

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1295 Incredible Steve Jobs Ideas About Decisions

So many organizations struggle with growing talent, and building effective leaders who can and will make decisions. Steve Jobs of Apple had some strong opinions on the topic of decision making. I'm Jerry Roberts, and what I'm going to share today may make a big difference for you and your team. That's next, on The Extra Point.

Today's Extra Point is about decisions, and it involves a story. It was 1997 and the name Apple Computer was mud to me. Apple had fired co-founder and CEO Steve Jobs years before, and the company had gone through several leaders who just about ruined it.

The Macintosh operating system at that time was a profane term — at least to Apple users — System 7. Numerous older Mac enthusiasts listening just winced. If you're a Windows person and System 7 has no meaning for you, here's profanity you will relate to — Windows ME. Oh, painful, right?

I was publishing a magazine and the computers were crashing continuously. Not daily, not hourly, but multiple times per hour. Apple support had no clue, forums couldn't help, and trying to pump out a 80-120-page publication was sheer torture.

That year we bought a refurbished Mac desktop computer, a powerful unit which was going to be the main design station for the magazine. Apple promoted that their refurbis were checked out thoroughly and were as good as new.

We turned it on and it went "BOOM", flames shot out, and it was literally toast. Worse, it took nearly an Act of God to get Apple to accept responsibility. Months of phone calls and emails. It was incredibly frustrating.

I was mentally done with Apple, but there were zero options. Windows was 10 times worse. It was System 7 or nothing.

As a side note, Apple stock closed that year at

just under 10 cents per share. If anyone had suggested I pick up a thousand shares of Apple for \$100, I'd have laughed at them, screamed at them, maybe thrown something at them. Buy Apple stock? Gimme a break.

In desperation, Apple had brought Jobs back the year before, but as a consultant. He wasn't the CEO. I didn't see any immediate changes.

At Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference, Jobs was taking questions from the audience when he was unexpectedly hammered by a man, who said: "Mr. Jobs, you're a bright and influential man. It's sad and clear that on several accounts you've discussed, you don't know what you're talking about."

The man went on to ask specific questions about software infrastructure that Jobs had announced would be discontinued. He then challenged Apple's founder on what he'd been doing during the years since he'd been fired from Apple. It was not pretty.

Jobs didn't answer the man's specific questions, nor did he attempt to defend his intelligence or success. Instead, he simply replied, "Some mistakes will be made along the way. That's good, because at least some decisions are being made along the way." Then he added, "We'll find the mistakes and we'll fix them."

On one hand, Jobs accepted responsibility, and on the other he defined decision making and success. He emphasized what all great leaders know — mistakes are unavoidable if you're ever going to do anything of value.

What Steve Jobs was saying was that making mistakes didn't diminish one's credibility — it added to it so long as you learned from those mistakes.

Jobs resigned from Apple due to illness in August of 2011. It was four years after he had launched the iPhone. He died six weeks later. (Con't.)

Today, Apple is the largest company in the world, with a total market value of about \$2.6 trillion, roughly \$500 billion more than second-place Microsoft.

By the way, if I had put \$100 down for 1,000 shares of Apple at the end of 1997, today I would have 112,000 shares by virtue of five stock splits. That \$100 investment would be worth...\$18.5 million.

No \$18.5 million for me, but the lessons learned from Steve Jobs are worth a lot.

"Some mistakes will be made along the way. That's good, because at least some decisions are being made along the way."

Teach people to make decisions. Start with small ones and work them up to bigger ones. Make sure they learn from mistakes and then let them make more decisions. Eventually, you'll build a strong bench of people you can rely upon to lead. That's the win.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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