

Steve Jobs And Modern Leadership

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Abstract: *During the time, especially in the last fifty years, leadership has increasingly become a major subject in the management literature, a subject of much thought, writing and teaching. While the importance of leadership is generally accepted all over the world, there are as many definitions of it as there are organizations. In spite of the fact that the business literature on leadership is so voluminous, there is not an agreed-upon definition of the concept of leadership. Leadership is not only intensely studied, but also practiced in different organizations. How to lead effectively an organization depends on many factors such as the organizational culture, the behavior of the followers, and the personal traits of the leader. The vast majority of successful leaders are multi-dimensional individuals. The aims of our paper are to present a short biography of Steve Jobs and to highlight his contribution to modern leadership. Our research is based on a literature review. The S. Jobs example illustrates how a transformational leader as him can be a key factor in successfully turning round the fortunes of a company as Apple. The paper facilitates a better understanding of modern leadership, emphasizing the case of S. Jobs, and provides a platform on which to build further studies on the same subject.*

Key words: leadership, Steve Jobs, leader, Apple

JEL Classification: M1, M19

Introduction

As leadership constitutes a universal phenomenon, it is often discussed and analysed in various environments (e.g., business, academic). Leadership is not only intensely studied, but also practiced in different organizations. Formal organizations embodies "at least two distinctive, yet complementary aspects of the phenomenon of leadership: (1) the structure of organization institutionalizes the leadership process into a network of roles, often in an overconcretized and de-humanizing form; (2) mediating or interpersonal leadership- what is most evident as leadership in action, operationalizes the principles of leadership as an emergent process within the context of the former" (Smircich and Morgan, 1982, p. 260). Also, leadership in organizations involves three different levels: team, operational and strategic (Adair, 2002).

During the time, especially in the last fifty years, leadership has increasingly become a major subject in the management literature, a subject of much thought, writing and teaching. In the beginning, the study of leadership was anchored in a single disciplinary view for most for the last century. Since the development of big business organizations such as the multinational and transnational corporations, leadership has been described through multi-faceted approaches. In today's continuously changing environment, "leadership can and does make a meaningful difference in every aspect of organizations" (Hickman, 1998, p. xiii).

The aims of our paper are to present a short biography of Steve Jobs and to highlight his contribution to modern leadership. Our research is based on a literature review.

The paper is structured as follows. In section one, we present some definitions and

features of leadership. The second part of the paper renders in brief the biography of S. Jobs. The third part deals with the connection between Jobs and modern leadership. This is followed by conclusions.

1. What is leadership ?

The concept of leadership is not an easy subject to define and explain. Leadership scholars have studied leadership in one or several academic fields such as social psychology, anthropology, human resources, sociology, political science, education, theology and business. Most of these scholars belong to business schools.

Many studies were devoted to the difference between management and leadership. In this respect, "if one wishes to distinguish leadership from management or administration, one can argue that leadership creates and changes cultures, while management and administration act within a culture" (Schein, 2004, p. 11). That is why there are differences between the actions and behaviours of leaders and managers (Table 1). Also, a clear distinction has been made in the management literature between the two leadership models within the capitalist economic system (Table 2). On the one hand, there is the Anglo/US model and, on the other hand, there is the Rhineland model (Avery, 2005). The two forms of capitalism influence in a high degree the way organizations are led.

Table 1. *The Manager and the Leader: a comparison*

The Manager	The Leader
Administers	Innovates
Is a copy	Is an original
Maintains existing patterns	Explores new territory
Maintains	Develops
Avoids risks	Takes risks
Focuses on systems	Focuses on people
Relies on control	Inspires trust
Short-range view	Long-range view
Makes plans and budgets	Formulates vision
Asks how and when	Asks what and why
Eye on the bottom line	Eye on the horizon
Imitates	Originates
Accepts the status quo	Challenges the status quo
Stabilizes	Initiates change
Transacts	Transforms
Invokes rationality	Invokes passion
Obeys orders without question	Obeys when appropriate but thinks
Does things right	Does the right things
Is trained	Learns
Controls	Empowers
Enforces uniformity	Encourages diversity
Acts amorally	Acts morally
Operates within the culture	Creates the culture

Source: Allio, 2009, p. 6; Hopper and Potter, 2000, p. 61

Leadership has a full range of definitions. During the time, the definitions of leadership have shown a progression of thought related to this topic. In the beginning, the definitions identified leadership as “a focus of group process and movement- personality in action. The next definitions considered it the art of inducing compliance” and “the more recent definitions conceive of leadership in terms of influence relationships, power differentials, persuasion, influence on goal

achievement, role differentiation, reinforcement, initiation of structure, and perceived attributions of behavior that are consistent with what the perceivers believe leadership to be” (Bass and Bass, 2008, p. 24).

