

Steve Jobs: "Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish"

Think for a second about your most innovative and productive employees. It's likely that they approach life in the same way they approach work—with an unbridled passion. It's not something a manager can teach ... but it is something they can harness and direct.

With the news of Steve Jobs' death yesterday, I remembered a remarkable commencement speech the Apple founder gave at Stanford University in 2005. He spoke of that kind of passion for work and life. The speech made the rounds on the Internet at the time. It was about a year after he received his cancer prognosis. He said, "I had the surgery and am fine now."



That first brush with death forced Jobs to confront the big issues of work, death and how he wanted to live his life. The highlights:

"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 ...



"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."

Jobs went on to talk about a publication that signed off its final issue with a back cover that showed an early

morning country road. Beneath it were the words "Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish." Said Jobs, "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."

Steve Jobs worked hard to instill that kind of innovation and passion in all his employees. Successful companies try to do the same. Google, for example, tells its employees to use 20% of their work time to pursue whatever project interests them most.

Does your organization give its employees the resources and responsibility to "follow their hearts and intuition"?

Note: You can watch the video or read a full transcript of his Stanford speech at:

<http://news.stanford.edu/news/2005/june15/jobs-061505.html>