STEVE JOBS (from 1955 to 2011…. to eternity….)

About the author:

Sir Walter Isaacson is a writer and biographer par excellence. He is the president and CEO of the Aspen Institute, based in Washington D.C. He has been the chairman and CEO of CNN and the managing editor of TIME. He has written the biographies of Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin and Henry Kissinger before writing the same about Steve Jobs, published by Simon and Schuster.

About Steve Jobs:

Born in 1955 to two university students Joanne and Abdulfattah Jandali in San Francisco and adopted by Paul and Clara Jobs, Jobs had a difficult childhood. He met Steve Wozniak at Hewlett Packard during a summer job. Their liking for each other and inclination towards technological innovation resulted in lasting friendship and many inventions.

Jobs spent around seven months in India (1974) in search of spiritual enlightenment. This had a great impact on the way he handled triumphs and tribulations in his life; and also on the strict food habits (vegetarianism) which he followed till the end.


In the same year he founded NeXT computer and released Next workstations and NeXTcube in 1990.

In 1986, Jobs bought The Graphics group, renamed it Pixar and produced a film Toy Story (1995). Pixar went on to produce many more movies which were critically acclaimed and appreciated. Few movies even won the Academy awards.


Jobs resigned as the CEO of Apple in August 2011 and left for heavenly abode on 5th October 2011 after fighting a long battle with cancer.

About Steve Jobs-The biography

This is the story of a legendary-

- Who was instrumental in the transformation of the ways we think about and use products
Who was always on his toes and wanted to give the best to the world— not just satisfy or delight customers, but give the customers such products, they would not even have thought about.

Who thought so far ahead of times, that leaders in the market stumbled when he came out with one extraordinary product after the other.

Who had a maddening urge for perfection which reflected in the products he came out with.

Who believed in total control of everything he did. That led him to have unique software and unbreakable seals for his products.

Walter Isaacson has recounted the life of Steve Jobs in a logical way finely weaving together his professional and personal life. The book is not in strict chronological order, although the author has tried to elucidate important events of his life in the order of their occurrences. Steve's thoughts are aptly reproduced and rightly placed throughout the book. The book takes us through the successes and failures on both personal and professional fronts in the journey of Steve's life. The book is an excellent read from page one till the last one.

Walter Isaacson has put in tremendous effort in conducting interviews with around 120 people who had a role to play in Steve jobs' life. The list includes his bosses, employees, contemporaries, competitors, family members and his friends. The author has tried to be as objective as possible in showcasing the extraordinarily sensitive qualities of Jobs. He has not been judgmental about Jobs, though at times has commented about his irritable and obnoxious character.

The signature qualities of Jobs which have been instrumental in his dream of making an impression in the universe, like magical imagination, intuition, assertiveness, persistence, simplicity, total control, storytelling, dramatization of events and charming people have been brilliantly sprinkled through the book.

The story of Steve Jobs and the way in which it is narrated by Isaacson leaves a deep impression on the minds of the reader. Especially those instances when Jobs' skin color turned orange due to his carrot diet, the way he lacked personal hygiene and walked barefoot are illustrated hilariously. The passages about Jobs' resignation as Apple's chief executive, and the time he spent with Isaacson listening to music and reminiscing are deeply heartrending.

The dual personality of Jobs is finely carved out by Isaacson, especially in instances when Jobs took just $1 per year from 1997 to 2000 as his remuneration; and then demanding a private plane for his and his family's travel; then again when Apple started making profits granting him 10 million shares in 2000.

For Steve Jobs reality was malleable. He used Reality distortion field (ability to convince himself and others to believe almost anything with a mix of charm, charisma, bravado, hyperbole, marketing, appeasement, and persistence) as a tool to draw people (within and outside the organization) towards what he thought was right. This led them to accept his vision of the latest techno products and convince them to use the same. Jobs has been able to accomplish the un-accomplishable using the reality distortion field. As the author has mentioned in many places, this reality distortion was empowering. It enabled him to inspire his team to change the course of computer history with a fraction of the resources of Xerox or IBM.

However, if reality did not blend with his will, he would ignore it, as he had done with the birth of his daughter and would do years later when first diagnosed with cancer. Even in small everyday rebellions, such as not putting a license plate on his car and parking it in places reserved for handicapped persons, he acted as if he were not subject to the strictures around him.

The fact that people detested the Steve Jobs way, but still could not stop admiring him has been highlighted in many instances. An example...

When Amelio was fired from the post of CEO (Jobs was instrumental in that decision too, though he was not a member on the board), Jobs gave him some unsolicited advice to take six months off from work.
Amelio was stunned but managed to mumble a few words of thanks. He turned to his wife and recounted what Jobs said. “In ways I still like the man, but I don’t believe him,” he told her.

“I was totally taken in by Steve,” she said, “and I really feel like an idiot”.

“Join the crowd”, her husband replied.

Steve Wozniak was thrilled that Jobs was coming back. “It is just what we needed,” he said, “because whatever you think of Steve, he knows how to get the magic back”. Nor did Jobs triumph over Amelio surprise Wozniak, who was an informal advisor to Apple. As he told Wired shortly after it happened, “Gil Amelio meets Steve Jobs, Game over” (page 317) Isaacson has also drawn the readers’ attention to instances when Steve jobs had to lose money and people due to his aesthetic passions, prickliness and his controlling nature. One example…

Jobs wanted a machinery to be painted in bright hues, like the apple logo, but he spent so much time going over paint chips that Apple’s manufacturing director, Matt Carter, finally just installed them in their usual beige and gray. When Jobs took a tour, he ordered that the machines be repainted in the bright colors he wanted. Carter objected; this was precision equipment and repainting could cause could cause problems. He turned out to be right. One of the most expensive machines, which got painted bright blue, ended up not working properly and was dubbed “Steve’s folly”. Finally Carter quit. “It took so much energy to fight him, and it was usually over something so pointless that finally I had enough”, he recalled. (Page 183)

Oh and one more thing...

This book is a must read for anyone whose interests lies in management, information technology, humanities, gadgets which have become a part of us. This book is a must read for those who have used any of Apple’s or its competitors’ products/services, or intend to do so. This book is also for those who dream but feel it is out of this world to be true. This book is definitely a must read for those who read for the joy they derive from the same. The captivating writing style used by Walter Isaacson is lucid and will ensure to take you to the end of the 630 pages, once you start reading it.

Happy reading!!!