The Apple of Our Eye

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Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak were computer enthusiasts whose paths crossed many times throughout the 1970s. In a time where the average consumer did not have access to a computer, Wozniak created his own and introduced it to amateur computer users at a gathering called the Homebrew Computer Club, a club where Jobs was also an avid member. This was not a computer as we know it today. At the time, he made just a bare circuit board that could be attached to peripheral chips, a monitor, and input device. What made this computer stand out was that it was designed to be connected to a QWERTY keyboard rather than a standard, at the time, 8-input toggle switch. Steve Jobs, while not having designed any circuit boards or written any of its code, saw the potential for profit and convinced Wozniak to try to sell it. (Linzmayer, 2008)

Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak with their Apple I Prototype / Credit: Business Insider

They showed their design to both Hewlett-Packard, where Wozniak worked, and Atari, where Jobs worked, but both companies had no interest in selling their product. Denied by both employers, Jobs convinced Wozniak to start their own business which led to Jobs selling his Volkswagen bus and Wozniak's programmable calculator for a grand total of $1750 in seed money. The Steve's realized they needed a third partner to ensure they do not become deadlocked in the many decision-making processes required in starting a business. Jobs found a colleague

Apple I board / Credit: Jimmy's Blog

named Ronald Gerald Wayne who ended up taking a 10% stake in their business. Then, Apple was created by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Gerald Wayne in 1976. (Linzmayer, 2008)

Wayne was the chief technical draftsman for Atari. Technical draftsmen are artists who specialize in drawings that convey the construction or function of a design (3ERP, 2021). Being the artist of the three, he was commissioned to create the first Apple logo. The logo he came up with consisted of Isaac Newton sitting under the famous apple tree, apple above him illuminated, with the entire image wrapped in a waving banner that read "Apple Computer Co." This, of course, is wildly different than the iconic Apple logo we know today. (Linzmayer, 2008)

The First Apple Logo / Credit: Global Young Voices

They had planned on only selling circuit boards, however, after some persistent salesmanship by Jobs, they received their first order for 50 "Apple I" computers at $500 each-contingent on the computers being fully assembled and operational on delivery. This led to Jobs needing to take out loans to pay for the other parts. The unexpected large amount of debt, plus losing his own Las Vegas-based engineering firm caused Wayne to sell his 10% stake for $800 and renounce his partnership, a move that was right for him at the time but would end up losing him billions of dollars. Even though they lost their partner, Jobs and Wozniak continued on with their first order, starting construction at Jobs' parents' house. Contrary to popular belief, Jobs and

Wozniak actually began building the computers in a bedroom before it got too crowded, forcing them to move the operation to the garage. Despite delivering motherboards without cases, power supplies, monitors, and keyboards, their first customer paid in full, making Apple $8000 in profit and encouraging Jobs who became even more ambitious thereafter. (Linzmayer, 2008)

Apple I / Credit: Antonimuthu on YouTube

Jobs later met a man named Armas Clifford "Mike" Markkula who came out of retirement to help Apple create a business plan. Already, the Apple I board was being sold in 10 retail stores leading Markkula to make the prediction of $500 million in sales in just 10 years. Markkula found Apple its first president, secured Apple a $250,000 line of credit at Bank of America, and invested $92,000 of his own money into the company. This enabled Apple to begin making their superior Apple II computer, whose parts before were too expensive to produce in large numbers. (Linzmayer, 2008)

Steve Jobs, while not as talented engineer an engineer as Wozniak, understood the importance of design. He wanted professionally designed aesthetic plastic cases that were more consumer friendly than their metal counterparts used by computer hobbyists at the time. He also wanted a new logo. Wayne's logo, Jobs felt, had little emotion and was hard to reproduce. He hired a design company that created the second Apple logo. Rob

The Second Apple Logo / Credit: TheeDigital

Janoff, an art director, began with a black and white silhouette of an apple. He stated, "I wanted to simplify the shape of an apple, and by taking a bite- a byte, right? - out of the side, it prevented the apple from looking like a cherry tomato." Despite being harder and more expensive to reproduce, Jobs insisted that Janoff add colored stripes to the apple in homage to the Apple II's color capabilities, creating arguably one of the most world-renowned logos to date. (Linzmayer, 2008)

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Apple II / Credit: National Museum of American History

