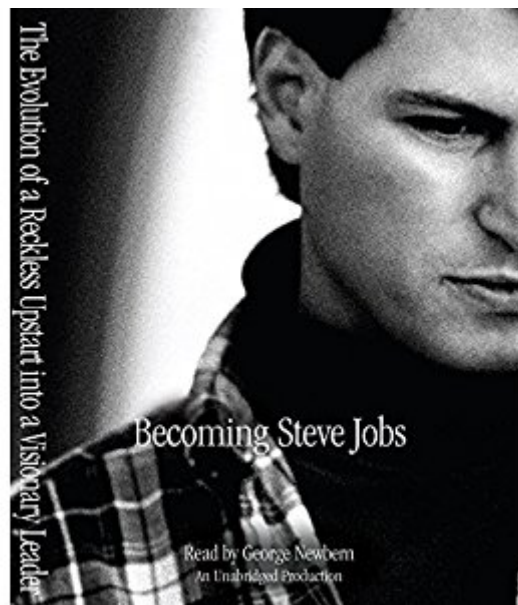




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Becoming Steve Jobs: The Evolution Of A Reckless Upstart Into A Visionary Leader



Synopsis

There have been many books - on a large and small scale - about Steve Jobs, one of the most famous CEOs in history. But this book is different from all the others. *Becoming Steve Jobs* takes on and breaks down the existing myth and stereotypes about Steve Jobs. The conventional, one-dimensional view of Jobs is that he was half genius, half jerk from youth, an irascible and selfish leader who slighted friends and family alike. *Becoming Steve Jobs* answers the central question about the life and career of the Apple cofounder and CEO: How did a young man so reckless and arrogant that he was exiled from the company he founded become the most effective visionary business leader of our time, ultimately transforming the daily lives of billions of people? Drawing on incredible and sometimes exclusive access, Schlender and Tetzeli tell a different story of a real human being who wrestled with his failings and learned to maximize his strengths over time. Their rich, compelling narrative is filled with stories never told before from the people who knew Jobs best and who decided to open up to the authors, including his family, former inner circle executives, and top people at Apple, Pixar, and Disney. In addition Brent knew Jobs personally for 25 years and drew upon his many interviews with him, on and off the record, in writing the book. He and Rick humanize the man and explain, rather than simply describe, his behavior. Along the way the book provides rich context about the technology revolution we all have lived through and the ways in which Jobs changed our world. Schlender and Tetzeli make clear that Jobs' astounding success at Apple was far more complicated than simply picking the right products: he became more patient, he learned to trust his inner circle, and he discovered the importance of growing the company incrementally rather than only shooting for dazzling, game-changing products.

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Customer Reviews

This is a fascinating biography that I enjoyed very much, but before getting into the details of the book itself I want to quickly go back in time to when Steve Jobs died on October 5, 2011 (it's hard to believe that three and a half years have already gone by since that date). At that time, the Walter Isaacson biography (Steve Jobs) had already been written. Jobs had agreed to be interviewed by Isaacson over the course of the final two years of his life, and when Isaacson's biography of Jobs was published less than three weeks after his death, on October 24, 2011, it immediately became a bestseller. His book was taken as the most thorough and authoritative description of Jobs that had been written. It did have the cooperation of Jobs himself, and did become the benchmark biography of Jobs (until today). It pulled few punches in describing Jobs volatility throughout his life and in managing his businesses. The view of most was probably that the Isaacson book was tough but fair, because the stories of how difficult Jobs could be were well known and undisputed. Now that a couple of years have gone by and people have had a chance to adjust to Jobs death and reflect, it turns out that there was a need for a more balanced look at his life, one that doesn't overlook his failings but also gives more credit to not only his great technological leadership but also his humanity and his great talents as a leader of men and women. Especially interesting are the stories of his growth as a person, and how he did learn to be more understanding and compassionate in dealing with people. We learn through reading this book that this was something he acknowledged and worked hard at improving. He knew he had faults and he tried to limit them (not always successfully). We are all aware of his accomplishments - he led and inspired (and demanded) the talented people at Apple to innovate and exceed their own expectations time after time, and although he was a stern taskmaster he also drove them to design and engineer products that were sensational to use and experience. They were transformative to industries. Jobs may not have been perfect, nobody is claiming that, but these things do not happen solely through bullying, there has to be more to it than that. And there is more to it than that. This new biography of Jobs brings out those other aspects of Jobs life and personality. And no doubt it benefits from the time that has gone by since his death, which has given everyone involved a chance to get some distance from the events of his life and put them in perspective. This book also has an even more significant difference, I feel: the authors, Brent Schlender and Rick Tetzeli, are two gentlemen who have known the computer industry and Jobs for many years. Schlender in particular had a relationship with Jobs that spanned almost 25 years. He did not meet Jobs for the first time when they began working on the book (and

