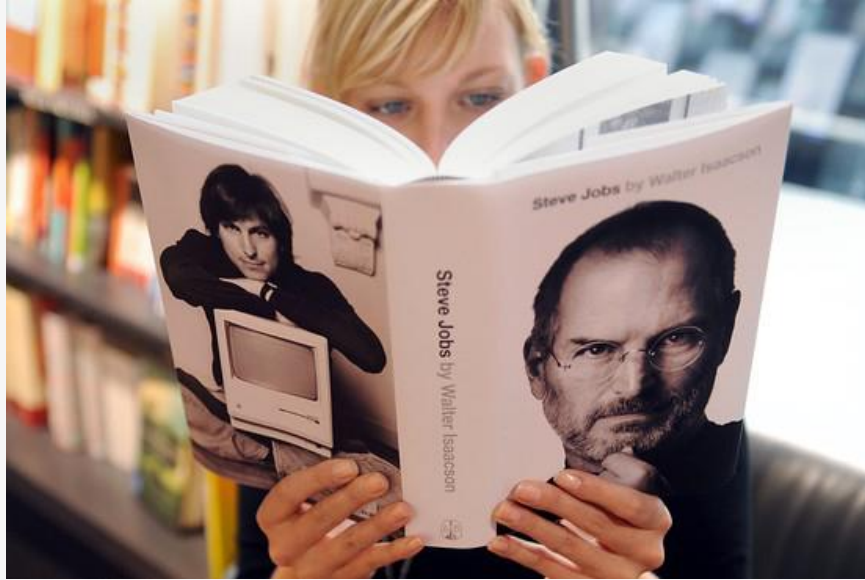


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Jonathan Rotenberg
STEVE JOBS & MORONIC AMERICANS

I've always been impressed with how Steve Jobs—someone who never got past his first semester of freshman year at college—was so committed to educational opportunity for all Americans.

Steve had a profound generosity-of-spirit that he rarely (if ever) showed in public after his 1985 exile from Apple. While I always knew that Steve was driven by a deep sense of service to all humanity, I also sensed another, less-lofty side of his passion for education: Steve did not suffer fools gladly.

When I was 19 and Steve was 27, we met for breakfast one beautiful May morning in Boston during Applefest '82. Steve was exhausted but beaming. He had not been to bed the previous night. To set the context of this breakfast, Steve Jobs that morning may well have been Planet Earth's Most Eligible Bachelor. He was a gorgeously handsome, sensual, brilliant, playful, fun, 27-year-old California dude worth over \$200 million. He had met a woman in Boston the previous evening. They had what sounded to me like the most wonderful night of his life. He and she walked through much of historic downtown Boston until the wee hours of the night and watched the sun rise over the Public Garden. Steve loved Boston and was enamored with this woman.

In the midst of this joyful moment for Steve, though, I came to understand something else about Steve: He had no patience whatsoever for 'dim bulbs' in any part of his life. Almost like a big brother to me, Steve went from describing his romantic evening in Boston to describing more philosophically what he'd been learning recently about himself and dating. He had just been to a party in N. California where a beautiful, shallow, ditzy, "Valley Girl" had been flirting with him. "So, uh, like, what's your sign?" she asked him, sounding like some sort of transcendent new age Goddess. His expressionless reply to her: "Negative." And then he broke out laughing with me.

My two greatest life mentors—my grandmother & Steve Jobs—both shared this personality characteristic deeply. Neither had patience for self-absorbed dimwits. After moving from New York City to California, my grandmother once said to me: "You know, there is a special plant that only grows out here in the West." "Oh, what is that?" I asked. "The blooming idiot!" she replied with a good-hearted laugh.

I couldn't help but think about dimwitted Americans, Steve Jobs & my grandmother this morning as I read today's Wall Street Journal. A lead story in the "Business & Finance" section describes a brand-new management fad in which self-absorbed numskull managers use Walter Isaacson's "Steve

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Jobs" biography to rationalize really-bad management habits.
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203458604577263921497919972.html?ref=linkedin>

For example, the CEO of one software company devoured the book and then bought copies of it for all of his employees. "I'm a good guy, but I'm very demanding," the CEO said. Once his employees have read the book—and see how irritable Steve could be—they'll see I'm a very nice manager."

The CEO of a Georgia-based mattress manufacturer had two key take-aways: Wear black clothes (like Steve's black mock turtlenecks). And cultivate a "reality distortion field" to manipulate employees. (Note to self: Avoid mattresses made by this company!)

I was imagining what I might say if I could talk with Steve about today's WSJ article. "Oh dear, Steve," I might say. "What shall we do? There are more people than you can imagine who bought Walter Isaacson's biography, and are using it to rationalize all kinds of crazy, dumb things. What is missing from these peoples' education? What do they need to learn."

I'm not sure what Steve would say, but one possible answer could be the following: "Cause vs. effect. I.e., correlation is not causation. I.e., science."

This point is something all American adults were SUPPOSED to have learned in high school. Just because President Obama smoked cigarettes as a young person and became president of the United States does NOT MEAN that smoking cigarettes CAUSES one to become more successful in leadership. Correlation is NOT causation.


Just because Steve lost his temper and became impatient does NOT mean that losing one's temper or becoming impatient is beneficial in anyway.

If you're some schlub who believes that people will like you more when they find out that they would have been treated WORSE by Steve Jobs than by you... you know what? You're still a schlub!



There are NO shortcuts to greatness. And there is no good reason for any serious business leader to imitate Steve Jobs' mannerisms. If you want to be successful like Steve Jobs, do exactly what he instructed in his 2005 Stanford Commencement Speech: Do what YOU love. Honor and cultivate the unique greatness that is in you and only in you


Steve Jobs never imitated anyone else. He was successful because he honored his own, unique, God-given gifts. No one ever needs to go back to school to learn this lesson. Honoring and loving your own uniqueness is available to you right here, right now and in EVERY moment of your life.

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 **Carolyn Coughlin** Absolutely brilliant and hilarious!! And thanks for saying this! I worked at Apple for a few years and there were managers (not mine luckily!) who would yell at people "because Steve did". I would say "he is an amazing success DESPITE the fact he sometimes yells at people, not BECAUSE he yells at people". DUH! What an awesome essay!
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 **Christopher Hartman** Nice job, Jonathan. The Isaacson book is very clear in describing both Jobs' personal faults and his great gift for being able to tap into the innermost sensibilities of the high tech consumer. Overwhelmingly, he was able to inspire people to higher ac... [See More](#)
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