

## **Book Review**

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Book	BECOMING STEVE JOBS The Evolution of a Reckless Upstart into a Visionary Leader
Authors	Brent Schlender and Rick Tetzeli
Genre	Biography
Place	Great Britain/ India
Publishers	Sceptre/ Hachette
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"I didn't want to be a businessman, because all the businessmen I knew I didn't want to be like." This is what Steven Paul Jobs often told Brent Schlender – one the authors of Becoming Steve Jobs – despite being a hugely successful businessman. The young Steve Jobs was a mess of contradictions, write Schlender and Tetzeli. He was a co-founder of one of the most successful

start-ups ever, but he didn't want to be seen as a businessmen. He craved the advice of mentors, and yet resented those in power. He dropped acid, walked barefoot wore scraggly jeans, and liked the idea of living in a commune, yet he also loved nothing more than speeding down the highway in a finely crafted German sports car. He was impatient and intransigent and aggressively rude, but he was eager to learn and eventually would apologise if in the wrong (more often than not); a practicing Buddhist who was also an unrepentant capitalist and wanted to bring sophisticated and quality technology to people's homes.

Although his life could be and already has been made into several movies, the authors believe it is much more than that. Veteran journalists Brent Schlender and Rick Tetzeli present a portrait of Jobs that is far more nuanced and intimate than previous biographies as the ups and downs that Jobs had in his personal and professional life are well documented in this book through interviews with Jobs' family and friends and the authors' writings over the decades. Brent Schlender, one of the premiere chroniclers of the personal computer revolution, covered Steve Jobs for the Wall Street Journal and Fortune for nearly 25 years and Rick Tetzeli has covered technology for two decades and has been closely involved with Schlender's work. However, this is largely a first person account from the perspective of Schlender since he came close to the innovator through his reportage. 'Becoming Steve Jobs: The Evolution of a Reckless Upstart into a Visionary Leader' works brilliantly to overturn the popular and conventional view of Steve Jobs, that of being half genius and half jerk. It answers a compelling question about the Apple co-founder and CEO, how did a young man, who was so reckless and arrogant that he was exiled from the very company he created, become one of the most effective visionary business leaders of our time?

Schlender and Tetzeli paint pictures with words in their work and give us a glimpse into the life of the legendary creator, innovative designer, marketing expert and exasperating perfectionist. What else would you call the man who believed in and stood by his credo – Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication – shared by the company we know as Apple! The authors take us through an eventful and exciting journey of Jobs' life from when he was the public face of the personal computer industry despite still being a kid at twenty-four years old to his last days as he was battling with cancer and ensuring his legacy at Apple of good design and ingenuity lived on.

There are several previously untold accounts of Jobs' life and work and through these anecdotes, the authors have managed to do what a lot of the other biographies have missed and that is create a much more layered portrait of the man whose mind could clearly see what was not there, what could be there, what had to be there; a mind which was never a captive of reality! Nonetheless, there also are numerous accounts that find place here which one can also read through Isaacson's work (has the distinction of being the authorised biography) and watch in movies where Ashton Kutcher (Jobs, 2013) and Michael Fassbender (Steve Jobs, 2015) among others have reprised Job's *enfant terrible* roles with much finesse. In fact several incidents in his life have been recounted here – like his rejection

to accept Lisa as his daughter, as well as his failed and extravagant comeback among others – which paint him in poor light.

However, what this book celebrates in chapter after chapter are the redeemable qualities of the man behind the rash and brash dictator. Whether it is in the very first chapter where the authors tell us of his impatience with the lack of efficiency of an NGO he was involved in and how he breaks down after his rant or towards the end where colleagues speak up about how he inspired them and stood by them as a fast friend, the biography time and again focuses on the positives. There are several interesting and endearing anecdotes about the genius madman who ended up making friends out of people who weathered his moods and understood the idea within. One such episode highlighted by the authors is that of the earliest (and for a long time possibly the only) retailer, Ron Johnson who was responsible for the Apple stores' design and merchandising. Despite several struggles with the designing of the prototype, Johnson always received the necessary push from Jobs to be creative and audacious and strive for the best. He deemed Jobs to be the best delegator he ever met! Johnson said at a Stanford address, "He was so clear about what he wanted that it gave you great freedom."

The book also gives you insight into his marketing prowess. The authors note how Jobs embraced the marketing adage that every single moment a consumer encounters a brand – whether as a buyer, a user, a store visitor, a passerby seeing a billboard, or someone simply watching an ad on TV – is an experience that adds either credits or debits to the brand's 'account'. His emphasis on design finds place in the writing too when his ideas on good design are quoted as 1. innovative 2. what makes a product useful 3. aesthetic 4. what makes a product understandable 5. Unobtrusive 6. honest 7. long-lasting 8. thorough down to the last detail 9. environmentally friendly 10. as little design as possible.

The chapters progress to show how caring Jobs was and of his concern for employees and colleagues. He took a personal interest in their wellbeing and an episode that brings a smile to one's lips is how he managed to call up Tim Cook's mother to ask about his lack of personal life! Another incident which touches the heart is how honest he was in his dealings with Bob Iger during the Pixar-Disney deal revealing that his cancer had recurred before the press conference. The Pixar adventure finds its own chapters (A Side Bet and Luck) where Jobs' purchase of the animation studio is highlighted through several interviews done in the past by Schlender. The only one of two historic 'on the record' meetings of Steve Jobs and Bill Gates also has its place in the sixth chapter, Bill Gates Pays a Visit. Wherever necessary, the authors use their own interviews and official annual reports and government statistics to highlight the topsy-turvy ride of Apple and NeXT and their eventual merger as well as the action-packed journey of Apple Inc. and its products from iPod to iPad.

And all through the book, you see how Jobs matures and become the visionary leader that we fondly remember him as. He is inspirational and a true leader and whether it is through

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his Stanford address or his leading by example and living the life he lived, Jobs packed a powerful message for all of us when he spoke about how he didn't really care about the consequences because that is what he wanted to do, and if he tried his best and failed, well, he tried his best! He also asked some pertinent questions... "What's the truth of your ambition? Do you have the humility to continually grow, to learn from your failures and get back up? Are you utterly relentless for your cause, ferocious for your cause? Can you channel your intensity and intelligence and energy and talents and gifts and ideas outward into something that is bigger and more impactful than you are? That's what great leadership is about. But of all the sum total of life lessons we can learn from him, the most important one is, according to me, "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life."

