

Steve Jobs—Apple

1. Discuss how each of the five elements of our definition of leadership applies to Steve Jobs leading Apple (see Exhibit 1.1).

Steve Jobs has clearly been mostly interested in being the leader in the leader-follower element of the definition of leadership. He first demonstrated his interest by co-founding Apple in the 1970s. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) Had Steve Jobs been more interested in simply earning a paycheck, he would not have started a company. His intense, even aggressive, approach to leading Apple has been controversial, but it reinforces the idea of Jobs embracing the role of leader over follower. While Jobs has mainly worked as the top leader of Apple, he demonstrated his willingness to be a follower when he hired John Sculley to become CEO. (Lussier & Achua) By making such a bold move, Jobs showed that he cared greatly about the success of Apple even more than his own power within the company. Even with Sculley at the helm, Steve Jobs' desire to lead Apple in the manner he believed caused conflict between Sculley and him. (Lussier & Achua, 2010)

Influencing others at Apple has been an integral part of Steve Jobs bringing new products to the market. Although Jobs may be a visionary, his influence on others is obvious in that employees of Apple deliver cutting edge consumer technology to the market. Steve Jobs' passion for product innovation has had a great influence on the company. From the Apple II to the Macintosh to the iPhone, Apple has benefitted tremendously from Jobs' influence on others. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) Although it proved to be unsuccessful, the hiring of John Sculley as CEO showed that Steve Jobs was initially willing to be influenced by an experienced manager. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) However, the disagreements between Jobs and Sculley demonstrate that Jobs has always been more interested in influencing others. For those employees who were able to endure Steve Jobs' style of leadership, many were influenced by him to do their best work. (Lussier & Achua, 2010)

By taking initiative with new product development, Steve Jobs forms organizational objectives for employees to follow. By making product innovation an organizational objective, Jobs has long inspired Apple employees to share in this objective rather than putting their own interests first. Maintaining this objective has provided direction to employees regardless of their opinion of Steve Jobs' leadership style. Clearly, such an organizational goal is not about what Jobs will gain personally. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) Rather, Jobs presents employees with a goal that will benefit Apple. Product innovation is an idea that employees can rally around, especially if they are creative and productive.

Steve Jobs does not simply accept change, he plays a major role in changing Apple and technology that consumers use. While some leaders may avoid change, Jobs has embraced it and has been a champion of change at Apple. Innovation and change has been at the core of Apple since its very beginning. Along with Steve Wozniak, Steve Jobs developed a computer for individuals to use and turned it into a business. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) Indeed, Apple has been on the cutting edge, because of Jobs' ability to recognize change before it happens. Steve Jobs has been able to identify where consumer products should evolve for a long time. (Lussier & Achua, 2010)

Steve Jobs' people skills have been questionable and controversial during his time as leader of Apple. Jobs has realized throughout that he needs people to work together to achieve organizational goals of radical product innovation. However, his style has been characterized as demanding and intimidating, not exactly the textbook description of treating people like assets. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) For those employees who were driven to

succeed, like Jobs has been, they have rated his people skills as necessary. Other employees, however, have claimed that Jobs failed to give credit by keeping it mostly to himself. (Lussier & Achua, 2010)

2. Identify leadership roles played by Jobs as CEO of Apple. Which role was the most important? Discuss thoroughly your support.

As CEO of Apple, Steve Jobs plays different leadership roles in the interpersonal, informational, and decisional categories. Among interpersonal roles, Jobs is both a figurehead and a liaison. As a figurehead, Jobs has been the face of Apple for many years, representing Apple in the public, speaking at conferences, or giving interviews, among other obligations. Internally, Steve Jobs has appeared at Macworld, the conference for Apple employees. In the interpersonal role of liaison, Steve Jobs has represented Apple at conferences for a long time. Doing so has allowed Jobs to interact with people outside of Apple.

Among the informational roles, Jobs is mostly involved in disseminating information to others within Apple and those outside of Apple. By speaking in internal and external conferences, Jobs provides relevant information for particular parties. Jobs' technical and business acumen has been passed on to others within Apple. At external conferences, Steve Jobs can share information about new or improved products, such as the iPhone or iPod. Indeed, Steve Jobs' presentation style has been admired by many people, some of whom have cited it as a how-to for giving presentations.

