

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF STEVE JOBS LEADERSHIP SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: To assess Steve Jobs success through the lens of leadership theory.

Methodology: Literature-based review. The study analysed existing literature on Steve Jobs leadership style and transformational leadership theory.

Findings: Jobs ability to envision and actualize ground-breaking ideas contributed to the success of Apple Inc. Jobs leadership style resonated with aspects of transformational leadership theory, emphasizing his capacity to inspire, motivate, and empower followers. Jobs was able to conceive and execute a compelling vision, even in the face of challenges. Jobs aligned with characteristics associated with transformational leadership, such as providing clear direction and being a transformative agent for change.

Conclusion: Steve Jobs success in leading Apple Inc. and shaping the technology industry can be attributed to his exceptional ability to lead with a compelling vision. He employed elements of transformational leadership theory, including charisma, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. Through these traits, Jobs inspired trust, fostered creativity, and motivated his followers to achieve remarkable success and innovation in the technology sector. His visionary leadership, combined with his charismatic and motivating qualities, played a pivotal role in Apple's transformation and its lasting impact on the industry.

Keywords: *Critical Evaluation, Steve Jobs, Leadership, Success*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to critically evaluate Steve Jobs success in terms of pan-theoretical concept of leadership. According to Warren Bennis (1999), leadership is the capacity to create a compelling vision and translate it into action and sustain it. This paper will evaluate how Jobs success in creating a successful multi-national corporation Apple Inc. was rooted in his ability to conceptualize and implement a ground-breaking vision and technology. It will be argued that Jobs' leadership style aligns with certain constructs of transformational leadership theory. In the process, this study will identify the different aspects of Jobs' leadership which enabled him to build one of the most successful multi-national tech companies in the world. To effectively analyse Jobs' leadership style, this paper will use the criterion given by Warren Bennis (1999): the capacity to create a compelling vision and translate it into action and sustain it.

The first part of this paper will discuss how Jobs was able to conceive a powerful and innovative vision of a multi-disciplinary company and how he was able to translate it into reality via his relentless drive. The second part of this paper will then examine in detail how Jobs was able to maintain his vision and drive in the face of overwhelming resistance and challenge. Further, the paper will refer to literature about transformational leadership theory and according to the theory, transformational leadership is characterized by the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and empower followers (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Specific characteristics of this theory include providing a clear vision, inspiring follower dedication, listening to their concerns and suggestions, and acting as a transformational agent. Drawing on these characteristics, this paper will identify the various ways in which Jobs was able to effectively use transformational leadership.

THEORETICAL EVALUATION

Theory Explaining Leader's Success

An appropriate theory that can explain Steve Jobs' success as a leader is Transformational Leadership. Transformational Leadership is defined as a leadership style that utilizes vision, enthusiasm, and emotional intelligence to motivate others to take action towards desired change and motivation (Dalal, 2019). Transformational Leaders aim to improve the performance of their teams by inspiring followers with a shared vision, developing their potential, and providing supportive and positive feedback (Blanchard et al., 2001).

Support for Theory Applicability

Steve Jobs was an iconic leader of our time whose visionary ideas and capacity to turn them into reality changed the way technology was viewed and experienced in everyday life. Most of his success can be attributed to his ability to create a compelling vision and turn it into action, making a lasting impact on the world. To evaluate the success of Steve Jobs's leadership, this paper will utilize transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978), which emphasizes values, morals, and inspiration instead of relying on power derivatives and rewards. As outlined by his achievements as the leader of Apple and Pixar, Jobs cultivated a vision of how a company should and could be run that inspired the people around him. This emphasis on shared values is a common trait of transformational leaders, inspiring "higher levels of motivation and moral development in followers" (James et al., 2019). Jobs continually stressed the importance of staying true to the mission and values of Apple, and this was a key factor in motivating his employees to strive for excellence.

He was known for giving passionate speeches about the company's goals and inspiring the team to perform well for the sake of the company, rather than offering rewards for their efforts. This principled approach demonstrates the emphasis placed by transformational leaders on the mission and the employees' commitment to it. Jobs also consistently inspired a sense of loyalty within the company by his continual focus on innovation. He was driven by a vision to create revolutionary products that showcased the power of technology, and this ambition was conveyed to the people he worked with. He consistently encouraged Apple employees to think differently and to think more. Through his vision, he transformed the ways people interacted with computers and technology, paving the way for the industry as we know it today. True to transformational leadership theory, Jobs encouraged changes in thinking that resulted in breakthroughs and enhanced morale (James et al., 2019).

