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1 of 2 | Frank Shrontz in 1984. (Craig Fujii / The Seattle Times)

At a time when Boeing is adrift and beleaguered — and poised for yet another leadership change — it is appropriate to consider [the legacy of Frank Shrontz](#), the former CEO who passed away May 3 at the age of 92.

Shrontz is credited with establishing a positive corporate culture at the airplane manufacturer, guiding the way for the successful introduction of the game-changing 777. The plane later became a best-seller.

Just as important, Shrontz led an exemplary life. Married to Harriet Houghton for 58 years, Shrontz served on the Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents. When the Mariners' future in Seattle looked tenuous, he was part of the group that purchased the team in 1992 and was a member of its board of directors.

Of particular note: In recent memory, Shrontz was the last Boeing CEO to leave of his own accord.

Subsequent Boeing top leadership is a rogue's gallery of mistakes and malfeasance. Phil Condit — Shrontz's immediate successor — left in 2003 during a Pentagon procurement scandal; Harry Stonecipher was forced to resign over an affair; James McNerney launched the 787 Dreamliner, which suffered from massive cost overruns associated with outsourcing production; Dennis Muilenburg drew condemnation for his handling of two 737 MAX crashes.

In March, current president and CEO Dave Calhoun announced his decision to step down at the end of 2024 after a piece of fuselage blew off an Alaska Airlines flight in January and Boeing bad news fell like a blizzard. Upon his retirement, [CNN reported](#) Calhoun's golden parachute will be worth about \$45 million in stock awards and options that vest over time.

A Boeing man for most of his life, Shrontz joined the company in 1958 and worked there for 39 years, with a short hiatus at the Pentagon. In 1986, Shrontz became CEO and chairman of the board two years later. He stepped down as CEO in 1996.

In awarding Shrontz its [Ernest C. Arbuckle Award](#) for a graduate who demonstrated outstanding management leadership, the Stanford Business School Alumni Association in 1997 noted Shrontz's efforts to build a culture focusing on teamwork and process improvement.

Accepting the recognition, Shrontz highlighted his longtime concern with K-12 public education. "There is no more critical effort to ensure our future," he said at the time.

Back before Boeing made the ill-advised decision to move its headquarters out of Seattle, his leadership also bolstered local institutions. He and his wife, Harriet, began philanthropic support of Virginia Mason in 1984, joining its foundation board in 2004 and helping advance a health care capital campaign.

Creating a positive corporate culture. Civic contributions. Recognizing the importance of basic education.

These are some of the things that make up Shrontz's formidable legacy. They also represent the essential building blocks of Boeing's future leader.

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