



Straight-A Guide Newsletter #6: Book Reports

March 10, 2012

Dear Straight-A Guide Participants:

In my previous newsletter, I referenced a Wall Street Journal article that expressed the importance that employers place upon hiring job candidates who can prove their ability to communicate effectively. Those employers wrote that they would consider hiring individuals with unconventional backgrounds, but only if the job candidates could distinguish themselves from the crowd.

In the books that constitute the Straight-A Guide, Michael wrote about steps he takes with hopes of distinguishing himself, or making a favorable impression upon prospective employers and others who could help him transition into society successfully. One of those steps, he wrote, was writing book reports. The personal profile he built on the Internet features book reports for more than 100 books that he has read. Each book report follows the same format. It lists the following:

Title of book:

Author of book:

Date he read book:

Then, each book report offers Michael's response to the following three questions:

Why I read (title of book):

What I learned from reading (title of book):

How reading (title of book) will contribute to my success upon my release from prison:

Michael's response to each of the above questions varies in length depending upon how much influence the book had on his way of thinking. By writing reports for all of the books that he reads, Michael believes that he gives himself advantage. When he is making a case for himself, he will be able to pull up his web profile and show audiences how hard he worked to educate himself independently and overcome the challenges of confinement. He expects that the work he does while in prison will help him emerge successful, and I believe him.

As part of this newsletter, I offer a copy of a book report that Michael recently published on his web profile. Perhaps you can use it as a model. If you're reading books, perhaps you should be writing book reports and posting those book reports to your web profile. It's one strategy that would show others how hard you're working to emerge from prison successfully. Your prospective employers will certainly appreciate the effort. At least that's what I think.

With hopes that I receive some book reports from you, I send my kindest, personal regards.

Sincerely,

Justin Paperny
Executive Director
Michael G. Santos Foundation

Review of *Steve Jobs* by Michael Santos

Title: *Steve Jobs*

Author: Walter Isaacson

Date Read: February 24, 2012

Why I read *Steve Jobs*:

Likes millions of others, I've been reading about Steve Jobs for decades. While still a student at Shorecrest High School, I first heard about Apple computers and Steve Jobs. Although I didn't understand much of anything about technology, the world had begun to evolve into the computer age and I read how Steve Jobs was a leader of that movement. When my prison term began, in 1987, I realized how important it would be to educate myself and since business was one of the many subjects I studied, I frequently read about the influence Steve Jobs had on the business community. I remember news on the corporate coup that led to his ouster from Apple in the 1980s, about his launch of Next Computers, and about his leadership at the Pixar company.

During the past several years I've focused more on writing than reading. Since I've begun to climb through what I expect will be my final year of imprisonment, I've made a commitment to read more. I wanted to focus on the genre of biography and leadership. The first book that I wanted to read was the biography on Steve Jobs. He succumbed to cancer earlier this year, I knew, but since he lived as one of the world's most accomplished business leaders and visionaries, I looked forward to learning more about him in the [authorized biography that Walter Isaacson](#) wrote.

What I learned from reading *Steve Jobs*:

The Isaacson biography on Steve Jobs taught me a great deal about him. I learned not only about the development of his mind for business and creativity, but also about his youth in Silicon Valley. Although he did not adjust well as a student, Steve was driven with ambition and aspired to create a lasting company from the time of his adolescence. He became friends with Steve Wozniack (Woz), who was a few years older than him, but the two shared a passion for electronics. After accepting a job at Atari while he was still in high school, Steve began to develop upon his engineering skills. While working at Atari, he brought in Woz and the two expanded upon their engineering collaborations. They invented a contraption that would allow them to make free telephone calls, effectively stealing from the phone company, then they built

their first computer, the Apple, which eventually led them to create the Apple Computer company.

With the success of their first computer, Jobs understood the need to expand. Instead of building kits that people would have assemble, he aspired to build ready-to-use computers. Since doing so would require significant amounts of capital that he did not have, he and Woz took in another partner who would provide the initial financing for Apple Computer with a \$250,000 credit line. Each of the partners held a third of the newly formed company, and that initial credit line enabled them to scale the business. They built Apple Computer into an enormously successful venture, one that led to an initial public offering within a couple of years. By the time Steve reached his early 20s, his equity in Apple Computer sent his net worth to north of \$200 million. But as the company grew, everyone realized that the best interests of shareholders would require professional management. Jobs brought in John Scully, who had been CEO of Pepsi. When Scully later dismissed Jobs, he went on to start a new venture, Next Computers.

Although many recognized Steve as a visionary genius with regard to his skills with design and business, in other areas of his life he had idiosyncrasies that others found peculiar. He dieted obsessively, sometimes eating only fruit, thinking that through his diet he could avoid the trouble of bathing more than once a week. Such questionable hygiene habits resulted in others not wanting to be around him. The book criticized Jobs incessantly, describing him as rude, dismissive, and hostile toward others. According to the book, Jobs saw people as being either brilliant or “dumb shits,” and he would not restrain his vitriol when upset with the incompetence of others, regardless of who they were. I learned about the strained relationship Steve had with his first daughter, and his seeming indifference toward his other daughters. He was closer with his son Reed, who is now a student at Stanford.

The author did not restrain himself from voicing any criticisms of Jobs, but he also gave ample praise to his genius and effectiveness as a businessman. Steve honed his leadership skills while building Pixar into a powerhouse that he eventually sold to Disney. Later, he sold Next Computer back to Apple Computer, and that move resulted in his returning to rebuild and lead. He launched many new products that the world has embraced. After redesigning the Macintosh, he went on to lead his team of designers and engineers to launch new products that would transform Apple. Instead of offering only computers, under Jobs’ direction, the company introduced the iPod, the iPhone, the iPad, and the iCloud service. It opened Apple stores and launched iTunes. Profits from all of those new products resulted in Apple becoming the most valuable company on the planet. When Jobs returned to the company, it was on the verge of bankruptcy. Since then, the stock market has sent the company’s shares surging, giving Apple a valuation in excess of \$300 billion.

How reading Steve Jobs will contribute to my success upon release:

My release from prison will come sometime in 2012. When it does, I expect to launch a business venture that will enable me to monetize all that I’ve learned while living as a prisoner for 25 years. By reading the biography about Steve Jobs, I learned a great deal about the importance of understanding the needs of my prospective customers, and about building an easy-to-use product that will simplify their lives. I’m enthusiastic about launching my new company, and when I do,

I will make use of many Apple products, including the Macintosh, the iPad, the iPhone, and the iCloud service. I look forward to learning more about those products upon my release.