this is one of the most important differences in comparing this book to the earlier biography, because Isaacson did not know Jobs prior to working on that book, and he did not have the strong background in the computer industry that both Schlender and Tetzeli possess. He was, and is, an accomplished and well respected biographer and business executive, and among other things has been the CEO of the Aspen Institute for a number of years). Bringing out this personal connection right at the beginning, the book starts with Schlender talking about his first meeting with Jobs, in April of 1986, when he was working for the Wall Street Journal and stationed in San Francisco and he drove down to Palo Alto to meet with Jobs at the NeXT headquarters. A couple of years ago, when Schlender and Tetzeli approached Apple with their plan to write this book, they were not able to obtain the cooperation of the company or its executives. Then, after a year and a half of continued effort, the door was finally opened. They were able to meet with Apple people, as well as with Jobs widow, and the resulting fresh materials, together with the notes and documents they had already gathered, going back many years, gave them an unequalled resource of information to produce this new biography. This book provides a more comprehensive look at Jobs full career, not just the Apple years (parts I and II). There is a great deal of material describing his time at both NeXT and Pixar that I was unfamiliar with. Those years when he was separated from Apple were very important in understanding and illustrating the evolution Jobs went through as a manager and as a person over the course of his life. The executives Ed Catmull, and John Lasseter at Pixar, and Bob Iger at Disney, for example, were very influential to Jobs and this was interesting to read about. (This is a time period of his life that was almost completely overlooked in the earlier Isaacson biography). This 13-year period, beginning in September, 1985, when Jobs resigned from Apple after John Scully essentially stripped all of Jobs responsibilities from him, until late 1998 when he returned to Apple following Apple's acquisition of NeXT and the removal of Gil Amelio as CEO, is covered in detail in this book and was, to me, most interesting. It was during this period that Steve tried unsuccessfully to reproduce the magic of the Mac in the new NeXT computer, acquired a creative and well-functioning team at Pixar that resisted his micromanaging and taught him how to more skillfully lead a high performing creative group. It was also during this time that he met his future wife, Laurene Powell, married and began to raise a family. Pixar achieved it's first major success when the movie Toy Story was produced in 1995; that eventually led to his return to great wealth when Pixar was sold to Disney. All of these experiences combined over time to produce a more thoughtful and measured manager who, by the time he was asked to lead Apple again, was a far different person than the imperious and demanding 20-something who had co-founded Apple and then skyrocketed to fame and fortune when he was probably too young to handle it. And while

some are now criticising this book as being more forgiving regarding Jobs, especially when compared to the Isaacson biography, I'll add one story that speaks volumes to me regarding this 'other side' of Jobs. When he returned to Apple in 1998, he faced a terribly difficult situation, the company had it's least inspiring product lineup ever, employee morale was seriously depressed, and there was a desperate need to chart a path to recover the magic that the company had held in its early days. In one of his very first leadership decisions at Apple, in learning that the stock options of the employees were all 'underwater' and valueless, he insisted that the board re-issue all those employee stock options so that they were priced at the stock value on July 7, the day that Amelio's firing was made public. He informed the employees of this in an 'all hands' memo that went out over his signature, a singular move that immediately revitalized the financial prospects for the companies employees. And he had no personal stake in that decision, because at that time he had no personal stock options of his own. The depth of his dedication to the employees of Apple could not have been more clearly shown than it was in that single action. As I read this book, having read many other stories about Jobs and having a familiarity with his life and how it developed, it can be both sad and frustrating to read once again about his failures and mistakes. At NeXT, for example, recounting the many errors made - selecting expensive magnesium for the computer case, requiring it to be built as a cube with sharp edges rather than easier to manufacture rounded corners, building the state-of-the-art factory in Fremont that would never be used to its full capability - I found myself lamenting that he hadn't been able to learn those lessons of management and discipline earlier in his life. A great waste, in many respects. Still, it is a part of his story (and a number of the innovations from NeXT would go on to live well beyond those days). Great leaders always talk about how their failures were critical to their development. Likely he would not have grown into the man he eventually became if he hadn't made those mistakes, painful though they are to replay. He was just 30 when he began NeXT, 33 when the first NeXT computer was unveiled, in grand Jobs extravaganza style at the Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco. He was world famous and yet still a very young and immature man. The attention to detail and importance of design that was so important to him from the very beginning, even when it was impossible to implement or led to products that were too expensive to succeed commercially, would blossom in later years as the iPhone and other devices were developed and led to Apple's greatest successes. To me, the most moving story from the book was when Tim Cook realized that he and Jobs had the same blood type. That meant that Cook could potentially help Jobs fight his illness by donating a part of his own liver. But Jobs wouldn't even consider it, and the deep personal nature of that exchange, between those two men and at a time when Jobs realized that his remaining days were dwindling, was very

