

***"Anything Is Possible"***

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***Commencement Speech*  
Haas School of Business  
University of California, Berkeley**

Thank you Dean Hasler for your introduction and for the honor of being selected today's speaker. I am delighted to be here and share in this most memorable occasion.

This ceremony is symbolic of the great many accomplishments that lie ahead for you in a world where Anything Is Possible! And speaking of possible -- it's possible -- no, it's probable that one day one of you will be standing where I am, addressing a new class of Haas graduates.

I predict you'll beat my cycle time, shaving it from 20 years down to 15, 10 or even 5 years.

The pace of everything continues to accelerate while truly extraordinary things are happening in our world:

- Who would have believed that we'd be singing "Hello Dolly" again in the 90's??? No, I'm not talking about the musical! I'm talking about the cloned sheep named Dolly.

- Or, that world atlases would become collector's items as the USSR would give rise to places like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan?

- Or, that 250 Chinese students at the University of Michigan, armed with a fax machine, would be the catalyst for political reform in China during the Tiananmen Square massacre?

- Or, that John Harsanyi, the Econ professor I debated with over supply and demand curves my first year in college would ultimately win a Nobel prize? (had I known that I might have gone a little easier on him)

- Or, given that I was born in a different country with a completely different culture, that I would be asked to deliver today's commencement address? (it sure came as a surprise to me)

But this is the kind of world we live in today. Which leads me to my theme:

"You are entering a 'Hello Dolly' world where Anything is Possible!"

## **THE WORLD IS CHANGING:**

This world is a very different place than the one I entered as a Haas graduate. But if there has been one constant -- it's change.

Change has certainly been a catalyst in my career, as it's bound to be in yours. Just look at the world since 1979:

We've witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall. Business is booming in former Communist countries. I recently traveled to Poland and Romania. I've seen with my own eyes how quickly these people have embraced capitalism. The demand for wireless phones is a clear indicator of their desire to catch up to and even pass the rest of the world.

I can tell you, first hand, these people share our aspirations! They want our freedom! They crave our lifestyle! Just as your parents wanted a better life for you, they want the same for their children. And they're going for it.

## **GLOBAL COMMERCE IS ON THE RISE:**

Global commerce is on the rise. In fact there's been a 10-fold increase in global trade in just the past 20 years, boosting the standard of living for millions around the globe.

Clearly, national borders are blurring. Cultures are merging. People are defining their own economic destinies like never before. Global change

has transformed our world into one marketplace where the currency is no longer money -- it's information!

Just as the world has changed, so has business. The top five companies in 1979 were AT&T, IBM, Exxon, GM and GE. Three have now been replaced. Two of those by Intel and Microsoft.

It should come as no surprise -- we're doing business in the Information Age! That's why Cisco, Tellabs and Compaq are among our fastest growing companies.

## **THE INFORMATION AGE:**

Today, people think nothing of carrying laptop computers and accessing the Internet. The first computer I ever met was an unfriendly, behemoth mainframe named, Bertha. She lurked in the basement of Evans Hall. And I had to go there in the wee hours of the morning with my punch cards and feel her wrath.

Now, people communicate with palmtops with more computing power than old Bertha. In just a few years, new satellite systems like Globalstar and Iridium will make it possible to make and receive wireless calls from anywhere in the world.

By that time, Bill Gates and Craig McCaw will have their ambitious Internet in the sky. Who knows what walls that will bring down. I'm sure even Bill and Craig don't.

And here, at AirTouch, we'll have a wireless phone that works on terrestrial or satellite systems, whichever is available at the moment. And you thought you were mobile now.

What this means for you is that you'll be doing business in a world where instant global voice and data communications is the rule, not the exception.

## **AGE OF DISINTERMEDIATION:**

With the advent of distributed computing! With so much information available on the Internet! With new organizational paradigms emerging! The business model for the new millennium will look very different:

Flatter organizations!

More collaboration across companies and industries!

More and more small companies!

Less and less monoliths ruling the day!

The AGE OF DISINTERMEDIATION is dawning. And without these proverbial "middlemen" -- the rules of business are in a flux!

Herein Lies Your Opportunity!

So my advice to you is, "think globally and embrace change."

## **THE WEAR AND TEAR OF GLOBAL BUSINESS:**

Your multi-cultural education here at Berkeley has prepared you for this world. But brace yourself -- the wear and tear of global business can be daunting -- even for the hardest.

You'll log millions of air miles. You'll be exposed to a variety of cuisines. You'll see things your parents only dreamed of. I can tell you these trips are exhausting... but they are always filled with adventure.

I vividly recall a recent trip to China with a team of AirTouch colleagues. We were pursuing a wireless license. We were meeting with an influential mayor. At lunch, our host suggested that I try two of his favorite foods. I guess the real question at this moment was, "Was Arun willing to Bite?"