Within the decisional roles of leadership, Steve Jobs clearly exercises entrepreneurship within Apple's organization. This role is by far the most important for Jobs at Apple, as he has been the leader for product innovation. Steve Jobs has an incredible track record for identifying high-tech consumer products that will sell phenomenally. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) Apple has greatly benefitted from this entrepreneurial spirit that Jobs initiated from the very beginning of the company. Although Jobs is synonymous with computers, his leadership has impacted other industries through Apple, including music and wireless phones. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) Although it could be argued that Steve Jobs has had a great influence as a figurehead, liaison, or disseminator, it has been his entrepreneurial genius that has propelled Apple beyond the realm of only being a computer manufacturer. Indeed, the idea of entrepreneurship was especially demonstrated when Steve Jobs returned to Apple in the 1990s to lead the company from near disaster to a renaissance. (Lussier & Achua, 2010)

3. Which level of analysis is the primary focus of this case? Discuss.

The primary focus of this case is the organizational level of analysis in that the discussion is about Steve Jobs and his influence on Apple's success. If the case had been written solely about Steve Jobs' influence on individuals at Apple, then the focus would have been the individual level of analysis. Had the focus of the case been the group level of analysis, it would have only had discussion about Steve Jobs' relationship with Apple's group of new product innovators or Apple's sales group. Instead, with the primary focus of the case on organizational level of analysis, readers are informed of Apple's success as it has been attributed to Steve Jobs' pursuit of product innovation and product perfection. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) As with any organization, performance has much to do with understanding the competitive environment and how to accommodate its demands. In other words, organizations must be willing and able to adapt to the environment in which they operate. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) Through Steve Jobs' leadership, Apple has not only adapted to its

environment, it has been at the forefront of demand. Apple has anticipated what many consumers want by providing several products to the market. Some organizations respond to consumers' demand, but Apple has created demand, which has led to stellar organizational performance.

4. Explain how each of the leadership theory classifications applies to this case, and which one is the most relevant.

Trait theory applies to this case about Steve Jobs and Apple in that the common qualities exhibited by leaders are possessed by Jobs. Aggressiveness, dominance, high energy level, and self-reliance have been characteristics found in leadership studies in the past. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) These characteristics match the case's description of Steve Jobs. Since Jobs originally founded Apple with Steve Wozniak, he became the leader of the company by default. However, these traits helped Jobs lead Apple employees to a very dynamic start for a young company. When Jobs came back to Apple in the 1990s, his leadership traits were on full display, as he brought the company from near bankruptcy to become a powerhouse again. (Lussier & Achua, 2010)

The case study of Steve Jobs shows how behavioral leadership theory can explain his tendencies to get employees to contribute to Apple. Described as aggressive, intimidating, and demanding, Steve Jobs has led Apple with an intensity that resulted in many people having done the best work of their lives. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) This type of leadership behavior either encouraged employees to work hard or it caused them to leave Apple altogether. Whether or not employees bought into Steve Jobs' style of leadership, it was clear that he did not waver in his efforts to make Apple the best company it could possibly be.

Contingency leadership theory applies to the case study by showing which behaviors achieved success. This type of leadership was evident when Steve Jobs believed the situation for Apple had dramatically changed. In the 1980s, Apple had grown quite large. In order to compete more effectively, Jobs believed success depended on who would lead the larger Apple. With this belief, Jobs hired John Sculley to replace him as CEO of Apple. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) Thus, Steve Jobs demonstrated contingency leadership based on his understanding of Apple's situation.

The case study also examines Steve Jobs and Apple by applying integrative leadership theory to understand the level of commitment employees have demonstrated to the company. From the very beginning, Steve Jobs has demonstrated that he is tremendously competitive, and Apple has closely personified this quality. This competitive spirit has caused Jobs to lead Apple in a direction that the company will exploit opportunities to ensure its success. In doing so, the integrative leadership theory explains how Steve Jobs has consciously used the concepts within trait theory, behavioral theory, and contingency theory to shape Apple's performance. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) His characteristically driven traits combined with aggressive behavior and a willingness to modify leadership proved that Jobs continually aspires to put Apple at the forefront of consumers' consciences.

