Dr. Manu Kumar

Manu is the founder and Chief Firestarter at K9 Ventures.

Manu previously founded, grew and sold two successful ventures. He was the Founder, President and CEO of SneakerLabs, Inc. – a company which developed software and services for web-based customer interaction. After the successful acquisition of SneakerLabs (March 2000), Manu served as the Vice-President of Interactive Technologies for E.piphany. He then served as the Chairman and CEO of iMeet, Inc. – a provider of web-conferencing services. After the merger of iMeet with Boston based Netspoke (August 2002), Manu served on the Board of Directors of Netspoke until its acquisition by Premiere Global Services (August 2005). Prior to starting his entrepreneurial ventures, Manu was a lecturer in the distance education program at the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University.

Manu completed his Bachelors in Electrical and Computer Engineering with University Honors from Carnegie Mellon University, where he was inducted in to the Electrical Engineering Honor Society – Eta Kappa Nu, the National Engineering Honor Society – Tau Beta Pi and the honor society of Phi Kappa Phi. He holds a Masters degree in Software Engineering with a concentration in Business from Carnegie Mellon. He was awarded the Enterprise Award with Distinction in 1997 by the Tepper School of Business and is the recipient of Carnegie Mellon University's Recent Alumni Award for 2004 in recognition of exceptional achievement during the first 10 years of graduating from the university. Manu also holds a Masters and a Ph.D. in Computer Science (Human Computer Interaction) with a Distinction in Teaching from Stanford University.

He has worked on research, development and commercialization of interactive technologies ranging from speech technologies, distributed systems, highly-scalable synchronous collaboration servers, chat, web conferencing, application sharing, distance learning, audio conferencing, and CRM applications. He is the sole inventor on three issued US Patents. His academic research has been in the area of automobile interfaces and the use of eye tracking for human computer interaction. His dissertation research explored how gaze information can effectively be used as an augmented input in addition to traditional devices.

Manu has served on the Advisory Board for the Information Technology Network for the Pittsburgh Technology Council, the Dean's Leadership Council and the Silicon Valley Advisory Committee for the Carnegie Institute of Technology and is a former member of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the Carnegie Mellon Alumni Association. Manu was the founder of the Pittsburgh Java Users Group (PittJUG), the Pittsburgh Chapter of TiE (The Indus Entrepreneurs) and was a former charter member of TiE-Silicon Valley.

Manu serves as an investor and/or advisor for several technology startups including Refocus Imaging, Dolores Labs (CrowdFlower), Twilio, DNAnexus, and others. His interests include discovery, creation and commercialization of new and innovative technologies.