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How the Reality of Death Motivated Steve Jobs' Life...

...And Changed the World!



Steve Jobs

By [Adrienne Papp](#)

In 1976, two young college dropouts with a vision, [Steve Wozniak](#) and [Steve Jobs](#), created the first consumer-oriented personal computer in a garage in [Mountain View, Calif.](#) They had sold a van and two calculators to raise \$1300 to start the business, which they called [Apple](#). Like a lot of other entrepreneurial stories, this one had less than a modest beginning, yet Apple, through Wozniak's genius for computer design and Jobs' product vision ended up becoming the single most valuable company in the world in many sense of the word. But the legacy of [Steven Paul Jobs](#) of Apple can't be measured strictly in terms of just dollars and cents. Not only he was a [Buddhist](#), which made him see the larger picture and not just the daily tasks, but also he lived with a goal and mission in

mind every day. The legacy he leaves behind is more about the vision and inextinguishable flame of the creative spirit, which all by itself is genius that drove him on a narrow path hardly understood by many. The determination and commitment that this very narrow path calls for is not for everyone. But this very depth of consciousness, which made him reevaluate his course continuously and live up to his own, rather than other's expectations, is what made Steve Jobs the single biggest genius of our time changing not only the course of technology but mankind.

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When Steve Jobs died on October 5, it was a reminder that true greatness can often come from the most unexpected places. He was born on February 24, 1955 in San Francisco and was given up for adoption by graduate student [Joanne Schieble](#). Insisting that her son be raised by college graduates, the baby boy was to be adopted by an attorney, but when the couple decided they wanted a girl, her son was adopted by the family of [Paul and Clara Jobs](#) of [Mountain View](#), a working class couple with no college background.

Committed to sending their son to college, as mandated by the birthmother, the Jobs devoted their life saving to sending Steve to [Reed College in Oregon](#). That didn't make sense to Jobs, as he noted in a famous commencement speech given at [Stanford University](#) in 2005:

“I naively chose a college that was almost as expensive as Stanford, and all of my working-class parents' savings were being spent on my college tuition. After six months, I couldn't see the value in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out. And here I was spending all of the money my parents had saved their entire life. So I decided to drop out and trust that it would all work out OK. It was pretty scary at the time, but looking back it was one of the best decisions I ever made. The minute I dropped out I could stop taking the required classes that didn't interest me, and begin dropping in on the ones that looked interesting.”

One of the classes he took was calligraphy, which had a direct influence on the interface we now see on our personal computers:

“Reed College at that time offered perhaps the best calligraphy instruction in the country. I decided to take a calligraphy class to learn how to do this. I learned about serif and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture, and I found it fascinating. Ten years later, when we were designing the first [Macintosh computer](#), it all came back to me. It was the first computer with beautiful typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts and personal computers might not have the wonderful typography that they do.”

If [Steve Wozniak](#) was a true computer genius in terms of circuit board design, it was Jobs who had the vision to see how that could be translated into products that were easy to use and able to transform our personal lives. Jobs could take an idea and run with it and create something that would be, in his words, “insanely great.”



Steve Jobs and Stephen Wozniak

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The creative legend of Steve Jobs, Apple, and the personal computer began in 1979, when the 24-year old entrepreneur visited Xerox PARC, the research arm of [Xerox Corporation](#) and experimental laboratory of technology concepts in the [Silicon Valley](#). There he observed new concept that was the forerunner of the modern mouse. At [Xerox PARC](#), the mouse was a clunky device in a primitive format. But Jobs realized its potential and transformed it into something elegant and functional. Now it's impossible to think of operating a personal computer without one.



Steve Jobs has been called the [Edison](#) of our time, and while Apple may not have been the first company to come up with a breakthrough concept, it was Jobs who had the vision to craft the technology into something with an almost mystical sense of cool. Apple didn't invent the mp3 player, a company called Audio Highway did. But when Steve Jobs said during a product introduction in 2001 that "to have your whole music library with you at all times is a quantum leap in listening to music" and then pulled the iPod out of his jeans pocket, it became obvious that this was a defining moment in technology, that in creating the iPod Jobs had transcended all existing technology. It first occurred to me about 16 years ago when I was buying a million

CDs just to be able to combine a library of music I liked by recording one or two songs of each CD to a cassette tape at the time. I thought to myself: am I the only one who does not want to listen to a whole CD and needs to keep on changing CDs to get the music she wants?

Likewise, Apple didn't invent the online music store, someone named [Ivan J. Parron](#) did. But it was Jobs who brokered the deals with record companies to allow iTunes to become the number one music retailer in the world after its introduction in 2003, eventually selling more than 10 billion songs.

