a while, but then ended up there was a gentleman named Rick Belluzzo that was the COO that had been brought in and I ended up going to be his business manager and that sort of broadened my perspective on a whole bunch of other parts of the business.

Ended up doing work on the consumer side, so MSN for a while and MSN International with Moshe Lichtman and then again working for Rick. They were launching Xbox. I was there sort of when we did some of the early Xbox stuff. I wasn't on the team but working for Rick, he ended up helping out doing keynote stuff as a demo person with Bill. And so the Consumer Group was working along and then Bob Ley came along and we started working on the .NET services —HailStorm was the code name there. And so there was a whole bunch of pieces that sat under Rick Belluzzo, and then as the business manager I worked on and I did some consumer strategy work trying to link all the pieces together, went to CES, did the booths of the CES, did the keynotes, and then Rick left, and when Rick left an opportunity came up in the UK to work on customer partner experience.

We've gotten low scores on CPE NSAT, net satisfaction, and so the UK needed some help. They sent me over, which was a great experience. I got it a year in the UK to work on that. And then Orlando Ayala who sent me over there, and I think he was running sales, asked me to come back and work on Small Business and sort of operations for S-M-S-M-P. So I got to work on that, was kind of the shift from product. I did consumer strategy, that was strategy,

and then from that one I went did small business strategy from small business sort of strategy. In that work I ended up in the Server Group doing application platform work, which was Developer Tools, Biz Talk and SQL Server. Again, kind of a strategy for developers linked into evangelism a little bit there, and then that's when I got promoted into corporate vice president and ended up running ecosystem.

So I did OEM from there for five years. I did developer experience, which was developer evangelism and ISV for four or five years and then did the last couple of years doing some partner work for the MBS ecosystem and ai. And so it was quite the journey, not a straight line. Super interesting. I always told people that in Silicon Valley people went to lots of different companies to have different audiences and products. At Microsoft, you could work on anything from consumer to commercial, from small business and consumer all the way up to enterprise, a variety of products with one common thread called software. And so we're very fortunate I had the opportunity to work on just a huge variety of things without ever having to leave sort of the Microsoft umbrella.

Becky Monk: And you really got to see a lot of the big pivot points in the industry while you were there with Windows 95, but then the internet and then software as a service.

Steve Guggenheimer: Yeah, my time at Microsoft, the industry's gone through incredible changes. When I talk to people today, when we grew up sort of there, we had three building blocks: compute, storage, networking. We just wanted more compute power, 2 86 to 3 86, 3 86 to 4 86 depending, et cetera. More networking, 2G, 3G, 4G, 5G, DSL, at home, fiber, et cetera, and more storage. The kids coming out of school today have a different set of building blocks. They have AI. They have artificial intelligence, internet of things, they have mixed reality, they have blockchain. They ultimately will have quantum, and so they have a whole new set of building blocks.

They're starting from a whole new place. But if you think about in 25 years with that set of building blocks, the number of changes that occurred going from client to client server computing to the internet, and weaving that into, as you noted, services as a way of operating and now AI on some of the other experiences.

We've moved through these paradigms of the way the platforms and software are built, the way they're used, the experiences you can build on top of them. As a result, the number of devices that people have, the way media and content are moved around and used, I mean the world has evolved that an incredible pace and it hasn't slowed down and it's not slowing down and it's pretty amazing to be part of a company that's been in the center of that. And actually I was fortunate to work on projects that sort of went through each of those evolutions. There's not a more unique place to be for the last 25 years from a work environment, I think, than right at the heart of it.

Becky Monk: Yeah. Can you talk us through what it was like to try to shift the company inside to go from package software to software as a service?

Steve Guggenheimer: Yeah. One of the hardest transitions in particular on the sales and partner side was the move. One of the interesting changes in the company is when you move from each of these platform shifts inside the company and outside because each one is different. So when you move from packaged software to client server, you move from selling boxes on a shelf that people go in and buy to client and server access lines licenses, cals and sales client access licenses and server access licenses. When you do that, your partner ecosystem changes. The way you compensate your salesforce changes. You actually have to add an enterprise salesforce, which you didn't have to have before. You have to sort of add partners that you didn't have before. So that whole shift in terms of how you

compensate people, who you partner with and who you compete with, how your older partners view you is a shift.

