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

Adkins, Rodney C., 1958-

Alternative Names: Rodney Adkins;

Life Dates: August 23, 1958-

Place of Birth: Louisville, Georgia, USA

Residence: Miami Beach, FL

Work: Miami Beach, FL

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

**Rollins College** [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to ?]

**BA**

**Georgia Institute of Technology** [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to ?]

**MSEE**

**Georgia Institute of Technology** [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to ?]

**BSEE**

**Georgia Jones-Ayers Middle School** [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to ?]

**Miami Jackson Senior High School** [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to ?]

**International Business Machines (IBM)** [EMPLOYEE OF]
[from 1981 to ?]

**Sr. Vice President, Corporate Strategy**

**Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated** [MEMBER OF]
[from 1979 to ?]

**Life Member**

**National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)** [MEMBER OF]
[from 1995 to ?]

**Life Member**

**Pitney Bowes** [MEMBER OF]
[from 2007 to 2013]

**Director**

**National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering** [Member Of]
[from 2008 to ?]

**Member, Board of Directors**

**Georgia Tech Foundation** [Member Of]
[from 2008 to ?]

**Trustee**

**Smithsonian Institution National Board** [Member Of]
[from 2009 to ?]

**Member**

**University of Maryland Baltimore County Board of Visitors** [Member Of]
[from 2009 to ?]

**Board of Visitors**

**Rollins College President Leadership Council** [Member Of]
[from 2009 to ?]

**Member**

**University of Miami College of Engineering** [Member Of]
[from 2012 to ?]

**Visiting Committee**