John L. Hennessy

Chairman, Alphabet, Inc.
Former President, Stanford University

An effective approach to leadership

Biography

John L. Hennessy, PhD, is a computer scientist, businessman, distinguished engineer and a pioneer in computer architecture. He is one of the founders of MIPS Computer Systems and Atheros, previously served as the tenth President of Stanford University for 16 years and is currently Chairman of Alphabet Inc.

Along with his colleague, Hennessy won the 2017 Turing Award for their work in developing the reduced instruction set computer (RISC) architecture, which has revolutionized computing by increasing performance while reducing costs. The design is now used in 99% of new computer chips. Professor Hennessy co-founded Atheros Communications, a pioneer in WiFi technology and served as Chair of the Board. He currently serves on the board of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and Alphabet.
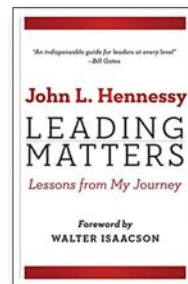
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John L. Hennessy
LEADING MATTERS
Lessons from My Journey

Foreword by
WALTER ISAACSON

John L. Hennessy
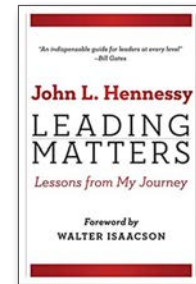
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Hennessy joined Stanford's faculty as an assistant professor of electrical engineering. He was the inaugural Willard R. and Inez Kerr Bell Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and served as chair of Computer Science, dean of the School of Engineering, and university provost, before being inaugurated as Stanford's 10th president. Keeping Stanford accessible and affordable to outstanding students was among his priorities, and during his presidency, Stanford's financial aid program became one of the strongest in the nation. The Arts at Stanford also experienced a renaissance during his tenure. After stepping down as president, he became the inaugural Shriram Family Director of the Knight-Hennessy Scholars Program, which is the largest fully endowed graduate-level scholarship program in the world.

His honors include the 2012 Medal of Honor of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, its highest award; the 2017 ACM Turing Prize, its highest award; the 2000 John von Neumann Medal; the 2001 Eckert-Mauchly Award of the Association for Computing Machinery; the 2001 Seymour Cray Computer Engineering Award; a 2004 NEC C&C Prize for lifetime achievement in computer science and engineering. He is an elected member or Fellow of the National Academy of Engineering, the Royal Academy of Engineering, The National Academy of Science, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society.

Hennessy earned his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Villanova University and his master's and doctoral degrees in computer science from the Stony Brook University, as well as ten honorary doctorates. He is also the coauthor of two internationally used textbooks on computer architecture.

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