

## An analytical study of leadership skill: A case study of Steve Jobs's Speech

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper focuses on the leadership skills of Steve Jobs which is reflected in his famous commencement speech delivered to the graduates at Stanford University. His speaking style, personality and leadership qualities excelled him towards perfection and purposeful life. This speech was delivered with well-prepared writing script, presented on a formal occasion of commencement program. His speech reflects his leadership skill and traits that great leaders persist. He was very much particular with his communication skills and the message supposed to be conveyed to the audience. His speech reflects a transformational leadership pertaining the characteristics viz; visionary, creativity, passionate. The various interviews depict some of his good quality too such as; a nut shell content, building good rapport with the audience, confidence, positive body language and good communication skills. Apart from them, some of the interviews also reflect his inner qualities as a good leader, like; strong belief, simplicity (simplicity is the ultimate sophistication), responsibility, perfection, motivation to do thing, connected with the people, think differently (out of box), team work, creative thinking, spirituality, managing people, risk taking, positive attitude etc. The emotional intelligence also imparted role in excelling his inner traits towards the success. It made him aware of empathy, motivation, optimism, goal setting etc.*

*This analysis will make us aware of the certain traits, boosting power and identifies inner strength to form a shape towards purposeful direction of life. We can inculcate the habit and behaviour by identifying emotional balance to become a true and contended human being.*

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Presentation Skills, Public Speaking,

## **Introduction**

### **1:1 Life History**

Steve Jobs was born in San Francisco in 1955, and was raised by adoptive parents. He hardly attended graduate college for higher study. Jobs struck up a partnership with Steve Wozniak and in 1976 the two founded Apple Computer which went public in 1980. After four years, the company launched the Macintosh under Jobs's vision but brought some conflict with other partners. There after he founded other computer company NeXT in 1986. Over a period of decade, Jobs helped to revive Apple Computer and to re-establish in the market. Under Jobs' leadership, Apple pioneered the iMac, more opening of the Apple Stores, iPod in forthcoming years. Jobs led ahead to launch the iPhone in 2007 and the iPad in 2010. As a result of these innovations with NeXT and Apple, he became an iconic ideal for seven industries; personal computers, animated film, music, telephones, tablet computing, digital publishing, and retail stores. In 2004, Jobs suffered from pancreatic cancer and undergone multiple surgeries and treatments. He kept battling with the disease and finally recognised the truth of life and death. Steve Jobs, former CEO, Chairman, and co-founder of Apple, passed away on October 5, 2011.

The memory of his life and work stands to shape how we think and talk about transformational leadership. This paper examines him as key characteristics of transformational leader (such as creative, passionate and visionary) through many of his interviews and speeches.

### **1:2 Analysis of commencement address by Steve Jobs at Stanford University, 2005.**

At the beginning of speech he expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the audience and shared three of his life stories which are inspirational and show an exemplary fact of true leadership skills.

He starts with his very first story in which he shares some of the facts about his education and struggle. He is opened-up with the audience while sharing the facts of life and so building up good rapport without any hindrance. He says about connecting the dots, stands for past and future experiences teaching a lesson of practicality and new opportunity ahead. He was never drop-out from college because he was in the womb of graduate unwed mother. He went through many ups and down what destiny had decided for him. During his teen-age, he was not clear about the goal or purpose of life. He decided to come out of the shell with his own creativity and this was his attitude

of 'think differently'. He excelled himself to a greater height towards new innovation in technoworld. Here his creativity and innovative skill, think out of the box, his decision making skills, faith in own self etc. are showing prominent skills of leadership. He always chased the path in which he had keen interest, passion or intense desire to do. He says life sometimes is a struggle, preaches a lot because he found a great difficulty in finding good food of his choice to satisfy his palate. He had a big curiosity and intuition also reflects his leadership quality. At Reed College he learnt calligraphy which he introduced in his Mac, so he said learning never goes wasted rather it is dividend and that learning gave him a hope for new opportunities in font style, later copied by Windows. He believes in gut, destiny, life and karma and whatever happens in life, having its purpose linked to past karma/destiny so we should never lose hope and embrace with wide-opened arms to show your own identity. Therefore, these were the lessons he taught us as a great leader through first story.

