

Kevin Systrom - Biography

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Kevin Systrom was born on the 30th December 1983 in Hooliston, Massachusetts. He is an American entrepreneur and Software Engineer. He is best known for creating the monumentally popular social media and photo sharing app: Instagram along with his co-founder Mike Krieger. With an estimated net worth of \$1.4 Billion, he is included on the list of America's wealthiest individuals under 40.

Systrom studied Management Science and Engineering in Stanford University where he would later graduate with a Bachelors degree. He spent his third year abroad in Florence, Italy. During his time abroad, he studied photography, which would prove to be useful in the future as his deep understanding of photos was a major driving force for the intense popularity and user adoption of Instagram.

While in university, he also got his very first taste of entrepreneurship and startups when he was nominated to participate in the Mayfield Fellows Program. The fellowship led to an internship at a company called Odeo, a podcasting app. The creator of Odeo would later go on to create Twitter, interestingly enough Jack Dorsey, the current CEO of Twitter, was also working at Odeo at the same time as Systrom.

Systrom's desire to become an entrepreneur and start his own business started when he was working at Google early in his career. He worked on many Google services such as Gmail and Google's own Document Suite(Docs, Spreadsheets) etc. He was employed at Google for a total of two years before finally quitting due to frustrations of not being promoted to an Associate Product Manager position.

1 Early start

After his exit from Google he joined a social travel recommendation startup called NextStop. NextStop mixed elements of social recommendations with a reputation system and gameplay. It was bought by Facebook a year after its inception.

2 How did that progress

During his time at NextStop, Kevin had began work on his own app which he aptly called *Burbn* after his favourite spirit. The app combined location-based social networking with photo-sharing. The app first gained traction when Systrom pitched the idea at a party in Silicon Valley, where he found his early adopters as well as two investors who each invested \$250,000 even though it was in it's infancy. This was also around the time when Systrom brought on Mike Kreiger as co-founder.

Although early adopters loved the app, it was a nightmare for newcomers. It was just too clunky. Although initially, Burbn launched as a direct competitor to Foursquare, it could not match the apps ease of use. Systrom and Kreiger decided to look at the data, and what they found was that people really enjoyed taking pictures, applying a filter from a filter app and posting it for their friends to see. So they completely stripped Burbn of most of it's features, shifting their focus solely to photo-sharing. What was once a competitor to Foursquare had now transformed into a whole new category, with no competition.

The real "eureka" moment came to Kevin when he was at the beach with his girlfriend who was complaining that she didn't want to post her pictures online because they did not look as his friend Greg's. When Systrom told her that Greg had used a filter app before posting his pictures, she told him that he should include filters in Burbn. Thus photo-filters were introduced into the app, the first filter created by Kevin himself called "X-Pro II" is still available on Instagram today. Burbn was officially renamed to *Instagram* in October 2010.

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