Finally, Jobs was a particularly effective leader due to his capacity to identify and utilise the skills of the people around him. He was particularly adept at recruiting talented people who could contribute to the company's mission. He understood the value of expertise and experience, and this enabled him to be effective in choosing the right team to bring his vision to life (Isaacson, 2012). Transformational leader theory also emphasises leading by example, and Jobs did this effectively by involving his team in his projects and delegating responsibility in order to get the best results. From these examples, it can be seen that Steve Jobs embodied the principles of transformational leadership theory. His ability to craft a compelling vision

which inspired and motivated those around him, combined with his capacity to recruit the right people and utilise their skills, were key to his success in leading Apple and Pixar to be leading companies in their respective industries (Isaacson, 2012).

Leader's Ability to Create a Vision

Steve Jobs was a transformative leader who was successful in creating a compelling vision for Apple. His leadership style was characterized by passion, courage, and the ability to influence and inspire others. He was able to develop a powerful brand strategy and focus on creating products that were attractive, user-friendly, and of a high quality (Kassim, 2020). His leadership style is an example of the power of transformational leadership.

Evidence of Leader's Capacity to Create a Compelling Vision

The most prominent example of Steve Job's ability to create a compelling vision can be seen when he took the helm of the Apple computer company as CEO in 1997. Upon taking the reins, Jobs quickly set to work refocusing the company's mission and rebuilding the organization's infrastructure. He decided to prioritize the development of sleek, user-friendly products that could easily be used by a variety of customers – a vision that eventually became Apple's signature design style (Subject, 2020). Jobs famously strived to make products “insanely great” to set Apple apart from the competition and this passion for excellence significantly increased the company's brand recognition and market presence (Cole, 2011). Furthermore, he developed a brand strategy that emphasized the “coolness” of Apple products, and focused on developing the best software for the user experience. Thus, Steve Jobs was considered passionate about his company success and had the courage to take risks and make big bets.

Leader's Ability to Inspire Others

The second and arguably most notable component of Jobs' success was his ability to inspire and motivate the people around him to achieve success. He was a masterful storyteller who could articulate his vision for the company in a way that captivated and motivated individuals in the organization to take action. An example of Jobs' leadership skills can be seen in his well-known “Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish” speech at Stanford University in 2005, where he urged individuals to continuously strive for excellence and success (Tharoor, 2013). Jobs' powerful and stirring words resonated through the organization to inspire employees to reach their full potential and contribute to the exceptional success of the company.

Jobs success in creating a compelling vision for Apple is consistent with the transformational leadership model, which is defined as a process of change in which the leader works to align individual and group values and goals to inspire followers to meet their vision and to reach their highest potential (Asif et al., 2017). Transformational leaders focus on creating a shared vision that is inspirational and motivates followers to commit and take action. They provide a sense of direction and have a powerful presence and charisma. Jobs was a transformational leader who could inspire others to commit and take action. He had a clear vision and shared it with his team, motivating them to believe that anything was possible. He was also a risk-taker and had the confidence and ability to make bold decisions to move Apple forward.

Leader's Ability to Translate Vision into Action

Steve Jobs was an incredibly successful leader due to his capacity to create a compelling and inspiring vision and turn it into action and sustain it for many years. This was evidenced in how he steered Apple to world-wide success in the technology industry, revolutionizing it through innovative products and market strategies.

Evidence of Leader's Skills

One of the most convincing evidence of Job's success in turning vision into action was the consistent rollout of outstanding products and services that he cultivated. When Jobs took reins of Apple in 1997, the brand was reeling from a steady decline of market share and profitability. It wouldn't be until a few years later with the introduction of the iconic iPod, that Apple began regaining its lost market share (Lönnqvist & Lönnqvist, 2018). The iPod was followed by the equally successful iPhone, iPad, optimised store experience, thematic packaging, and even successful collaborations with celebrities such as Bono (Loeppky & McLoughlin, 2015). Through a combination of innovative new products and services, the culture of a digital lifestyle, and a focused campaign on digital rights management, Steve Jobs successfully transformed Apple into the behemoth we know today.

