

CHAPTER 1

STEVE JOBS

ON USER EXPERIENCE, DESIGN AND TIMELESSNESS

When Steve Jobs passed away, Bill Gates said that Jobs's influence would be felt for "many generations to come."¹ Tim Cook, who succeeded Jobs at Apple, went even further, speaking of "thousands of years from now."²

History will remember Jobs for the seismic impact he had on the world of computers, especially in making them popular and accessible to all. What is also extraordinary is the way in which he was able to pivot his company several times. As Apple changed, so did its primary competitor: IBM, Microsoft, Samsung, in that order. Jobs's influence will mark the world forever, and his thinking will inspire hundreds of innovative business models.

In 1993, a book was published about Chiat\Day, the leading Californian agency that later became part of the TBWA network.

It was entitled *Inventing Desire*.³ That's what Steve Jobs did. He invented tomorrow's desires.

All in One

When the iPod (and later the iPhone) came out, it was a real surprise not to find any instructions inside the package. Steve Jobs believed that users of his products should be able to use them instinctively. This might seem easy, but determining the most intuitive path requires a colossal amount of work. Jobs introduced what would be later called a “seamless user experience,” known today as a “frictionless customer experience.” Fluidity is the new norm.

At the launch of the Mac in 1984, Apple created an ad that referred to George Orwell's novel *1984*. Using the line “you'll see why 1984 won't be like 1984 . . .”⁴ Apple introduced the concept that machines should adapt to humans, not the other way around. Today, the algorithm should adapt to the user. Technology should not be constraining, ergonomics must permit fluidity of interactions. This prefigures a future when we will be truly *augmented*, where our intimacy with a machine will be total. The result: a world without friction between man and machine.

From stores to products, from iPods to Macs, from iTunes downloads to iPad apps, Apple masters better than anyone what physicists call *the science of reciprocal actions*. Apple was the first to create an ecosystem where devices interact automatically with one another, where products work together “naturally.” As we probably all remember, it started with the iPod. The iPod's initial pitch was very simple: “1,000 songs in your pocket,” to quote the slogan on the billboards TBWA\Chiat\Day created for Apple. The offer was the combination of iTunes, the iTunes

Store, and the iPod. Photos, games, and apps came later, as users progressively adopted the platform.

Many companies around the world are now looking to create their own proprietary ecosystems, business models with elaborate architectures. Those in China are no exception. For example, hundreds of millions of Chinese have WeChat and Alipay. They use these all-in-one apps constantly to contact friends, pay bills, order taxis, reserve hotels and plane tickets, catch up on the news, or schedule appointments. In a *Fast Company* article about multifaceted “super apps,” Albert Liu, EVP of Corporate Development at Veriphone declared, “The advantage of super lifestyle apps like Alipay or WeChat is they’ve connected incrementally more data than an app that’s just focused on a single area. . . . There is no comparison with anything in the U.S.”⁵ WeChat is used on average more than 10 times a day for other things than chatting. It’s been described as the “one app to rule them all.” This all-in-one thinking is not so far from the mindset we inherited from Steve Jobs. And this approach is now driving the smartphone explosion in China.

Back in 1983, at the International Design Conference in Aspen, Colorado, Steve Jobs had already identified the huge potential of applications. A grand visionary, he predicted a future when each user would have “an incredibly great computer in a book that you can carry around with you and learn how to use in 20 minutes.”⁶ In 2007, the launch of the iPhone made all previous applications permanently outdated. Apps were presented for the first time as simple icons, accessible through a user-friendly tactile interface. In doing so, Steve Jobs created applications that were attractive and easy to use. Before then, no one could have thought that millions of apps would see the light of day in the next decade. Without the flair of Steve Jobs, and his drive to impose his vision of the future at all costs, Uber and Airbnb

would probably never have existed. At least, they wouldn't exist in their current forms.

It was also in the early eighties that Steve Jobs pursued an idea that a number of his competitors disputed. As he put it, "More and more, software is getting integrated into the hardware. . . . Yesterday's software is today's hardware. Those two things are merging. And the line between hardware and software is going to get finer and finer and finer."⁷ I remember some observers at the time castigating Steve Jobs for his desire to make Apple a company that integrated both hardware and software. In his critics' view, this would condemn the brand to a niche market. For a while, the naysayers' arguments were reinforced by the success of the seemingly absolute compatibility of Microsoft Windows. It's true that, at the beginning, Apple was the brand for a small core of believers, often from creative industries. These passionate brand advocates allowed Apple to carry on until the tipping point of 2001, which was when the iPod launched. That year Steve Jobs changed the world, opening up a new era for design.

Apple was an early adopter of what was already known as "design thinking," a both analytical and intuitive approach that leads to a deeper understanding of the user experience. Apple accelerated its emergence.

