

PUBLISHER'S NOTEBOOK

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Stephanie Secrest | East Bay Business Times

A conversation with Digital Fountain CEO Charlie Oppenheimer

First job: Home handyman.

Business philosophy: Create value for people and everything will follow from that.

How do you stay motivated: I am absolutely relentless in pursuit of goals. I just do not let go of them.

Guiding principle: Integrity, commitment and work with the very best people you possibly can.

Definition of success: The people who are working with me coming away from the situation feeling like they've accomplished something big.

Goal yet to be achieved: Digital Fountain becoming an icon that other companies aspire to.

Best decision: Deciding to license Digital Fountain's technology to other companies.

Worst decision: While we've been able to accomplish everything we set out to do at Digital Fountain, I agreed to take over the company without having funding lined up. It made the task 10 times harder.

Definition of leadership: Lead by example. Never ask people to do things that you wouldn't do yourself.

Biggest missed opportunity: I was working at Apple and Steve Jobs left Apple in 1984 to

start Next Computer. He called me years later, invited me to his house and tried to get me to go to Next. I honestly didn't believe in what Next was doing. But Next ended up getting sold to Apple for \$400 million, and you know the rest of the story!

Mentor: One of my best is a guy named Frank Marshall, who was vice president of engineering at Cisco Systems, and just a tremendous leader and a great strategist. He taught me about taking a long-term view in a very pragmatic way.

Word that best describes you: Relentless.

Like best about job: The caliber of the people that we have here.

Like least about job: Not having influence over how fast markets develop.

Interests: My sons and do-it-yourself home remodeling.

Pet peeve: People who aren't as dedicated as I am.

Most important lesson learned: You have to spot how markets are changing and seize those windows of opportunity.

Person most interested in meeting: Leonardo da Vinci.

Greatest fear: Not spending enough time on

things that are really important.

Idea of perfect happiness: A Hawaiian beach.

Greatest strength: Resourcefulness.

Characteristic most admired: Creativity.

Characteristic most deplored: People who don't live up to their potential.

First choice for a new career: Music producer.

Favorite musician: Santana.

Favorite quote: "The way to succeed is to double your error rate." – Thomas J. Watson

Current state of mind: High alert.

How do you deal with disappointment: Get back on the horse.

How do you deal with stress: Work out.

Exercise of choice: Elliptical trainer and the speed bag.

Question you want answered: How do people write music? I absolutely cannot fathom how they do it.

Most ecstatic moment: When we sold Airtiva to Yahoo.

BACKGROUND

Name: Charlie Oppenheimer
Company: Digital Fountain, the Fremont developer of patented Internet and wireless transmission technologies
Title: President and CEO
Years with company: 7
Career: Former CEO of Airtiva, acquired by Yahoo; COO of Oneworld Systems; senior vice president and general manager of the products division at Global Village Communications; executive at Apple Computer
Education: B.S., computer science, Union College; M.B.A. from The Wharton School
Residence: Menlo Park
Family: Wife Kathy, twin 12-year-old sons Jono and Greg



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