

Joseph Bradley

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Joseph Bradley may not have been born with a spreadsheet in his hands, but those who know him well believe he was destined to succeed in business. His first idea along business lines was to get a paper route as a child. His father said that “paper boy” was not an impressive entry in a resume, and encouraged him to teach BASIC programming—at the age of 10.

So Bradley, with his father’s assistance, filed for a fictitious business name and set himself up in business. With a little advertising in the church bulletin and lots of word of mouth, Bradley soon began to work with clients. By the time he moved on to other things at the age of 16, he had 20 or 30 regular clients and a respectable savings account.

“I learned the value of relationships very early,” he says. “I got to know the people at the bank because I went down there to make my deposits all the time. They got to know me, and soon they were referring customers to me. That was my first lesson in business: people are everything.”

Bradley, who grew up in Mountain View, California, was highly influenced by his grandfather as well as his father. His grandfather, who began as a janitor and ended as millionaire real estate developer, impressed upon him that “you succeed by working through people and with people. You need to be articulate, and you need an education, but don’t ever forget where you came from, and remember to give back and stay rooted.” With such a firm foundation, Bradley had the confidence to secure an internship at Lockheed Martin at the age of 16, supporting finance and business planning in the engineering group. “I came to the interview with the financial statements from my business,” he remembers. “I guess they figured I could handle it.”

Despite his early interest in business, Bradley set off for the University of California at Berkeley with the aim of becoming a physician. “I think I wanted to be a doctor because no one else in my family had ever done it,” he says. Fortunately for the business world, he thoroughly disliked the study of medicine, and switched to the School of Economics, where he immediately hit his stride by starting another business—this time, by creating study notes for each of the undergraduate classes. He hired a number of his fellow students to attend classes and create the notes. “We made a killing. I think I paid my entire college tuition in six months. My parents were ecstatic!” And then he ran into another



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fact of business life: unfair competition. His business was undercutting the university's bookstore sales, and pressure from the chancellor's office forced him to abandon his thriving concern.

When Bradley graduated, he had his pick of offers, and chose to go with Pacific Bell's Sacramento Business Unit, under the mentorship of BU Vice President Chuck Smith (who later became president and CEO of Pacific Bell). Bradley alternated between finance and operations, and quickly became known as a "turnaround expert" because of his ability to galvanize "problem" people and organizations into success. "I articulated the vision to people every day. I had a clear set of metrics that I communicated to employees, and I followed up," he relates. "When you start with your employees and address their issues, the customer experience starts to improve. When the customer experience improves, the financials improve as well. We went from 70 percent customer satisfaction to something like 92 percent in a year."

Bradley joined AT&T's Advanced Management Program, and within eight years, was named vice president and general manager of the Data Communications Group. "I had learned earlier about the importance of communicating openly and clearly," he says. "But at AT&T, I learned how to *listen* well, too. I had to hear what people were saying and evaluate recommendations to make the right bets for the company."

His position at AT&T required a great deal of travel as well as numerous moves from city to city. Once, he and his family built a house, but Bradley was transferred before they ever set foot through the door. Tired of his transient life and attracted by the startup experience, he left to join C3 Communications as vice president, Operations. He was quickly promoted to CFO and senior vice president, Shared Services—and a year later was named CEO. He took C3 through their initial IPO and eventually to a position on the NASDAQ. But it was a bittersweet triumph; the dot-com bubble broke, and Bradley found himself in the position of breaking up the company and selling off the assets, working much of that time for no salary to assure that "everybody had something" from the demise of the company.

Again, he had no lack of offers, and he chose to join the Cisco® Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG). As a senior principal in IBSG's U.S. Value Practice, he was responsible for several key areas of thought leadership on a wide range of subjects. His work with clients drove such high levels of value and operational improvements for clients that he has promoted to director of Cisco IBSG's Economics Practice, and then headed up the Global Finance and Research Practice, which supported all of the practices with research and strategic planning.

Most recently, Bradley has taken on the responsibility for Cisco IBSG's Economics & Planning, a new group encompassing operations and business architecture in addition to economics and research. "Every engagement requires financial analysis, and almost 100 percent of engagements require some component of research, so that is still an important part of my job," he says. In business architecture, which is the process of translating technology into business solutions, he is responsible for transforming IBSG's customer relationships, scaling business solutions, and communicating IBSG's business messages.

Bradley has produced several thought leadership papers on economics for Cisco IBSG, including a prescient white paper entitled, "Next Generation Service Providers," in which he accurately predicted in 2005 that service providers' existing networks were not agile enough to bring new products and services to market. The subsequent erosion of SP margins due to incursions by over-the-top digital providers such as Google has proven him correct. In "The Economics of Innovation," Bradley pointed out that innovation is not just about invention of new ideas; it is equally about effective execution. (Apple conveniently provides examples of spending too much effort on invention and not enough on execution [the Apple Newton], and also exemplifies equal emphasis on execution as invention with the iPhone and iPad.) Bradley is currently at work on a book that examines "the shift from the 'and' economy to the 'or' economy." He postulates that the recent economic downturn has made such a powerful impact on consumers (largely due to the erosion of housing value and the loss of investment value) that they will not return to pre-crash spending behaviors for a long time to come. This will have a profound effect on providers of premium products and services—including service providers.

Bradley continues to engage with Cisco IBSG customers, though his role has changed. He is able to work with a wider range of companies, which he enjoys. One of his new roles allows him to work with Cisco Sales to a greater extent. "One of the things I get to work on is shifting our sales strategy," he says. "We want to be leading with the business issues—business architecture, business transformation—and follow with technology. The real key is delivering a high level of value to the customer by showing the company how to be more efficient, more productive, more competitive, and more agile in a rapidly-changing environment."

Bradley, who was a high school athlete, continues his interest in sports by supporting the Los Angeles Lakers and coaching his children's basketball teams. Unsurprisingly, his son and daughter are athletic, straight-A students, as he was himself. He also enjoys fishing, scuba diving, and boating.

More Information

Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), the company's global consultancy, helps CXOs from the world's largest public and private organizations solve critical business challenges. By connecting strategy, process, and technology, Cisco IBSG industry experts enable customers to turn visionary ideas into value.

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