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The  
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## **Insanely Simple: The Obsession That Drives Apple's Success** Ken Segall

To Steve Jobs, Simplicity was a religion. It was also a weapon.

Simplicity isn't just a design principle at Apple—it's a value that permeates every level of the organization. The obsession with Simplicity is what separates Apple from other technology companies. It's what helped Apple recover from near death in 1997 to become the most valuable company on Earth in 2011.

Thanks to Steve Jobs's uncompromising ways, you can see Simplicity in everything Apple does: the way it's structured, the way it innovates, and the way it speaks to its customers.

It's by crushing the forces of Complexity that the company remains on its stellar trajectory.

As ad agency creative director, Ken Segall played a key role in Apple's resurrection, helping to create such critical marketing campaigns as Think different. By naming the iMac, he also laid the foundation for naming waves of i-products to come.

Segall has a unique perspective, given his years of experience creating campaigns for other iconic tech companies, including IBM, Intel, and Dell. It was the stark contrast of Apple's ways that made Segall appreciate the power of Simplicity—and inspired him to help others benefit from it.

In *Insanely Simple*, you'll be a fly on the wall inside a conference room with Steve Jobs, and on the receiving end of his midnight phone calls. You'll understand how his obsession with Simplicity helped Apple perform better and faster, sometimes saving millions in the process. You'll also learn, for example, how to:

- **Think Minimal:** Distilling choices to a minimum brings clarity to a company and its customers—as Jobs proved when he replaced over twenty product models with a lineup of four.
- **Think Small:** Swearing allegiance to the concept of “small groups of smart people” raises both morale and productivity.
- **Think Motion:** Keeping project teams in constant motion focuses creative thinking on well-defined goals and minimizes distractions.
- **Think Iconic:** Using a simple, powerful image to symbolize the benefit of a product or idea creates a deeper impression in the minds of customers.
- **Think War:** Giving yourself an unfair advantage—using every weapon at your disposal—is the best way to ensure that your ideas survive unscathed.

Segall brings Apple's quest for Simplicity to life using fascinating (and previously untold) stories from behind the scenes. Through his insight and wit, you'll discover how companies that leverage this power can stand out from competitors—and individuals who master it can become critical assets to their organizations.

## **Insanely Simple: The Obsession That Drives Apple's Success Details**

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# From Reader Review Insanely Simple: The Obsession That Drives Apple's Success for online ebook

## Nipun says

If you can look past the unprofessional way Segall rails on other companies, his bizarre pseudo-religious way of talking about simplicity and his overly enthusiastic love for Apple (even in a book about how great Apple is, Segall comes across as too much of a fanboy), there are some good nuggets here. It's primarily a book about marketing but there are some interesting stories about Steve Jobs and how Apple's best marketing campaigns came about.

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## Prayag Panchwadkar says

Read only if you are an Apple fanboy or have read no other book on Apple. Most of the stories in the book are widely known.

The writing style has little structure or flow. Most of the book follows a "Steve did this, Steve did that" kind of approach.

Good only for a few good Apple stories which hadn't been shared previously which you will find if you search for reviews of the book online.

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## Erik says

Like most people who work at the intersection of programming and user experience, I am a big fan of simple. Because of this I thought this book would be right up my alley. Unfortunately, I was so wrong that I had to put this book down after getting only half way through it.

My main problem with the book is that this book never really defines, or even seems to have a good understanding of, what the term Simple means. In the end this is not a book about simplicity, it is a book about how much the author loved his experience of working at Apple. There is nothing wrong with this of course, and there is much to admire in Apple's work, but if you think this book will help you understand how to create insanely simple products like those from Apple you will be disappointed because to the author, "simple" appears to mean "whatever Apple does".

As an example, the author's first main push about simplicity is 'always have small meetings'. This may be a great rule, but I don't really think it is about simplicity or complexity in any meaningful way. Another example: the author likes to throw out true-isms in the form of 'simple is \_\_\_\_' and an early one is 'simple does not tolerate taming a bucking bronco'. Is this really supposed to inform me about the nature of simplicity?

In the end this book was not worth my time to finish, and I did not get much out of what I did read.

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## **Jmswtsn says**

Could have used some editing. For a book espousing the advantages of "Simplicity", it could have used some chopping. He basically makes the same point about 15 times before launching into some interesting stories. 100 pages of good stuff, 100 pages of fluff.

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## **Shog Al Maskery says**

Honestly, I feel like it's a book that you can benefit a lot from knowing how apple works, but at the same time it was getting a bit boring for me how Apple is the perfect model and how the author was bashing on other brands.

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## **Peter Labrow says**

Of all of the books jumping on the Steve Jobs bandwagon, this is perhaps the one that's most of value.

This is perhaps the one management book which has really resonated with me since Don Peppers and Martha Rogers' The One-To-One Future. Let's face it, that's not great: that was published in 1996.

I'm old enough to have worked for organisations both large and small – as an employee and as an outside supplier. It can be frustrating to be working for an organisation that has a core of brilliance but somehow can't get things done – this book explains the one simple reason why this is often the case: they can't do things in a simple way.

The book's author, Ken Segall, worked as a marketing provider to Apple – and, at the same time, Intel, Dell and other large IT companies. It's essentially the story of what makes Apple such a force to be reckoned with – but isn't merely a sanctification of Steve Jobs.

Yes, Steve is mentioned aplenty and is usually the centre of the many examples given. But while it touches on many of the facets of Steve's character which made him so successful, it focuses on one thing which almost anyone can do to improve their business – yet, will find an incredibly difficult and elusive concept to implement: simplicity.

Steve was often regarded as ruthless. Although there's some truth in that, it's probably better to say that he was single-minded. He wanted to get things done – and he often wanted to get them done fast. He didn't like to hear the word 'no'.

Well, we've all worked with managers who think that's the right way to move a company forward, that without their aggression, people simply wouldn't do their best. Steve's single-mindedness wasn't like that. He often knew that there was a better way and he provided a means to get there. He demanded simplicity.

Steve himself said that simplicity is hard to achieve. Segall's book tells the journey of a marketing man working with Steve Jobs as he struggled to rebuild his massively broken former empire.

In big-company terms, some of the stories are amazing – such as when Steve returned to Apple and decided

that it needed a branding campaign. After all, the company's brand was in the gutter. Yet Apple had never run a campaign that was only about brand, ever. What was aired was one of the greatest campaigns of all time – the Apple 'here's to the crazy ones' commercial, which was the spearhead for the company's 'think different' brand campaign.

"Here's to the crazy ones. The rebels. The troublemakers. The ones who see things differently. While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do."

Anyone who's ever tried to get a brand campaign running will tell you how hard it can be. First, the company has to understand its own values. Then, it has to work out the smartest way to communicate them. Steve wanted, needed, his campaign to be done fast. It took around a month – a simply astonishing amount of time.

The book contrasts this with Dell, who, after six months, still hadn't worked out what it stood for; it hadn't even got off the starting blocks. The book also contrasts Apple with Intel, which stifles creativity and strong ideas with the overuse of focus groups, which dilute ideas until they are not only inoffensive, they are ineffective. Or, the excessive use of testing analytics to remove any element of risk – and most elements of impact.

Apple never uses focus groups. Ever. It's smart enough to know a good idea when it sees one and has the confidence to run with it. When it makes a mistake (such as the round 'puck' mouse), it admits that mistake – and moves on quickly. This sounds arrogant, but the point is that not only does Apple trust itself, it knows how to keep things simple. It runs major meetings as conversations, not as presentations. Decision-making teams often number just two or three people; if you're not absolutely needed at a meeting, you won't be invited. If you turn up anyway, you'll be ejected. Apple – not just Jobs – is ruthless about simplicity.

Other companies believe that large project teams mean more brains on the job. Apple knows that this means more points of view, more conversations, more meetings, more cost, more delays – and a watered-down concept.

Other companies believe in inclusivity. That getting the 'wider view' will win hearts and minds. Apple believes in secrecy – that they have the knowledge, the smarts, the energy needed to make something really great that will win hearts and minds all on its own. Apple knows that the wider your outside involvement, the more people you have to please – and the less focused the idea.

Apple's obsession reaches into every aspect of what it does, including having teams working in secret to create packaging that delights people before the product is even pulled from the box. Other companies simply buy the cheapest brown pulp boxes they can.

Apple is now one of the most profitable companies in the world. It makes more money than most other computer companies combined, despite not having the largest market share. Its products reshape markets. That isn't magic – it's damned hard work and a passion about one thing: simplicity.

This is one book every business leader should read. Many will read it with envy, unable to envisage how they can possibly change the culture of their organisation into one that's both as empowered and as empowering – and therefore so effective.

Here's to the crazy people.

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## **Phil Simon says**

Yes, this book is that good. It's quite possibly the most important marketing book since Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable by Seth Godin. Segall shows us how Apple's maniacal emphasis on simplicity distinguishes it from Microsoft, Dell, HP, Intel, and other tech stalwarts.

In an age in which consumers are king, inundating them with features and specs is exactly the wrong approach. Rather, as Segall shows, Apple (through Steve Jobs and continuing under Tim Cook) does the opposite. By eschewing focus groups and keeping it simple, Apple has prospered beyond all realistic expectations. By following the advice in the book, companies of all sizes can increase the odds of success.

Finally, Segall's style is extremely conversational and often humorous. Had it been written a year ago, I would have quoted it extensively in The Age of the Platform.

Get. This. Book. Now.

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## **Timothy Chklovski says**

Disappointing book that promotes power of brutally direct communication and simplicity, and then proceeds to go into anecdotes of tiptoeing around Steve's snap judgements, and packaging things so he might like them.

Does have a good, clear call for a company knowing what its mission is, and the kind of strength a company can derive from building products that meet its high bar and reinforce its key philosophy.

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## **Roy Deseo says**

“Simple can be harder than complex. You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it’s worth it in the end, because once you get there, you can move mountains.”  
—Steve Jobs”

The book speaks of only one thing, 'Simplicity'. But mind you, that simplicity has produced and is currently being observed by a multi-billion dollar company, nuff said! This book is just a snappy glimpse in Steve's professionalism. Recommended for young individuals who aspire in jumping-up their level of productivity while still maintaining the wittiness in their life. Witty in the sense that you're striving for simplification rather than complexity, thus achieving quality results in just a short amount of time. Isn't that cool?!

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## **Glamdring says**

I DNF this audiobook at +/- 75%

As a more than 20 years Apple products user I was curious to read/listen this book. Some parts of it were interesting, unfortunately there was too much uninteresting rambling and the narration was kind of monotonous.

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## **Keith says**

I enjoyed this book thoroughly.

It's eye-opening to see Simplicity so crystallized in processes, products and people. Once you grok how nefarious Complexity is, it's difficult to ever again be complacent.

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## **Suzanne says**

Interesting and easy-to-read take on Steve Jobs and Apple from a marketer's perspective. However, I found it really distasteful how he criticized and shared negative insider details about his former clients, particularly Dell. I felt he broke the consultant's unspoken code of conduct. He also shared an anecdote where he let a colleague fail miserably in front of Steve Jobs and, in Segall's own words "So I started doing what any brave advertising guy would do: I made sure I sat outside the line of fire."

If you can get past those negatives, the book contains some great stories about Steve Jobs (Segall worked with him on and off for 12 years) and summarizes Segall's distillation of what made Jobs and Apple so successful.

Key highlights:

\* Any company is going to experience both success and failure, especially if you're focused on innovating. Steve Jobs believed in the concept of the "brand bank." Your brand is like a bank account. When you do great things - a fabulous new product/service - you get deposits in the brand bank. When you fail, you see a withdrawal. As long as you have a healthy balance in the brand bank, customers are more willing to ride out the tough times. But if you've let the balance run too low, customers are more likely to be really angry or worse, tempted to head for the hills.

\* If you're going to try and adopt the value of Simplicity, you have to do it across all of your actions, from how you communicate (minimize your proposition and talk the way humans do, not in marketing speak), to how you operate (small teams are better and you have to have the key decision maker involved throughout the process, not at the end), to what you offer (don't make things more complicated than they need to be by offering too many options - something which is a huge problem when you are trying to buy a PC).

\* I loved the story of how the Think Different campaign came into being. It's such an iconic campaign that has stood the test of time and there's a reason for that. It embraces and communicates the core values of Apple. Segall shares the speech that Jobs gave to employees when he unveiled the campaign. It's thought by



many to be the perfect presentation about the power of brands.

Overall, the book does a great job of inspiring you to look and see how you can champion Simplicity in your own career.

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### **Satai says**

Představte si, že život Ježíše se skládal povětšinou z událostí, jako bylo zločenečí fíkovníku... a vy chcete napsat evangelium.

Mytickou bytostí není v Insanely Simple syn tesaře ale minulý CEO Apple. Na sbírku historek z jeho života jich je málo, na rozbor jednoduchosti chybí cokoli hlubšího než "lidé to mají rádi jednoduché" a jako pokus zmapovat vznik některých produktů kniha stojí za houby, protože je napsal reklamkář a ne někdo, kdo má páru (iPhone je jednoduchý, protože má jedno tlačítko - řeknete 'wow').

Knize by prospěla její vlastní medicína - zjednodušit, nevozit se knihou na Jobsovské vlně a raději pár zajímavých věcí vydestilovat do několika blogpostů. Nebo tweetů

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### **Beth Dean says**

Segall talks about his time working on the creative team that served Apple under Steve Jobs. Segall learned and practiced the art of brutal simplicity in marketing and product rollouts.

This is a pursuit I believe in, too. Minus the brutal part. We're all adults here, after all. No need to be brutal.

I'm interpreting this book as part brilliant and part case of Stockholm Syndrome. Brilliant because the simple approach is best for the consumer. Stockholm Syndromish because some of the behavior he describes from Jobs at their group meetings is misanthropic and unacceptable, though presented in the guise of, "He was a visionary genius! So it's all okay!!"

Great philosophy, simplicity. Just don't forget to be humane while practicing it.

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### **Neven says**

This is a quirky and charmingly plain collection of anecdotes about Segall's interactions with Steve Jobs, and, more importantly, his takeaway lessons from Apple's success. It is, by design, a cherry-picked history, but in that it actually succeeds where Walter Isaacson's authorized biography failed. Isaacson spent so much time making sure his Steve was well rounded and fairly covered, he forgot to find (for lack of searching, it seems) any cause for the man's mindblowing career. Segall gets to the point: Steve kept things simple. We can now argue about other factors that contributed to the unprecedented rise of Apple, but for the time being Segall's thesis makes a lot of sense.

