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Interview with Steve Jobs

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Steve Jobs

(Interviewed 19 December 1991, Redwood City, CA)

Video Roll #1

Q: Steven or Steve?

JOBS: Doesn't matter. Steven P. Jobs, is fine. Steve Jobs is fine.

Q: And you're ...

JOBS: Ah -- President of Next Computer, Inc.

Q: What has your life come in contact with that of Dr. Joseph Juran's.

JOBS: Ah -- well, at Next, here, we decided to try to figure out what all of the ballyhoo about quality was about. So we started looking into things; came in contact with a lot of people.

And Dr. Juran was one of the few people that I met that had a real down to earth approach to it -- ah -- that didn't think that quality was the second coming, but rather thought that -- ah -- he approached it much more scientifically.

And that resonated with the engineers and other technical people here at Next, as well as the -- the -- the executives. And so Dr. Juran's visited us several times and -- ah -- always

wearing his characteristic bow tie. And -- and we've learned a lot from him.

Q: What are some things you have found most valuable?

JOBS: Ah -- I think the things that we've learned most from Dr. Juran are to look at everything as a repetitive process. And to instrument that process and find out how it's running and then start to take it apart and re-put it back together in ways that dramatically improve its effectiveness, in a very straight-forward way.

And no magic, no pep rallies, just a -- looking things directly in the eye, seeing them as repetitive processes, and then re-engineering them.

And I think most of the quality stuff, as I've understood it, is really a lot about re-engineering your repetitive processes -- to make them much, much more effective, combining them, eliminating some, strengthening others.

Q: Why should the American people be interested in seeing a documentary on Dr. Juran?

JOBS: A-a-h. America's in a tough spot right now, I think. I think we've forgotten the basics. We've -- we were so prosperous for so long that we took too many things for granted. And we forgot how much work it took to actually build and sustain those basic things that were supporting our prosperity. Things like a great education system. Things like great industry.

And we are now faced with re-learning those things. Going back to the basics and re-learning them. And that's why I think Dr. Juran is so valuable, because he is standing right on the basic heart of the matter of why we are being out-manufactured, why we are being out -- out-planned by Japan.

It is not -- (COUGHS) excuse me --

It is not because the Japanese are tricking us. It's not because the Japanese are better intellectually. It's because we are being out-planned, we are being out-strategized, we are being out-manufactured. And there is nothing that can't be fixed, but we're not going to fix it up here. We're going to fix it by getting back to the basics of what we have -- what we need to do.

Q: When he walked in, what struck you about Dr. Juran, the person?

JOBS: I've had an opportunity to meet a few great people in my life. And they all had one characteristic in common, which is that they treat everyone the same. Whether it's the janitor or the president of the company, whether it's the president of the United States or, you know, or someone in a rural slum.

Ah -- they treat them exactly the same. And if a question is asked, they will directly answer that question to the best of their ability. The look in their eyes is exactly the same.

And that was certainly true of Dr. Juran. Any question asked was the most important question that could have been asked at that moment, as far as Dr. Juran was concerned. And the caring and straight-forwardness that he expressed towards every individual-- made a big impression on us.

Of course, his awesome knowledge of the subject. But beyond his awesome knowledge of the subject, the way that he viewed people so optimistically that even the most foolish question was addressed with the greatest desire to transmit what he had learned in his life.

Q: Everybody now surely uses quality. The price of admission in lots of industries.

JOBS: Right.

Q: Yet, so many corporations have a hard time getting things moving. What holds it back do you think?

JOBS: It's funny, the group of people that do not use quality in their marketing are the Japanese. You never see them using quality in their marketing. It's only the American companies that do.

And yet, if you ask people on the street, which products have the best reputation for quality, they will tell you the Japanese products. Now why is that? How could that be? The answer is because customers don't form their opinions on quality from marketing. They don't form their opinions on quality from who won the Deming Award, or who won the Baldrige Award.

They form their opinions on quality from their own experience with the products, or the services. And so one can spend enormous amounts of money on quality. One can win every quality award there is. And yet, if your products don't live up to it, customers will not keep that opinion for long in their minds.

And so I think where we have to start is with our products and our services. Not with our marketing department. And we need to get back to the basics and go improve our products and services.

Now, again, quality isn't just the product or the service; it's having the right product. You know, knowing where the market's going and having the most innovative products is just as much a part of quality as the quality of the construction of the product when you have it.

And I think what we're seeing is the quality leaders of today have integrated that quality technology well beyond their manufacturing, now going well into their sales and marketing and out as far as they can to touch the customer.

And trying to create super-efficient processes back from the customer all the through to the delivery of the end products So

that they can have the most innovative products, understand the customer needs fastest, etc., etc.

*Q: I'm not sure **if** you came into contact with Dr. Juran back in the days of Apple.*

JOBS: No. Just at Next.

Q: What do you do differently at Next as a result of Dr. Juran that you didn't do back in the days of Apple?

JOBS: In most companies, if you're new and you ask, you know, why is it done this way? The answer is: because that's the way we do it here. Or because that's the way it's always been done.

And, in my opinion, the largest contribution of much of this quality thinking is to approach these ways of doing things, these processes, scientifically, where there is a theory behind why we do them. There is a description of what we do. And, most importantly, there is an opportunity to always question what we do.

And this is a radically different approach to business processes than the traditional one: because it's always done this way. And that single shift is everything, in my opinion.

Because, in that shift is a tremendous optimistic point of view about the people that work in a company. It says, these people are very smart. They're not -- they're not pawns. They're very smart. And, if given the opportunity to change and improve, they will. ~They will improve the processes, if there is -- if there is a mechanism for it.