While the importance of leadership is generally accepted all over the world, there are as many definitions of it as there are organizations. In spite of the fact that the business literature on leadership is so voluminous, there is not an agreed-upon definition of the

concept of leadership. Since the 1990s it has been said that a major problem with both leadership studies and with the people who practice leadership is that “neither the scholars nor the practitioners have been able to define leadership with precision, accuracy, and conciseness so that people are able to label it correctly when they see it happening or when they engage in it” (Rost, 1993, p. 6). However, most of the definitions were provided by American and British researchers and authors as follows:

- Leadership represents “the activity of influencing people to pursue a certain course” (Adair, 2002, p. 61).
- Leadership means “authority, control, direction, guidance, initiative, influence” (Lindberg, 2002, p. 424).
- “Some of the many definitions include: to guide, to direct, to begin, to be chief, to influence, to command, to be the first, to go ahead of, to create a path, to show the way, to control actions, to cause progress” (Cox and

Hoover, 2002, p. 5).

- Leadership involves initiating, and represents both a highly creative and an intrinsically interpersonal activity (Landsberg, 2000).
 - Leadership is “the ability to lead” (Davidson, Seaton and Simpson, 1998, p. 548).
- In essence, the working definitions of leadership belong to one of the following groups:
- “The early simplistic paradigm (leadership is good management).
 - The semantic description (leadership is the process of leading).
 - The transactional definition (leadership is a social exchange between leaders and followers).
 - The situational notion (leadership is a phenomenon that precedes and facilitates decisions and actions).
 - The esthetic concept (leadership is an art or a craft).” (Allio, 2013, p. 4)

Table 2. A comparison between the Anglo/US and Rhineland leadership models

No.	Element	Anglo/US model	Rhineland model
1.	Chief Executive Officer (CEO) concept	Decision maker, hero	Top team speaker
2.	Decision making	Manager-centered	Consensual
3.	Ethical behavior	Ambivalent	An explicit value
4.	Financial markets	Follow them	Challenge team
5.	Innovation	A challenge	Strong
6.	Knowledge management	A challenge	Shared
7.	Long-term perspective	No	Yes
8.	Management development	Import managers	Grow their own
9.	Organizational culture	A challenge	Strong
10.	People priority	Lip-service	Strong
11.	Quality	Difficult to deliver	High is a given
12.	Retaining staff	Weak	Strong
13.	Skilled workforce	Challenged	Strong
14.	Social responsibility	Underdeveloped	Strong

15.	Environmental responsibility	Underdeveloped	Strong
16.	Stakeholders	Shareholders	Broad focus
17.	Teams	Manager-centered	Self-governing
18.	Uncertainty and change	Fast adjustment	Considered process
19.	Union-management relations	Conflict	Cooperation

Source: Avery, 2005, p. 30

The above mentioned definitions show that the concept of leadership means different things to different people. However, these definitions lead to the following features of the concept:

- Leadership is a multidimensional concept which has many facets and dimensions.
 - Leadership is universal.
 - Leadership is close to management, but not identical.
 - Leadership implies various interpersonal activities such as influencing people or guiding them.
 - The concepts of leadership and leader are strongly interconnected.

How to lead effectively an organization depends on many factors such as the organizational culture, the behavior of the followers, and the personal traits of the leader (Simmons and Sower, 2012; Allio, 2009). The vast majority of successful leaders are multidimensional individuals. They excel in many dimensions of leadership, being flexible, sensitive, directive, empathetic, charismatic, motivators, persuasive or self-confident. In this respect, a valuable example is S. Jobs, the founder of Apple.

2. Steve Jobs: a short biography

Steven Paul Jobs (Steve Jobs) was born on 24 February 1955 in San Francisco, California. His parents were Abdul Fattah Jandali, a

young Syrian muslim immigrant, and Joanne Carole Schieble, a German-American. As Schieble's conservative Christian family did not accept her marrying Jandali, Joanne Carole took the decision to move from Wisconsin to the more liberal San Francisco in order to have her child. Steve Jobs was adopted by Clara and Paul Jobs, a middle-class San Francisco couple, who later moved to the suburban city of Mountain View.

