



Sandeep Akkaraju, Exo Co-Founder & CEO, Origin Story

Sandeep Akkaraju's vision for Exo began when the technology founder was backpacking through Africa and West Africa retracing the steps of a 14th century Moroccan pilgrim across isolated portions of Morocco, Mali and Burkina Faso.

By that point Akkaraju was already a successful technology pioneer. He'd helped bootstrap a DARPA-funded garage startup into a MEMS technology powerhouse acquired by Corning for \$750 million. But what Akkaraju saw in West Africa would make him rethink technology's impact on the world.

Here he was, a successful technology executive, being invited into the homes of subsistence villagers, and lavished with generosity. Meanwhile, these villages were dealing with potentially treatable medical conditions like River Blindness that often developed into life-altering illnesses.

Akkaraju spent a year traveling through countries like Morocco, Mali, Ghana and Burkina Faso, lured by adventure and curiosity. It was a world away from the often insular American technology hubs like Silicon Valley. The contrast could not have been more stark. While Silicon Valley started with ambitions to change the world, by the time Akkaraju was traveling West Africa, it already felt like it was descending into incremental and less ambitious goals—like selling consumer data for the digital advertising boom. Meanwhile, these West African villagers had little access to the basics of everyday life—things like clean water and simple medical care.

Akkaraju returned from West Africa and re-immersed himself in the technology world. But this time it was with a different perspective. He was determined to build a company that would impact the lives of people around the world in indelible ways.

It would take him two more successful startups before he could solidify the vision and amass the skills and team to launch Exo, but it was the driving force behind his second act in startup technology.

Akkaraju led the reacquisition of IntelliSense, his original startup, from Corning. He launched and sold Jyve, a sensor company pioneering the early technology of Augmented Reality, to a large semiconductor firm. All of that experience led to the launch and growth of Exo, born with the vision to redefine medical imaging and diagnostics for patients worldwide.

"I felt that the drive to create foundational tools for mankind in Silicon Valley was missing," said Akkaraju. "There was a gradual incrementalism creeping in and that disillusioned me. The Valley was no longer solving real issues for the population at large."



What had been bugging him in West Africa truly crystallized in his mind. While Silicon Valley was pumping billions of dollars into apps, the monetization of users through advertising and small improvements to mobile devices, there were still large, transformational problems to be solved.

“It felt like a loss of purity,” said Akkaraju of the direction of Silicon Valley.

Through it all, one quote, originally attributed to author William Ford Gibson, kept sticking in his mind. “The future is here, it is just not evenly distributed.”

Several driving forces have guided Akkaraju’s professional career. In many ways these have come full circle since his childhood. His grandparents established a hospital in Hyderabad, India. From them he received a drive to serve the underserved. His father was a space engineer and an entrepreneur, who showed him the way technology can transform society. And his own passion as a child was music. He dreamed of becoming a musician, exploring the creativity of making something unique and powerful.

Exo is the culmination of those drives, the product of a life of experiences that includes walking through remote African villages with a backpack thinking about ways that technology can transform the health and wellbeing of people around the globe.

“I think it is the process of creation that attracts me,” said Akkaraju. “Doing something new that fundamentally moves humankind forward. With Exo, we have the opportunity to directly impact how millions of people are diagnosed and treated for medical issues, bringing equality, access and innovation to a medical system that could do so much more for millions of people around the world.”

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