And then the bigger one even than that was when we went from sort of the client and server sort of paradigm into software as a service into SaaS, and so selling IaS and PaaS. And so at that point you move from again, selling client and server licenses to selling essentially a subscription service. And so a monthly paid fee you can pay more upfront or less versus an enterprise agreement or these other types of licensing agreements. That one is incredibly tough because it's sort of a CapEx to OpEx shift for the customer. The field is used to getting these sort of really large deals versus these ongoing run rate deals. Kevin Turner was the CO at the time and there was a lot of work to figure out what's the right incentive model for a salesforce in terms of how much do you get paid for the new stuff versus how much you get paid for the stuff that keeps the lights on.

And there's a delicate balance between still getting some of the larger older style deals, but getting people started on the new software as a service licensing side, and that was a heavy shift and you have to do the same thing with partners. Partner margins change the types of partners you work with. Some partners make it through that transition, some don't. Some are happy with the shift, some are unhappy with it. So the only constant in my time at Microsoft and in this industry is change and the sales partner ecosystem, competitive ecosystem, sides of that change are as large if not larger, are as large or larger than the technology shifts. Let me just redo that last little bit.

The shifts in the sales and competitive and partner ecosystem side aligned with each of those technology shifts are actually larger. So getting the technology change is a hard piece of work, but it's done by a relatively small group of people in engineering. Getting the field models and sales models changed, the partner incentive

models changed, the competitive models changed. Getting all of that shifted is actually a larger piece of work and incredibly hard. And with each one of those shifts in particular the move to software as a service, that was just a ton of work and multiple year journeys to do that.

Becky Monk: If it was tough to turn the ship internally, what was it like externally?

Steve Guggenheimer: I kind of answered that with the last one. I did both, but I'll do it again if you want. So shifting internally is half the battle. There was some incredible product conversations in the early days of starting to build the infrastructure as a service model relative to our Windows server model. There were some tough meetings with Bill and Steve and the engineering teams around this is the hailstorm timeframe and post hailstorm when we're working on the early cloud infrastructure stuff that was being done and being tough, tough internal conversations. Those conversations in some ways were tough, but a really small group, the next group inside of Microsoft ends up being the Salesforce and getting the Salesforce model shifted, getting the way we incent people and the compensation models changed and getting people balanced between selling the old Windows server, Cal and S licenses and selling the new SaaS licenses and knowing you're going to shift from one to the other, but you can't sunset the first one until the other side picks up. Those were incredibly hard and long multi-year journeys of transformation and they were fun to be a part of. I learned a ton. Anytime I talk to a customer or somebody I work with today, I can look back on those transitions that we made as learning for how other companies and industries should think about their transitions.

So that was the internal one. If you want to do the external one, then I can do that and then you'll have it in two pieces.

Becky Monk: Yes, please.

Steve Guggenheimer: As much fun and challenge as the internal shifts and changes were with each of the paradigm shifts, the ecosystem shifts were actually harder because the partner models, when you move from a SAL model to a SaaS model, they change how much they make because we're now running the backend infrastructure, so their incentive model, it changes and not everybody makes it through that. And also the skills requirement changes who you compete with versus who you partner with. That changes, and so there's a new set of partners that you have to work with the OEMs and the ISVs ecosystems, that part's all shifting and they're shifting with the paradigm. So you have good control on the engineering side making those changes internally. You have pretty good control on your field side. You can pull those levers When you're changing the ecosystem, it's much harder. And there were times when Steve had to get on stage and sort of say, look, the world is moving to this software as a service model.