And -- ah -- that -- that optimistic humanism I find very appealing. And I think we have countless examples that it works.

Q: Part of this optimistic humanism are the things to which the people who control corporations say yes to requests and recommendations. What kind of things are you saying yes to, as a result of Dr. Juran's teachings, that you might never have said yes to before?

JOBS: Well, I think your question, actually, capsulizes what's wrong. The whole philosophy behind these newer quality approaches is that people shouldn't have to ask management permission to do something that needs to be approved.

Authority should be vested in the people doing the work to improve their own processes, to teach them how to measure them, to understand them, and to improve them. And they should not have to ask for permission to improve their processes.

r-.. So I think a lot of the philosophy behind this quality stuff carries with it a flattening of the traditional hierarchical organization, and a distribution of authority to the people who are best in the position to decide what should happen to improve these processes: the people doing the work themselves.

And so the permission that's given because of this quality philosophy is the permission to do have to ask permission.

Q: The two getting the most notoriety are Joe Juran and Dr. Deming.

JOBS: Uh hm, right.

Q: Obviously you're familiar with Dr. Deming and the Deming prize. What do you see as the significant contributions of both men?

JOBS: I've never met Dr. Deming and I've never read his books, so I'm ignorant -- can't tell you.

Q: When all that are left are Dr. Juran's tapes and books, what are going to be your fondest memories of Dr. Juran?

JOBS: I think the thing that strikes me most deeply about Joe Juran is the fact that at his -- his senior age, his mind is as alive as anyone I know. And he has an energy about him that propels him around the globe on planes, to come visit companies like Next, to spend draining days trying to transmit what he's learned his whole life, to people.

And you ask, why does he do this, and where does he get the energy for it. And there is clearly something in his heart that's propelling him. His pocketbook's not what's propelling him; his heart is propelling him.

And I have a very deep respect for what -- for that thing in his heart that he's trying to take everything he's learned in his whole life and teach the next generation before he can no longer do that.

And he's flown out here several times -- ah -- cross country- - to try to make Next the kind of company that he would like to see more of. And he will gain nothing from it, himself, except to know that his ideas will live on beyond him.

And I really respect that. And I found him to be an incredibly warm individual with something big in his heart.

Q: You raised an interesting point that he treats everyone the same.

JOBS: Uh hm.

Q: I don't know how much private time you've spent from him.

JOBS: Fair bit.

Q: What's Dr. Juran really like?

JOBS: I think he has much more of a sense of humor than he lets show, when he's talking to groups. Much more of sense of -- a kind of a pretty wicked sense of humor, actually. And I imagine -- I just imagine when he was young, he was a pretty wild character.

Q: Everyone has eluded to his humor.

JOBS: Db huh.

Q: Can you give me an example of the Juran humor?

JOBS: My memory's not that good. I don't remember anecdotes and things like that. So I -- but I remember laughing a lot with him.

Q: What have I not asked?

JOBS: Oh -- I don't know. I never visited him at his home. I think you learn a lot by doing that. I never met his wife, and I think you learn a lot by meeting someone's family.

Joe Juran was clearly -- is clearly a person that spent his life on one thing. He found his great subject early in life, and he pursued it over decades. And he's made a deep, deep, deep contribution -- ah -- that will last well beyond his physical years.

-Ah -- and like most people that do that, there is, below the surface, great sacrifices they've made to do that. In some cases, with their family. In some cases, with a lot of other things they might have wanted to do with their lives. And I don't think Joe

Juran would be an exception. Matter of fact, I think he would be -- I think he would follow that.

And I imagine that if one scratches the surface a little bit, one will find some sacrifices in his life that he's made to follow the pure path that he has, that most people don't see. And that maybe you have a chance to explore. So -- But I don't know them myself. You can sense that they're there.

Q: Juran's early successes in Japan were in the early '50's. And yet it has taken literally 30 to 40 years before America has come around to giving Joe Juran the recognition that he deserves. What do you think it is him that's sustained him for 30 to 40 years where those audiences were not so willing to listen?

JOBS: Ah -- that's a very good question. And I think most people that are able to make a sustained contribution over time - - rather than jut a peak -- are very internally driven. You have to be. Because, in the ebb and tide of people's opinions and of fads, there are going to be times when you are criticized, and criticism's very difficult.

And so when you're criticized, you learn to pull back a little and listen to your own drummer. And to some extent, that isolates you from the praise, if you eventually get it, too. The praise becomes a little less important to you, and the criticism becomes a little less important to you, in the same measure.

And you become more internally driven. And I think Joe Juran has clearly -- ah -- had those experiences and become very internally driven. And I think he felt the bedrock of his -- of the truth of his pursuits. And that's what kept him going.

I don't *think* that -- ah -- he got -- I think that the great satisfaction that he got from Japan did not end in the '50's. I think he probably looks at Japan as something that he helped nurture along. And as every decade has passed, he sees his ideas blossoming even more.

So I'm sure he gets tremendous satisfaction from having injected a very important ingredient into the early post-war culture of Japan, and he probably sees that in, you know, in every branch and leaf of a fairly large tree.

And I think what he's trying to do now is to make sure that he -- he gets that into the -- into the future culture of American industry as it rebuilds itself. Ah -- and I think if he is successful, which I think he is on the verge of being, that in his last breath, he will feel comfortable, knowing in the decades to come, that his work will get recognition.

Q: *Thank you.*

(END OF TAPE)

