



# Steve Jobs: Innovator

The 7 insanely different principles of Jobs' breakthrough success with Apple

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# INTRODUCTION

Apple co-founder Steve Jobs will be remembered as one of a handful of history's most elite innovators. He was the classic American entrepreneur — starting his company in the spare bedroom of his parents' house and pioneering the development of the first personal computer for everyday use. This was a man who was fired from the company he had started, but returned 12 years later to save it from near bankruptcy. Not only that, but in the next 10 years Jobs used Apple to reinvent four different industries — computing, music, telecommunications and entertainment. (Let's not forget he was the CEO of a little company called Pixar.)

In 2010, Fortune magazine named Jobs the CEO of the Decade. The famed *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman wrote a column in which he declared America needs more jobs — Steve Jobs. He meant that innovation and creativity must be nurtured and encouraged to help the United States and other countries emerge from the global recession.

Everyone wants to learn more about what made Steve Jobs tick, yet very few journalists have identified the core principles that drove Jobs and his success. My book *The Innovation Secrets of Steve Jobs* (McGraw-Hill, 2010) reveals the 7 principles that were largely responsible for his breakthrough success — principles that guided Jobs throughout his career.

## Principle One: Do what you love.

In 2005, Steve Jobs told Stanford University's graduating class that the secret to success is having "the courage to follow your heart and intuition." Inside, he suggested, "you already know what you truly want to become." Jobs followed his heart his entire career, and that passion, according to him, made all the difference. It's very difficult to come up with new, creative ideas that move society forward if you are not passionate about the subject.

"I think you should go get a job as a busboy or something until you find something you're really passionate about," Jobs once said. "I'm convinced that about half of what separates successful entrepreneurs from the non-successful ones is pure perseverance. . . Unless you have a lot of passion about this, you're not going to survive. You're going to give up."

How do you find your passion? Passions are those ideas that don't leave you alone. They are the hopes, dreams and possibilities that consume your thoughts. Follow those passions despite the skeptics and naysayers who do not have the courage to follow their own dreams.

## Principle Two: Put a dent in the universe.

Steve Jobs attracted evangelists who shared his vision and helped turn his ideas into world-changing innovations. He has never underestimated the power of vision to move a brand forward. In 1976, Steve Wozniak was captivated by Jobs' vision to "put a computer in the hands of everyday people." Wozniak was the engineering genius behind the Apple I and Apple II, but it was Jobs' vision that inspired Wozniak to focus his skills on building a computer for the masses. Jobs' vision was intoxicating because it had four components that all inspiring visions share: It was 1) bold, 2) specific, 3) concise and 4) consistently communicated.

In 1979, Jobs took a tour of the Xerox research facility in Palo Alto, California. There he saw a new technology that let users interact with the computer via colorful graphical icons on the screen instead of entering complex line commands. It was called a "graphical user interface." In that moment, Jobs knew that this technology would allow him to fulfill his vision of putting a computer in the hands of everyday people. He went back to Apple and refocused his team on building the computer that would eventually become the Macintosh and forever change the way we talked to computers. Jobs later said that Xerox could have "dominated" the computer industry but instead its "vision" was limited to building another copier.



## Principle Three: Kick-start your brain.

Creativity leads to innovative ideas. For Steve Jobs, creativity meant connecting things. He believed that a broad set of experiences expands our understanding of the human experience. A broader understanding leads to breakthroughs that others may have missed.

Breakthrough innovation requires creativity, and creativity requires that you think differently about...the way you think. Scientists who study the way the brain works have discovered that innovators do think differently, but they use a technique available to all of us — they seek out diverse experiences.

This reminds me of the story behind Apple's name. The idea fell from a tree — literally. Jobs had returned from visiting a commune-like place in Oregon located in an apple orchard. Apple co-founder and Jobs' pal, Wozniak, picked him up from the airport. On the drive home, Jobs simply said, "I came up with a name for our company — Apple." Wozniak said they could have tried to come up with more technical-sounding names, but their vision was to make computers approachable. Apple fit nicely.

Jobs created new ideas precisely because he spent a lifetime exploring new and unrelated things — seeking out diverse experiences. Jobs hired people from outside the computing profession. He studied the art of calligraphy in college (a study that found its way into the first Macintosh), meditated in an Indian ashram, studied the fine details of a Mercedes-Benz and European-made washer-dryers for product ideas, and evaluated The Four Seasons hotel chain as he developed the customer service model for the Apple Stores. By bombarding his brain with new experiences, he removed the shackles of past experiences.

