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Do You Need to be Steve Jobs?

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Do you need to be and act like Steve Jobs to mirror the success the late co-founder created as the head of Apple? While the answer is no, says Fortune magazine Senior Editor Adam Lashinsky, entrepreneurs should carefully examine how Jobs ran Apple and choose from the many applicable lessons that fly in the face of traditional business practice.



Transcript

Almost exactly a year-ago this week I published an article in Fortune magazine with the same title as you see in front of you, Inside Apple. We decided at Fortune that in Apple we had a company that the entire world thought they knew a lot about because the world knew about Apple's products. And they knew about Apple's advertising and its image and its brand and its logo and so on. When in fact the world knew and really still does know very little about how Apple does what it does, what goes on inside Apple? There is a reason for that and it's a major part of my thesis and what I've learned in researching this company intensely over the last year and that is that Apple doesn't want us to know what goes on inside Apple. Apple is professionally focused on telling us, telling you about its products. Not about it. As a business journalist, my job is not to be concerned with what Apple is interested in us knowing, but what my readers at Fortune magazine ought to know and want to know. And as a sort of rhetorical device, I've come to have the opinion that Apple does business differently from the way almost every other business does business, and in indeed differently from the way business is taught in business schools. And my challenge as I've gone around speaking about Apple, to business schools in particular, but to other businesses and other kinds of schools is that if Apple does things differently than the way you're teaching it and if Apple is the most successful, most admired, most valuable company in the world, shouldn't you at least be asking the question, are we teaching the right thing and should we be paying more attention to the way Apple does things. There is a heavy don't necessarily try this at home component to learning about how Apple does what it does.

Companies, people, entrepreneurs will want to learn about Apple, not necessarily copy Apple. There is a vibrant discussion going on in Silicon Valley in particular, to be a successful entrepreneur, do you need to be like Steve Jobs? And the undercurrent to that is - thank you. The undercurrent to that is do you need to behave the way that he behaved. I would submit that you do not and you do not need to have every aspect of your company be like Apple. But in managing a career, in managing a big company, in managing a small company, I think it really pays to understand Apple and to pick and choose what might be applicable.