

# What Steve Jobs taught us · It's OK to fail

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 Former Apple CEO's wild successes were built on mistakes he recovered from



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College dropout. Fired tech executive. Unsuccessful businessman.

Steve Jobs will always be best known for his incredible success in guiding Apple Inc. and transforming the entire consumer computer and phone industry. But he'll also be remembered fondly as the poster child for how making mistakes — and even failing — can sometimes end up being the best thing that ever happen to you.

Jobs passed away Wednesday after suffering for years from health problems, likely stemming from a battle with cancer.

His death came after he was forced to step down from his position as chief executive of Apple because of the ongoing health problems. He stayed on as chairman of the company.

By the time he turned the reins of the company over to his second in command, Tim Cook, Jobs had become one of the business world's greatest comeback kids.

The company he founded, was fired from, and then returned to has gone from also-ran to technology industry leader. Under Jobs' intensely detail-oriented leadership, Apple created several iconic products, including the iPod, iPhone and iPad, which have changed the face of consumer technology forever.

Apple also is now one of the most valuable companies in America by market capitalization. Jobs was one of the richest men in the world.

He wasn't always in the enviable position of being both Wall Street and Silicon Valley's darling.

## College dropout

Like Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg, Jobs never graduated from college.

In fact, he only made it through about six months at Reed College, a highly selective liberal arts school in Oregon, before dropping out because he thought it was too expensive for his middle-class parents.

In a commencement speech at Stanford University in 2005, Jobs recalled sleeping on friends' floors and walking across town to the Hare Krishna temple for free meals. But he also recalled how dropping out left him with time to take a calligraphy class, which later would inform the typography aesthetic of the first Mac. *(Example of learning when you least expect it.)*

"If I had never dropped out, I would have never dropped in on this calligraphy class, and personal computers might not have the wonderful typography that they do," he said in the commencement speech.

## Fired executive

Career coaches and leadership gurus will often say that getting fired can be the best thing that ever happened to you, but that can be hard to believe if you're the one being shown the door.

That's especially true when you consider the case of Jobs. He wasn't just fired. He was dumped by Apple, his baby, the company he had co-founded.



Steve Jobs' charismatic style allowed him to quickly move past his, and Apple's m "antennagate" scandal where some iPhone users got spotty or no service.

Steve Jobs, 1955-2011

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in his garage with pal Steve Wozniak.

The firing came after a power struggle in which the board of directors sided with John Sculley, a former Pepsi executive had been brought in to run the company.

In the Stanford commencement speech, Jobs recalled the devastating public humiliation of being ousted, and conceded that he even considered running away from Silicon Valley. Only later did he see how the blow helped him.

Key →

"I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life," Jobs said in the Stanford commencement speech.

Instead of running away, during his time away from Apple Jobs bought the animation studio Pixar and started the computer company NeXT.

Pixar revolutionized animated moviemaking with releases such as "Toy Story," "Finding Nemo" and "Cars." It later was sold to The Walt Disney Co

### Unsuccessful businessman

NeXT wasn't quite as successful as Pixar. Jobs' dream of a pricey, beautiful computer, dubbed the Cube because of its shape, never found its niche. The company's software also wasn't widely adopted.

In an eviscerating 1991 article, Forbes said Jobs "has made fundamentally wrong decisions that could well doom the venture."

"None of this is to deny Jobs the credit due him for what he did in cofounding Apple. But there are very few miracle workers in the business world and it is now clear that Steve Jobs is not one of them," author Julia Pitta wrote in the Forbes piece.

Still, even NeXT ended up being an important stepping stone for Jobs. In 1997, a struggling Apple bought NeXT and incorporated some of the company's technology into Apple products. The deal also brought Jobs back to the company, and he eventually took over as CEO.

When the prodigal Jobs returned to Apple, many were openly speculating whether Apple was beyond salvation, as the company wallowed in financial losses and seemed to have lost direction.

By now, it's safe to say Jobs proved them wrong.

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