

# Business May Be Your Life – But – Life Is *Your* Business

## Part II: What Do *You* Really Want In A Job?<sup>A,B</sup>



James A. Cusumano, PhD

*“There is one great truth on this planet: whoever you are or whatever it is that you do, when you really want something, it’s because that desire originated in the soul of the universe. It’s your mission on earth.”*

**Paulo Coelho – “The Alchemist”**

### KEY CONCEPTS:

■ **Deep down, most people want essentially three things in a job, in the following priority.**

- 1. A sense of passion from a higher purpose**
- 2. Reasonable autonomy to do their job**
- 3. An appropriate reward for success**

Having spent most of my professional life in California’s Silicon Valley, I was fortunate to meet a number of successful entrepreneurs. To name just a few, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, founders of Apple Computer; Bob Swanson, founder of Genentech, and Jim Clark, founder of Netscape and Silicon Graphics. In discussions over the years with these gentlemen and others like them, I found that *not one of them followed their course of action primarily to get rich. Not one of them sought to be famous, although each of them carried a sizeable ego, and the self confidence to go with it. They each had a common set of principles that motivated them to achieve their successes.* Each of them possessed **three attributes** that fanned the fires within them to help address important world challenges, while creating millions of jobs, building hundreds of billions of dollars of corporate value, and contributing significantly to our global GDP. And what is equally important, these same three attributes, I have found, are what motivate most of us in our professional life, and for that matter, in life in general.

### CHANGE THE WORLD

These men pursued dreams that they thought would make a positive difference in the world. *The first principle is to work on something that you believe is important, something that will make an important positive difference. In the best of circumstances, it is your personal passion in life.* For example, if you have loved trains since you were a child, you might consider working for a rail company in some capacity. Finding your passion is a special process in its own right, and is the subject of the next article in this series. However, knowing your ultimate passion in life is not an absolute necessity for finding a satisfactory, productive and rewarding job. You might take a position in an area of interest to you, and while working, find your passion. And when you do, nothing will stop you from pursuing your journey toward your life goals.

Steve Jobs, who was my neighbor in Palo Alto, California, is a good example. He didn’t invent the Apple computer; it was his friend, Steve “Woz” Wozniak. But, Jobs, having a keen marketing eye, recognized in 1976 that this device could change the way the world works. He had barely made it through a few months at Reed College in Oregon before quitting. Yet he could see the global potential of the computer, and he wanted Woz to build the “neatest” computer on earth, so that they could create a market and help bring that potential to fruition. “An Apple in every home, business and school,” he would say. It was his passion. He had few worldly possessions, just a beat-up old van. And he sold it to raise \$1300 for Woz to buy the parts needed to complete the assembly of the first Apple computer. The rest is history.

Jobs is an entrepreneur in the true sense of the word. He is not a typical corporate executive. In fact, he probably would be loathed to be called one. He once told me that his primary motivation in the innovation process is to make “cool” (read “irresistible”) products that usually end up *creating a market*, rather than addressing an existing market. Examples include Apple II, Macintosh, iPod, iTunes, and iPhone. In fact, Steve has little patience with sales and market data for current products. He constantly seeks to change the world for the better through innovation with his “cool” products. Although currently facing challenging health issues, Jobs still leads Apple, which currently has a market value of more than \$170 billion.

With Genentech, Bob Swanson created a global revolution in genetic engineering that changed the face and future of healthcare. Founding the company in 1976, he and his team developed biopharmaceuticals that have literally saved the lives of millions (see **Figure 1**)<sup>1</sup>. Our family personally benefited from his efforts. My father “died” twice in a Dallas hospital

emergency room, but was fortunate to be revived each time by strong electrical shocks in conjunction with a potent biotech drug called tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) developed by Genentech. Administered immediately after defibrillation, tPA activated a series of biochemical reactions in my father’s circulatory system

**Figure 1: In 1976, Bob Swanson, shown here in 1984, founded Genentech, the first and most successful commercial biotech company (Reference 4).**



that rapidly dissolved the heavy clots of protein plaque blocking the flow of blood in his life-preserving coronary artery. Bob’s leadership at Genentech created innovative drugs that saved dad’s life and innumerable others throughout the world. It is terribly ironic and saddened me deeply to have seen Bob succumb to a brain tumor in December 1999 at the age of 52.

