

Taking stock of Steve Jobs' legacy

By Gary Morgenthaler, Morgenthaler Ventures Oct. 7, 2011, 8:09pm PT [14 Comments](#)



A friend recently asked me, knowing that I was involved with Siri, what Steve Jobs' legacy will be. Siri was the last giant milestone in Jobs' career, but he had a long list of accomplishments.

In the course of one lifetime, Steve Jobs:

- Helped create and popularize the personal computer (Apple II, 1977)
- Oversaw the second most valuable American IPO, after Ford Motor Company (Apple, 1980)
- Helped create the modern personal computer with mouse, icons and a graphical user interface (Macintosh, 1984)
- Co-created an influential modern operating system (Mac OS, 1984)
- Created the most memorable advertising campaigns of his generation (Macintosh Superbowl Ad, 1984; "Think Different" campaign, 1997; etc.)
- Co-created a modern publishing platform (bitmapped display, Apple LaserWriter, Aldus PageMaker, 1984–1985)
- Ushered in the concept of a modern movie animation studio (Pixar, which he bought in 1986)
- Popularized two more modern operating systems (NeXTStep, 1989, then OS X in 2002)
- Released the modern object-oriented programmer's toolset (NeXTStep, 1989)
- Resurrected the company he founded after returning to it when it was 90 days from bankruptcy (Apple, 1996)
- Reimagined and popularized digital music players (iPod, 2001)

- Transformed the retail experience and created the highest revenue-per-square-foot retail stores in the world (Apple Stores, 2001)
- Enabled easy digital music management (iTunes software, 2001)
- Released mass-market digital media creation and management software (iLife, 2003)
- Revolutionized online paid digital music distribution (iTunes Store, 2003)
- Sparked a transformation of the broadcast TV and cable industries (iTunes + Apple TV, 2007)
- Introduced the modern smartphone and helped shift the focus from telephony to music and Internet access (iPhone, 2007)
- Took down the “walled garden” application stranglehold of telecom carriers (with the iPhone + App Store, 2008)
- Reimagined the modern laptop computer (MacBook, 2006; MacBook Air, 2008)
- Transformed online software distribution with the application (“app”) store (Apple App Store, 2008)
- Invented the modern tablet computer (iPad, 2010)
- Along with Amazon, reimagined digital magazine publishing and distribution (Apple Newsstand + iTunes, part of iOS5, 2011)
- Laid the groundwork for mass-scale adoption of the artificial intelligence revolution in mass-market computing (Apple “Siri,” 2011)
- Built one of the world’s best management, engineering and marketing teams (Apple, 1996-2011)
- Created the world’s most respected and highly valued brand (Apple, 2008-2011)
- Increased value to shareholders 65-fold in 10 years (Apple, 2000-2011)
- Built the most valuable company in the history of the world (Apple, 2011)

Steve Jobs did not achieve any of this alone. But he was the visionary, instigator, leader, motivator, marketer, pitchman and showman for all of them. He was the most prolific technology and business innovator of our time. His restless intellect uniquely combined the humanities with technology and science, and brought a Zen sense of spare aesthetics to our everyday lives.

His brilliance, passion, commitment and energy changed, and continues to change, the lives of hundreds of millions of people for the better.

Steve’s legacy is hard to judge as a whole, as it lives on in the company he created, the technologies he unleashed, the many acolytes he trained and the aesthetic sensibility he imbued in all of us.

My family, many friends and I mourn for someone we never met.

Gary Morgenthaler is a partner at Morgenthaler Ventures. He was the first VC investor in Siri and was a board member at the company until it was acquired by Apple. Morgenthaler was also an investor and board member in Nuance, a partner of Apple.