The Apple II had a color monitor, a built-in keyboard, and "was the first [computer] to look like a consumer device," says Robert X. Cringely, technology journalist and former Apple employee, in a Bloomberg Quicktake video titled *Steve Jobs: How a Dreamer Changed the World*. It was a massive success and Apple became the star of silicone valley because of it. With a successful product, though, comes the pressure to come out with something even better. Through a million-dollar stock deal, Jobs got access to Xerox's research and development laboratory where he and his team saw the future of computing: interfaces designed to run multiple programs at once, the invention of mice, and other periphery. He strove to incorporate his findings into an Apple product, and the intensity of the pressure he put on Apple employees began to take its toll. Employees voiced their frustrations, some even quit due to his abrasive style of management, but the end product was a revolutionary new form of computing that was called the Macintosh- which Jobs said made the complexity of computing available to "mere mortals".

Apple's 1984 Macintosh / Credit: MacRumors

The Macintosh didn't sell well, however, and due to Jobs' erratic spending, costing Apple a great deal of money, and causing feud between him and the board of directors, he ended up being fired from his own company. An upset Jobs decided to leave and create another computer company called NeXT with five top Apple managers with him. This company, while unable to sell their hardware well enough to stay afloat, pivoted to selling their revolutionary operating system.

Steve Jobs, Founder of NeXT / Credit: BGR

Meanwhile, a now mismanaged Apple lost its foothold and the void it left in the market was quickly filled by Microsoft. Ironically, twelve years later in an effort to save the company, Apple bought NeXT from Jobs for over $400 million, and he returned as interim CEO. (Bloomberg, 2014)
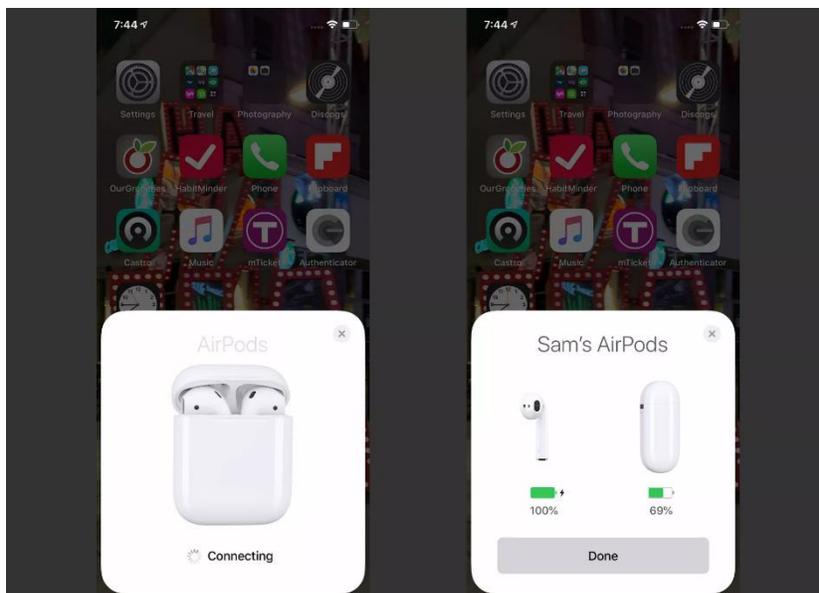
Undoing bad deals, trashing Apple products that Jobs said "suck", and making peace with rival and Microsoft CEO Bill Gates, were some of the few things Jobs did immediately after returning to Apple to right the ship. "Think Different," the iconic advertising campaign that outlined Apple's new approach, is regarded as the "line that launched Apple's rebirth" by Ken Segall, Jobs' advertising creative

Apple's "Think Different" Ad Campaign Posters / Credit: The Ross Art Group

director for both NeXT and Apple. Jobs had creative input on every word and image used in the campaign to ensure its efficacy. Despite the successful campaign, Apple's stock had been at an all-time low and needed an innovative product to get back on course (Bloomberg, 2014). In Jobs' first year back, Apple released the iMac, a stylish desktop known for its see-through plastic case,

futuristic design, and affordability. The next year they released the iBook, the iMac's laptop

counterpart. The year after that, a flat-panel monitor called the Cinema Display that pushed the

market towards an era of modern thin screens. One more year later, they released the product that

changed Apple's trajectory forever, the iPod, as it established Apple in the music industry and sent

it down a path towards the iPhone. Thus began the era of the Apple product onslaught. They

released such products as MacBook Pro, iPhone, MacBook Air, iPad, Siri, iCloud, Apple TV,

Apple Watch, AirPods, and HomePods in rapid fire with no sign of slowing down, even to this

day. (Alba, 2016)

