



WHAT'S FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF LIGHT? TECHNOLOGY, IT WOULD SEEM. TODAY'S FASTER-THAN-LIGHT WORLD MEANS THAT TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING AT AN UNSTOPPABLE PACE. MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS, SHRINKING DEVICES AND CLOUD TECHNOLOGY ARE CHANGING THE WAY ALL OF US WORK AND PLAY. WE TALKED FOUR ALUMNI INTO SITTING STILL LONG ENOUGH TO TELL US HOW THEY ARE HELPING USHER IN **A NEW DIGITAL DAWN.**

BY FRANCI ROGERS

HIGH-TECH BEARS



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When Rick Welday stumbles into something accidentally, he seems to know how to make the most of it.

As a junior in high school, Welday's family had just recently moved to Texas from Michigan. Welday happened to be free one day when his dad encouraged him to visit the Baylor campus.

"I liked the kids, I liked the campus, and I liked the professors," Welday said. "It was refreshing to consider a school that prioritized Christian values. And I'm not sure I would have considered Baylor without making that trip with my dad that day."

Once enrolled, Welday immersed himself in the Baylor culture. He was a member of the Student Foundation, Sigma Chi fraternity, excelled in his classes, and made lifelong friendships.

But it was just before graduating, with a double major in Finance and Management, that another accidental stumble changed his life.

Because he had imagined a career in financial services, he was excited to learn that a large banking firm was coming to campus. He got up very early to be sure to get in line by 5 a.m. But at 7 a.m., someone from the placement office came out and made the announcement there had been a mistake, and Southwestern Bell was the actual company interviewing that day.

"I started walking away, but my girlfriend [now his wife] grabbed my arm and said, 'Don't waste the time you spent.' I told her I was not going to work for the phone company," he said. "But she convinced me that I should interview anyway, just for practice."

Twenty-three years later, Welday still works for "the phone company," but as the senior vice president of network care for AT&T Services.

During those years, Welday has seen a tremendous amount of change.

"The mobile Internet is the fastest-moving and most powerful wave of our lifetime," he said. "You almost have to go back to the internal combustion engine to find anything that has had such a profound impact on how we live, work and socialize. For most of us, the mobile Internet has become so natural that it's an

THE ACCIDENTAL EMPLOYEE

RICK WELDAY
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SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
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ingrained part of our lives and something we only notice when it's not there."

Welday recalls that when the iPhone first launched on the AT&T network in 2007, Facebook was just getting started, the Kindle was still months away, Android phones didn't exist, and unlimited streaming video from Netflix was still a year in the making.

Now, he notes, tablets are on track to surpass laptops, e-books are outselling adult fiction hardcovers, and more than 30 billion mobile apps were downloaded worldwide last year alone.

"So, mobile Internet technology has changed every aspect of my life and work: how I communicate with my family, how I share experience, and how I work. Bottom line, I am more connected, engaged and productive, thanks to the power of the mobile Internet," he said.

Welday also believes that more change is on the horizon.

High-bandwidth applications, combined with the cloud as remote content storage, create endless possibilities.

"Think about what that means," Welday said. "All the content that is important to you can be integrated and synced on all of your devices, including your smartphone, your tablet, your PC, your TV, and even your car and home."

And Welday loves it. "I thrive on change," he said. "But whatever I do, I'm focused on what it is we're supposed to accomplish and what our customers want us to be doing. And that's something that came from Baylor: we are to care, be impactful and strive for excellence. That applies to the business world and everywhere else."



THE TRAVELING NERD

STEVEN FOLLIS
BBA '10,
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CONSULTANT
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CHARLOTTE,
NORTH CAROLINA



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"There are not enough nerds in America," Steven Follis said. "Technology is a hot industry, full of opportunity, and not enough people to fill the jobs."

Follis, who got his undergraduate degree in Management Information Systems in 2010, and his Master of Science in Information Systems a year later, always knew he wanted a job where he could use technology to make life better for people.

Although he grew up in Missouri, his college search led him to Texas. He toured several schools and found that he had a free day before going home, so on a whim, he scheduled a stop at Baylor.

"When I learned about Baylor's management information systems program, that just sealed it," he said. "It felt perfect for me. And it was. Hankamer was a wonderful experience."

