

24 September 2008

By: Filip Truta, Apple News Editor



Mockup of a picture from UnixWorld Magazine featuring Jobs on the cover UnixWorld Magazine

No Steve Jobs for Linux

It is argued that Linux would be better, should a Steve Jobs be taking the reins

Word has it that Linux does not need its own [Steve Jobs](#). Then again, why was this question posed in the first place? Because it's only obvious that whatever Jobs touches turns into gold. But who says anyone wants this happening to Linux? The two are simply "different."

An article outlining why "Linux needs its own Steve Jobs for it to be good" (who said Linux was bad?) has been picked up and slammed to the ground by [a certain pink site](#). It is stated there that "Steve Jobs gives the company direction and that [this] makes their product great." It's true, and this is where the whole argument should end. No need to go into the "kernel" and the "backend" topics because, just as the author points out, "[Jobs] does exactly what 'mythical' Jobs does, he looks at problems and hires people so he can order them to fix them."

With that out of the way, other voices on the web are cited as saying that "Steve Jobs has visions that push their products where nobody thought about going before." While the author believes Jobs' / Apple's sole vision was "to stop being a computer company and turn into a content provider who fights with any dirty trick it can find to lock customers in," we can agree the wretched DRM did play a big role in the company's success. But, again, who says that should happen to Linux? It boasts other values, like Open Source and a truly great community. These people "think different," but not the way Apple says it thinks different. And that's not necessarily bad. It's just... different.

"Steve Jobs can work as well 'cause nobody in the company can work against him or he gets fired, that leads to everybody working in one direction." Where Linux is concerned, "everybody can take the whole shebang and modify it to be different is the strength of the free software stack," the author believes, adding that, "if something happened to [Linus Torvalds], there are others that have the tree and knowledge to take over, that is another strength. One person 'in charge' means that your whole project dies with that person."

This is where we dare disagree a bit. Apple's business cannot be compared to Linux from this point of view. While others have the "kernel" knowledge to take over what Torvalds has begun, Apple's execs, no matter how well-versed they are in the ways of the Mac, cannot substitute themselves for the "marketing" knowledge Jobs has. The instant that man takes a stage, announcing a new product, you know millions of units will be sold, whatever that products is, or does. That's Steve Jobs - he can take a plastic bag in September, put an "i" in front of its name, and sell millions of iBags before Christmas. This has little to do with how much development knowledge he has, and is less likely to be achieved by someone else.

Yes, Linux would do better with someone like Jobs at the helm, but then, it wouldn't be what it stands for anymore. So, whoever is asking these questions is probably not picking the right parties to compare. What's your impression?