Effectiveness of Leader's Leadership Style

The success of Steve Jobs as a leader can be attributed to his effective leadership style that drew heavily on transformational leadership theory. As a transformational leader, Jobs was renowned for being highly visible and personally engaged in setting direction and inspiring those around him (Lönnqvist & Lönnqvist, 2018). He was known to set challenging goals as well as a unique and clearly defined mission for the company that could be emotionally

compelling. At the same time, Jobs prioritized innovation and customer service, emphasizing the importance to produce quality products and solutions with superior user experiences (Sirhan, 2015). This approach was incredibly effective as it allowed Jobs to rally the team towards his vision and embody Apple's holistic mission as a values-driven company. Steve Jobs was a remarkable leader due to his key ability of translating a compelling vision and mission into action. His success was underscored by the evidence of his innovative and consistent product rollouts, as well as his use of transformational leadership. These enabled the bottom-line transformation that Apple saw during his tenure as CEO and solidified the legacy of the brand.

LEADER'S CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN THE VISION

Steve Jobs demonstrated remarkable leadership capacity through his ability to sustain his vision, as well as his ability to overcome hardships and adapt. His example is an inspiration to aspiring leaders and he is widely considered to be one of the most influential figures in modern business (Kassim, 2020). He provided a model for entrepreneurial leadership and left a lasting legacy of innovation and success.

According to Kassim (2020), Steve Jobs is arguably one of the greatest business leaders of all time who created a revolutionary vision for Apple that would completely transform the entire technology industry. He had a clear understanding of the potential of technology to improve lives and how they can be used to facilitate collaboration and innovation. From the start, Jobs held a long-term vision for Apple that he refused to compromise. For example, he famously ignored customer complaints and demands of the Apple Macintosh, declaring to Apple's shareholders that they will make really great computers (Kassim, 2020). Jobs believed in his vision for Apple even when others did not and his loyalty to his vision allowed him to see his vision through to fruition in the form of the iPod, iPhone, iPad, and other products.

Isaacson (2012), noted that a hallmark of a great leader is the ability to overcome hardship and adapt to changing circumstances. Steve Jobs exemplified this quality. Even when Apple was at its most difficult point and was facing imminent bankruptcy, Steve Jobs was undeterred. He adapted his vision to the situation and devised a plan to revitalize the company. He believed he could turn Apple around through a combination of innovation, restructuring, and corporate renewal. Jobs were not afraid to make the hard decisions that were necessary to ensure Apple's success. These decisions included cutting operating costs, streamlining operations, and implementing a new focus on product design and experience (Isaacson, 2012). In addition, Jobs

also infused Apple with his own drive and passion. This served as a source of inspiration to employees, which in turn encouraged them to work towards achieving Jobs' vision. This quality of leadership enabled Apple to become the powerhouse company that it is today.

CONCLUSION

Steve Jobs has been recognised as one of the most influential leaders of the 21st century in business and technology through his exemplary leadership and stewardship of Apple Inc. His success in leading and transforming both the Apple Inc. and the fast-paced technology industry can be attributed to his remarkable capacity to lead with a compelling vision, galvanise action and sustain it. Jobs' success can be evaluated through the lens of transformational leadership theory to better understand and explain his success. Transformational leadership theory can be defined as a type of leadership where leaders motivate and inspire their followers to create positive and meaningful change. The four components of transformational leadership are charisma or idealised influence, individualised consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. These characteristics describe how a transformational leader can capture the hearts and minds of their followers and foster an environment of creativity, innovation and prosperity. Jobs' success can be attributed to his remarkable capacity to lead with a compelling vision. From the beginning of his tenure at Apple, he set an ambitious goal to revolutionise the technology industry and achieve success through innovation in design and technology.

Through his charisma and inspiring words, he was able to build trust and attract passionate followers who believed in his innovative vision. He was also an advocate of great design, which was an essential part of his vision for Apple. He provided individualised consideration and inspires motivation to his employees in order to motivate them to continue contributing to the overarching goal. He also stimulated their intellectual ability to think of innovative solutions for every setback. It was through this combination of charismatic, individualised, inspiring and intellectual leadership that Jobs was able to achieve great success with Apple Inc. Steve Job's success can be attributed to his capacity to lead with a compelling vision, galvanise action and sustain it. His success can be analysed through transformational leadership theory, which highlights his remarkable use of charisma, individualised consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation to motivate and inspire his followers. With these strategies, Jobs was able to build trust, foster creativity and innovation and ultimately revolutionise the technology industry.

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