And, Follis said, he believes the holistic education he received has prepared him well for his career. Follis is a consultant for Microsoft.

"All kinds of companies—large and small, public and private—buy Microsoft software. And for most companies, it fits their needs really well. But for some, out of the box, it does about 80 percent of what they need, but it would be great to get it to do that extra 20 percent," he said.

"That's where consultants come in. We'll set up, teach and do whatever it takes for our customers to get 100 percent. And sometimes that means enhancing and customizing Microsoft software to fit their needs."

This requires Follis to travel extensively.

"I travel Sundays through Thursdays, but I have a plane ticket home every weekend," he said. "I'm going all over the country, meeting so many people. I love it. It's an incredible experience. Every project is wildly different from the rest."

And because of the nature of what he does, Follis likes to reiterate that people skills are just as valuable as tech skills.

"People matter a lot," he said. "Finding the right people with the right skill set is important, but in this industry, skill sets are changing all the time. Technology changes every 20 minutes. The skills you really need are problem solving, creativity and communication. The days of the IT department working in solitude in some basement are in the past."

Emerging technology, he said, is opening the field like never before.

"Tech, itself, is mattering less and less. It's about how you leverage it," he said. "With things like the Cloud, you don't have to worry as much about buying a bunch of servers and many employees to keep them running. Barriers to innovation have dropped, and companies can take more risks. We have more flexibility and more speed than ever. And that means IT departments have to change the way they do things."

In the past, Follis said, companies viewed IT departments by asking how they could spend the least amount of money and still keep the systems running.

"Now IT is seen as a profit center. We are who they come to when they want to get a leg up against the competition. We're more creative," he said. "There is a lot more collaboration now with other business units, such as accounting, with marketing. We're part of finding the solutions. We help other departments to better understand customer relationships and data analysis."

We have oceans of information about our customers, and we can make that information and make it valuable and actionable for the business."

Follis also hopes that current business students who are not pursuing degrees in technology take the time to at least learn the basics.

"Basic technology skills are truly foundational," he said. "You can no longer say, 'That's IT. I don't do that, so I don't have to care about it.' Tech impacts everyone, and you sell yourself short if you don't make an effort to learn it. Technology is not something to be scared of if you don't understand it. It's not all black and white. Embrace that gray! It's something to be harnessed and used to make your job and life better."



THE KISMET GO-GETTER

**TOYSHA
WALKER**
MBA '09

EQUIPMENT PERFORMANCE
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MICRON TECHNOLOGY, INC.
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In her nine years at Micron Technology, Inc., Toysha Walker has learned to embrace change. The industry has changed, their products have changed, even her location has changed. But the thing that may have changed her most was a chance sighting of a billboard in a new city.

Walker had been living in Washington, D.C., when she started thinking about getting her MBA.

"Personally, I said I would never go back to school," she said. "But you have to always be open to learning a new way of thinking. Do not think you have learned everything!"

Walker explored some options in the area, but when she had a chance to move to Austin, Texas to advance her career with a two-year assignment, she thought she would have to abandon her dream.

"I hadn't been in Austin long at all, and I was driving one day and saw a billboard that said Baylor EMBA," she said. "I called on a whim, and I interviewed the next week. I saw

where Baylor's strengths were: personal relationships built throughout the program, and the way they accommodate the working professional."

She knew she only had two years to complete the program before moving back to Washington, D.C. The Baylor EMBA 21-month program fit perfectly within her timeline. She graduated in 2009, and is happier than ever that she saw that billboard.

"I believe the Baylor EMBA program helped enlarge my viewpoint and helped me think holistically, especially when solving a problem," Walker said. "Before, I focused on just what was in front of me, my piece. But the EMBA program helped me think in a new way. Now, I always try to think through the whole process, how my piece affects everything else down the line."

As a program manager in the quality department of Micron, she uses that new viewpoint daily, as the technology around her changes.

Micron Technology is the only U.S.-based memory manufacturer.

"We make memory for almost anything you can think of," Walker said. "Cell phones, PCs, automobile rear back-up cameras, flash drives and more."

The technology is ever-changing, but so is the philosophy.