It means changes for the partner ecosystem. Not everybody's going to love these changes, but we are going to make them and we're going to lead from the front on this. You have to tell the street when you're doing your earnings, how you should be measured in a software as a service world as opposed to being measured in a Cal Sal world. So Amy has to explain to people how they should think about Microsoft and view us. So the broader the circle goes from the engineering building a new sort of platform model to the Microsoft overall, selling that model to getting the ecosystem and everybody that's involved from the street to the ISVs, to startups to OEMs to everyone else, the complexity just continues to increase and your storytelling has to get better and better about where the new world is and where it's going.

Becky Monk: Right. Thank you for that. Thank you. I really appreciate the breaking it down into the different...

Speaker 3: No worries.

Becky Monk: No, I guess I want to get at that's internal and moving out to the partners from someone who wasn't internal, from someone who wasn't a techie, what was the Coud and why should be there. What was the big selling point and trying to get the consumer to adopt Azure.

Steve Guggenheimer: Before I answer the question, let me just, there's never really a push to get the consumer to adopt Azure. Azure is what the ISVs use to build on to build services that end users use on your phone and on your pc, but no consumer gives a crap about Azure or Amazon AWS or GCP.

Becky Monk: I'm trying to get at the customer adoption, external adoption of the product.

Steve Guggenheimer: Well, why don't we say external adoption of products. How do you get consumers excited about new technologies or new things?

Becky Monk: Yes.

Steve Guggenheimer: No worries. I keep saying one of a fun aspect of the journey is watching consumers go through the multiple shifts as well. There was a lot of work obviously done with companies, enterprise companies, mid-market, small business, et cetera, on these platform paradigm shifts. It's a different view from the consumer lens. The consumer lens is really about what capabilities they can get. And when we started way back in Windows four work groups and Windows 95, windows 95 was a reason to go get a new PC because you could run a whole new class of application win 32 apps, so kind of more fun games or better productivity. And for a while we used to call it speeds and feeds. What the consumer cared about was when they got a new machine, what they could do on it and the new things that were unlocked. Then a little bit of that's still true today obviously, but over time things shifted.

When the internet came along, on one hand there was a piece of that for the commercial side, but for consumers, all of a sudden there's this window into this broad new world and that brings opportunity, it brings fear, it brings sort of good things and bad things, but the internet provided a new way of accessing information and applications and tools and sort of capabilities from a computer. And so that was kind of an interesting paradigm shift that sort of sold itself. Well then along comes mobile phones and mobile phones are essentially small computers and we've been through many iterations of them now, but that ability to not just have a computer with you to do all this work, but being able to do more on the phone and then tablets come along and tablets give you that experience and then ultimately televisions. And so what we saw over time was this proliferation of the technology that originally came in a computer that you used at your desktop to that technology being immersed in all types of devices.

Essentially anything with a screen had a processor and that processor that allowed you to use the same capabilities and over time, whether it was the internet or ultimately Azure and the SaaS services led to a set of services that you could use on any of the devices, you can watch tv, you can play games, you can do your banking, you can often do your work from any of the screens in your home or on the go. And as a consumer, they've come along in the journey. One of the challenges in today's world is the understanding and the use of the technologies on all of these screens for people who grew up with it, whether those of us in our generation or our kids and those who didn't, an older generation who sometimes feel left behind because they're not used to using all of these devices in screens and more and more parts of the world use that as their interaction model for connecting with them.

Becky Monk: Anyway, sorry. So when you're thinking about all of the things that you were able to accomplish at Microsoft, what are you most proud of?

Steve Guggenheimer: The things that I feel the most excitement when I look at my time at Microsoft, the thing that probably sticks with me the most is growing people. I think one of the things I feel the very best about was there I was able to have three people that worked for me promoted into that corporate vice president role, Kim Akers and Nick Parker who are both still there today and John Case, I was able to grow just a large number of people and the ability to sort of build teams, enable or embed a culture of sort positive match to the Microsoft values that delivered successfully on an ongoing basis. That's an incredible piece. The part you leave behind in terms of people is probably the most rewarding, and I connect with people who are no longer at Microsoft all over the place on a regular basis, and I sit on some boards with some ex-Microsoft people who are built companies.