In his second story, he says about love and loss. He had an intense love for his work or in other word he was very much passionate about what he had wish to do in life, entirely different from others. He was a person of focused goal and ready to take challenges with all positive beliefs, strength, creativity and hopes. These are the elements act as an anchor against turbulence. Adversity in his life made him to stand firmly, bestow the energy and strength and that was a quality of a big leader to pass out acid-test. He kept moving ahead against all odds with his passion and belief.

His third story is about death, had pancreatic cancer. Somewhere he read one quote saying something about a life, which triggered his mind to think differently and change life's perspectives. He listened to his heart, gave command to his brain to do some innovation. He realised to do something for people before he finished his life. Sometimes life gives another chance to live with and gives some more days to remain with happiness and that is an ultimate bliss. Death is a bitter truth and everybody has to come across, this was the part of spirituality in him which he explained as a cycle of life and death. He emphasised on inner voice and to follow heart and intuition. He presented the scripture of holy Bible, poetic touch of the book 'The Whole Earth Catalog', in form of message that whatsoever you wish to do, should be executed with full of heart and soul, closely related to brain and heart. At the last he says, "Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish" which depicts a hungry man is a passionate fellow. As a hungry man understands the value of food and its everlasting taste, similarly love your work and join your heart and soul to accomplish your goal and purpose of life for being a

good mankind. Foolish stands for ignorant, listen to circumstances, understand the terms minutely, engross yourself as if you don't know anything then only you can become master of yourself.

Therefore, lessons taught by him reflect his transformational Leadership skills as; set a persuasive vision, core value and passion, charismatic, having strong belief, focus, simplicity, creativity, responsibility, push for perfection, create enemy for survival and fight the battle to win, he talks about certainty instead of possibility, confidence, motivation to do things, connected with the people, think different (out of box), team work, creative thinking, spirituality, managing people, risk taking, positive attitude etc.

**Emotional Intelligence:** EQ is an important factor in a success of a good leader. The prominent factor is, being focused and this is one of the factors he had. He wanted only those people who really helped him to bring the product to life. A six-second emotional intelligence assessment (in term of high, medium, low) was done on a scale of eight competency of emotional intelligence, are following:

S.N.	Competency of EQ	6-Sec.EQ assessment
1	Emotional literacy	Low
2	Recognizing reaction patterns	Low
3	Managing emotions	Med.
4	Consequential thinking	High
5	Exercising optimism	High
6	Intrinsic motivation	High
7	Developing empathy	Low
8	Pursuing noble goal	High

Table: I

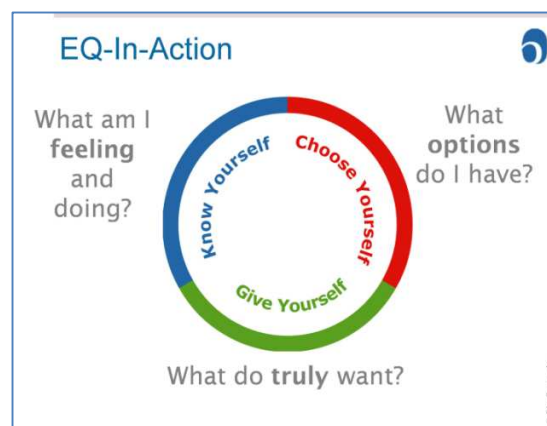
On the basis of above mentioned eight competencies, Job's EQ seems to be significantly higher in some of the competencies. He introduces his products with new features, fulfilling the expectations of consumers which motivate people to use comfortably. Therefore the simplicity of the product makes him so closer to his consumers.

He keeps on motivating himself and that is what he gives the same energy to his audience during presentation of the product. He believes in failure and success, getting a lesson from his personal life and this is the quality of being optimistic.

He hardly had empathy for others because he believed those who are not dedicated to his company, are useless. Here he had low emotional literacy and probably unable to recognise his own reaction patterns.

Apple would not have been as successful if:

1. Jobs designed products just for money or fame without real purpose;
2. He explained his failures but his behaviour of being optimist towards life made him successful.
3. He only looked at short-term consequences without considering his own values when creating products.
4. His struggle with [emotional intelligence](#) was life-long, but it was his continuous efforts to grow that made him great. He wouldn't have grown to be a [better leader](#) without flaws in his life.
5. Without determination and adaptability to change, Jobs would never have left such an amazing mark on the world.