In 1981, Jim Clark left his position as Professor of Electrical Engineering at Stanford University to found

**EDITOR’S NOTE** – <sup>A)</sup>This is the second in a new series of articles based on the author’s experience as an entrepreneur, having founded several successful businesses, including Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc., a billion-dollar public company. His experience base currently spans “5 lives” – A multimillion record sales recording artist; R&D Director for Exxon; CEO & founder of 2 public companies; CEO, founder and Executive Producer for Chateau Wally films; Chairman & Owner of Chateau Mcely, an international award-winning luxury hotel & SPA. This article is extracted from his latest book, currently in preparation and entitled, “My Little Book of Business – Tales of Passion, Life & Enterprise.”

<sup>B)</sup>The author may be reached at [Jim@ChateauMcely.Com](mailto:Jim@ChateauMcely.Com).





Silicon Graphics. Subsequent to its success, he left to found Netscape because he saw that he could help launch the worldwide web, and he knew what that would mean for humanity. He was not after money or fame. Jobs, Swanson and Clark all followed their dream. Each of them changed the world for the better.

In my small universe, I left Exxon where I was Director of R&D with a promise of vice presidency. I gave up a comfortable and well-defined path to advancement and financial security to join two close friends in forming a fledgling consulting company called Catalytica Associates. We each invested \$10,000 to launch our adventure. I took out a loan to raise my contribution. The other two founders and I were trained and commercially experienced in catalytic science and technologies. We passionately believed – we “knew” – that catalysis was critical to address many of the major global challenges that were beginning to be recognized in the early 1980s, not the least of which were then – and still are – sustainable, environmentally-compatible manufacturing, energy security, and climate change. Catalytic technologies enable manufacturers to reduce the number of process steps, minimize and sometimes even eliminate the use of toxic materials. We envisioned growing our consulting business to a critical nucleus and then moving into technology development and manufacturing, which we ultimately did. When we eventually sold our company at a premium, which we had taken public on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange, we had more than 2,000 employees, annual sales of \$500 million with a profit of \$50 million, and a market value of \$1 billion. We made our shareholders very happy! But I can honestly tell you that we were never after money. Our deep-seated passion was to help industry commercialize safer, more cost-effective, sustainable technologies – and we did just that.

### I DID IT MY WAY

The **second fundamental principle** is that successful entrepreneurs need a strong sense of autonomy in their work; they have got to do it their way. They have a vision, and they want nothing to get in the way that vision. This is not to say that they do not listen to the input of others, but in the end, they follow their intuition and their dreams. This attitude sometimes got Jobs in trouble with his colleagues at Apple, and in fact it got him fired by John Scully, the former CEO of PepsiCo, whom Steve hired to help him build Apple (see **Figure 2**)<sup>2</sup>. But the basic principle is sound, and applies not only to entrepreneurs, but to employees as well. If you are an employer and have smart people

**Figure 2: Steve Jobs recruiting John Scully, CEO of PepsiCo. The winning sound byte that captured Scully: “Do You want to spend the rest of your life making sugar water, or do you want to change the world?” (Reference 2).**



working for you, people who are passionate about their work, it is wise to give them some level of autonomy to carry out their job. I am not suggesting that you abdicate, but delegate. Effective delegation means setting boundaries, and checking back on occasion as to employee progress and challenges. This approach often pays great dividends. Employees work harder, smarter and almost always achieve their goals.