It's the people and your ability to sort of have an impact and then help them grow into their potential. That's the most rewarding. I'd say that the next thing is just the huge community of external companies and people and network that I have the opportunity to work with and still hear from regularly. I mean, we had an impact on kind of the world as a whole. That sounds maybe too grandiose, but it's true. And I have the opportunity to work with a large part of the ecosystem, ISVs and OEMs and customers directly and indirectly, and those relationships and the opportunity to help them sort of through some of these dramatic shifts in technology is what it's all about. And that's still what I do today and I was lucky to be at Microsoft during the period of time in roles that allowed me to, for the most part, understand it, help shape it, and then help others sort of take advantage of it.

Becky Monk: What do you think Microsoft's legacy should be?

Steve Guggenheimer: The question of Microsoft’s legacy is pretty interesting because on one hand a lot has been done. On the other hand, there's so much more to come. You want the, I think at least from

my perspective, I want the legacy to be of positive change to the world we are fortunate to work on and with a set of technology that isn't limited to a certain geographic area or certain size business or certain class or place in life, it's technology that has impact everywhere. And so that is an amazing opportunity, but also responsibility and you want to think and believe that the company has done the best it can in terms of using and enabling that technology for the good of the people in the world.

Becky Monk: Fantastic. We didn't really talk a lot about your time working with AI and within the company, and as you talk about going forward, there's a lot more to do. I think that is a good place to talk about what you were doing with AI and the future that Microsoft can expect with AI.

Steve Guggenheimer: The last bit of my journey at Microsoft, there was sort of a heavy set of work on AI, and it was super interesting. AI's been worked on for decades, but at the time it was just starting to coalesce the Research Group where I was working on, I'll call it a set of building blocks for image recognition and speech recognition, but core building blocks that were reusable. I was in a group with [indecipherable] and Harry [Shum] world working on solutions. How do you actually build solutions that are specifically using AI for different business processes that ultimately ended up in MBS? The product groups were busy taking the building blocks and some of their own work and infusing AI into their products. And so as a company, we started working on a story around what does Microsoft do well? Microsoft is building core building blocks that the industry as a whole can use.

Microsoft is infusing AI into our core products, whether it's Windows or Office or any of the tool sets, and we're working on some new solution side. How do you put it into business solutions with sort of the MBS side and that framing of that story, some of the early work that was done on the technology side and with

partners ended up becoming a little bit of a life of its own because telling that story and trying to piece it together, we had a weekly meeting with Satya for the last two or three of the years in the middle there, specifically going through all the parts of the ai, and it was shaping the conversation both inside and outside. And there was enough learning from sort of how IE went from being, or how the internet went from being this separate thing to being just part of the fabric of everything we did and sort of taking that thinking in terms of ai, how it goes from on one hand, having a life of its own on the other being woven into the fabric of everything that's going on at the company.

And I think we had the hindsight of the knowledge from having gone through these paradigm shifts and now we're on the other side of that where it's becoming part of all of the conversations at Microsoft versus in the early days there was just a few of us telling that story and then a chunk of people doing deep work in today's world, everybody's got a part of that. And so super interesting period in today's world. When we grew up, we started with compute, storage, networking, just faster processors, more storage, faster networks. How do we build software on top of that paradigm shifts from windows to the client server, from client to client, server to internet. Now the world and Microsoft, you're working on ai, you're working on quantum computing, you mix quantum and AI together, that's going to be an incredible shift. We're not there yet, but when we get there, the pace of change and the scope is going to be in some ways far outpace or exceed what we've done to date. And there are other pieces to this. There's other networking with 5G, there's IOT type or device work. So there's a number blockchain, there's a number of new technologies that are pushing the pace forward and we'll create another paradigm shift, the most bullish between AI and quantum. Those two will really sort of, I think, change the landscape of the world in the future, and I enjoy sort of following along on that journey as well.