In the early 1950s, the Santa Clara county became known as Silicon Valley after the sprouting of a myriad of semi-conductor companies. So, Steve lived in his childhood in the neighborhood of electronic industry. This hi-tech environment shaped his interest in the field as he grew up. At age 13, Jobs met one of the most important persons in his life: Stephen Wozniak, older than him with 5 years. An electronics wiz kid, Wozniak spent many hours building various electronics projects. He also was regularly attending meetings of a group of early computer hobbyists called the Homebrew Computer Club, a forerunner of personal computing. In the same year, Jobs called up Bill Hewlett and got a summer job at the Hewlett-Packard (HP) factory. Later, Wozniak himself started working for HP, designing calculator circuits.

Jobs and Wozniak had two main things in common: electronics and pranks. Jobs grew up listening to the Beatles, but Wozniak turned him into Bob Dylan whose

music carried greater resonance for them. Jobs highly appreciated Dylan because he composed songs based on what the musician saw and thought. Living in a California open to so many possibilities, Steve embraced the hippie culture. He ate seeds, took LSD, wore long hair and became interested in Indian spiritualism.

When he was 18, Jobs reached college age and enrolled in Reed College, an expensive private liberal-arts college in Portland. Jobs saw the college as “a chance to reinvent himself far away from home” (Dormehl, 2012, p. 51). He met Dan Kottke there. They both enjoyed reading books, being attracted by the psychedelic experience. They often discussed about yoga, meditation and Zen, subjects treated especially in spiritual books such as ‘Be Here Now’ by Baba Ram Dass, ‘Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind’ by Shunryu Suzuki or ‘Autobiography of a Yogi’ by Paramahansa Yogananda. Moreover, Jobs and Kottke worked as volunteers at a 220-acre apple farm, located forty miles away from Portland. Influenced by the book ‘Diet for a Small Planet’ by Frances Moore Lappe, they made the decision to become vegetarians. Throughout the rest of his life, Jobs embraced the diets based on fresh fruits.

Jobs spent only one semester at Reed, then dropped out, and returned home where he looked for work. In the San Jose Mercury newspaper he found an advertisement of the video-game manufacturer Atari: “Have fun, make money”, which sounded promising to him. In a short period of time, he was hired at the Atari and used his wages to make a trip to India in 1974, in order to ‘seek enlightenment’. Jobs returned home came back a little disillusioned, but he wore traditional Indian clothing and remained a serious practitioner

of Zen Buddhism. At that time, Wozniak succeeded in building his own computer board and Jobs quickly understood that his friend’s invention could be a gold mine.

On April 1, 1976, Steve Jobs, Stephen Wozniak and Ronald G. Wayne founded a company called Apple Computer. In the following months they assembled boards of Apple I computers in the Jobses’ garage, and sold them to independent computer dealers in the area. Wozniak was a genius in computers, but he could not market their product, raise money, or operate a business the way Jobs could. It was a perfect combination of skills of the two Steves.

As Wozniak had started work on a much better computer, the Apple II, that supported color graphics, Jobs sought venture capital. He convinced Mike Markkula, a former Intel executive, to invest \$92,000 in Apple. In January 1977, Jobs and Markkula hired Mike Scott as CEO, bringing professional management from Intel. Step by step, Apple became a symbol of the PC revolution, a company that challenged the so-called “possibilities” of a young American computer industry.

By constantly redefining the standards for its products, the company made Apple II into the first mass-market PC with impressive sales around the USA. The company’s sales had surged from \$2.7 million in 1977 to \$200 million in 1980, with an expected \$600 million by the end of 1982. Starting with 1981, Jobs appeared on the cover of many well-known publications (e.g., Time, Inc.).

In the early 1983, John Sculley, a former PepsiCo CEO, became Apple’s CEO after having been wooed by Jobs for several months. Two years later, Apple’s board strips Jobs off all executive duties. He resigned from Apple and launched a new company called NeXT

with five other refugees from Apple. In 1986 he decided to buy the computer division of George Lucas' ILM for \$10 million and incorporated it as Pixar. Pixar widely benefited from the Disney marketing machine and made a hit with *Toy Story*. In the late 1980s, Jobs was named 'Entrepreneur of the decade' by Inc. magazine.

