

Entrepreneur Paper on George Kurtz

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George Kurtz is a well known and respected figure in the cybersecurity industry, best known for his role as the CEO and co-founder of CrowdStrike, a leading cybersecurity technology company. Coming from humble beginnings, a lot can be learned by taking a look at his long entrepreneurial career. Kurtz's ability to both find market gaps and then meet those needs is important traits for an entrepreneur to have. His ideas have not only advanced the cybersecurity industry, but have also set new standards for protecting against cyber threats which has affected the cybersecurity landscape as a whole.

Before becoming the CEO that everyone knows him for today, George Kurtz first started off as a child interested in computers and programming. In fourth grade, Kurtz would first start tinkering with technology by programming video games on a Commodore system. He would maintain this passion for technology all the way through College, where after graduation would obtain his first position in the cyber security industry at Pricewaterhouse Coopers LLP, an auditing and consultation business. At just 21 years old, Kurtz had a position as manager and would go on to implement internet penetration testing methodology for the entire company. Pen-testing is a way to identify weaknesses in the businesses defenses by acting as a hacker would in an attack. This means attempting to find and utilize vulnerabilities in the system.

After his time at Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Kurtz would career change and become an author. He co-wrote the book “Hacking Exposed”, which was published in January of 1999. This book summarized cyber attacks and how to avoid them, which is vital information to those trying to protect their computer networks, especially in the late 90s at a time where the internet and computers were still fairly new and starting to become widespread. Later in the same year that his book was published, Kurtz would go on to co-found his first company, Foundstone.

Foundstone was a cybersecurity consultation company that helped other companies protect their systems and assets from cyber attacks. In just five years, Foundstone would gain large amounts of high profile customers, such as AT&T, Motorola, and various government agencies (*McAfee acquires Foundstone* 2004). In 2004, Foundstone would be sold to the Anti-virus software company McAfee for \$86 million in cash.

Kurtz would then go on to become the Worldwide Chief Technology Officer at McAfee following the acquisition. He would remain in this position for years until he suddenly had an idea for his next company CrowdStrike.

In an interview, George Kurtz explained his sudden wake-up call that drove him to create the CrowdStrike Company. Kurtz recalled a time where he was still CTO at McAfee, and would frequently have to travel for the position. On one flight, Kurtz saw a business man open his laptop and turn it on, but it took a whole 15 minutes for the machine to fully turn on due to the slow McAfee program. After seeing this, Kurtz recognized that McAfee would have to make major changes to their programs in order to make them cloud-based and work faster. When McAfee had no interest in adapting to these changes, Kurtz would leave the company and look for investors to fund his new company so he could implement these changes himself (Bartlett, 2024). Now having this new idea, he created a 25-slide PowerPoint presentation that secured \$25 million in investor funding, leading to the founding of CrowdStrike in 2011.

CrowdStrike is a leading cybersecurity technology company with a market cap of 84.12 billion dollars. They are well known for their top of the line endpoint security systems. An endpoint is “any device that connects to a network from outside its firewall (Aarness, 2024).” Endpoints can include laptops, phones, printers, and other various devices. CrowdStrike and their Endpoint security is especially important in today’s world and will continue to increase in

relevancy as time goes on. This is due to the fact that as more jobs switch to remote work, the number of endpoints will increase. An increased number of endpoints mean that there will be more vulnerabilities and weak points in a network, leaving a company open to cyber attacks.

Today, CrowdStrike is continuing to push the limits of cybersecurity technology, and are starting to implement Artificial Intelligence into their security products. These new products use AI to analyze systems at much higher speeds than before in order to detect threats. On top of this, these new security systems can use previous data and patterns in order to predict future attacks. When used by existing cyber security teams, CrowdStrike's security programs will complement their own defenses, allowing them to defend against threats better and faster than before. This technology is still new, but according to Tony Bradley (2024), a journalist at Forbes, 'AI's role in cybersecurity is no longer just a competitive advantage; it is rapidly becoming an imperative. With CrowdStrike being one of the forerunners in this space, they will continue to gain market share as other companies fail to adapt to these new necessities and customers turn to Kurtz's company.

The more research I did on George Kurtz, the more I came to respect him and his background. He spent many years in the industry learning the ins and outs of cybersecurity and found a way to make profitable business not once but twice over. In particular, I found the story about his idea to create CrowdStrike very interesting. Hearing how Kurtz saw a problem firsthand in the slow security programs, and then instantly turned around to find a solution to the problem is admirable. An important attribute that separates Kurtz from other CEOs is his mentality that customers should always be put first. When CrowdStrike first went public in 2019, Kurtz personally made it his goal to meet 100 customers. He made this decision because of the high value Kurtz places on consumer happiness. According to Kurtz, "if you take care of the

client, everything else takes care of itself. (Doler, 2021)” This mindset is what keeps CrowdStrike’s clients happy and keeps them coming back. As an entrepreneur, this can be an important takeaway lesson that can give you ideas on what you change in your business to keep and attract more customers.

Another takeaway I had is the importance of having the skills to acquire investors. Kurtz was able to put together only 25 slides presenting his idea of CrowdStrike, and those were enough to get him 1 million dollars per slide in investor money. Another aspect I admire about George Kurtz is how he has been able to stay in the top of the industry for so many years, despite how much cybersecurity technology has changed. He had to adapt and keep up to date on these technologies in order to stay relevant, and this is an important trait for a cybersecurity companies CEO. New forms of cyber attacks are developed every day, and for a company who is based around countering these attacks, they must stay one step ahead of the cyber criminals. With George Kurtz leading CrowdStrike and changing the companies’ direction towards AI technology, it seems he is able to clearly see which direction the cybersecurity landscape is heading and aims to meet the needs that arise there.

George Kurtz's entrepreneurial journey and his ability to adapt to the ever-changing landscape of cybersecurity are both noteworthy and inspiring to those in the industry and entrepreneurs in general. His passion is shown in his long career and experience, from his early days of programming video games to founding two successful companies. Kurtz has demonstrated his ability to innovate and push the possibilities of cybersecurity technology. As CrowdStrike continues to act on his vision, particularly with the integration of artificial intelligence, George Kurtz's is set to leave a lasting impression on the industry for years to come.

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