Today, all tech companies follow in the footsteps of Steve Jobs. Programmers are interested in not only what machines can do, but more importantly, how they are used. Fulfilling Jobs's predictions, the interaction between software and hardware has become the distinctive sign of business.

In the *Financial Times*, John Gapper commented on Google's project to make an entire platform—software and hardware—for driverless cars. He said, "Without the iPhone revolution, it is hard to imagine a technology company entering the transport

industry, or designing a device that can steer cars around while receiving and transmitting streams of data.”⁸ The iPhone has provided tech companies with a new and unlimited world of opportunities. It was a pioneering product, helping people find ways to develop seamless hardware and software solutions that drive innovation into new spaces.

Only when hardware and software work perfectly together, can the user experience be optimized. And what is a strategy today if not to constantly seek to improve the user experience? That’s why, little by little, as underlined by the *Harvard Business Review*, “Firms started treating corporate strategy as an exercise in design.”⁹ This approach facilitates the resolution of more and more complicated issues, addressing large-scale problems with multistep processes. Design helps cut through complexity.

For Steve Jobs, design was not so much a physical process as a way of thinking. This was the single-minded vision that drove his company. As a result, Apple took an end-to-end responsibility for the user experience years before the phrase “design thinking” became popular—and decades before the concept imposed itself on the business world as a whole.

The Art of Reduction

I would like now to talk not so much about design thinking, but of design in the usual meaning of the word. Jonathan Ive, who has for years been Apple’s head of design, always adopted a minimalist approach. In our agency, we call this quest for simplicity “the art of reduction.”

One of the key elements of minimalism resides in the dualism of simplicity and richness, the fact that clean forms allow the essential to be revealed. In search of immediate

readability, minimalist art advocates no distance between the object and its purpose. Apple is a paragon of this philosophy. Any superfluous ornament or element is removed. Apple aims to show the object as an idea. This approach is the foundation of minimalist art.

Steve Jobs turned computers into objects of desire, making design matter. He educated billions of peoples' eyes. He made machines friendly and beautiful, brightening offices. By bringing beauty to a field where it was scarcely expected, Apple has raised our aesthetic expectations—forever, no matter the product category.

People talk about strong design like they talk about great art. Also like art, design leaves a lasting impression. Apple devices are art. Steve Jobs often said that he wanted Apple to be at the intersection of humanity and science. In almost every keynote presentation he made for the launch of a new product, he ended with a slide that showed two road signs at the intersection of Liberal Arts Street and Technology Street. It was his way of underlining how much he wanted to balance the humanities with science, creativity with technology, art with engineering.

Life Lessons

Steve Jobs's legacy is immense. First, he shaped what was to become the New Economy by rendering possible thousands of business models. Second, he helped make design an art in itself. There are, of course, many other things Steve Jobs accomplished, but I wish to close this chapter by remembering some of his observations, memorable thoughts on issues close to his heart.

On the subject of innovation, he confessed, “I’m actually as proud of the things we haven’t done as the things I have done. Innovation is saying no to 1,000 things.”¹⁰ On simplicity, he stated, “Simple can be harder than complex: you have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple.”¹¹

Steve Jobs did not leave us observations only of business, but also some timeless lessons from his own life and from life in general. He said that, for a free spirit like his, being fired by Apple was the best thing that could have happened. The liberty of becoming a beginner again replaced the burden of success. As he put it, “It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.”

He loved to mix experiences, conjugate different disciplines. On this subject, he often said that it’s impossible to connect the dots in advance. You can’t predict how things are going to turn out. It’s only with hindsight that you can make sense of things. “So, you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future,” he added.

In the famous commencement address he gave at Stanford, he told the graduating class that when he was 17, he learned to live each day as if it were his last. After all, one day it certainly would be. Jobs explained that since realizing this, each morning he looked at himself in the mirror and thought about whether he would be happy with what he was planning to do during the day, assuming that day would be his last. If the answer several days running was *no*, then he knew it was time to change something important.

In the same speech, he explained to the students, “Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life.”¹² He pushed them to always aim higher, to stay hungry, to stay foolish. When I first saw the video of this speech, I was reminded of the script

our agency created for the commercial “Think Different.” In that we imagined Jobs saying:

Here’s to the crazy ones. The ones who see things differently. . . . They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. . . . They push the human race forward. . . . And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because people who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world are the ones who do.

This closely reflected Jobs’s way of thinking. Perhaps the best way to sum up his passion to encourage each of us to “put a dent in the universe”¹³ is with the famous question he asked John Sculley, whom Jobs was recruiting to be the president of Apple. It was 1985 and Sculley was the president of Pepsi when Jobs made him that offer. To make it impossible for Sculley to refuse, Jobs asked, “Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to come with me and change the world?”¹⁴