

Apple has no shame in pushing back product deadlines

TUAW

August 20, 2014 Wednesday 9:49 PM EST

Copyright 2014 Newstex LLC All Rights Reserved

Length: 926 words

Byline: Yoni Heisler

Body

Aug 20, 2014 (TUAW:<http://www.tuaw.com/> Delivered by Newstex)

Former Apple User Experience designer and evangelist Mark Kawano[1] recently penned an interesting piece for Inc.[2] detailing some of the lessons he learned during his 6+ year stint at Apple.

Given Apple's reputation for avoiding vaporware like the plague and only releasing finished and polished products, the following excerpt from Kawano's piece stands out.

From the outside looking in, a lot of people assume that Apple doesn't have internal deadlines for its products. If Apple did set a ship date, for example, we'd all know when the Apple iWatch is going to hit store shelves and there would already be people camped out in front of Apple stores, cash in hand.

But the theory that Apple doesn't have deadlines isn't just slightly inaccurate, it couldn't be further from the truth.

Not only does the company set internal deadlines, it also creates deadlines for deadlines that have their own deadlines. Every aspect of the company's production cycle, from conception to ship date, is calculated. But--and this is a big "but"--what makes Apple different is that it is a company that is willing to move those deadlines. If a product in development isn't ready to be released, the deadline is pushed back. If an idea isn't perfect, or isn't considered truly magical and delightful internally, it's held back, revised, and the product given an entirely new launch date.

Indeed, one of the reasons Apple stopped attending Macworld in an official capacity was because it grew weary of having to announce a grand new product on an artificial schedule set by conference organizers. Ironically, Apple with the success of the iPhone is now somewhat tied to announcing a next-gen device every 12 months or so.

Nonetheless, Apple certainly has no problem in pushing back a product launch until things are just right. Recall that the iPhone 4s didn't launch until October of 2011, a good 16 months after the iPhone 4. Rumors at the time suggested that the delay was caused by issues with Siri, the device's flagship feature. You might also remember that the white iPhone 4 was delayed for 9 months. In that instance, rumor has it that the white paint on the device was too thin and subsequently allowed too much light to reach the camera sensor, resulting in less than stellar photos.

Apple has no shame in pushing back product deadlines

A few years **back**, Apple's Phil Schiller addressed the delay **in** an interview with All Things D[3].

It was challenging. It's not as simple as making something white. There's a lot more that goes into both the material science of it-how it holds up over time...but also **in** how it all works with the sensors.

In taking the necessary time to ensure that the white iPhone 4 met Apple's high standards, Schiller added that Apple was able to deliver a device without compromises.

Applying this framework to Apple's mythical iWatch, for example, one would be well advised to ignore the myriad of reports claiming to know when such a device might be announced and/or released. One day we stumble upon a report which claims that the iWatch will be announced **in** September and the next we see a report claiming that everything has been **pushed back** until 2015. Suffice it to say, Apple will launch this mythical wearable device when it's ready to ship and works as intended.

This might seem like a no-brainer, but even a cursory glance at any number of tech-oriented product reviews reveals that many company's simply have no shame **in** releasing products that are far too often categorized as "beta products", Amazon's Fire phone being the most recent example.

Now before the comments section goes up **in** vitriolic flames, there are, of course, counter examples.

Allow me to beat you to the punch.

Though overblown, there was the whole Antennagate saga. Also, critics might point to the less than stellar rollout of Apple's homegrown Maps app. But even there, people tend to overlook the fact that software as grandiose as a worldwide mapping app, complete with multiple imaging options, fleshed out geographic information, local landmarks, and driving directions can only be refined once released to the masses.

On this note, Counternotions summed things up perfectly[4] a few years ago:

Mapping is indeed one of the hardest of mobile services, involving physical terrestrial and aerial surveying, data acquisition, correction, tile making and layer upon layer of contextual info married to underlying data, all optimized to serve often under trying network conditions. Unfortunately, like dialect recognition or speech synthesis (think Siri), mapping is one of those technologies that can't be fully incubated **in** a lab for a few years and unleashed on several hundred million users **in** more than a 100 countries **in** a "mature" state. Thousands of reports from individuals around the world, for example, have helped Google correct countless mapping failures over the last half decade. Without this public exposure and help **in** the field, a mobile mapping solution like Apple's stands no chance.

This article originally appeared on TUAW.com at <http://www.tuaw.com/2014/08/20/apple-has-no-shame-in-pushing-back-product-deadlines/>

[1]: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mkawano?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603> [2]: <http://www.inc.com/mark-kawano/lessons-from-my-time-at-apple-ship-something-you-re-proud-of.html?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603> [3]: <http://allthingsd.com/20110427/apples-jobs-and-schiller-on-why-making-the-white-iphone-was-so-darn-tough/?mod=tweetncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603> [4]: <http://counternotions.com/2012/09/21/applemaps/?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603>

Apple has no shame in pushing back product deadlines

Classification

Language: English

Publication-Type: Web Blog

Journal Code: AOLB-5152

Subject: INTERVIEWS (78%); PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (78%); NEW PRODUCTS (68%); CONFERENCES & CONVENTIONS (50%)

Company: APPLE INC (96%)

Organization: Amazon; Apple; Google Inc.

Ticker: AAPL (NASDAQ) (96%)

Industry: MOBILE & CELLULAR TELEPHONES (89%); WEARABLE COMPUTERS (69%); NEW PRODUCTS (68%)

Person: Mark Kawano; Phil Schiller

Load-Date: August 20, 2014