**Fig: 1**

In above figure emotional intelligence is depicted in action form which is about knowing, choosing and giving yourself. A person feels about some actions, about the tentative options and the execution towards them, altogether make him to identify his identity to stand with.

**Transformational Leadership:** It is the process of engaging the commitment in the context of shared values and vision. According to Bass & Avolio (1990), transformational leadership has four components which can be interpreted in Jobs's personality:

1. Idealised influence: Having a clear vision and sense of purpose, he was able to win the trust and respect of consumers. He presented a new technology before his consumers as a very simple and authentic product.
2. Individual Consideration: He paid attention to the needs of his consumers and according to that he put forth his creativity and developed positive feedback from their end. He always helped his colleagues those who were passionate about their profession.
3. Intellectual simulation: He used to remain active, solicited new ideas and new ways of doing things. That was his quality which brought him to think differently out of the box.
4. Inspiration: He was a source of inspiration for others because he used to generate lots of enthusiasm, setting an example of his own life history of being failure and successful. He kept motivating people to march ahead with all potential, energy, talent, traits they had ever.

#### Characteristics of a transformational leader:

According to Tichy & Devanna (1986), some of the characteristics differentiated him from transactional leader. They are as follows:

- a) Risk taking: Jobs took a risk to do the things differently. He was not sure whether his product is going to be successful or not but he did because he had trust on him. He had a firm belief of his decision, facilitated growth of the company later.
- b) Being courageous: He was very much courageous because he confronted many ups and down in his life. He usually presented right direction to his employees.
- c) Believe in people: He had tremendous faith on his employees and consumers as well because he used to motivate and empower them every now and then.
- d) Take challenges: He was a big learner because he learned from his failure/ mistakes and took them as opportunities to grow further. He could cope up with all ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity, came into his life.
- e) Vision for life: He was a visionary man and so fulfilled long vision and purpose of life. He had strong set of values which drove him towards excellence. He inspired a sense of commitment and purpose.

**Presentation skills:**

Presentations are a great way to connect with target audience, mentally and emotionally. Steve Jobs changed the way to communicate, shared information and interacted with others . He was a genius, an innovator and a tough and demanding CEO of the company, but he was also one of the most dynamic and effective public speakers. Jobs had an amazing ability to speak with passion and make his ideas understandable and memorable through telling stories and demonstrations. His story telling skill gives a good visual impact on audience's mind. He only focuses on one idea at a time instead of muddling the audience. He never remains busy with his presentation slides behind him rather put forth the reality of the product. Unlike other CEOs, Jobs avoids using technical terms during the presentation. He uses powerful but simple adjectives like; awesome, cool, great, incredible etc. to get the attention of audience. He hardly uses words in his slides; he let the image painted and the picture itself tells stories. He never let the fact down with an overload of jargon. He never put himself with stationary, holding onto a lectern like many people do during a presentation. Jobs used to rehearse his speeches or presentation many a times for getting perfection. He put in days and hours into rehearsing for every major speech and product launch. From a communications point of view, he gives us lessons to learn how to give effective presentation. He was a wonderful story-teller and through his story he used to convey the message, as he had given beautiful message during commencement address at Stanford University before his last breath counted. As a person he had questionable tactics and during his presentation, his question used to be 'what next'. He hardly believed on text of the slides rather focusing on picturesque. The language used to be too simple and comprehensive for the listeners. Jobs' speeches and presentations show that he passionately believes in what he does. He calls it the "passionate pursuit of excellence."

Steve Jobs saw every public presentation as a performance. During his presentation he only used to focus on the impact of the product on people's life instead of bringing other peripheral information. Like other speakers he never dumped data into his presentation but kept his content simple and relevant to the audience. Jobs had a habit of saying in his presentations; "And one more thing" which means telling you one more thing. Sometimes it was a call to action while next time it used to be a question or a challenge. As per the need of the audience he used to prepare and deliver his presentation and that was his unique style of his presentation. Some of his keys ideas are following:

1. Concise Headings and Theme: He usually kept his headline of a topic in short to remember and comprehend well for the audience. When iPhone 2007 was launched, its heading was ‘Your life, in your pocket’. This means that iPhone has so many features and covers all aspects of your social requirements. He just put up only one slide “Your life in your pocket” instead of a number of slides during his presentation.