I was. But it was only after I did, that he told me I had eaten silk worms and roaches.

Believe me, these are two delicacies that I had never tasted before. Yet, I found them to be absolutely delicious and my willingness to sample them gave me a new appreciation for a country I hope to operate in one day. It also helped me forge an important business relationship.

So if global business is your choice -- master the art of sleeping on transcontinental flights; catch flues that challenge every cell of your immune system; log late hours so you can actually talk with your colleagues and loved-ones in the States... and seek culinary adventures that expand your mind as well as your taste buds.

### **CHANGE WILL BE THE RULE OF THE DAY:**

Change will be the rule of the day. You must embrace change if you want to succeed. If not, you'll be left behind. This brings me back to our sweet little Dolly. What if the scientists who created her were unwilling to embrace change? There would be no Dolly! No matter what your opinions are on this topic -- and there are many -- it is a staggering accomplishment. One worthy of distinction.

### **CHANGES IN MY CAREER:**

As I mentioned earlier, change has been a big catalyst in my career -- starting with the most fundamental of changes -- leaving India. When I arrived here in 1976 with my BS in Engineering, I went straight to

International House and promptly contracted Malaria. I was quarantined for a week in Cowell hospital.

Three years later, I graduated from Berkeley with an MBA, an MS in Engineering and a new respect for tropical diseases.

You know, I studied engineering for seven years and I never practiced it a day in my life. I guess you could say that I changed the day I walked off this campus. And so will you.

My first job was with a consulting firm specializing in the energy industry. After three years I went to work for one of our clients, Natomas. Then I faced my first enormous business change -- we were being acquired by Diamond Shamrock. Everyone feared for their jobs.

But what seemed like bad news, ultimately paved my way to success. It was shortly after the break-up of AT&T. We were on the heels of an energy crisis. So, I changed industries and landed a job with Pacific Telesis Group. That's how I got into telecommunications.

## **CHANGES IN YOUR CAREER:**

The net/net of all the changes I've just mentioned is that when it comes to your career, your first -- or your fifth employer -- won't be your last. This may reek havoc on your pension plan, but it will also bring tremendous opportunity.

You'll explore new ways for small ventures to have a global reach. You'll jump into emerging industries. You'll have the opportunity to become an overnight millionaire like Netscape's Mark Andreessen.

Last year, 18 Haas business school graduates were inspired to launch 10 new Internet start-ups. Like I said, you're living in a Hello Dolly world where Anything Is Possible.

## **EMBRACE YOUR UNIQUENESS:**

Beyond your common bond of graduating from this distinguished school, your success will be defined as uniquely as your fingerprints. We would all love a cookbook for success -- 10 parts hard work, 50 parts passion, 8 parts integrity, sprinkle it with luck...

But there isn't one. And there shouldn't be. Otherwise you wouldn't have the opportunity to write your own book. To be a career chef in the new millennium you'll need to be a visionary for your career and your industry. You'll need to collaborate across geographic borders. You'll need to be a team player and an influence manager. Perhaps, you'll even need to eat... roaches.

Whatever path you take, respect diversity and foster understanding. Master your technological tools and learn to control your work interruptions so that you can strike a balance between career and personal life. Inspire and empower others to be their best. Help them navigate in this changing world... for we never succeed alone.

## **BELIEVE IN LUCK:**

As you know, in a world of constant change, you're guaranteed to confront many things you can neither predict nor control. That's where that sprinkling of luck comes in. For me, that was the day I joined Pacific Telesis.

That first day I met another new hire, a fellow business school grad who was assigned to the publishing business. I was assigned to Cellular. A

few years later, they closed publishing and cellular took center stage. I got my lucky break.

I'm convinced there's a huge dose of luck behind every successful business career. I'm also convinced that those of you who embrace constant change will create your own luck. Someone once said that luck is nothing more than preparation meeting opportunity. I believe this.

## **CLOSING COMMENTS:**

Standing here, I can't help but remember how I felt the day I graduated. I was scared -- but oh, so full of hope. Never did I imagine that I would be the president of the largest wireless communications company in the world. How could I imagine it??? When I sat where you are -- my industry did not exist.

Now That's Change!!!

All of these changes I've described created a world where an immigrant from India could become president of AirTouch -- in 20 years. And in today's world, you'll do it quicker than that.

As you file off the stage, today, remember that within each of you lies the ability to accomplish great things. You've already proved that by graduating. Don't be stopped by your own perceived limitations. See the world with no limits. And as you do business in your own unique way, remember to leave the world a better place.

Finally, take a look at the faces surrounding you today. One day, one of you will have the honor of standing where I am. And I have no doubt that one of the things you'll be expressing to your audience will be -- **ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE!**

I salute your success. Thank you.