

What the New Steve Jobs Movie Got Wrong Adam Toren Comments

Steve Jobs was a tough boss, no doubt. And while the recent release of the first of two planned biopics based on the life of Apple's infectiously rebellious founder doesn't shy away from addressing Jobs's divisive management style, it's not the whole story.

In the movie, he fires an engineer with a flick of his wrist then asks, "Why are you still here?" Though abrasive, he also nurtured a collaborative environment in which creativity could thrive. After watching Jobs, I started thinking about what made his management style special -- albeit gruff at times -- and the personality pitfalls that the film addresses. And while I'd definitely recommend waiting for Aaron Sorkin's interpretation of the life of Steve Jobs (Wozniak is consulting), Jobs got me thinking about what made Apple's collaborative monarchy so successful. Here are four reasons:

His vision helped fuel individual creativity.

Apple and Steve Jobs are interchangeable. His identity will be reflected in every Apple product developed in the future, and that's because he had a hand in every element of Apple's design philosophy. He's known for being a control freak, and was even reported to have redesigned the appearance of the company bus and cafeteria.

Though every Apple product is the sum of many different skillsets, the product adheres to the basic vision established by Jobs's ability to understand what makes an Apple product appealing. This very specific foundation empowers the different aspects of product design to exceed or flourish within Jobs's basic expectations while keeping the user experience consistent.

He didn't hire dumb people.

Apple's recruitment methods were structured around specialist workers and multi-faceted professions. While the first instinct for many managers is to hire someone who works equal to or less than their employer, Apple sought out the outliers within any given profession and gave them a chance to shine. These employees had to agree with Apple's basic message, however. That's how Steve Jobs got his rude-guy reputation.

He brought an artist's philosophy to technology.

An artist becomes an artist on spec. The artist knows why their art is cool, but it's ultimately up to the customer to realize why they like it. Once the butt of every tech-oriented blog's joke, the iPad taught consumers that laptop batteries didn't need to heat up your lap anymore. It would've been a tough pitch to a focus group, but Apple didn't need them. Jobs's willingness to invest in the aesthetic continuity of Apple products morphed the utilitarian purpose of any electronic device into something that was exciting to look at and marketed itself through coolness.

He snubbed the status quo.

Spoiler alert: Jobs ends with a just-real-enough reimagining of recording Apple's iconic 1997 Super Bowl ad. The “Think Different” campaign didn't just become the mantra which best described Apple's philosophy, it also represented the oft-forgotten humanistic side of technology.

An Apple touchpad, I believe, personifies the true meaning of “Think Different.” It feels natural, quick, and going back to a PC touchpad would be uncomfortable. Apple products are more expensive because you're paying for a design team that was given the creative freedom to analyze how you'll interact with the product. Steve Jobs isn't known for his willingness to share credit, but I'd definitely like more people to recognize that a large part of what makes Apple products great is the faith (and funding) that the company places in the hands of its design team.

Though Jobs might not have known it when he was first recording his (eventually scrapped) voice-over, he was building the foundation of a cult of personality which exploded simply because their Kool-Aid tasted better than the name brand.

It must be noted, however, that Steve Jobs was the counterpoint to a movement which was already on its way. Computers were inevitable, but Jobs was the only guy willing to jump in to the industry from a new angle.

His management style was divisive, but the results are clear: Letting your product reflect the minds that created it will affect how customers feel when they buy it. Steve Jobs was an occasional bully, but only because he was acutely aware of the link between the product and his identity. Expect the best from your coworkers, expect the best from yourself, and always consider new ways for your company to “Think Different.”