

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Rodney Adkins

PERSON

Adkins, Rodney

Alternative Names: Adkins, Rodney, 1958-;

Life Dates: August 23, 1958-

Place of Birth: Louisville, Georgia

Residence: Armonk, New York

Occupations: Electrical Engineer;

Biographical Note

Corporate executive and computer engineer Rodney Adkins was born on August 23, 1958, in Miami, Florida, to Archie and Wauneta Adkins. He attended Miami Jackson High School where he graduated in 1976 as valedictorian. In 1981, Adkins graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology with his B.S. degree in electrical engineering. He then received his B.A. degree in physics from Rollins College in 1982, and an M.S. degree in electrical engineering in 1983 from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Adkins began working at International Business Machines (IBM) in 1981 as a test engineer. In 1986, he was promoted to manager of special component engineering. In the early 1990s, Adkins helped to develop the IBM ThinkPad, one of the first laptop computers, and a frequent winner of design awards following its launch in 1992. In 1993, he attended Harvard Business School's Program for Management Development. A promotion to vice president of commercial desktop systems followed in 1995. Within three years, Adkins became the general manager of the UNIX server division, which he revitalized. In 1998, IBM named him to its Worldwide Management Council which consisted of forty-five of IBM's top executives. In 2002, Adkins was

promoted to vice president of development for IBM's systems and technology group, and he remained in that position until 2007 when he was named an IBM corporate officer and senior vice president of development and manufacturing for the systems and technology group. Adkins became the first African American to attain that position in the history of IBM. In 2009, he was named the senior vice president and group executive of IBM's systems and technology group. Adkins was named senior vice president of IBM's corporate strategy in 2013.

Adkins has received numerous awards including the 1996 award for Black Engineer of the Year, the 2007 Black Engineer of the Year, and 'Black Enterprise' magazine's Corporate Executive of the Year in 2011. 'Fortune' magazine has also named Adkins one of the 50 Most Powerful Black Executives in America in 2002, and, in 2001, the National Society of Black Engineers awarded him the Golden Torch Award for Lifetime Achievement in Industry. In 2011, Adkins was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science degree from the University of Maryland Baltimore County. Adkins is married to Michelle Collier, and they have two sons, Rodney and Ryan.

Rodney Adkins was interviewed by 'The HistoryMakers' on July 9, 2013.

Related Entries

Adkins, Marian [SIBLINGOF]
Sister

Adkins, Barry [SIBLINGOF]
Brother

Adkins, Rodney [PARENTOF]
Son

Adkins, Wauneta [CHILDOF]
Mother

Adkins, Ryan [PARENTOF]
Son

Adkins, Archie [CHILDOF]
Father

Rollins College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to 1982-02-15]

BA

Georgia Institute of Technology [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to 1983-09-02]

MSEE

Georgia Institute of Technology [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to 1981-09-04]

BSEE

Allapattah Middle School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Miami Jackson Senior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

International Business Machines (IBM) [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1981 to ?]

Sr. Vice President, Corporate Strategy

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated [MEMBEROF]
Life Member

National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) [MEMBEROF]
Life Member

Pitney Bowes [MEMBEROF]
Director

National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering [MEMBEROF]
Member, Board of Directors

Georgia Tech Foundation [MEMBEROF]
Trustee

Smithsonian Institution National Board [MEMBEROF]
Member

University of Maryland Baltimore County Board of Visitors [MEMBEROF]
Board of Visitors

Rollins College President Leadership Council [MEMBEROF]
Member

University of Miami College of Engineering [MEMBEROF]
Visiting Committee