2. Interesting stories: He knew how to interact with audience. He presented himself from audience point of view. He told stories that are commonly experienced by users regarding Apple’s products. Once he said in a presentation “I was sitting in the cafe using iPad and noticed that girl totally checking me out”. His slide consisted of just these few words while he explained the story himself about Apple’s products. He had a good sense of humour to make everyone laugh through some of instances.

3. Concise topic: No matter how long the topic was but Jobs always managed to cover in fewer words. For example: “Music, calls and internet.” – introducing iPhone

**“Thousand songs in your pocket.” – introducing iPod.**

**“Touch your music.” – introducing iPod touch.**

**“The world’s thinnest notebook.” – introducing MacBook Air.**

4. Simple Statistics: He always had the numbers simplified. In his presentation when he wanted to tell the progress of iTunes, instead of saying that 25 billion songs have been downloaded from iTunes. He said that 15,000 songs are downloaded from iTunes every minute and that’s pretty huge and memorable.

5. Images: He had incredible images in his presentation. There wasn’t too much media. It was just focused on one or two images which were enough and represented the whole point.

6. Smile: He used to maintain good facial expression with gentle smile. His whole presentation was kind of joy because he always continued smiling the whole time.



**Public Speaking:**

He mostly used to wear informal dress to make himself comfortable and presentable. His dress sense and attire helped him to be more focused with the content. Content is a vital element of any speech because it directly touches the heart of audience so he was a master of making content. His gesture and movement made him more open during his speech delivery or presentation. He had a very good eye contact with the audience even though during demonstration of the product, he used to maintain continuity of his speech. His hands movement used to make his gesture more effective and lively. His speech shows pause and stress to add rhythm to speech. He knew that he needed to connect on a human level and speak about what a regular person really wanted out of a product. The way Jobs walked around the stage freely, comfortably and relaxed, reveals to attract the public towards him.

**Conclusion:**

Steve Jobs had an intense passion which empowered his public speaking. His audience got excited because he was excited. Even in the final years of his life when he was frail and dying of pancreatic cancer, Jobs never lost that passion. Steve Jobs taught us so much about business—especially about communication and leadership. He was emotionally weak at some places, especially behaving with the colleagues. Every coin has its two sides; similarly he had cons of his emotional balance whereas on the other side he was very strong in other traits of leadership. Some of the leaders are born whereas some can be trained through developing the traits in them.

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**Appendix:**

Transcription of the commencement address by Steve Jobs at Stanford University, 2005.

I am honored to be with you today at your commencement from one of the finest universities in the world. Truth be told, I never graduated from college. This is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation. Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories. The first story is about connecting the dots.

I dropped out of Reed College after the first 6 months, but then stayed around as a drop-in for another 18 months or so before I really quit. So why did I drop out? It started before I was born. My biological mother was a young, unwed college graduate student, and she decided to put me up for adoption. She felt very strongly that I should be adopted by college graduates, so everything was all set for me to be adopted at birth by a lawyer and his wife. Except that when I popped out they decided at the last minute that they really wanted a girl. So my parents, who were on a waiting list, got a call in the middle of the night asking: "We have an unexpected baby boy; do you want him?" They said: "Of course." My biological mother later found out that my mother had never graduated from college and that my father had never graduated from high school. She refused to sign the final adoption papers. She only relented a few months later when my parents promised that I would someday go to college. And 17 years later I did go to college. But I naively chose a college that was almost as expensive as Stanford, and all of my working-class parents' savings were being spent on my college tuition. After six months, I couldn't see the value in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out. And here I was spending all of the money my parents had saved their entire life. So I decided to drop out and trust that it would all work out OK. It was pretty scary at the time, but looking back it was one of the best decisions I ever made. The minute I dropped out I could stop taking the required classes that didn't interest me, and begin dropping in on the ones that looked interesting. It wasn't all romantic. I didn't have a dorm room, so I slept on the floor in friends' rooms, I returned Coke bottles for the 5¢ deposits to buy food with, and I would walk the 7 miles across town every Sunday night to get one good meal a week at the Hare Krishna temple. I loved it. And much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on. Let me give you one example: Reed College at that time offered perhaps the best calligraphy instruction in the country. Throughout the campus every poster, every label on every drawer, was beautifully hand calligraphed. Because I had dropped out and didn't have to take the normal classes, I decided to take a calligraphy class to learn how to do this. I learned about serif and sans serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture, and I found it fascinating. None of this had even a hope of any practical application in my life. But 10 years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have

never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts. And since Windows just copied the Mac, it's likely that no personal computer would have them. If I had never dropped out, I would have never dropped in on this calligraphy class, and personal computers might not have the wonderful typography that they do. Of course it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backward 10 years later. Again, you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.

