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Sybase CEO John Chen on immigration, doing business in China



Sybase CEO John Chen also sits on the board of Walt Disney.

Sybase CEO John Chen, speaking at the California-Asia Business Council's annual gala Friday, said that the United States can't afford to be short-sighted as it determines how to handle intellectual property, immigration and other hot issues with China.

Chen, who runs Sybase, a software and database company in Dublin, also is a member of President Bush's export council and is co-chairman of the Secure Borders and Open Doors Advisory Committee, a subcommittee of the federal government's Homeland Security Advisory Council. He spoke to the Chronicle before giving his speech and receiving an award from the California-Asia Business Council.

Chen said the United States must think both long-term and short-term when it comes to immigration policies. Though the United States must secure its borders, it also has to balance that with the need for skilled immigrants, such as engineers. It's a thorny issue that Silicon Valley tech companies continue to wrestle with, contending that they need to hire more software developers to stay competitive, but having a limited ability to recruit overseas workers.

"We need to make sure our immigration policy makes sense in both directions," said Chen, himself an immigrant from Hong Kong.

Chen also said that U.S. businesses have to be patient on intellectual property matters in China. With the country prospering, it's only a matter of time before China's intellectual property violations become less prevalent, he said. In the meantime, the United States shouldn't crack down too harshly because it could backfire. Instead, it should foster more collaboration between the two countries in establishing certain global technology standards.

Posted By: [Ellen Lee \(Email\)](#) | October 27 2007 at 12:00 PM