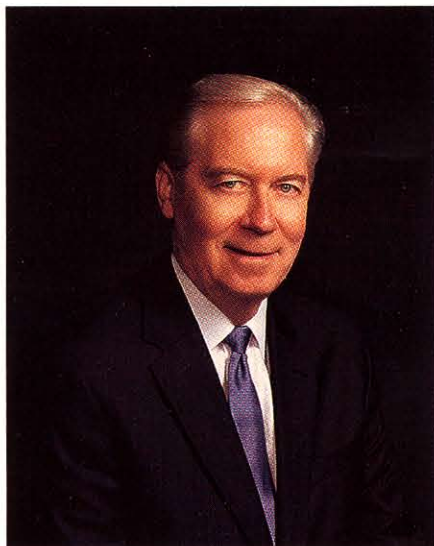


How to Build a CEO

By Ann Houston



Harvey Dean

“I wasn’t a bad student ... just bored! Too much wasted time.”

That’s how reformed troublemaker Harvey Dean describes himself as a 1960s high school “shop” student from Elmore City, Oklahoma. Dean was an average athlete and mediocre in English, yet he spent four hours every day during part of his junior year in “shop” because he’d been locked out of every other class by the school principal.

Many Oklahoma Baby Boomers remember the industrial arts programs of the 1960s and ‘70s—more commonly known as “shop.” Most boys—not girls—were enrolled in “shop,” primarily a cabinetmaking and wood-working program. Since 1985, “industrial arts/shop” has evolved into “technology education.” Today more than 17,800 junior and senior high school students are members of the Technology Student Association (TSA), with 164 chapters across Oklahoma.

As for Dean, the former “troublemaker,” he became the founder and CEO of Pitsco, a 30-year-old company with 200 employees based in Pittsburg, Kansas. Pitsco is a leading provider of

Take one bored student, put him into an industrial arts class and add an encouraging and supportive instructor. That is the formula that helped launch Harvey Dean’s successful career.

innovative products and curriculum for math, science and technology education programs, annually touching the lives of millions of students nationwide by engaging them in education that’s meaningful, engaging and fun.

Pitsco products include gliders, kites, rockets, CO₂ dragsters, balsa bridges and supportive materials and software. Most career and technical education instructors are familiar with the company’s products.

Although now a success story, Dean recalls, “I was in four hours of industrial arts one semester, because I’d been kicked out of almost every other class. I’ll never forget the day that my instructor, Jim Coffey, saw me standing by the heater in the shop, after being ‘dismissed’ from school.

“He encouraged me by saying that I was going to be successful in life...that I should not let what was happening to me in school keep me from going on to be successful in whatever I decided to do in life. There’s a good chance that if I hadn’t been allowed to be in his class and that he had not been a positive influence on me at that time in my life that I might have never finished school.”

Dean did hang in there, and because he credits career and technical education with helping him achieve success, he has been recognized by Oklahoma as one of its CareerTech Champions. Today, Dean’s company, Pitsco, touches the lives of more than 7.2 million students, from elementary through high school.

Before founding Pitsco in 1971 Dean taught at the junior high, high school and university levels. He holds bachelor of science, master of science, doctorate of education and specialist in education degrees. He received the Champion Award from the National Modernization Forum, an organization sponsored by the National Institute for Standards in Technology, and the Industrial Leader Award from Pittsburg State University. Dean has also been recognized as a Pittsburg State University Outstanding Alumnus and received their Meritorious Achievement Award. In 1993, *Inc. Magazine* chose him as Entrepreneur of the Year. His 1997 book, *Changing Education*, received the Small Press Book Award.

Dean has amassed an impressive list of accomplishments over the years. It is amazing what a student can begin building in “shop” class. **I**

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