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Wozniak on What Went Wrong at Apple

If Apple were the Beatles, Steve Jobs would have been Paul McCartney, the commercializer and pop icon. Steve Wozniak would have been a cross between John Lennon and Ringo Starr - a combination poet and teddy bear.

It was Jobs's garage that Apple started in, but it was Wozniak's computer.

Wozniak read my last HotWired piece, and not surprisingly, he had comments.

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From: Steve Wozniak
Re: Apple Is a Lousy Lover

I concur strongly but not wholeheartedly with your Apple comments.

Mike Markkula organized Apple as a marketing-driven company. And
Steve Jobs spoke out for buying the current technologies of the
world and adding value by piecing them together to create complete,
finished computers.

So Apple is not the company I had hoped it would be.

I always thought that a major player in the personal computer
business, with its label on the products, would be composed of top
engineers and multiple labs full of scientists developing new devices
out of physics and chemistry. I only worked for HP and Apple. HP had
lots of such labs. In fact, they had chip manufacturing plants in each
division around 1976 for a technological edge. HP was known inside and
out as an engineering-oriented company.

It seemed to me in recent years that new software diverted to the PC
because of market share. You try to put the cause more on alienation
of developers. Have you worked with executives of producers of major
software titles who had full choice to choose which platforms to
develop for? My experience tells me that they go for market share.
But Apple had a lot of very dedicated fans who saw how right and good
the Mac OS was, and they would never switch. Extreme loyalty was
perhaps Apple's strongest strength.
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I feel that Apple has hurt and alienated both the loyal developers and
loyal users. The developer who finds his platform and libraries and
development language yanked back-and-forth finally gives up the
loyalty. The user who buys a PowerBook full of red stickers that say
"Ready for PowerPC upgrade" (I leave mine on) finds that the computer
is dropped from Apple's line before the upgrade is even available.

You fall in love with one model of Mac and convince yourself what a
great computer you have, and half a year later, it's obsolete and
uncertain to work with the niftiest apps of the future. Customer
loyalty fades.

I think Apple lost a lot in the Microsoft lawsuit. Apple should have
sued Microsoft for *not* copying the Mac as closely as possible. Had
we gone to Microsoft and said "do anything the way we've already found
is good, for 25 cents" the result might have been a commonality as
beneficial to Apple as Microsoft. When you're comfortable with one OS
because of all your skills, it's scary to change. Were the two
platforms very similar, the comfort feeling wouldn't trap Mac users or
PC users to their familiar machines.

John Sculley and others were outspoken as to the importance of Apple
reaping great rewards by keeping everything proprietary, with examples
of how US companies licensed away the world to the Japanese. But the
result is a totally owned and protected OS that leads to loyal users
because it's hard to step out of it into an OS that's very different.
So Mac users are trapped into Macs as long as the Mac is very
different from the alternatives.

I feel most sorry that the best quality people are not solidly in
the Mac camp anymore.

About me: I'm a private evangelist for the school district in Los
Gatos, where I live. I had two goals in life, to be an engineer and to
teach fifth grade. For several years, I've been teaching computers to
not only teachers but also to fifth through eighth graders.

Steve Wozniak
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Coooooooool.

Thanks, Steve!

A Worldwide Trance!

Windows 95 is a worldwide trance. The reporters write about other reporters. The next day, there
is some news. *The Wall Street Journal*   reports that first-day sales for Windows 95 are US$700
million. So it's a financial trance, too.

Apple and IBM run ads on 24 August. I only heard about them, didn't see them. Bill heard about
them, too. In the press conference, he announces that IBM has licensed Windows 95. "The
licensing program for Win95 is now complete." He smiles. What a difference from the way Bill
viewed IBM in 1990 when Windows 3.0 rolled out.

Surprisingly, Bill had praise for Apple and renewed his commitment to continuing to develop for
the Macintosh. "Apple views us as a competitor, but we don't see them that way."

I believe if it weren't for Bill's personal commitment to the Macintosh, Microsoft would
immediately cut off all development for the Mac. The company is very resource-constrained, and
the Macintosh is tangential to its primary need - growth. There's only so much growth available
in the Mac market, and Microsoft is advancing quickly elsewhere, notably in the
commercialization of the Internet. All the programming juice going to the Mac platform could be

applied to its battle with Netscape for the standard for the evolution of the Web, or to building content and tools for its new alliance with NBC or investments in other media.

Microsoft execs tell us that Microsoft is more than Bill Gates, and it is. But he's holding up the Macintosh at a time when it's surprising that he is. Don't miss this, and factor it into your thinking.

It's a bit of a mystery to me.

DaveNet '95   userland@hotwired.com

P.S. Steve has a Web site, running on a Mac, of course.

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