My second story is about love and loss.

I was lucky — I found what I loved to do early in life. Woz and I started Apple in my parents' garage when I was 20. We worked hard, and in 10 years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage into a \$2 billion company with over 4,000 employees. We had just released our finest creation — the Macintosh — a year earlier, and I had just turned 30. And then I got fired. How can you get fired from a company you started? Well, as Apple grew we hired someone who I thought was very talented to run the company with me, and for the first year or so things went well. But then our visions of the future began to diverge and eventually we had a falling out. When we did, our Board of Directors sided with him. So at 30 I was out. And very publicly out. What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating. I really didn't know what to do for a few months. I felt that I had let the previous generation of entrepreneurs down — that I had dropped the baton as it was being passed to me. I met with David Packard and Bob Noyce and tried to apologize for screwing up so badly. I was a very public failure, and I even thought about running away from the valley. But something slowly began to dawn on me — I still loved what I did. The turn of events at Apple had not changed that one bit. I had been rejected, but I was still in love. And so I decided to start over. I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life. During the next five years, I started a company named NeXT, another company named Pixar, and fell in love with an amazing woman who would become my wife. Pixar went on to create the world's first computer animated feature film, *Toy Story*, and is now the most successful animation studio in the world. In a remarkable turn of events, Apple bought NeXT, I returned to Apple, and the

technology we developed at NeXT is at the heart of Apple's current renaissance. And Laurene and I have a wonderful family together. I'm pretty sure none of this would have happened if I hadn't been fired from Apple. It was awful tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it. Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith. I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.

My third story is about death.

When I was 17, I read a quote that went something like: "If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right." It made an impression on me, and since then, for the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: "If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?" And whenever the answer has been "No" for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something. Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure — these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart. About a year ago I was diagnosed with cancer. I had a scan at 7:30 in the morning, and it clearly showed a tumor on my pancreas. I didn't even know what a pancreas was. The doctors told me this was almost certainly a type of cancer that is incurable, and that I should expect to live no longer than three to six months. My doctor advised me to go home and get my affairs in order, which is doctor's code for prepare to die. It means to try to tell your kids everything you thought you'd have the next 10 years to tell them in just a few months. It means to make sure everything is buttoned up so that it will be as easy as possible for your family. It means to say your goodbyes. I lived with that diagnosis all day. Later that evening I had a biopsy, where they stuck an endoscope down my throat, through my stomach and into my intestines, put a needle into my pancreas and got a few cells from the tumor. I was sedated, but my wife, who was

there, told me that when they viewed the cells under a microscope the doctors started crying because it turned out to be a very rare form of pancreatic cancer that is curable with surgery. I had the surgery and I'm fine now. This was the closest I've been to facing death, and I hope it's the closest I get for a few more decades. Having lived through it, I can now say this to you with a bit more certainty than when death was a useful but purely intellectual concept: No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. Right now the new is you, but someday not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away. Sorry to be so dramatic, but it is quite true. Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary. When I was young, there was an amazing publication called *The Whole Earth Catalog*, which was one of the bibles of my generation. It was created by a fellow named Stewart Brand not far from here in Menlo Park, and he brought it to life with his poetic touch. This was in the late 1960s, before personal computers and desktop publishing, so it was all made with typewriters, scissors and Polaroid cameras. It was sort of like Google in paperback form, 35 years before Google came along: It was idealistic, and overflowing with neat tools and great notions.

Stewart and his team put out several issues of *The Whole Earth Catalog*, and then when it had run its course, they put out a final issue. It was the mid-1970s, and I was your age. On the back cover of their final issue was a photograph of an early morning country road, the kind you might find yourself hitchhiking on if you were so adventurous. Beneath it were the words: "Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish." It was their farewell message as they signed off. Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish. And I have always wished that for myself. And now, as you graduate to begin anew, I wish that for you.

Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.

Thank you all very much.