

Open letter to Steve Jobs: Retire now!

By David Gewirtz | July 19, 2010, 7:39am PDT

Dear Steve,

It's been many years since you and I had a serious chat. We were both young men, almost kids, and we both looked at the world through much younger eyes. But now, buddy, we gotta talk, man-to-man.

Friday's event was deeply disturbing. There you were, up there on stage, mocking genuinely valid concerns over the fundamental performance of your flagship product, arrogantly denying credible analysis by some of the most reputable product testers on the planet, telling members of the press that you love your users so much that you've built 300 Apple retail stores just for them.

The whole thing was embarrassing. It was beneath you.

You have been one the most transformative figures in the history of American business, up there with Thomas Edison, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, and, yes, Bill Gates.

And now, *this* is how you're spending your time? Complaining that everyone's ganging up on you because you're so special? Talking back to regular consumers at 3am? Chastising them because they're holding their phones wrong?

You are an iconic American figure. You are an American strategic asset. Yet, here you are, arguing with people about whether you can make enough bumpers to fix the undeniable antenna problem you refuse to admit exists.

Bumpers? Is this what your reality has distorted into?

It certainly shouldn't be how people think of you. Look at Bill Gates. Bill is out there helping to cure sickness and disease, poverty and hunger, working to find ways of producing alternative energy systems and trying to save the world from almost-certain darkness. Bill has become one of the world's leading philanthropists, probably the most generous and effective in the history of the mankind.

By comparison, you're spending your days (and, apparently, your nights) arguing with consumers who bought a \$200 phone and complaining that Consumer Reports doesn't know how to test consumer products.

Do you see a difference?

It's time for you to step down, retire, and let others deal with the day-to-day challenges of running Apple. Phil Schiller is certainly a reasonable capable manager. Let him do it.

All this iPhone stuff can't be healthy for you. It's got to be stressful. You need to preserve your reputation and apply your leadership to things that matter.

Almost 30 years ago, John Scully was at Pepsi and you asked him, "Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to come with me and change the world?"

So, Steve, here's the question I ask you: "Do you want to sell crappy phones and consumer electronics for the rest of your life, or do you want to leave Apple and change the world?"

Think about it.

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As a child, David Gewirtz discovered he was a geek sometime during the middle of the Johnson administration.

Disclosure

At various times during his adult life, David has voted for both Democrats and Republicans, and has been disappointed by both. He is deeply disturbed by how partisanship has come before patriotism in America, which gives him the freedom to pick on both sides.

David is a frequent guest on TV and radio stations across America and can usually be heard or seen on-the-air at least once a week. He writes weekly commentary and analysis for CNN's Anderson Cooper 360 and has been interviewed by Fox News, CNN, various ABC and NBC affiliates, and Canada's Global TV. He has been a featured guest on National Public Radio and has also been featured on Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty where his commentaries on technology, industry, and emerging nations have been broadcast into 46 countries (all in their own unique translations).

David is the executive director of U.S. Strategic Perspective Institute, a nonprofit research and policy organization. He is the Cyberterrorism Advisor for the International Association for Counterterrorism & Security Professionals, a columnist for *The Journal of Counterterrorism and Homeland Security* and a special contributor to *Frontline Security Magazine*. He is a member of the FBI's InfraGard program, the security partnership between the FBI and industry. David is also a member of the U.S. Naval Institute and the National Defense Industrial Association, the leading defense industry association promoting national security.

David is an advisory board member for the Technical Communications and Management Certificate program at the University of California, Berkeley extension. He is also a member of the instructional faculty at the University of California, Berkeley extension.

David's "day job" is as publisher and editor-in-chief of ZATZ publishing, an online publisher of technical magazines. Other than his ownership stake in Component Enterprises, Inc. (the parent company of ZATZ), David has no additional industry investments.

ZATZ has many advertisers who do, in part, provide for David's lush income and extravagant lifestyle. Most of them are IBM and Lotus aftermarket suppliers, some of them make goodies for Microsoft Outlook, and a few make all sorts of strange mobile devices and add-on products. David has been a regular judge of the IBM Awards, but has no formal financial interest in or with IBM.

Because the ZATZ online magazines often review products, David and ZATZ are sent an overwhelming stream of unsolicited, silly, and often useless products to review. Because they're such a pain to track and ship back, these products often wind up in a dumpster or fill up the corner of a large closet. Although David has no plans to review products in connection to his ZDNet blog, if he does do a product review, he will disclose any relationship completely in that posting.

Both through ZATZ and independently, David derives a small income through various advertising and sales relationships with Amazon.com and Google. These are minor relationships and they will not impede his willingness or ability to chastise either company should they deserve it.

David has many other business relationships, but none of them relate to anything he covers in his ZDNet blog. David does have a bit of the sales-guy bug and if he's not doing a sales deal with someone at least once a month, he goes through withdrawal. He has a number of consulting clients, but none of them relate to anything he covers for ZDNet (and if they ever do, he will either disclose that fact, or decline to write about them).

Back in the 1980s, David held the unusual title of "Godfather" at Apple. He has written and published 40 incredibly simplistic applications for Apple's iPhone.

Although David is forbidden to disclose the terms of his iPhone developer agreement, he isn't drinking the Apple Kool Aid, will never be confused with a metrosexual, and feels free to mock Apple, and Apple users, any time the occasion permits, on alternate Tuesdays, or if he's bored.

Biography

As a child, David Gewirtz discovered he was a geek sometime during the middle of the Johnson administration. He is the author of *How To Save Jobs: Reinventing Business, Reinvigorating Work, and Reawakening the American Dream* and *Where Have All The Emails Gone? How Something as Seemingly Benign as White House Email Can Have Freaky National Security Consequences*.

He is the executive director of the U.S. Strategic Perspective Institute, founder of the ZATZ technical magazines, a CNN contributor, and the cyberterrorism advisor for the International Association for Counterterrorism and Security Professionals.

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