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## Just why are you waiting in that line?

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On June 24, 2010, hundreds of thousands of people around the world from Berlin to Tokyo to Kalamazoo stood in line. They waited not for food or jobs or even tickets to see Team USA play in the World Cup. No. They waited for a phone. Okay, maybe it is more than a phone: they waited for an iPhone 4.

How did the world seemingly become consumed by iPhone fever? How did AT&T sell 600,000 phones online in a mere 24 hours? How did, just a month earlier, Apple the creator of the iPhone, on May 26<sup>th</sup> become the largest company in America behind giant ExxonMobil? Maybe, the question should be why. Or perhaps who?

The answer to all these questions when it comes to Apple is Steve Jobs, the company's iconic founder, chairman and visionary. Apple is indeed a function of Jobs' passion, vision and six basic business practices.

### 1. Tune Out The Industry "Experts"

Apple resides in the heart of Tech World in Silicon Valley but it does not let this proximity to so-called experts drive its growth. Instead of following conventional wisdom by seeking incremental changes to competitor's products, it invents entire new ways of seeing the solution.

Steve Jobs is famous for creating new products on a one-page drawing, with the admonition to his team, "That's what we are going to make." No focus groups. No market analysts. Just solving the customer's problem.

### 2. No, Nope, Nada, Ain't Gonna Happen

Steve Jobs knows exactly who Apple is and where it is going. It is his job everyday to say no to great ideas, ideas that competitors will take but that are not the "Apple way." This means that Apple will launch fewer products than their competitors but, then again, hundreds of thousands of people don't stand in line to pay \$500 for his competitors' stuff.

Each of us sees opportunities in our own companies, what are you saying no to?

### 3. It's "A Ritz Carlton World"

Walk into an Apple store and what is the first thing you notice after how packed it is? Service. In fact, its service rivals that of concierges at the best hotels in America. Known as a "Genius," an Apple employee is hired not just for his or her technical knowledge but also for his or her talent for taking care of people. Want to know why there are so many people in that store? It is not just the product; it's the people.

At a time when the apparent wisdom of the crowd is to cut costs at all possible avenues, Apple has found that great products alone will not create raving fans of a

company. A company must ensure the customer understands how to use the product and knows that it is there to provide the Ritz Carlton-level of support.

Think you can't afford to hire talent like Apple or the Ritz. Guess what? These companies don't pay any better than their competitors do. They just focus on only bringing the right people on their teams.

#### **4. Everybody Sells**

Sales is an intentional process. It is the result of hard work. And it is the most important thing a company can do. Without it, you are dead. In theory, all companies sell, but what gets 600,000 people to buy a phone online in one day?

In one word, it is a "Movement." Apple's customers are not simply customers anymore than Barak Obama's campaign supporters were just voters. These people are passionate about the product and what it represents to their sense of self. Think Perrier Water, the Grateful Dead and the New York Yankees. These are all products that are sold and promoted by their companies and even more so buy their fans.

Great brands like Apple never take for granted their fan power. The second they do, their day is done. One of my favorite stories about Apple is from this year, January 27<sup>th</sup> to be exact: the launch day for the iPad. For the formal announcement, Apple rented the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. As Steve Jobs took the stage to announce his latest game changing product, iPad advertisements were placed on every bus stop in the area surrounding the Center. As journalist and industry leaders left the event, the iPad was everywhere. And oh by the way, the time and date shown on those iPads in the advertisements is 9:41 am, January 27, 2010 - the exact time and date when Steve Jobs made the announcement.

#### **5. The Past Will Kill You**

Henry Ford once famously said, "If I'd have asked customers what they wanted, they would have told me faster horses."

While the tradition in Silicon Valley is to change incrementally, Steve Jobs is not interested in building faster horses. Instead, he wants to revolutionize the products and services that are important to his customers. He did not invent the tablet PC or book reader, yet the iPad is quickly making all of its predecessors irrelevant. The same is true with digital music, the mp3 player or the phone that will seemingly do everything in your life including turn of the lights in your house.

If business focuses on the incremental growth, it is a sure sign of incremental death.

#### **6. Call Your Own Shots**

There may not be a more iconic image of leadership than that of Babe Ruth pointing his bat to left field, indicating his intent to hit a homerun there. He called his shot and his success has gone down in history.

Steve Jobs is the epitome of "Business Babe Ruth." When he announces a new product or service, it is almost always met with calls from the industry media that it will not work, followed by his competitors who claim his Midas touch is over, followed by customers who shout, "How did we ever live without it?"

Confidence and grand vision are the marks of great leaders whether it is in Yankee Stadium, Silicon Valley or, if like us, you are standing in line in Kalamazoo waiting for your new phone.

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