

Steve Jobs  
On  
**Knowing What You Do Best, and Doing It**  
(from [www. macrumors.com](http://www.macrumors.com) – 1/23/2011)

Early last week, Steve Jobs [announced that](#) he was once again taking a medical leave of absence from Apple. The news has been met with understandable concern about his future at the company, and resulted in many a "look back" at Apple over the years. One particularly insightful article is [this Newsweek article](#) interviewing Steve Jobs back in 1985 shortly after his ousting from Apple. It's interesting to see how his views and attitudes about product design haven't changed much in 25 years.

Steve Jobs co-founded Apple Computer in 1976 and led the Macintosh team in the early 80s, but in 1985, he was forced out of the company after an internal power struggle with John Sculley, the Apple CEO at the time. This interview was held shortly after he had departed Apple.

On what his plans and strengths are, Jobs described himself as being best and most enthusiastic about building products:

*What I'm best at doing is finding a group of talented people and making things with them. I respect the direction that Apple is going in. But for me personally, you know, I want to make things. And if there's no place for me to make things there, then I'll do what I did twice before. I'll make my own place. You know, I did it in the garage when Apple started, and I did it in the metaphorical garage when Mac started.*

He rejected offers to be a professor at the time and said he wasn't ready to be an industry pundit. Jobs went on to found NeXT computer company which was later purchased by Apple in 1996 and its operating system used as the basis for Mac OS X. He also acquired the computer graphics division of Lucasfilm which became Pixar Animation Studios. Pixar, of course, was ultimately acquired by Disney after years of commercial success. After Jobs' return to Apple in 1996, he's widely credited for returning Apple to profitability and the launch of many notable products including Mac OS X, the iMac, iPod, iPhone and most recently, the iPad.

Jobs finally describes his philosophy in running a company and the role of customer feedback:

*My philosophy is that everything starts with a great product. So, you know, I obviously believed in listening to customers, but customers can't tell you about the next breakthrough that's going to happen next year that's going to change the whole industry. So you have to listen very carefully. But then you have to go and sort of stow away -- you have to go hide away with people that really understand the technology, but also really care about the customers, and dream up this next breakthrough. And that's my perspective, that everything starts with a great product.*

Jobs has echoed this sentiment in recent years including citing a [quote](#) from Henry Ford which was "If I'd have asked my customers what they wanted, they would have told me 'A faster horse.'"