And then there is the iPhone. Apple didn't invent the first smartphone. [IBM](#), [Nokia](#) and other companies had the technology first. But under Job's direction Apple's iPhone redefined what a phone should be, a touch screen device that allows you to carry your "life in your pocket," as he said when he introduced it in 2007. Personally, although I consider myself very lucky and blessed in life with a tremendous amount of joy, trials, triumphs and tribulations, I still say that the best thing that has ever happened to me was the iPhone.

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The lesson we can take from Steve Jobs' visit to Xerox PARC and the products he created based on formative technology is that being first isn't nearly as important as being great. It's always better to be the best and Jobs' defining genius came from taking ideas in their initial, primitive formats and transforming them into unique products of elegant functionality.

As he continued to refine the technology and products that would change our lives, he came up against an adversary that he couldn't outthink or transform. Jobs was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and underwent surgery in 2004, and eventually needed a liver transplant. Those encounters with his own mortality helped shape his views of life and death, a perspective he shared in a remarkable 2005 commencement speech at Stanford University. It wasn't a rousing speech full of encouragement and rah-rah spirit. Instead it was serious and philosophical, as Jobs urged the graduates to remember that the future is uncertain and that death could be just around the corner, and that life should be a journey of following your heart. In the speech he said "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do."

His burning desire for greatness began early as Jobs told the students "When I was 17 I read a quote that went something like, 'If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you will most certainly be right.' It made an impression on me. And since then, for the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself, 'If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?' And whenever the answer has been 'No' for too many days in a row, I know I needed to change something."

Parts of this speech are as important as any of the consumer products that Steve Jobs gifted us with during his brilliant career. He will be remembered for words like these long after the life of his creations: "Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure — these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose! You are already naked; there is no reason not to follow your heart. No one wants to die ... and yet, death is the destination we all share. Death is very likely the single best invention of life. It's life's change



Jobs and Wozniak



Adrienne Papp, Jennifer C, Stephen Wozniak, Bob O

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agent.”

and Mrs. Wozniak

He added: “Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice.”

Steve Jobs parting words to Stanford’s graduating class of 2005 were “Stay hungry, stay foolish.”

I believe that Jobs’ biggest contribution yet to the world were these words: “Death is very likely the single best invention of life. It’s life’s change agent.” I believe that living with this simple axiom every day would make every single person bring out the best she/he can be on Earth. With this one sentence [Steve Jobs](#) summarized what I am trying to convey in my writings, what Oprah Winfrey is talking about every day, what quantum physics teach us, what the chaos theory, which we still just starting to understand explains, and what every working man and woman in whichever profession is trying to do every day IF they are conscious enough: become the best they can be! That is the biggest contribution to mankind a human can achieve! Stay hungry for it! Or, as Jobs put it: Stay hungry! Period!



Every Day Counts

The great test of genius is its longevity, and as some of the most famous people in the world offer words that celebrate the life of Steve Jobs, from Presidents to [Bill Gates](#) to [Mark Zuckerberg](#) to [George Lucas](#), the people who have helped define our modern world, it is the message that Jobs himself left that rings out the loudest and will be remembered longest:

“Most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition,” he said to those Stanford grads, “they somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” And, if these metaphysical words (also wrongly used at times as “spirituality”) do not ring a bell with you from a straight out scientist with world changing technology inventions

then nothing will ever do!

About the Author of This Article: [Lady Adrienne Papp](#) is a recognized journalist who has written for many publications including Savoir, [Beverly Hills 90210](#), [Malibu Beach](#), [Santa Monica Sun](#), [The Beverly Hills Times](#), [Brentwood News](#), [Bel-Air View](#), [Celebrity Society](#), [Celeb Staff](#), [It Magazine](#), [Chic Today](#), [LA2DAY](#), [West Side Today](#) among many others. She is the President and CEO of Los Angeles / New York-based publicity company, [Atlantic Publicity](#) and publishing house, [Atlantic Publisher](#). Adrienne writes about world trends, [Quantum Physics](#), entertainment and interviews celebrities, world leaders, inventors, philanthropists and entrepreneurs. She also owns [Atlantic United Films](#) that produces and finances true stories made for theatrical release or the silver screen. [Spotlight News Magazine](#) is owned by [Atlantic United, Inc](#) with [Adrienne Papp](#) being the majority shareholder.



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Oct 9, 2011, 4:59

Absolutely great article! Really well said about Steve Jobs! He was more than an inventor! Great author!



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Roger

Oct 9, 2011, 5:00

Loved this piece! This is a real good site. Thank you!



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Erika

Oct 9, 2011, 20:40

Steve Jobs was the most talented man of our times. He changed the world! I loved this man!



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Valeria

Oct 9, 2011, 20:46

My whole life has changed due to Steve Jobs. The world has lost a genius of our times.



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Aaron

Oct 19, 2011, 23:49

What a Fantastic Article. Thank you for publishing it.
Steve Jobs is certainly one of the most amazing people of the century!



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