Clearly, management to leadership theory applies to Steve Jobs in that he has chosen over the years to lead Apple in new directions. Although Jobs possesses traits of a traditional autocratic manager in his aggressive pushing of employees to excel, he has also demonstrated a rare ability to lead through innovation and change. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) Jobs does not desire to simply get the work done; he seeks to dramatically alter the landscape of consumer products. This type of thinking turned Apple around from a plodding company to once again become a business and technology juggernaut.

5. When Steve Jobs leaves Apple again, will Apple's performance deteriorate and go back into a crisis of near bankruptcy? Why or Why Not? Please include your response to Question #5 with the previous four question responses in Part B, however, also post your response to Question #5 on the Discussion Forum. Please tie your response to the previous student posting unless you are the first posting listed.

When Steve Jobs leaves Apple again, Apple's performance will deteriorate for a while, but afterward, the company will make a sustained comeback. The deterioration of Apple's performance does not necessarily mean it will result in a crisis of near bankruptcy, however. The evidence for Apple's decline can be extracted from its history, particularly the period when Jobs first left, 1985 through 1997. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) During that time, Apple went from a dominant personal computer company to a floundering operation. From Apple's phenomenal beginning until Jobs' departure, Apple was a highly innovative and successful firm. Apple experienced a renaissance that began with Jobs' return as CEO. It's no coincidence that Jobs' aggressive, competitive, and intense leadership style propelled Apple to greatness, while his absence caused Apple to operate woefully. Steve Jobs' propensity to lead employees to develop and launch highly popular consumer technology products has placed Apple firmly in the conscience of people worldwide. Apple is one of the most recognized brands globally as a result of this drive for perfection. The success of Steve Jobs and Apple has been admired by peers, leading rival, Bill Gates, to classify Jobs as an intuitive visionary. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) The prosperity of Apple and Steve Jobs has been noticed by the media as well. A few years into Apple's existence, Jobs landed on the cover of *Time* magazine. (Lussier & Achua, 2010) More recently, in 2007, *Fortune Magazine* honored Steve Jobs as the most powerful person in business. (Wikipedia) In sum, Apple's success is unquestionable with Jobs at the helm.

Up for debate, however, is whether Apple will deteriorate to a crisis of near bankruptcy after Steve Jobs finally leaves. It is possible that Apple's previous regression foreshadows its post-Jobs future. As Poshea217 stated in their post, Apple would likely experience a downturn, as it may prove very difficult to replace Steve Jobs. Moreover, it is thinkable for Apple to suffer from a lack of motivation in its future. This period of performance deterioration may happen, but it is just as likely for Apple to lift itself out of the morass. If Apple is to become a truly great organization in the long run, it may need to go through a metamorphosis. This process may include changing the culture, replacing management multiple times, reinventing its business model, or entering markets that Steve Jobs never even considered. 3M started as a mining company in the early twentieth century but went on to become a company that produces thousands of products, two of which are Scotch Tape and Post-It Notes. (Collins & Porras, 2002) With technology changing rapidly every few years, Apple will need to stay ahead of the curve, or it might consider entering into completely different product markets. The debate about Apple's future is highly speculative in that Apple's success has always ultimately depended on the ability of the organization to rise to the occasion. Steve Jobs has been recognized as the chief influence behind Apple's success. This observation, however, does not mean the company will forever be dependent on the charismatic brilliance of Steve Jobs. Indeed, for Apple to become a visionary company beyond its founder, it needs to focus on becoming an organizational visionary. (Collins & Porras, 2002) The idea of one genius with a thousand helpers can obviously be successful for a while, but for Apple to become a company that is built to last for a long time, it must have the right people, especially a great management team. (Collins, 2001) It took an organization to bring products, such as the Macintosh, iPod, iPhone, and QuickTime to market, as it would have been impossible for Jobs to do everything on his own.

## References

Lussier, R., & Achua, C. (2010). *Leadership Theory, Application, & Skill Development*. Mason: South-Western.

Wikipedia. (2009). *Steve Jobs*. Retrieved October 3, 2009, from  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve\\_jobs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_jobs).

Collins, J., & Porras, J. (2002). *Built to Last*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to Great*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers