Leader Versus Manager Article Paper

Tim Cook, Apple CEO

by

Bryce Hargis

for

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California Baptist University

Dr. John Walls, Professor

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**Executive Summary**

Tim Cook is the Chief Executive Officer of Apple Inc. Since taking the position in 2011, he has developed thick skin against criticism and a conscientious attitude toward philanthropy for both himself and his employees. Success for Tim Cook is defined is leading Apple in the way that it should go. Cook is not concerned with emulating Steve Jobs’ leadership style. Cook instead employs his own style, even if some decisions run contrary to what Steve Jobs would have done. One example is how Cook has opened up communication between the news media and employees at Apple. One weakness is Cook’s shyness to discuss some of Apple’s personal developments for new products. This is negative because it can make Apple seems like it lacks a vision. Cook has compensated for this weakness by adapting a long-term outlook for Apple. This compensates the weakness by defining Apple’s direction to onlookers, even when there is no current news about new product developments. This perspective was built by mutual trust between Cook, his employees, and shareholders. Tim Cook is a talented leader who has developed a stable vision for Apple’s future, even in the face of criticism.

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**Introduction**

Apple Inc. is one of the top tech giants in the world today. Leading this corporate powerhouse is no small feat, but it currently the job of Timothy Donald Cook. Tim Cook became the Chief Executive Offer of Apple in 2011, amidst founder Steve Job’s health issues at the time. Carrying on the legacy of Steve Jobs is an imposing challenge, but it is not what Tim Cook chose to do. Tim Cook recognizes that he is not Steve Jobs, and attempting to copy Steve Jobs’ leadership style will do Apple more harm than good. Instead, Tim Cook embraced his own unique leadership style, fully accepting that his primary task was to lead Apple and not to emulate Steve Jobs. Tim Cook is described as a coach who trusts the talent of his players rather manipulating things at every turn (Lashinsky, 2015). He focuses on taking Apple where it should go, even if that way is not what Steve Jobs would have chosen.

**Characteristics**

When Tim Cook took hold of Apple’s reins, the most important characteristics for him to develop was thick skin. Apple’s tech dominance was largely because of Steve Jobs’ leadership, and coming into that role comes with its fair share of criticism. Cook reflects on the initial impact as being more intense than he could have imagined (Lashinsky, 2015). As Cook toughened up to the criticism, he admired what Jobs had done even more. Cook also believes becoming tough in this way will serve him well later in life. Resistance to criticism is an essential component in leadership, especially in such a high-profile position. Being in the spotlight means that someone will always be criticizing every action. The actions of a talent leader cannot be influence by unknowledgeable bystander. With this toughness comes the discretion to discern between warranted and unwarranted criticisms, and respond accordingly.

Despite this tough exterior, Tim Cook is also conscientious in his leadership and personal life. Cook has been donating money quietly and planned to engage in systematic philanthropy at the time of this article (Lashinsky, 2015). Cook even encourages employees to give charitably as well. This philanthropic attitude contributes to a healthy work environment and positively reflects on Apple as a company. The CEO of a company, among their other responsibilities, must represent their company on the public stage. In addition to helping society, Cook’s giving also makes him a better leader and CEO. Voluntary and quietly giving contributes to his overall character, which creates employees who are happy to be working under his leadership. This also forms a better relationship between Apple and the media. Cook is far more open to interaction between his employees and the media. He believes these interviews and interactions embolden Apple’s perception by society and contribute well to the company’s image. With his giving and media interactions, Apple is perceived as a warm, compassionate company as opposed to the secretive project of a manipulative leader.

**Defining Success**

Whether in leadership or entrepreneurship, the most desired ideal in business is success. Success is the ultimate goal of any business venture. However, success is defined differently in almost every scenario, and this definition isn’t always clear. As Tim Cook took the place of Steve Jobs, many thought that Cook’s goal should be to emulate Jobs’ legacy. Tim Cook did not see it like that. Steve Jobs and Tim Cook are fundamentally different people. Cook had been working at Apple since 1998, so he was familiar with Jobs’ and his particular roles in Apple as well as differences in their personalities. If Cook tried to imitate Jobs’ leadership style, Cook would have failed and Apple would have failed with him. Success for Tim Cook is to lead Apple and not to copy Steve Jobs. Leading Apple in this way may include doing things that Steve Jobs may not approve of. Tim Cook has already moved away from Job’s methods in how Apple approaches media relations. As mentioned earlier, Cook has opened up relationships between Apple’s employees and the news media. Jobs had severely limited these interactions, while Cook has embraced them as a positive for the company. This is an example of how Cook does not define his success by how well he emulates Steve Jobs.

**Weaknesses and Compensation**

As a tech company, innovation is one of the primary objectives of Apple. One of the risks that comes with innovating is that a new product may flop. Another concern is making sure new ideas are shielded from any other company stealing them before they come to fruition. Despite opening media relations between employees and the media, Tim Cook himself is often more elusive when it comes to the press. The most apparent example is a tech conference in 2013, where Cook was coy with the press and dodging important questions about the company’s direction and upcoming products. At the time, this caused many to doubt if Cook even had a solid vision for Apple’s future. Cook has to walk a fine line between keeping the public interested while not revealing too much about ideas that are not ready to be discussed.

To compensate for this weakness, Cook has adapted a long-term outlook for Apple. By transitioning to a long-term viewpoint, the media and tech culture do not need to rely on Apple’s short-term upcoming products for the company to see success. This perspective has a few downsides, however. One disadvantage is that short-term investors will be driven away from the company because they do not have much to gain in the short term. Another disadvantage is that creating a long-term vision takes longer to establish, as people need to develop trust in Cook’s leadership and where he will take the company over the next few years. This disadvantage has mostly dissipated because Cook has been successfully leading Apple for six years now, with new innovations such as the Apple Watch and Apple Pay.

**Conclusion**

In 2011, Apple made a huge leadership transition by replacing the ill Steve Jobs with Tim Cook. Since then, Tim Cook has established himself as a tough, conscientious leader whose goal is to lead Apple into a stable future in his own way. Cook is able to discern valid criticisms and has the courage to make decisions different from Jobs’ way. His philanthropy creates a better corporate environment for his employees and bolsters Apple’s public image. His goal is to lead Apple rather than imitate Jobs. The long-term perspective he established at Apple will give the company a stable future. This outlook was only built because of the trust that Apple’s employees give to Cook and the trust that Cook gives to his employees, like a coach with his star team.

Works Cited

Lashinsky, A. (2015, March 26). Apple's Tim Cook leads different. Retrieved April 21, 2017, from http://fortune.com/2015/03/26/tim-cook/