

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/silicon-valley-history-and-secret>

John Hennessy, Stanford University's 10th president, talks about how the future of Silicon Valley lies in supporting the creative environment fueled by the combination of universities, big companies, and the entrepreneurial spirit. The creative environment is conducive to innovation because you never can predict where the next breakthrough will occur, he says.



Transcript

Silicon Valley secrets.. What really matters? Well supporting a creative environment because I think we never know where the next breakthrough, the next paradigm shift, the next interesting invention comes out of.. We've got to have a creative environment.. We've got to have a range of companies.. We've got universities like Stanford and Berkeley and San Jose State, they've all formed part of the process that enable that mechanism of creativity to work.. You've got to have bigger companies as well.. Hewlett-Packard and Intel and big companies, they are important to the whole process as well because especially now where we often see that they are the primary customers of the products designed by smaller new start-ups.. There is some admiration for technological leaders; it's one of the few places in the world and one of the problems we all have is as technology people is that there is a show about policeman, there is a show about lawyers, there is a show about doctors, there is even shows like Dallas about business and the oil industry but what do engineers and technologists have? Well Home Improvement is about it! There is none.. So somehow we need a place to celebrate those contributions and I believe that is one of the reasons the fact that we don't identify and celebrate those contributions.. One of the reasons we have such a hard time attracting more young people into science and technology..

We need to do a better job of it.. I grew up in the Sputnik era.. Everybody was excited and understood that science and technology were important to the country and to the world.. We need to go back to that time.. I think fostering interaction is wonderful.. The fact that industry and academia see each other as each making a contribution.. Each a respected contribution.. Different in its form we work on research, they work on product development but they each are important is absolutely crucial.. Encouraging entrepreneurship.. having support for an environment that allows failure and having all the right ingredients, having a little luck..

Virtually every company I know that's been successful has at least been partly lucky if nothing else with respect to the timing and when they appear.. There are lots of good companies that get started they just appear at the wrong time or the wrong technology; missed the window, they're too early, they're too late and sometimes it's only luck.. They do everything else right they just missed out on that and then it takes time.. I think the product you see when you look around Silicon Valley is the product that many years of successful collaborations starting way back when, more than 60 years ago when Terman encouraged Hewlett and Packard to get it started.. They started on an absolute shoestring.. The first building they built after they had the garage where they first incubated their company was a building called "The Redwood Building".. It was a famous building; they designed it actually thinking ahead--always thinking ahead.. They designed it so that if the company failed it could be turned into a grocery store.. It didn't fail but they were thinking ahead and they were thinking creatively.. And I think it's that view and that nurturing of creative thinking that we need..

So thank you for your attention and I will be happy to take some questions...