

Chizen to be honored with SVLG Lifetime Achievement Award

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Bruce Chizen didn't wait for retirement to do a little volunteer work.

The former Adobe Systems chief executive was known as a volunteer for community causes even while he was leading the \$3.2 billion San Jose-based software company through a period of major growth. He left Adobe last year, but Chizen still sits on corporate boards and advises investment firms while continuing to work with non-profits that help local schools and promote arts and culture in Silicon Valley.

Those efforts, and a reputation for plain-spoken integrity, are reasons why the former New Yorker — who majored in health science at Brooklyn College — is being honored Friday with a "Spirit of Silicon Valley Lifetime Achievement" award from a local industry association, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

The annual award is intended to recognize ethics, business leadership and community involvement. Carl Guardino, president of the leadership group, said Chizen "is the best reason I know for human cloning. We need dozens more like him — concerned for the community, compassionate about the needy and savvy on the economy."

The 53-year-old Chizen led Adobe from 2000 to 2007, as the company tripled its revenue and expanded its reach from design and document software to

video, Web and mobile-device applications. During that time, he chaired the boards of the Children's Discovery Museum, the Santa Clara County Education Foundation — now the Silicon Valley Education Foundation, which coordinates private support for local school districts — and 1stACT Silicon Valley, a non-profit that promotes arts, culture and efforts to build a sense of community in downtown San Jose.

Chizen said in an interview that he believes all those programs can help local families and industry, which needs strong schools and cultural attractions to recruit and keep the best workers.

"I'm a product of public education. If it wasn't for public education, there is no way I would have been able to achieve what I have achieved," Chizen added. "But today we are drastically under-funding what I think is critical to our future."

In his time at Adobe, Chizen ran the company with an eye on long-term strategy, with "a little bit of an iron fist, but emphasis on the velvet glove," said Synopsys Chief Executive Aart de Geus, a longtime friend who won the award last year.

1stACT managing director Connie Martinez described Chizen as "down to earth" and "a role model" in an industry where it can be hard for community groups to get top executives' attention.

As for Chizen, he didn't really retire, though he said he wanted a change and more time with his family. He's on the boards of Synopsys and Oracle, is an advisor to two investment firms, and serves as vice chair of the education foundation and board chairman of 1stACT.

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