

# Example of succession at apple essay

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## **Leadership Qualities of Steve Jobs**

Apple has been spectacularly successful under the leadership of Jobs. It has introduced many product ideas that revolutionized the way people do things. It introduced the whole concept of desktop publishing with the Macintosh and whole new kind of entertainment package with the iPod and later the iPhone and the iPad. All of these innovations have been attributed to its co-founder and leader: Steve Jobs.

Jobs never personally invented any of Apple's products and innovations. They were developed by almost everybody else. Jobs has the uncanny ability to recognize the other uses, especially by the ordinary consumer, of a product or an idea. He then suggests ways to modifications to the product to make it consumer friendly.

Steve Jobs himself admitted what apparently is and what he believes is his most important quality: a strong passion for the arts and good taste in design. He keeps admitting this in his talks and in his biography. Like an artist, he is driven by a passion for excellence. He always strives for perfection—in every detail—in the matter of aesthetics. He realized this early in life when he took a course in calligraphy in college. This interest in calligraphy was manifested and made full use of in the development of the Macintosh.

His second most important skill or talent is the ability to recognize really good talent and how such people could work and be useful at Apple. He is able to relate an aesthetic ability with those of engineering. This is perhaps his most important talent as he himself could not have conceived any of Apple's products. He used other people to produce all of these products.

Another important quality of Jobs is his ability to understand people and know how to communicate with them. He can actually be manipulative, operating at the most sensitive aspects of an individual's motivations. He can also be extremely mean and inconsiderate of other people. This may really be an asset or a virtue. However, as the book *Good to Great* notes, even tyrants have led companies to success even if only temporarily. What Jobs has successfully established at Apple is the culture of quality, especially in the area of aesthetics for consumer satisfaction.

### **A Female Leader**

Apple does not seem to be a typical day-to-day operations company. It is a company populated by very creative and unconventional people. Steve Jobs set the pace for this. It has an environment akin to a school campus. People dress casually and can be a bit too frank if not altogether vulgar in dealing with each other. People are self-driven like Jobs himself. They are out to achieve for their own fulfillment.

It really would not matter what gender the leader has. What is important is for that leader to understand the environment at Apple and the motivations of its people. The people would perform without prodding. They performed exceptionally well under pressure—or tyranny—of Jobs .

The gender of the leader at Apple would not be the issue. It is the mindset of the leader—whether he is a conservative or liberal, whether he is open to new philosophy or lifestyles. Anyone who would have survived and thrived in Apple's environment would be able to adjust quickly in the leadership role.

## **Successor and predecessor**

It is inevitable that the successor will be compared to his predecessor especially in the case of Apple. Steve Jobs is an iconic leader. He is a celebrity CEO. He is the kind of leader who is hard to replace. He does not need much help from anyone else in the leadership function because he knows what he needs to do. He succeeds because it is his own style. The success or failure of his successor is to be able to harness what drives the people to motivate themselves to perform—that is what motivates the people other than the leader.

Tim Cook has been with Apple for a long time. He knows the people there and surely knows what drives them. The managers and inventors at Apple are among the smartest and the most talented in the industry and they are very well aware of that. What Steve Jobs did was getting them together and push them to their limits. These people would have performed even in spite of Steve Jobs. He was after all a tyrant and people in the organization had wished he had been less mean and unkind. There are certainly other ways of motivating people besides tyranny

It is precisely because of Jobs fame—including his mean reputation—that people thought he was irreplaceable. Companies led by such people usually fail after the leader has left the organization. Even the first attempt of Apple to have another celebrity CEO—John Sculley or PepsiCo—failed. The ideal successor would be someone like Cooke, someone who understands what the company is all about and who are its people. He shares the vision of Jobs and more importantly seems to have the discipline to succeed.

Cook has suffered tremendously from criticism because he does not have the

charisma of Jobs . Some of the critics have admitted that they do not know who Cook is . Cook however has proven his critics wrong. He has so far led Apple in the same direction as Jobs would have. The company has continued to grow and has launched new products in character and expectations of the old company. Clearly, Cook has succeeded in harnessing the strengths of Apple’s employees and getting them to deliver. To the earlier question of whether Cook was the right leader for Apple? The answer seems to be inevitably yes. Cook, even while Jobs was still alive, had been quietly driving Apple to growth.

Personally, I think Steve Jobs most important skill is identifying great talent and forcing them to deliver. Steve Wozniak, for instance, was a very talented engineer. He did not need to Steve Jobs to perform and do well. He was already working at Hewlett-Packard and not really doing badly. However, he needed to be pushed further. At Apple, it was the great talent the delivered the great products. Jobs pushed these people to deliver these products and Jobs presented these products to the world and took credit for them. To drive Apple to the same level of success, perhaps it is important to appreciate and understand some of Jobs’ personal beliefs. He was quoted to keep declaring, ““ Picasso had a saying—“ good artists copy, great artists steal”—and we have always been shameless about stealing great ideas”” .

Indeed, one need not be like Jobs to perform well as a CEO in the company. What is important to do is how to drive people to excellence. One need not be inhumane, mean and rude to do that. So, the first thing that I would do is find out who are the top creative people in the company. It is in the creative area that gave Apple its position of strength in the industry. I will talk to each

of them and find out what motivates them. Then, I will have to assess what are the possible ways of accomplishing that without having to imitate Jobs. I do not have to anyway. I will have to apply my own way of doing that—perhaps, even if having to hire another person to deal with the creative people. After all, there may be some people whom I would not like at all. Rather than they quit the company, let somebody else deal with them in the more effective way.

Of course, this does not mean that I will focus solely on doing this. I will still have to do certain routine things—keeping watch on the financials and protecting the interests of workers—that are important to other stakeholders. There seems to be a lot of feelings, passion and creativity involved in the operations of Apple. I may not agree with all of them, but I will have to understand. In the end, I will have to be myself in dealing with all these creative people. With proper understanding, I can adjust myself to deal with everyone in the company appropriately and effectively.

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