

Who is the person pictured below? What position did he hold until recently? **Read the introduction to the article to check your ideas.**



## What Would it Take to Be the Apple of Your Industry?

Amidst all of the well-deserved praise for what Steve Jobs accomplished in his two brief stints as CEO of Apple, there should also be a search for lessons that might be applied elsewhere: what made Apple so extraordinarily successful? And, should

we or could we do it in our industry?

If we define strategy as being about choice [and execution, as well, but let's stay with choice for this argument], then what choices did Apple make under Steve Jobs' leadership that resulted in their success? Off the top of my head, several come to mind:

**Discussion** How would you answer the question about what made Apple so successful?

Discuss whether you think these statements are true  or false  and then read the journalist's first two suggestions to check your ideas.

- Steve Jobs was more interested in the technology than its use.
- Apple products have always been focused on customers' needs.
- Apple felt restricted by traditional industry boundaries.
- The iPod completely changed music distribution.



**Apple understood the relationship between the customer's fundamental desires for what their products could provide and how their products could best fulfill those desires.**

While Jobs' original partner Steve Wozniak was essentially a "hobbyist" at heart who loved the technology, Jobs was "thinking bigger", beyond the technology to what it could do for people, and this led to many of the hardware and software changes that were different from the rest of the industry, who were basically

all "hobbyists" at heart.

Apple's products have always been about your needs as a customer, whether it's better access to your music, or easier ways to manage photos, etc., rather than how neat their technology is.

**Apple innovated systemically.**

It is all end-to-end, no matter how many industry borders they had to cross. It has recently been speculated that conventional industry analysis is dying because of an inability of its practitioners to rethink industry boundaries that are now totally in flux. In fact, a frequent question is: What industry[ies] is Apple in? While others debated this question, Apple moved

on, never letting traditional industry boundaries confuse, define, constrain who they were, or what they could do, or slow them down. Be it the iPod's completely blowing-up the long-traditional value-chain of music distribution, pricing and intellectual property; or the iPhone's reconfiguring of the traditional telecom industry's value-chain with respect to actors, content and power; or the iPad's alterations of the fledgling ebook industry's relationships; Apple has always thought beyond narrow industry definitions and acted as if they were only impediments to the incumbents, which, in fact, was exactly the case.

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**Discussion** Do you agree that Apple products are easier to use? Do you think that traditional industry analysis is dying? What industry do you think Apple is in?

The writer's other suggestions concern (a) product look and price and (b) the manufacturing of Apple products. What do you think they are going to say?

**Discuss these questions and then read to check your ideas:**

- 1 What was more important to Apple, look and functionality or price?
- 2 In recent years, what share of the worldwide PC market did Apple have?
- 3 Was Apple a more efficient manufacturer than Dell?
- 4 Did Apple outsource much of the manufacturing of its products?



**Apple's products spoke to beauty and elegance, and they were never inexpensive.**

In industries headed towards commodization, as the PC industry was, the smart phone industry is fast becoming, and the tablet industry is fated to evolve into, Apple has never compromised on its dedication to beauty and elegance, as well as

functionality, even if that resulted in their being the high-priced offerings in markets all-too-often preoccupied with "value." One consequence of this is that for most of Apple's recent history it has never enjoyed much more than 5% of the global PC market, yet this was accepted as a conscious strategic choice.

**Apple was as good at making as it was at designing things.**

For all the attention that Apple receives for designing the best looking products, it is always surprising to me that they do not receive the credit that they deserve

for being manufacturing leaders as well. Although never matching Dell in pure manufacturing efficiencies [which Dell needed because of their low-cost offerings], Apple is nonetheless a most accomplished lean producer, thus making their beautiful devices relatively affordable despite the extra costs that went into them [and the lower volumes over which to amortize higher fixed costs]. In addition, while others have outsourced both the control and the making of their products, Apple has steadfastly retained large control over how their products are made and with what processes.

**Discussion** Do you agree that Apple's products are beautiful and elegant as well as functional? Do you agree with Apple's business strategy? Could your company become the Apple of your industry?

**Vocabulary focus** Match the words from the article on the left to the synonyms on the right.

- |               |                              |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| 1 stint       | A firmly                     |
| 2 fulfill     | B limit, constrict           |
| 3 flux        | C period                     |
| 4 constrain   | D meet (a requirement, etc.) |
| 5 match       | E change                     |
| 6 steadfastly | F equal                      |

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

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**Practice** Now use the words (in the correct form) to complete these sentences:

- 1 Market research says our new product is not \_\_\_\_\_ customers' needs.
- 2 The manager \_\_\_\_\_ refused to fire any of his team.
- 3 Our sales now \_\_\_\_\_ those of the market leader – the boss is delighted.
- 4 With the financial crisis many markets are in a state of \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 Under EU regulations, we are not \_\_\_\_\_ to doing business only in Spain.
- 6 After a \_\_\_\_\_ at Apple, James joined Microsoft for a better salary.

**Language focus** Look at this extract from the article:

'Apple was **as** good at making **as** it was at designing things.'

- 1 You use 'as...as...' to compare people or things that are similar in some way. You use 'as' and an adjective or adverb, followed by 'as' and a noun or a clause.

**Write five more examples here:**

- 2 You can make a negative comparison using 'not as...as...'  
e.g. *This Dell computer is not as fast as my Apple.*

**Write five more examples here:**

- 3 You can use the adverbs 'almost', 'just', 'nearly' or 'quite' in front of 'as...as...'  
e.g. *Your Nokia is nearly as easy to use as my iPhone.*

**Write five more examples here:**

- 4 In a negative comparison, you can use 'not nearly' or 'not quite' before 'as...as...'  
e.g. *Amazon's Kindle is not quite as expensive as the iPad.*

**Write five more examples here:**

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Teacher's notes

Total pages 4 / student pages 3 / week of 12.09.11 / advanced (C1)

The man in the photo is Steve Jobs, former CEO of Apple.

## Vocabulary focus

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>

## Practice

- 1** fulfilling
- 2** steadfastly
- 3** match
- 4** flux
- 5** constrained
- 6** stint