Becky Monk: When you think about the future, and if you were to go back and give advice to someone who is starting now at the company, what advice would you give them?

Steve Guggenheimer: If I were to talk to, or sometimes I still talk to people who are new or early in their career at the company and they ask for advice. I always think of a few things. First and foremost, you have a role and a job, whatever else you do, because there'll be other things you do. Make sure you do the thing you're signed up to do. Because if you do a bunch of other stuff, great, but you don't actually do the part you're signed up for. You're going to run it that you're not going to get credit for that. Now, assuming you're doing that, build your network, spend time with others in other parts of the company. Be a voracious reader. There's no way to do everything, but you can read about other parts of the company, you can try other pieces of the software. You can meet in other groups and learn about different pieces, be hands-on play with stuff.

Whenever new builds came out, whenever new products came out, I always played with 'em. I always tried to be hands-on using the products so that I could understand, at least at a basic level, I was either an end user or somebody who might work with these products, what they were like. So be hands-on, build your network, take the time to make connections in other areas and then figure out what your strength is or what you like to do and use that. I was a pretty good speaker and demo-er and product spokesperson, so I would get requests from other parts of the company to come show off a new technology or come help with a talk for an event they were doing. And I would do those because it was something I was pretty good at and it helped build bridges to other parts of the company so that when I needed something or needed some information, I knew who to call or I had done that. So that's not for everyone, but if you're a specific coder and you work in a specific area, share your skills or work with other parts of the company. If you're in sales and you're on a specific area, learn about others. But

whatever your strength and skill is and whatever you do, use that to broaden your network. I always say people still buy from people and people learn from people. It is good to have those connections and it's good to build those bridges and be as broad as you can in your base.

Becky Monk: Absolutely. That's what we're all about at the Alumni Network. When you think back on your time at Microsoft, how would you describe the culture?

Steve Guggenheimer: The culture of Microsoft? I always put the culture into three buckets. I always talk about the three eras of Microsoft: The What Era, The Why Era, and The How Era. I always said Bill was the What Era. When I first joined Microsoft and during Bill's tenure, what you got done was in many ways what mattered the most. I was good at getting stuff done and that served me well. The how you did it was important, but what was more important in many ways. So we were sort of what you got done is what mattered and just a grindy sort of hardworking direct culture, a challenging culture in terms of challenging ideas and everything. The consent decree and the DOJ sort of changed the tenure. Steve took over as CEO and I sort of said that was the How Era. We knew how to do things or what side of the how we did it was the next piece.

So the values for the company of bringing others along, competing but competing in a way that was viewed positively. And so we added how into the conversation, so what you did and how you did it both mattered and as part of the review process, part of the dialogue, part of the values. So that was the second chunk of the culture. The third I think of as Why. The third is why with Satya. It's a little bit of why are we here? Obviously we build great software, we have an impact on the planet, but I think the why matters as well. How do we influence the broader technology and world conversation around things like AI, around the ethics related to artificial intelligence, working with the world on security and trying

to help the world be a safer place in the technology landscape, in the digital landscape. So it's not just what we do, it's not just how we do it, but it's why we do it. Are we back to the thesis around what's the right outcome for Microsoft that's having a positive impact on society and helping the world use these tools and using these capabilities in the best way possible. And so I think there's a why aspect in the Satya era, which sort of brings all three of them together.

Becky Monk: Working with the three and having the 25 plus years at the company, what do you think is the secret sauce to having the longevity that it did and will continue to have?

Steve Guggenheimer: I assume in this case you mean Microsoft?

Becky Monk: Yes. Yes.

Steve Guggenheimer: If you think about Microsoft, I had this conversation the other night with somebody. If you look at companies that are top rated over the last 20 years, companies come in and out of that list. Microsoft is sort of the one constant in there and that's a pretty incredible and impressive place to be. And I think we're fortunate to have had three leaders at the right times with the right change in culture that have allowed us to continue to move forward. And combination of people who can execute on what you need to do today, plus people who can see around the corner what needs to be next. I mean, people used to ask what's it like to have Bill and Steve and Satya and very few companies have a Bill, very few companies have a Steve and very few companies have a Satya. The fact that we have all three and have grown them internally is an incredible statement.

I think back to the notion that you can stay in one company and have a really broad set of experiences has helped our leaders and our leadership flourish. And so we have leaders who know the consumer side, know the commercial side, no different types of

software, no different ecosystems, no different parts of the globe. I mean it's an incredible place that way and we're lucky to have some long tenured people there that have taken advantage of that and have grown with the company. So I think we're lucky. I think the cultures have helped. I think the changes at the right time in terms of leadership have helped. I think that next 100, 300, 500, 1,000 people all the way out to the a hundred thousand people sort of rowing for the most part in the same direction. It matters. It makes a difference the amount of time you spend as a leader at Microsoft working with the other leaders to try and make all of the pieces line up as best you can because there's always going to be friction matters. And so I think our culture, our processes, our tools have allowed us to thrive through these changes and we have a culture and we have a mentality of change is the only constant and sort of working with and living with change where a lot of other companies struggle with that.

Becky Monk: I feel like you were the ones making the change, and I feel like through all of these interviews, the personalities thrive on that change. And so I'm wondering, I've heard some good celebration stories. Do you have any really good, how did you celebrate the wins at Microsoft with your teams?

Steve Guggenheimer: Celebrating the wins at Microsoft was always fun. In the early days you'd have a party or they'd have champagne somewhere when it got a little bit bigger, like the Internet Explorer days, I'm sure somebody told you the story of taking the E and putting it on Netscape's front lawn way back when. And then over time the celebrations get, I'll say more professional based. You have a nice dinner with the team, people have wives at that time. So I enjoyed the Windows 95 and Windows for Work Groups celebrations and IE, but I don't have any outlandish stories related to those. Never my sort of calling. The thing you could ask about is sort of some of the funnier moments or funnier stories, which is a different angle on that question.

Becky Monk: Yeah. Do you have some favorite funny stories or memorable stories?

Steve Guggenheimer: So often you get asked about stories from Microsoft Days. I have lots of 'em. They're all over the map. They're funny, most of them. You can pick them in buckets, the stories in meetings or midyear reviews where it's two or three in the morning and Steve's up at an easel giving a math camp to some of us and we're sitting in the back on Messenger trying to make people in the front row laugh, which we used to do being down the bottom of Willows Lodge at all hours of the night. Most of the best demo stories for me in the early days were demo stories, were demos gone wrong and those were all classic. One of the first ones we were doing the Chicago roadshow or the Windows 95 roadshow and we were on stage and I don't remember what city, it might've been Chicago or Detroit, but we had all these computers on a table and they put the tables up on some blocks so it'd be higher so we could work for 'em.

And it was the early days of plug and play and Compact had this laptop you could plug into a docking station. Long story short, they didn't stabilize the table on these blocks and I go and push the PC into the docking station and the back leg of this table with 20 computers on it starts to come off the back and all of these computers on the stage, there's 2,000 people in the audience start to slide off and you could hear a pin drop as the collective gasp, but I caught the back end of the table and sort of rescued the table from falling and we got a bigger applause for rescuing the table than any of the demos we actually did. So that one was fun. There was right after Bill and Melinda had their first child, we were doing an early NetMeeting demo and I was in San Jose and Bill was in Studio and he's on a big screen staring down at me and we're talking and we had a Word document open and he's supposed to use NetMeeting to enlarge the truck, and so he's supposed to click on the corner and then drag it and make it bigger.

It was a joke about a moving truck and moving into his new house. At any rate, he clicked on it and the latency was slow so nothing happened. So he clicked it again, so he double clicks it and opens. Well, that's not supposed to happen, so he closes it, he does the same thing again. At which point I'm like, I think what Bill's trying to do is drag this truck and make it larger. It's not working well. At any rate, all I could see for the next hour was Bill glaring at me or maybe half an hour. He was not happy that the audience laughed. They loved it, they thought it was funny. Bill didn't think it was so funny. So all I had was Bill sort of glaring at me for about as long as the rest of the talk went and I had to check the next week to make sure I still had a job and things were good. There's a bunch of those. There was the parrot that didn't work properly on stage in Vegas in front of a couple thousand people and was uncooperative. There was the time the power went off, there's a few times the power went off and you're trying to reset everything and things aren't working. I mean, the backstage stories are highly entertaining and there's lots of them.

Becky Monk: Well, if you're thinking about a roadshow, how many cities were you doing? Whas it like a city a night?

Steve Guggenheimer: Oh yeah, those roadshows. I mean the early days, we did 'em for a long time. Different products. You'd pick an area, a region, and you'd do five or 10 of 'em over a two week period. And so somebody would go take the New Zealand and Australia because that was their home country and we would do the East Coast of the US or the UK. You'd go around Europe. I mean we would do this. We did it during the Windows timeframe, the Internet Explorer timeframe, even in today's world. And then when you get into some of the more senior roles, we would do a tour, we'd go to Asia or we'd go to Europe and you'd do a combination of press meetings, internal meetings, customer meetings. So there's a real routine to travel. The five years I ran OEM, I would be in Asia six, seven times a year.

I would leave on Saturday afternoon, arrive Sunday night in Taiwan, work all day Monday in Taiwan, half a day, Tuesday, fly to Korea, Tuesday afternoon, work all day Wednesday in Korea, fly Wednesday night to Japan, be in Japan on Thursday, work all day Thursday in Japan, half a day Friday and fly home sometimes add on China or another place and multiple times a year. So the travel and the scheduling and the roadshows. I mean my wife would tell you I spent a good amount of my career at Microsoft on the road and that's just part of the job back to the evangelism point and externally focused regardless who the audience is. That was one of the parts of my role and being a spokesperson, I enjoyed it and was good at it, but it puts you on the road a lot.

Becky Monk: Absolutely. I want to touch on at least one more thing about culture and that is Microsoft and the giving culture and the social impact. Tell me a little bit about if what Microsoft was doing from a philanthropic point of view, if that had any impact on your life.

Steve Guggenheimer: On the philanthropic side, I mean Microsoft in many ways, it sort of opens your eyes to what's possible both at a grassroots and a macro level. I mean the company and Bill and Melinda led from the top there and Steve and Connie and everyone else as givers. And then having the Giving Campaign where our money was matched was amazing. And we used it. We had a foundation. We worked on some cancer stuff. We still give to Hopelink and some of the other causes there. It sort of opened. We learned a lot about giving. I served on a nonprofit board for a little while I was there and now living in a small town in Deer Lodge, we use what we're fortunate to have to help here locally and it's incredible what small amounts do or amounts do in small communities, and so it goes much longer or much further.

That was a unique part of the culture and it always made me proud. Still makes me proud that the Alumni Network does matching, and I've used that here in Deer Lodge of all places to match the food

bank here. And so I think I had never worked in a culture like that before. I didn't grow up in a household where we had the means to do that, and Microsoft gave us both the means and sort of a bit of an education on doing that. And of course the Giving Campaign was fun. We had a lot of fun with it. We used to put different things into the pool there and we've learned from that. We use some of that today. We do a local charity event here every year, and my wife and I auction off at dinner at our house, which is something we learn from the Giving Campaign and that goes very well. And that's a popular item and we have a lot of fun with it. And it all stems back to what we learned from the Giving Campaign and sort of how that influenced us.

Becky Monk: I think when you talk about taking things away that you learned at Microsoft and using them today, you're on the boards for several organizations. You are doing this charity work, this philanthropic work in your hometown now. What are some of the biggest takeaways that you use on your daily life?

Steve Guggenheimer: Well look, the breadth of experiences and interactions, actions, I was fortunate enough to have at Microsoft at a business level and at a personal level. Those come into play on the boards. I sit on boards for a couple of Fortune 1000 companies, one Fortune 100 company. And all of the things that you don't realize you're learning, but you're learning when you're working at Microsoft in terms of processes, in terms of culture, in terms of go to market, sales, product development, all of those things get reused. And you realize when you're in these other conversations that we were really good at it as a company and other companies are good, but there's things that we can share that bring other perspectives into those conversations that other industries don't have. And so that's incredibly fortunate. We did a thing with KT once on performance purpose and sort of what you stand for.

And I learned a lot about sort of trying to help people develop and leading by example with sort of a combination of intensity and empathy, which is basically, I'm a pretty intense person, but having that empathetic side as well, which I didn't start with in what era of Microsoft, I was pretty hardcore. But over the years you learn that other side. And so leading by example with intensity and empathy is something I still use today, whether sitting on other boards, coaching a wide variety of people that reach out from Microsoft, from the industry or in our own community in terms of trying to make a difference through impact. That all stems from Microsoft and it is certainly not where I started, but I hung in there long enough and had enough good mentors and role models and people to watch and learn from that. You pick up a lot along the way. And I think being self-aware enough to learn from what others are doing and why they're doing it and how they're doing it is helpful. And you come out to the point where I am today and it's helpful. I use it a lot.

Becky Monk: Fantastic. Steve, there was so much about your career. I'm sure we just didn't get to, couldn't get in this amount of time, but is there any one other thing that you want us to really dig into?

Steve Guggenheimer: You could talk a little bit about ecosystem. What does that mean? Because that's where I spent a lot of my career.

Becky Monk: Great. A lot of Microsoft's success comes from the idea of ecosystem and building out a giant ecosystem. Talk a little bit about your role in that and what that means.

Steve Guggenheimer: Probably the largest, a large chunk of my career was spent on working with the ecosystem and Microsoft. At its heart, a big chunk of it is a platform company. And the success of a platform is determined by the health of the ecosystem. So if you're building a device platform, you need lots of devices to be built on it. And Windows, if you're building an experienced platform, you need lots of software and capabilities to be built on top of it. So the software

ecosystem. And so Microsoft success is partially defined by the health of that ecosystem. And I was lucky I got to work on both the hardware side and the software side. And it's a fun place to be because you're working with the people who are building on top of your products to make things that end users are going to use. And ultimately that's how Microsoft is successful is those end user devices, PCs and phones and TVs and other devices.

Those end-user experiences, whether they're in the old days, desktop software or they're service-based software and experiences today, that's what makes it ticks for Xbox. It's the gaming, it's all the games and experiences that are on the Xbox. And so I was lucky, I mean I got to run both halves of which gives you probably as wide a view as you can get working with people who build all of the hardware that Microsoft ultimately runs on was pretty eye-opening in the beginning, but an incredible base of partners and relationships. And then the next phase, which was the software side, which is both ISVs, people who built software for a living as well as developers, people who write code for a living and startups and students and enterprise level. That's probably one of the most rewarding, most challenging, broadest, broadest perspectives. Part of the work that I did.

And you're balancing because there are multiple parts to Microsoft now and so the ISVs, very few ISVs are going to do everything on top of Microsoft platforms and in some places are going to compete with us while they partner with us. At the same time, very few ISVs are going to do nothing on top of Microsoft and mostly true for hardware developers as well. So finding the right balance, finding the right way to make progress with partners based on kind of what we're trying to do as a company, while also trying to help them grow as a company and have the best relationship with Microsoft. That's very rewarding. Again, it was very challenging, but I got the opportunity to work across all of the most, if not all of the product groups, the different businesses. And there's no better

learning ground than trying to work on the ecosystem side, both sides of the ecosystem than there is for Microsoft.

Becky Monk: Fantastic. Anything else you want to touch on?

Steve Guggenheimer: No, we covered a lot of ground. I'm sure you'll cut and slice and dice. So hopefully it gives you enough flavor and stuff to work with that it's helpful.

Becky Monk: Absolutely helpful. I'm so grateful you took the time to do this and share your experience. Thank you.