In December 1996, Jobs was back at the company he founded after Apple bought NeXT for \$400 million. In less than one year, he accepted to become Apple's interim CEO. In 2011, Jobs designed and developed Apple's Digital Hub Strategy at Macworld: the Mac is to become the center of consumers' emerging digital lifestyles. As a consequence, iPod, the first digital music player that people loved, was a huge business success from the day it debuted.

During the period 2005-2011 the big Apple was finally built. In 2011, Jobs resigned as CEO of Apple and died on October 5 at home, surrounded by his family.

3. Steve Jobs, a leader in modern times

For many management experts and researchers, Jobs is supposed "to have had the insight into the future of personal computers, a vision of genius" and represents "a perfect example of the Silicon Valley entrepreneur: individualistic, quirky, obsessed by a product design that combines functional performance and a pleasing aesthetic" which "implemented an aggressive and demanding style of management" (Godelier, 2007, p. 5). He truly knew what he wanted and succeeded in transforming his dreams into realities. His life philosophy was the philosophy of a winner who:

- promoted the Apple II, making Apple the first computer giant and the world's most

valuable company.

- designed the first windows platform with the Mac.
- created the mouse and made it popular.
- funded Pixar which became the largest animator in history.
- beat cancer for a long period of time.
- in spite of a long list of failures, was back on top.
- created many blockbuster movies in a row, etc.

A genius and a visionary, Jobs was a complex leader. His distinctive personality represented a key factor in explaining the way he led Apple. Some of his main personal traits are worth to be emphasised such as:

- passionate,
- flexible,
- impulsive,
- overly critical,
- obsessive perfectionist,
- highly intuitive,
- charismatic,
- egotist,
- free-spirit innovator,
- open-minded,
- persuasive,
- inspiring, etc.

A company like Apple has to sustain excellence "not only through its processes", but also "in its leadership, namely, in its CEO" (Moore and Knickle, 2012, p. 67). Jobs built a strong and successful corporate culture that facilitated Apple employees to "know one when they see one".

The DNA of Apple was the DNA of Jobs. The company was "profoundly influenced by its founder and still bears today the characteristics associated with an organization that favours the type of logic and modes

of justification that come from the logic of inspiration" (Boivin and Roch, 2006, p. 415). Jobs had always inspired his people and customers with his stories: "business world will always remember Steve Jobs as one-of-a-kind storyteller" (Kuran, 2013, p. 121). Apple's greatness has been built on its inspirational logic that pushed the company to continuously seeking for perfectionism.

Jobs belongs in the pantheon of America's great modern leaders. This statement is based on several fundamental elements as follows (Isaacson, 2012; Isaacson, 2011; Davenport, 2011):

- His personality was integral to his way of doing business.
- In spite of his tendency to be rough on people, Jobs was surrounded by an intensely loyal cadre of colleagues who had been inspired by him for along period of time.
- As a perfectionist, he never gave up and steadfastly pursued his dreams.
- Jobs made Apple an enduring company through the implementation of a creative strategy at Apple, based on entrepreneurship, leadership, organization and innovation.
- Focus was ingrained in his business philosophy and had been honed by his Zen training: "Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do".
- Jobs promoted simplicity in order to achieve the ultimate sophistication.
- He always took responsibility end to end.
- Jobs had always put products before profits.
- He possessed the famous ability to push Apple people to do the impossible.
- Jobs was a strong believer in face-to-face meetings with people.

- He provided intellectual challenges and stimulation to the Apple people.

- Jobs had the ability to create small teams of top talents and to express ideas to the team for their realization.

In short, Jobs proved to be a highly successful leader in an intensely competitive industry. He constitutes the valuable example of a transformational leader able to inspire his people to do great things they had never done before.

Conclusions

Leadership represents one of the most observed and debated phenomena on earth in the last decades. As a multidimensional concept, leadership is essential in every aspect of today's organizations.

The S. Jobs example illustrates how a transformational leader as him can be a key factor in successfully turning round the fortunes of a company. The dominant logic of Apple was strongly determined by its founder. Jobs offered a vision of the future that was both inspiring and attractive for Apple people. Unlike many leaders who appear to succeed only once, he constantly repeated his success.

Our paper facilitates a better understanding of Jobs' contribution to modern leadership and provides a platform on which to build further studies on the same subject.

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