All these products now make up what is known as the Apple ecosystem. According to

Anyron Copeman's article *The irresistible lure of the Apple* Ecosystem, in the tech world an

ecosystem refers to a "community of devices all designed to work well with each other." Today,

these devices are all connected to one another through the iCloud and are capable of talking to one

another through Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and cellular data. Say you are using your MacBook and your

iPhone is in the other room. If you were to receive an iMessage on your iPhone, you'd get a

notification on your MacBook and be able to respond without leaving the room. If you're watching a movie on your MacBook and want to move it to your television, there's a button that will wake up and send it to your Apple TV and

AirPod Syncing Aniumation/Prompt / Credit: Lifewire

immediately start playing the movie you are watching at the exact spot you left off. When you first buy AirPods, you merely wave them in front of your iPhone which brings up an animation of their likeness and prompts you to connect and name them, as though they were a pet. Every time you take AirPods out of their case and put them into your ears, they automatically sense it and connect to your iPhone, iPad, or Mac through Bluetooth. Writing a note on your iPhone? It can be continued on your MacBook in as fast as you can open the app (Copeman, 2019). Files are instantly uploaded and shared with every Apple device you own with iCloud, plugging your phone into a computer to transfer data is a distant thing of the past. Siri, voice recognition software integrated into nearly every modern Apple device, can be used to communicate with all your Apple devices such as a HomePod, a smart speaker that connects to your Wi-Fi. You could ask Siri to turn down the speaker volume, to play a song or specific movie/tv show on your Apple TV, to tell you the weather, to turn on your lights if you have smart lights, or any question you can think to ask, really. These devices connect with one another to enhance the experience of the user, to work seamlessly with one another, to unburden consumers from unnecessary work, and to encapsulate them within the Apple ecosystem creating a world that gets better and easier with every Apple product purchased.

Apple's Ecosystem / Credit: MacRumors

It was unimaginable to most people in the 1970s that computers would be accessible to consumers for individual use. Computers were often incredibly large and complicated. They were discretely located in government, educational, and company buildings, often guarded or locked up securely, only used by professionals who specialized in their operation. These were not only the attitudes of those in charge of the safeguarded computers currently in use, but of most of the general public as well. Naturally, there would be a learning curve with using computers of any kind and getting users to pay large amounts of money just to have to learn the complexities of something as involved as a computer at the time was a far-fetched idea. Jobs thought different, however, and his goal was to design a computer that could be operated by anyone. Changing the minds of consumers would not be easy, which is why he took such an emotional approach to their design and marketing. He, and his colleagues at Apple, reckoned that consumers would literally need to fall in love with their computers to change the ingrained attitudes they had about them. (Thomke & Feinberg, 2012)

The way they did this was by reverse engineering, starting with design first. Cordell Ratzlaff, a major developer of Mac OSX said, "We focused on what we thought people would need and want, and how they would interact with their computer. We made sure we got that right, and then we went and figured out how to achieve it technically…We ended up doing a lot of things that we initially thought were impossible, or would take a long time to do." They also made a great deal of effort to worry about the minute design details of a product, not because they think that consumers are nit pickers who always notice or expect them, but because they all culminate into an overall pleasant experience with the product, which has always been their goal. An interest in refining every small detail does not need to lead to a complex product, however, and Jobs' design attitude was that the ultimate sophistication is simplicity. In fact, probing for every tiny mistake in

every detail of a product makes it possible to find what features or aspects are unnecessary (Thomke & Feinberg, 2012). Apple removed CD-ROM ports from their laptops years ago and, more recently, removed the headphone jack on their iPhones. Both decisions were met with frustration from critics and consumers alike, however, shortly after they got rid of those features from their products, other companies followed suit and consumers quickly forgot what they were upset about considering the death of the CD-ROM and the availability of Bluetooth earbuds.

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In conclusion, Apple has been an innovative design company since its beginning in 1976 and is as relevant today as ever. They brought the personal computer into homes, and with it a fully-fledged ecosystem of devices. Though Steve Jobs died in 2011 before products such as the AirPods and HomePods were released, his design vision for Apple is clearly still very much alive. The evolution of a living, communicating ecosystem within which users' interaction with Apple products are made easier by mere proximity to other Apple products is a testament to their focus on innovative design. Combining this ecosystem with how they boil products down to their essence, trimming all the fat, and place great value on attention to small details make Apple the design giant they are today.

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