### THE REWARD

The **third fundamental principle** is to envision, expect and reap an appropriate reward for your efforts. No one works hard and succeeds, and stays motivated without receiving some form of reward. For people like Jobs, Swanson and Clark, it was important to be recognized by their peers. Jobs loves press and product launch conferences, and he is excellent at them. He’s a master performer. And only lastly was money an important part of the reward. For Jobs, Swanson, Clark, and

**Figure 3: Steve Jobs was never driven by money. After having bought his first multi-million dollar home, he was too busy creating the Mac to furnish it (Reference 3).**



others like them, money is usually a measure of success. It is not an end in itself. When Apple was about \$1 Billion in sales, some of the Apple financial executives advised Jobs, who was single at the time, to invest in real estate, “Buy a home,” they said. As one can easily do in Silicon Valley, he spent several million dollars and bought a new home. But for the longest time, it was nearly empty; besides a bed and some lamps and stereo equipment, it had almost no furniture (see **Figure 3**)<sup>3</sup>. When I asked Steve why, he said he had no time to be bothered buying furniture. At the time, he was busy working on the Macintosh Project, the first computer to offer the point-and-click technology interface that is now ubiquitous to all computers (see **Figure 4**)<sup>4</sup>.

In 2005, Jobs was asked to give the commencement address at Stanford University. His speech can be found at <http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/-2005/june15/jobs-061505.html>. I highly recommend it. It is inspirational. In a final passage, Steve provides excellent advice for professional and personal success.

“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... Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.”

In summary, one road to a successful job, and for that matter, to a successful life, requires the following, in order of priority:

**Figure 4: Steve Jobs was the “living force” behind the 1984 launch of the Apple Mac. It was the first computer to offer a point-and-click interface (Reference 4).**



1. **Follow your passion and only work at those things that will make a difference and change the world for the better.**
2. **Don’t waste your time trying to live someone else’s dream – you really can’t do it!** Listen carefully to the counsel of others – not just to hear them out of politeness, but to truly understand their ideas – but in the end after considering the merits of their advice, follow your inner voice and make any necessary changes in your plan – or not. Be courageous. Follow **your** dream.
3. **Continuously envision, expect and then reap the rewards.** First and foremost, acknowledge recognition from yourself – your inner core – then from your peers and others, and finally, expect a fair and appropriate financial reward as a measure of your contribution.

It’s been my experience that when you follow these three principles, although money is not the primary driving force, it comes as a consequence of your actions, and almost always is more than you could have anticipated.

*Everything else is secondary.*

**James A. Cusumano, PhD** ■

### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Roger Ressimeyer, Pro.Corbis.Com
- <sup>2</sup> Diana Walker, [http://www.forbes.com/2008/01/14/steve-jobs-apple-tech-personal-cx\\_bc\\_0115lifeofjobs\\_slide.html](http://www.forbes.com/2008/01/14/steve-jobs-apple-tech-personal-cx_bc_0115lifeofjobs_slide.html)
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid
- <sup>4</sup> Bernard Gotfryd, [http://www.forbes.com/2008/01/14/steve-jobs-apple-tech-personal-cx\\_bc\\_0115lifeofjobs\\_slide.html](http://www.forbes.com/2008/01/14/steve-jobs-apple-tech-personal-cx_bc_0115lifeofjobs_slide.html)

**About the Author:** James A. Cusumano is Chairman and owner of Chateau Mcely ([www.ChateauMcely.Com](http://www.ChateauMcely.Com)), chosen in 2007 by the European Union as the only “Green” 5-star luxury hotel in Central and Eastern Europe and in 2008 by the World Travel Awards as the Leading Green Hotel in the World. He is a former Research Director for Exxon, and subsequently founded two public companies in Silicon Valley, one in clean power generation, the other in pharmaceuticals manufacture via environmentally-benign, low-cost, catalytic technologies. While he was Chairman and CEO, the latter – Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc. – grew in less than 5 years, to a \$1 billion enterprise with 2,000 employees. He is co-author of “Freedom from Mid-East Oil,” recently released by World Business Academy Press ([www.WorldBusiness.Org](http://www.WorldBusiness.Org)) and can be reached at [Jim@ChateauMcely.Com](mailto:Jim@ChateauMcely.Com).