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[Top Microsoft Executives Are Leaving the Company Like Rats from a Sinking Ship](#)

Will it end with Bill Gates?

It all started in the second week of January with Microsoft confirming the departure of Bruce Jaffe, Corporate Vice President, Corporate Development. But Jaffe signaled only the beginning of what was to come. It is hard not to look at Jaffe as a trend setter, but the fact of the matter is that lately Microsoft top executives have illustrated an increased tendency to leave the Redmond company. Jaffe was responsible for overseeing, executing and managing Microsoft's transactions and alliances, including the \$6 billion deal the company has done with aQuantive. With Jaffe out to put his own start-up on its feet, the next on the list was Jeff Raikes, President of the Microsoft Business Division. But as far as Raikes was concerned, it was by no means a surprise. At least not for Microsoft, and illustrative of this is the fact that the company already had a transition plan in place as well as a replacement in the person of Stephen Elop, formerly chief operating officer (COO) at Juniper Networks. "Very few people have contributed more to Microsoft than Jeff," Microsoft Chief Executive Steve Ballmer stated in an internal email to Microsoft employees. "For more than 20 years, he has been the chief strategist behind the establishment of our information worker business, from our earliest productivity applications to the creation of Office to our ongoing success at redefining and expanding the Information Worker (IW) market as we've moved into new businesses including collaboration, businesses intelligence, unified communications, and much more. Jeff was also pivotal in creating what is now our Worldwide Sales, Marketing and Services Group and in providing the foundation that has made our sales organization so successful. His passion for demonstrating the value and magic of software to customers, partners, and employees is unparalleled." After Raikes, it was the turn of Charles Fitzgerald, Microsoft's General Manager of Platform Strategy, to leave the company in favor of a start-up. "Microsoft was a phenomenal experience and I had the opportunity to work with an amazing array of people. The company has set the benchmark for business success (if you haven't looked at a Microsoft financial report recently, go check out all the digits, especially on the profit line). Even the most successful of those who passed through are likely to fall far short of what Microsoft has accomplished. I wish my co-workers well and continued success," Fitzgerald stated. And then there were four. Microsoft top executives continued to drop like flies with Short, Corporate Vice President for Windows Core. At the time of his departure from Microsoft, Short had the responsibility to oversee the design, development and testing process of Windows' core components. And of course that in the background, there is the shadow cast by Bill Gates' own imminent departure as of mid 2008. Although with Gates it's a whole deal entirely as his transition plans out of Microsoft were announced as early as 2006.