## Principle Four: Sell dreams, not products.

Steve Jobs didn't rely on focus groups. "It comes down to the very real fact that most customers don't know what they want in a new product," said tech analyst Rob Enderle.

Apple customers should be glad Jobs didn't do focus groups. If he had, they may never have enjoyed the iPod, iTunes, the iPhone, the iPad or Apple Stores. He did not need focus groups because he understood his customers really, really well. When Jobs returned to Apple in 1997 after a 12-year absence, Apple faced an uncertain future. Jobs closed his presentation that year at Macworld in Boston with an observation that set the tone for Apple's resurgence: "I think you have to think differently to buy an Apple computer. I think the people who do buy them do think differently. They are the creative spirits in this world. They are people who are not out to get a job done; they are out to change the world. And they are out to change the world using whatever great tools they can get. And we make tools for those kinds of people...A lot of times people think they're crazy, but in that craziness we see genius."

Now, this doesn't mean you shouldn't listen to your customers and ask them for feedback. Apple does that all the time. But Apple's breakthrough success relied most heavily on the innovative ideas of Jobs and his team. Asked why Apple doesn't do focus groups, Jobs responded: "We figure out what we want. You can't go out and ask people 'What's the next big thing?' There's a great quote by Henry Ford. He said, 'If I'd have asked my customers what they wanted, they would have told me 'A faster horse.'"


Nobody cares about your company or product. They care about themselves, their dreams and their goals. Steve Jobs won them over by helping them achieve their aspirations.

## Principle Five: Say no to 1,000 things.

Steve Jobs once said the secret to innovation is “saying no to 1,000 things.” In other words, Jobs was as proud of what Apple did not do as he was about what Apple did choose to pursue. He was committed to building simple, uncluttered design. This philosophy allowed Apple to build a continuous stream of products that continue to wow and delight customers with their elegance and simplicity.

In October 2008, Apple introduced its next-generation MacBook laptop computer. Jobs invited Apple design guru Jonathan Ive onstage to explain the new process of building mobile computers, a process that allowed Apple to offer notebooks that were lighter and sturdier. Ive told the audience that Apple’s new “aluminum unibody enclosure” eliminated 60 percent of the computer’s major structural parts. Reducing the number of parts naturally made the computer thinner. Contrary to what you’d expect, eliminating parts also made it more rigid and robust — the computer was actually stronger. According to Ive, “We are absolutely consumed by trying to develop a solution that is very simple, because as physical beings we understand clarity.”

Customers demand simplicity, and simplicity requires that you eliminate anything that clutters the user experience — whether in product design, website navigation, marketing and advertising materials or presentation slides.



## Principle Six: Create insanely great experiences.

Steve Jobs made the Apple Store the gold standard in customer service. The Apple Store has become the world's best retailer — generating more revenue-per-square-foot than most other brands — by introducing simple innovations any business can adopt to create deeper, more emotional connections with their customers. For example, there are no cashiers in an Apple Store. There are experts, consultants and even geniuses, but no cashiers. Jobs explained, “People don't want to just buy personal computers anymore. They want to know what they can do with them, and we're going to show people exactly that.”

Apple created an innovative retail experience by studying a company known for its customer experience — The Four Seasons. According to Ron Johnson, Apple senior vice president of retail operations, Apple Stores would attract shoppers not by moving boxes, but by “enriching lives.” Apple would offer customers a concierge-like experience, much like a customer would receive in an elegant hotel. The lesson — don't move the “product.” Jobs and Apple instead set forth to enrich lives. The result was huge success.



## Principle Seven: Master the message.

You can have the most innovative idea in the world, but if you can't get people excited about it, it doesn't matter. For every idea that turns into a successful innovation, there are thousands of ideas that never gain traction because the people behind those ideas failed to tell a compelling story.

Steve Jobs was considered one of the greatest corporate storytellers in the world because his presentations informed, educated and entertained. By giving extraordinary presentations, he stood out as a leader and communicator. He understood that the company was being judged to a large degree on his ability to communicate Apple's mission.

The big difference between extraordinary communicators and the average leader is that people like Jobs use presentations to *complement* the message. The speaker is the storyteller; the slideshow serves as a backdrop to the story.

# CONCLUSION

In a documentary on the making of the film *Jaws*, Steven Spielberg said that he was forced to improvise when the mechanical shark failed. He asked himself, “What would Hitchcock do?” The answer: Hitchcock would never show the shark. Today the global economy is in the jaws of the worst recession in decades. How can you emerge from the recession stronger, more inspired and more innovative than ever? We need to look at history as a guide and ask ourselves, “What would Steve Jobs do?”