12 Pivotal Lessons Steve Jobs Taught Guy Kawasaki

Guy Kawasaki is well known for his support of innovation and entrepreneurship, having been an early employee of Apple, then going on to start, advise, and assist a number of successful technology companies.

He also claims to be one of the only people to work for Steve Jobs twice and survive. He acknowledges that working for Steve Jobs was not easy, but also says it was one of the best experiences of his life.

On October 6, 2011, a day after Jobs death, Guy was scheduled to give a speech on the topic of 'enchanting customers' at Silicon Valley Bank's CEO Summit. Moved by Jobs' passing, Guy changed his speech at the last minute to '12 Lessons I Learned From Steve Jobs that Can Be Applied to Entrepreneurs'. The speech is just under half an hour in length. I've summarized the lessons below with some of my own comments. (If you're interested in hearing a specific point, I've also included the time frame where each point appears in Guy's speech.)

Here they are:

12 lessons for entrepreneurs Guy Kawasaki learned from Steve Jobs:

1. Experts are useless. (3:44)

A-Listers, analysts, gurus--they cannot help you as entrepreneurs. Whether it's one person's opinion or many, in the end it's just that--an opinion. As Guy puts it: "Steve Jobs did not listen to experts. Quite the contrary; experts listened to him."

"As an entrepreneur, you're gonna have to figure things out for yourself. Don't rely on others."

2. Customers cannot tell you what they need. (5:06)

Steve Jobs famously said: "A lot of times, people don't know what they want until you show it to them."

Sure, Jobs had tremendous resources to pursue that philosophy, which you and I might not have. But the best ideas come from those who identify problems that need solving--before anyone else has done anything about it.

3. Biggest challenges beget the best work. (6:52)

Think about your toughest clients, your pickiest customers. It's not a pleasure to deal with them. But you can't deny the fact that solving their problems *makes you better.*Jobs was notorious for his attention to detail and excellence. This was a huge challenge for those working with him, but it also brought out their best.

Lesson: Challenge your team, and don't back down from challenges extended to *you*. You may even be surprised of what you're capable of.

4. Design counts. (7:42)

In a world where everyone is talking about price, *design still counts.* For many people, design *is* the product.

This point was proven to me in a recent study I conducted with a number of my clients in Germany, to determine brand image. They were given a list of companies, and asked to write down the first three words or phrases that came to mind when they saw the company name. When it came to *Apple*, a number of participants recorded the word 'design'.

Perhaps not coincidentally, despite having many detractors, *Apple* consistently scored in the top brands I surveyed.

5. Big graphics. Big font. (9:21)

"This is the key to pitching. Just do this, and you'll be better than 90% of the people using PowerPoint."

I recently wrote about the problems inherent to webinars, and one of these is the poor use of PowerPoint slides. Nobody wants a presenter who simply reads long, elaborate slides; yet, we see this time and time again. (Remember the KISS principle: Keep It Short and Simple.)

Steve Jobs was well known for his use of big graphics and big font.

Following this rule forces you to tighten up your message, explain things simply and with clarity, and engage your audience--all elements of a great presentation.

6. Jump curves, not better sameness. (10:23)

If you truly want to be an entrepreneur and innovator, you have to jump curves. "You don't do things 10% better; you do things 10 times better", according to Guy (and Jobs).

Think of how the ipod replaced the Walkman. Or how iPhone replaced Blackberry. Or how the iPad replaced...

What did we even use before the iPad?

Great innovation occurs when entrepreneurs try to jump the curve.

7. "Work" or "Doesn't Work" is all that matters. (13:16)

In future speeches, Guy changed this point to: Changing your mind is a sign of intelligence.

When iPhone first came out, third party apps were not permitted. Security was a major issue, so was quality of experience, etc. In essence, Apple said: 'We're doing this for your own good'.

Six months later, Apple reversed its position completely and opened up the iPhone for developers. How do you think that turned out for them?

Lesson: Be flexible when needed.

8. "Value" is different from "price". (16:05)

An item may cost more, but what is its value? What about factors such as ease of use, increased productivity, and lower support cost? How much are these premiums worth to the customer?

Companies like Apple, McKinsey, and Mercedes are built on the premise that customers will pay a high price for high quality.

So ask yourself: What is the perception of value for my company's product or service?

9. A players hire A players. (22:22)

Usually, when a company is small, it's determined to hire only A players. But as the company grows, fear and politics set in. Some leaders fear that a new employee will be better at something than they are. They may even show them up or take their job. This fear leads to what Guy refers to as the 'Bozo Explosion'. The moment you hire a B player is the moment the 'Bozo Explosion' starts; the B player hires a C player, the C player hires D players, until one day you wake...and you are surrounded by bozos.

Lesson: Hire the best. If possible, hire people who are better than you.

10. Real CEOs demo. (24:53)

Have you ever sat in on a presentation where the head of the company or project says: Okay, now I'd like my (VP, head of design, etc.) to demonstrate the product.

At this point many begin to think: Why? Can't you do it? Is it so difficult?

Jobs was famous for leading his own demos. It wasn't always perfect, but he wanted that responsibility.

You should, too.

11. Real entrepreneurs ship. (25:41)

When you've jumped the curve, the first version of your product or service might not be great. It'll be revolutionary, but it will have weaknesses (Think iPhone 1 vs. future models...or iPad vs

iPad Air).

Don't let that hold you back. Because if you do, you'll be waiting forever to get into the market and the window of opportunity will be gone.

As Guy puts it: "I am not saying ship a piece of crap. I'm saying ship something that has jumped curves that has elements of crappiness to it. Big difference."

12. Some things need to be believed to be seen. (27:05)

Most people believe that things must be seen to be believed, but not real entrepreneurs. You have to believe in your product or service; then, get it out there. Only afterwards can you see the results you hoped for.

Guy: "If you don't believe, it'll never happen. If you wait for proof, it'll never happen. If you wait for customer validation, it will never happen. The reason why Macintosh was successful is that at the core, 100 people, starting with Steve Jobs, believed in Macintosh. And because we believed in Macintosh we made it real."

So, what do *you* think? Which of these lessons do you find most valuable for your business? Make sure to leave a comment below or share the conversation.

By Justine Bariso