poignant. The last part of the book is especially sad as we live through his final days, when he knew that his time was coming to an end. There are many other interesting stories here, some of which can be found elsewhere in the other reviews or on the internet already, as the early reviews are out and most of them share favorite stories or new insights that were gained from reading the book. I'll just add that this is a very human portrayal of Jobs, it is one that I believe will appeal to people who like to read biographies of business leaders, people who are fans of Apple and are looking for more insight into how it works and the people behind the products, and it will also appeal to readers who are interested in what makes a brilliant leader tick, how does the mind work and what magic must take place in order for those visions to become manifest in products and in a company that, soon after Jobs' death, became the largest in the world. I also think that it is remarkable to see the support that Apple executives are now putting behind this book now that it has been released. Tim Cook, Apple's current CEO and Jobs' hand-picked successor, Jony Ive, Apple's long standing head of design, and Eddy Cue, Apple's head of software and internet services, have all endorsed it. A cynic might view their praise of the book as support of something that may help to reshape Jobs' image in a more flattering light, but I think that there is more to it than that. This book does not whitewash Jobs or overlook his faults. My earlier comparisons to the Isaacson biography, which until today may have been the benchmark for a Jobs biography, may sound like too much of a criticism of that book, so I will add that anyone interested in Apple and the story of the company and of Steve Jobs is probably going to want to read both books. I purchased the Isaacson book as soon as it came out, and I'll probably go back and read it again now. There are portions of Jobs' life and Apple history that are covered in the Isaacson book and not so much (or at all) in this new book. I think that one of the other reviewers makes the point that the two books should be viewed as complimentary, and I think that is the right way to look at it. By the time of his death, Steve Jobs had become an icon of the business world, having achieved a stature that only a few American business executives have ever reached (Jack Welch at GE being perhaps the most recent, prior to Jobs). This is a fascinating look at him and his company, and after reading it I have the feeling that I may be just a bit closer to understanding what he was like. I wouldn't try to claim that this book is definitive - Jobs was complex enough and accomplished so much during his life that no single biography is going to provide everything that could be written about him. I do have the feeling that it may be the closest yet.

Great job on Jobs. The key difference here is the depth of his behavior and actions...showing the evolution of maturity in a brilliant young man who was able to continuously learn his way into the

skills, patience, and focus to pull off one of the great turnarounds and transformations of all time. As a book about Apple (a company many of us loved from the beginning) it is a good read. As a book about the power of learning to accomplish great things and to pull great people together...it really is a must read and a must reflect. I have seen few books over the years that do such a comprehensive story about a person's journey to great things in a corporate setting. In most cases of real life the importance of what happened to Steve Jobs is missed. We don't look keenly enough in my opinion. Here we have a story of a real person, his real experiences, his maturing and learning into what we love to call one of our heroes. Perhaps true...but in this book we see the small things that most corporate "leaders" ignore or avoid as unimportant. And it is not a formula...suggest it is a mindset and a spirit of faith in our abilities to be great. More than another story about Steve Jobs and Apple. Read and reflect. And be motivated by what, in varying degrees, we are all capable of together.

Steve Jobs was invited everywhere because he was bold, brazen and later on a genius, but he didn't belong anywhere. That is because he belonged to the future. The tragedy of his life was that his genius may have caused him to outsmart himself so that he never got a chance to enjoy his future. I'd heard that *Becoming Steve Jobs* would be different from Walter Isaacson's book, *Steve Jobs*. And it was. But what I wasn't prepared for was the surprise ending. It turns out that this is a love story. And it's not about the love that Steve Jobs had for his family. It's about the love that Steve Jobs had for and towards Tim Cook, Jony Ive, John Lasseter and Bob Iger and that they had for and towards him. Someone once told me that immature love is loving someone for what they do right; mature love is loving someone in spite of what they do wrong. And it is clear that Cook, Ive, Lasseter and Iger felt this way towards Steve Jobs and I'm guessing that there is rarely a day goes by when they don't think about him. Of course I could be projecting, because that is the way I feel about my late mentor, Warren Bennis (who I wrote about at:

http://centerforpublicleadership.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=581:warren-bennis-scholar-on-leadership-dies-at-89-). There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about him, but rather than feeling a deep sadness, thinking about him causes me to have a "smile in my heart" that stretches up in to my cheekbones and flirts a little with my eyes. I'm guessing that Cook, Ive, Lasseter and Iger might know what I'm talking about. Rest in peace Steve... and rest in peace Warren.

This book is excellent. I appreciate the level-headed and heart-felt reporting, which in combination provides a compelling portrait of a genius at work. I now see Jobs as exacting, yes, but not as an

ego-driven corporate bully. The book combines solid facts with personal stories of Steve Jobs. The pace is good and weaves in both personal and professional moments in Jobs' life evenly. The stories speak to the irascible nature Jobs was noted for as well as to the human side of Jobs. Schlender takes us back stage with Jobs and into his private moments with friends and family. In the end, Jobs becomes a man who learned from his mistakes and who sincerely reflected on those mistakes to reinvent himself.

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