"We are no longer focused on producing the lowest cost product. We focus on customer satisfaction, and we know that the lowest price doesn't always equal the best; and people want the best," she said. "When people turn on their computers, they want them to work. They want reliability."

And, while consumers are demanding better quality, they're also demanding more convenience.

"Not only do we have to have quality, but we have to keep up with the next generation of technology. Devices are shrinking. Think of the first cordless handheld phones compared with today's small cell phones," she said.

"When consumers today say they want more for less, they mean they want more memory for smaller sized devices. That's a challenge for us. But we're doing it."

As for the future,

Walker believes the next change in technology is right around the corner.

"The future is cloud computing, and that is going to have a tremendous impact," she said. "With the cloud, you don't have to save photos and videos on your phone; you send it to the cloud. It doesn't take up memory. That means applications are going to run quicker. Devices are going to be able to do more, higher quality things and do them faster."

While some advances in technology are apparent only to those in the industry, Walker believes everyone will notice the changes that are coming.

"Consumers can expect some really cool stuff," she said. "For example, graphics are going to change. Next-generation TVs are producing higher pixel density displays that yield stunning graphics. The consumer will be able to see the fine details. It's an exciting time to see what's next."

bbr.baylor.edu/toysha-walker

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In the late 1970s, long before home computers and gaming systems became prevalent, David Wilson's older brother managed to gain access to a computer lab at a nearby university.

"I don't know how he happened to get his hands on it, but we used to sneak in there and play Star Trek games on the mainframe computer," he said. "Computers felt like black magic to me. I didn't really understand them, but they fascinated me."

Wilson found a way to channel that fascination into a double major at Baylor, in Economics and Computer Information Systems. But he still wasn't sure of his career path.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do until I was about 30," he said.

After graduation, Wilson worked on information systems for a few oil and gas companies as a consultant at Andersen Consulting, and while he was successful, he wasn't satisfied.

"It was tech, but it was mundane. And I had to wear wool suits to work in Houston in the summer.

I like to wear shorts and sneakers to work," he said. "I realized this wasn't me, but I still didn't know what I wanted to do. So I stalled by going to get my MBA."

That's when he discovered product management, and his career really got started.

"What appealed to me is that I got to do different things all throughout every day," Wilson said.

"What I did touched every area of the company: product development, finance, sales, marketing. I found that very attractive."

He returned to Texas, and he went to work for a company that sold high-end professional graphics programs to consumers, "back when software came packaged in big boxes," he said.

"Ink jet printers were becoming affordable at that point, and people could suddenly print high quality stuff at home," Wilson said. "So we started wondering how to leverage that with our expertise in graphics."

What they came up with was working with Hallmark to sell software to print greeting cards at home and with Crayola to sell kids' art software.

"We had fun building that into a pretty big business very quickly," Wilson said.

As technology evolved, so did his career. Wilson attended a conference focused on the Internet in 1995, where he got hooked on the next big thing.

"I remember knowing very viscerally that the Internet was going to change everything," he said. "I got the bug, and I just had to do something in the Internet space."

Wilson became the vice president of marketing for the Austin-based Usenet discussion site Deja News, and helped them to build a top 20 website.

"We had a blast, but after we sold Deja to Google and eBay in the teeth of the crash [the dot com bust of the early 2000s],

everything changed again. There were no more instant millionaires," he said. "After that, I took the approach that I wanted to build companies in a more capital-efficient way. So now I do whatever I want. I do things that spark my interest and are big ideas."

Wilson's latest venture was serving as President & CEO of Spawn Labs, which was recently acquired by GameStop, the world's largest multichannel video game retailer.

"Cloud gaming runs games on high-end hardware in data centers and streams the video and audio of the game to a variety of devices - TVs, computers, tablets, and so on," he said. "No one thought this would work, but we're doing it. We're doing for gaming what Netflix has done for streaming TV shows and movies."

As for the next big thing?

"The beauty of technology is that there are constantly opportunities for major innovation," he said. "It's always fun to see what's next."

DIVISIONAL VICE PRESIDENT OF
CLOUD GAMING, GAMESTOP
AUSTIN, TEXAS

DAVID
WILSON
BBA '87

THE WELL-
ROUNDED
REBEL