

# Zuckerberg's focus drives Facebook's ascent

February 10 2012, By Mike Swift

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When Mark Zuckerberg showed up to rent Judy Fusco's Los Altos, Calif., house in the fall of 2004, soon after he'd arrived in Silicon Valley, the landlord was immediately struck by his confidence.

"I said, 'Gee, how old are you?' And he said, '20,' " Fusco remembered in a recent interview. "I said, 'You think I'm going to rent you my million-dollar house?' And he said, 'Yes.' "

Over time, Fusco also came to understand her tenant's clarity of purpose. When she ran into him in downtown Palo Alto, Calif., two years later, she asked Zuckerberg just how he could have turned down the reported \$1 billion that Yahoo had offered to buy [Facebook](#).

"He said, 'Judy, I didn't do this because of the money,' " said Fusco. "Money to him is just a vehicle to do what he wants to do."

As Facebook begins the journey to an IPO, Facebook's founder and CEO is entering a new phase: Now, he will very much have to care about the money. In the coming months, questions inevitably will be raised about how far the kid who stood on Judy Fusco's doorstep has traveled toward maturity, and whether he will be a CEO as passionate about the business of Facebook as he is on creating the addictive [social software](#) that he so clearly loves.

"Zuckerberg is setting the strategy, and no question that kid has 100 more IQ points than anyone we know, but is he a great businessman? Is he going to build a company that is going to maximize profit?" says

Michael Pachter, an analyst with Wedbush Securities. "He's going to have shareholders that demand he grow their investment. He might not like that."

How he will adjust is hard to say. A look at his history reveals that "Zuck," as just about everybody calls him, is an uncommon combination of humility, focus and supreme confidence. There are recurring signs of his idealism throughout his life. But there is also powerful evidence of the focus and the foresight that could make Zuckerberg a successful CEO of a public company like none the world has seen.

"He's still the same guy he was," said David Kirkpatrick, author of "The Facebook Effect." "He has been able to retain his humanity and not become an arrogant jerk, even though he has every right to be."

Perhaps no businessperson in American history has been so successful at such a young age. With Zuckerberg, as with few others, the trappings of youth somehow mesh with the characteristics that make a compelling leader.

Consider his wardrobe. Originally, his daily uniform consisted of a hoodie and open-toed Adidas sandals. More recently, Zuckerberg's attire has morphed into a T-shirt, jeans and New Balance running sneakers. But much like Apple's Steve Jobs, this regimented way of dressing underlines Zuckerberg's deliberate, ultra-focused philosophy of life.

Every year, Zuckerberg takes on a personal challenge. In 2009, he decided to wear a tie almost every day. In 2010, he focused on learning Mandarin. In 2011, he became mostly a vegetarian - only eating meat he killed with his own hands.

But for the year of the IPO, Zuckerberg has chosen a goal that is more in keeping with the professional challenge he faces. His focus for 2012, he

has told friends, is "ruthless time management."

Colleagues, who spoke privately because they were not authorized to discuss Zuckerberg, say people are drawn by his powerful inner compass. He occasionally lacks basic conversational skills and can be an emotionally demanding boss. But within Facebook, where Zuckerberg has never had a private office and sits at a modest desk amidst other engineers, he has built a powerful sense of personal loyalty, insiders say.

"He's focused. He's arrogant in the sense that he believes what he believes, and I think there's that arrogance and confidence in what he wants to accomplish in the company he has built," said one. "It helps him be a great leader, and a leader that people believe in and want to follow and want to get behind."

For the engineers who are the heart of high-tech companies, nothing is more compelling than the boss who is committed to the product.

Andrew Bosworth was Zuckerberg's teaching assistant at Harvard University before coming to Facebook, where Bosworth oversaw efforts to rebuild its messaging system to make it work seamlessly with email, text messages and instant messages. Bosworth said in an interview last year that Zuckerberg had the initial vision for the effort. But the CEO also spent the Sunday night before the launch working overnight with Facebook engineers, fixing bugs.

"Zuck has kind of a Jobsian quality when it comes to the precision of details," he said. "He's got this vision for how things need to be."

Zuckerberg grew up in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y, a town of about 11,000 people north of New York City. His father, Edward, remains a dentist there - "The Painless Dr. Z" - and his mother, Karen, was a trained psychologist who later worked in her husband's office.

Young Mark showed an early affinity for computers - and for accomplishing the tasks that he set out for himself, often at a high level. When Edward Zuckerberg told his 12-year-old son that he wanted a better way to know a patient had arrived, Mark built a program he called "Zucknet," a basic version of the instant message features in many Internet services, according to the New Yorker.

By the time he got to Harvard, Zuckerberg was writing addictive software like "facemash," which randomly put photos of two Harvard undergrads beside each other, asking users to choose which was "hotter."

That landed the sophomore in hot water with the university, and later with the rest of the world when in 2010 Zuckerberg's messages from that time, in which he boasted about having email addresses and other sensitive information about other students, surfaced on the website Silicon Alley Insider.

People "just submitted it," Zuckerberg wrote. "they 'trust me' ... dumb (expletives)."

Zuckerberg has apologized and said he hopes people realize he has matured.

On Feb. 4, 2004, Zuckerberg launched what was then called "thefacebook.com," allowing Harvard students to "friend" one another. It went viral, and it soon launched at other schools.

Facebook has not stopped growing since. And, the evidence suggests, neither has Zuckerberg.

Zuckerberg's personal life shows signs that he is leaving his youthful Harvard arrogance behind.

He and partner Priscilla Chan recently moved from an inconspicuous rented home to a \$7 million, five-bedroom, 5,000-square-foot home that Zuckerberg bought last year near University Avenue in Old Palo Alto.

His relationship with Chan may be changing too. They have been together since Nov. 13, 2003, when she found him initially attractive, she told the New Yorker, as "this nerdy guy who was just a little bit out there." Friends and Facebook colleagues said they have no knowledge that the couple has considered marriage. But Chan, 26, recently changed her relationship to Karen Zuckerberg on Facebook from "future mother-in-law" to simply "mother-in-law." (Chan did not respond to a request for comment; Facebook declined comment.)

"The same woman who he fell in love with before he invented Facebook, he's still with," Kirkpatrick said. "When you are hanging out with them, you don't feel like this is the most powerful 27-year-old in the world. You just think this is a guy who makes some bright comments, and is cooking dinner for his girlfriend, and has a few friends over from Harvard for dinner."

Of course, he is much more than that.

The most striking element of Facebook's thick IPO filing on Wednesday was the letter from the founder, where in just over 2,000 words, Zuckerberg set out a set of guiding principles he called "The Hacker Way." The letter provided the clearest evidence of how he plans to combine his idealism with his business plan.

At one point, Zuckerberg laid out an almost utopian vision of Facebook's mission. He said the company would help reorganize the world's information around people from the grassroots up, as opposed to the hierarchical, top-down system that exists now.

"We live at a moment when the majority of people in the world have access to the Internet or mobile phones - the raw tools necessary to start sharing what they're thinking, feeling and doing with whomever they want," Zuckerberg wrote.

But the [IPO](#) filing also suggests Zuckerberg has a keen sense of the dynamics of power. When Zuckerberg sold off pieces of Facebook early on, he demanded that investors hand their stock voting rights back to him. Combined with the stock he owns personally, Zuckerberg will control 57 percent of the voting power in the new, public Facebook.

Where does his clarity come from? Kirkpatrick said Zuckerberg is not an introspective person. Even he may not know.

"You're not going to find out by asking him," the writer said. "Because, believe me, I've tried."

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