

## **What if Steve Jobs had been an Innovative Educator?**

*Would education have changed during the past 38-years!*

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Two days after Steve Jobs passed away on Oct. 5, 2011, I fell into a light sleep on a flight between Philadelphia and Chicago. In this light sleep I began to imagine the impact of Steve Jobs' life during the last 38-years as he invented and marketed between 5-10 society changing shifts through technology. These shifts incrementally changed how the world uses, accesses, consumes, modifies, imagines and creates information, media, electronics, and technology.

Without a doubt Steve Jobs was visionary, innovator, and marketer who knew how to change and shift his industry as well as society. This thought pattern I was on during my relaxing moments allowed me to jump over to a rather interesting thought, as well as it's potential impact ... *"What if Steve Jobs was an educator and transformed education during the last 38-years as much as he did through technology."*

All readers will need to give me some 'wiggle room' as I describe the hopeful and invigorating thoughts that quickly ran pleasantly through my mind. I saw Steve step back into history; to the year 1975. In my imagination I witnessed Steve Jobs as an educator who was set on a mission to change education for the modern world with the same vigor, tenacity, creativeness, relentless joy of transforming the personal computer age. I must admit that this was one of the most relaxing and hope-filled flights I have taken in some time as I witnessed the transformational outcomes of a modern day visionary, hero, marketer, and innovator that traveled through 36 years of educational transformation rather than technology transformation. Before you read what I envisioned, imagine for a moment what the last 36 years of education would have potentially produced if Steve Jobs was the educational innovator, transformer, and marketer.

Below are the six major shifts that I envisioned during my light sleep that gave me great hope that education still may embrace a Steve Jobs style of transformation.

1. The first invention and shift marketed by Steve jobs was to allow humanity to envision what a personal education looked like. Up until this point in history, everyone viewed education as a massive system, much like the business computers of the 1975 era. Steve quickly created a solution that broke down the belief that education was about the sanctity of the 'system,' and more about the personal 'experience' and value of the individual.
2. The second major shift marketed by Steve Jobs was the reality that education could be accessed and touched by everyone around the world in one form or another. He creatively decided that it was believable and acceptable that an individual like himself, and possibly three other leaders could take on the needed and long awaited transformation in education and make it instantly

- and naturally accessible to everyone. Steve Jobs in essence was competing against the imaginary educational giants like **IBM** which stood for (**I**mmensely **B**ureaucratic **M**ayhem) in education. These giants would soon have to evolve or hand over the personal side of education to the likes of Steve Jobs who would operate a transformational business called **APPLE** (**A** Personal and **P**rofitable **L**earning **E**xperience.)
3. The third major shift marketed by Steve Jobs was that of identifying the recipe for organizational transformation. The recipe was that it is more important to decide what not to do, than what to do. He agreed to say 'no' to many of the non-confrontational and consensus type of groups, versus the innovators who were experiencing and living education on a regular basis. Steve created and mentored leaders with the ability to say no to the 300 distractors each month and say yes to the '1' goal of transformation, vision, and innovation; and then effectively market that one goal to the world; which was to give personalized and profitable education to everyone around the world.
  4. The fourth major shift marketed by Steve Jobs was not favorable. Rather, it was a setback that would rally him years later. He found that not everyone wanted the change they first claimed they wanted, especially in education. Two-thirds into his miraculous transformation of education he was given a vote of no confidence, and asked to step-down and leave. Steve took his walking papers and left the transformation of personal education for a few years.
  5. The fifth major shift in Steve's journey was that years after his vote of no confidence, education had almost become bankrupt (Much like Apple), fell to 12<sup>th</sup> place in the world rankings, and didn't have a clue what to do about the dilemma. The Educational system (which retracted back to the Mayhem), begged him to come back and resuscitate education. During this time around Steve had more wisdom, tenacity, vision, and innovation and so he set out for his sixth and last major shift. In fact they decided to label Steve the 'Come-back-Kid'.
  6. The sixth and most impactful shift that Steve would market would be the EPS system. Recalling that education needed to be personalized, Steve realized that the world had become used to the GPS (Global Positioning System) and now needed an **E**ducational **P**ositioning **S**ystem (EPS). This innovation would allow each individual student to own an EPS – (Educational Positioning System) to navigate their educational journey in the same relatively simple manner they use their GPS system while trying to locate the directions to their campus for the very first time. Steve recognized that the technologies exist that allow every student to 'map-in' their educational starting point, destiny, determine how many educational units per dollar they are getting with their funding, determine how much longer they have left in their educational journey, provide the indicators where the academic gas tank is at, and determine how they are traveling against the educational 'norm' during all points of their journey. Steve thought: "If educational completion is one of the most prized and valuable destinies for every

American student, surely we need to innovate and market a vision that leverages the technologies and analytical tools that will completely eradicate the educational risks of taking wrong-turns, running out of academic gas, miscalculating the distance, under estimating the costs, and the inability to have a 'norm' to compare a personalized educational journey against." Eventually higher education will reach a point where not having a personalized Educational Positioning System (EPS) equivalent to a (GPS) will be deemed as irresponsible and unacceptable; merely because the private sector will continue to navigate the consumers' way through all other walks of life. Talk about disruptive innovation!

Steve knew that if he could get educational leaders to rise to the challenge of providing a \$100 GPS equivalent solution, that the private sector has, it would revolutionize the personal experience of education. The EPS would display the student's data, information, and analytics on the navigation screens, and allow students to travel the educational highway in a profoundly new kind of self-service mode. Theoretically, it is completely possible for every student to track via a GPS type of tool where they are at within the ERP, LMS, Grading, and Alumni systems. The day will eventually arrive where students will know exactly where they are located within the student success cycle, and receive an analytical 'recalculating' command that is issued via their voice activated EPS, should they inadvertently miss an academic direction or destiny that was originally mapped into their journey.

In this visionary and futuristic picture of an EPS world - all educational institutions will also benefit as they will have access to the entire collection of the individual educational travelers EPS systems; allowing them to have a far more comprehensive view of all the educational journeys, academic warnings, academic gas gauges, revenue flow, and challenges that provide a very accurate 'pipeline' of educational travelers coming and going through their campuses.

Steve concluded that everyone would win with this type of transformation and innovation in higher education.

When I woke up from my short 2-minute light visionary nap, I began to dream and hope of the outcomes that could start to occur if we had the visionary leaders in education with the same innovation, vision, and tenacity that Steve Jobs possessed.