

The 10 Commandments of Steve

More than anything else, Jobs's genius is in managing the creative process. Here's his playbook.

By Leander Kahney

1

Go for perfect.

Jobs sweats the details. The night before the first iPod launched, the Apple staff stayed up all night replacing headphone jacks because Jobs didn't think they were "clicky" enough.

2

Tap the experts.

Jobs hired architect I. M. Pei to design the NeXT logo and recruited the Gap's Mickey Drexler to Apple's board before launching the company's retail chain.

4

Shun focus groups.

Jobs famously said, "People don't know what they want until you show it to them." So he acts as a one-man focus group, taking prototype products home and testing them for months.

5

Never stop studying.

When designing early brochures for Apple, he pored over Sony's use of fonts, layout, and the weight of the paper. Working on the case for the first Mac, he wandered around Apple's parking lot studying the bodywork of German and Italian cars.

6

Simplify.

Jobs's design philosophy is one of constant simplification. He ordered the iPod's designers to lose all the buttons on early prototypes, including the on/off button. The designers complained, then developed the iconic scroll wheel instead.

3

Be ruthless.

Jobs is as proud of the products he has killed as of the ones he has released. He worked hard on a Palm Pilot clone, only to kill it when he realized cell phones would eclipse PDAs. That freed up his engineers to develop the iPod.

8

Keep teams small.

The original Macintosh team was 100 people; no more, no less. If a 101st person was hired, someone was ditched to make room. Jobs was convinced he could remember the first names of only 100 people.

9

Use more carrot than stick.

Jobs is scary, but his charisma is his most powerful motivator. His enthusiasm was the primary reason the original Mac team worked 90-hour weeks for three years making the machine "insanely great."

10

Prototype to the extreme.

Everything Jobs does is exhaustively prototyped: the hardware, the software, even Apple's retail stores. Architects and designers spent a year building a prototype store in a secret warehouse near Apple's headquarters, only to have Jobs scrap the project and start over.

7

Keep your secrets.

Nobody at Apple talks. Everything is on a need-to-know basis, with the company divided into discrete cells. The secrecy allows Jobs to generate frenzied interest for his surprise product demonstrations, and the resulting headlines ensure lines around the block.