

Thrive in the Digital Age

Job's Methodology for Creating Great New Value

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Steve Jobs stands out as a unique CEO, one focused on design in general and user experience design in particular. Highly disciplined, Jobs has been unyielding in his pursuit of simple elegance. With the emphasis today on the importance of design, what can we decode from Jobs approach to designing Apple's offerings? John Sculley provides powerful insights into the functioning of Jobs and Apple's success over the past decade in [an interview](#) recently posted by Leander Kahney on the Cult of Mac website. (I encourage you to read the enlightening interview.)

To specifically address the question above, I have reformulated a portion of the content of Sculley's interview to specifically illuminate Job's method of value creation, from ideation to realization. Based on Sculley's cogent observations, Steve Jobs methodology of how to build great products can be summed up as follows:

- Don't be afraid of a lofty vision. According to John Sculley, Jobs envisioned the computer as becoming "the bicycle for the mind."
- Follow sound first principles –
 - Begin and end the design *from the vantage point of the experience of the user*.
 - Focus on just a few things and rigorously avoid adding more.
 - Be a systems thinker, manage at all aspects that linked together bring about the user experience, from the remotest supplier to the retailer to customer support – always address the end-to-end system.
 - Never compromise.
 - Do not ask people what they want. What they want is what they know. What creates new value is what they do not know about yet and maybe cannot even imagine.
 - Believe in the value of beautiful design. Compare yourself not to other products in your industry or market (electronic products in the case of Apple) but compare yourself to the finest of offerings that evoke your customers' sense of beauty and value.
- Design in all facets of your offering simultaneously –
 - The look and feel of the *user experience*.
 - The look and feel of the *product* as a thing of beauty, the industrial design.
 - The end-to-end *system* that brings about the user experience.
 - *Design* the multiple levels of the offering *in parallel*. Design the whole system that stages the user experience at the same time.
- Embrace the paradox of lofty vision and down-to-earth achievement –

- Carry out your huge vision while attending to the precise detail of every step. Be methodical and careful about everything be a perfectionist from the beginning to the end; from ideation through the full realization of the offering.
- Shift between being highly charismatic and motivating and getting employees excited to feel like they are part of something insanely great. And on the other hand be almost merciless in terms of rejecting their work until you feel it reaches the level of perfection that is good enough to go into your offerings.
- What not to do ranks as high, if not higher, than what to do. Jobs always believed the most important decisions you make are not the things you do – but the things that you decide not to do – be minimalist.
- Once developed, manage every aspect of the system that delivers the customer experience. Steve believed that if you opened the system up people would start to make little changes and those changes would be compromises in the experience and he would not be able to deliver the kind of experience that he wanted.

Everything at Apple can be best understood through the lens of designing. Steve is a great designer, while other CEOs are great turn around artists, deal negotiators, and people motivators. Gates believed in domination. Jobs believed in perfection.

What Jobs has done since the mid-1970s with Apple stands to serve us today as framework for guiding our companies to thrive in the digital age.

Note on Citation:

Leadner Kahney, John Sculley On Steve Jobs, The Full Interview Transcript, <http://www.cultofmac.com/john-sculley-on-steve-jobs-the-full-interview-transcript/63295>, Oct 14, 2010, as retrieved on Jan 18, 2010