

Greg Joswiak

From EECS at Michigan to Marketing at Apple: The Path to the Post-PC Era



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“For 2010, the iPhone 4 is the biggest leap forward since the original iPhone.” In a recent new product video for the latest iPhone, Greg “Joz” Joswiak passionately articulates some of the advancements found in the most recent version of Apple’s iPhone. As Vice President, iPod, iPhone, and iOS Product Marketing, Joz has played a pivotal role in the launch of every version of the iPhone and iPod.

According to Joz, during his undergraduate days at Michigan, friends would often joke that his last name, Joswiak, was a combination of the last names of Apple’s founders, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak (who’s known as “Woz”). Despite that, he did not have his sights initially set on a career at Apple: “I was a user of Apple computers, but I also used PCs and big systems like Apollo and Burroughs. My plans regarding employment were of traditional computer engineering roles, not of specific companies.”

The connection to Apple came while Joz was working as a student computer consultant at the Business School. A co-worker interviewed with a number of high-tech companies, including Apple, and Apple asked for candidate recommendations for an upcoming recruiting trip to Michigan. His friend named Joz, and when Apple came to town and interviewed him, “it was love at first sight.”

Joz began at Apple in June 1986, just two years after the introduction of the Macintosh computer, in Apple’s newly formed support organization for the Mac. Within two years, he was running that group. “I was able to advance quickly at Apple, in good part because of the preparation I received at Michigan. My engineering degree provided a very good technical foundation, and the scale and culture of Michigan provided numerous opportunities for learning how to work with others and how to make better things happen as a team than you can as an individual.”

Joz’s next role at Apple came when he was chosen to lead the communications function for Apple’s Developer group, which supports third-party developers as they create applications for the Mac. In this capacity, it became increasingly clear that Joz had a rare blend of tech savvy and powerful communication skills – just the combination that Apple looks for in its product marketing managers – and he became a product manager for Apple’s consumer and education products.

“At Apple, the marketing function is a combination of product management – which involves working with executive and engineering teams to determine feature sets, price points, and other product details – and product marketing, which includes working with the people who make ads and other marketing materials, talking to the press and key customers, and other outward-facing

activities. Once again, my computer engineering background was an essential technical piece in filling this role effectively.”

In 1997, Joz was tapped to lead product marketing for the Powerbook line – a responsibility that grew to encompass all portable products and eventually all hardware products. In 2001, this included a new device called the iPod, which sowed the seeds for the transformational change that the computer industry continues to experience today.

The iPod was released just days after 9/11 at a time when the country faced a severe economic slump. It wasn’t an overnight success, but Apple felt its investment in iPod and other, yet unreleased products was strategic. Instead of cutting back, it stepped up its R&D activities to “innovate our way out” of the downturn, a decision that Joz points to as not only courageous, but instrumental in laying the technical foundation for the company’s future success.

When demand for the iPod skyrocketed in 2004, the iPod business was divided into a separate division with Joz as its marketing chief. According to Joz, “we saw the iPod and iTunes as something huge, the beginning of the post-PC era, and we identified the phone as a platform for the future that was ripe for reinvention.” His responsibilities ultimately grew to include the iPhone and iOS operating system in 2007. And it’s become clear that the post-PC era is truly here. “Our goal is to make products that are more compelling, easier to use, and more portable than computers ever could be,” Joz states.

He continues, “I’ve been fortunate to be part of the amazing team at Apple, and it’s been phenomenal to see the company grow from a \$2 billion market cap in 1998 to become the second most valuable company in the world today. Even more significant has been the opportunity to play a role in the emergence of the post-PC era, a time in which the team at Apple has revolutionized how people create, access, and consume information.

“It’s been an incredible experience not only for me, but for other Michigan alums as well. I had the privilege of working with fellow alum Tony Fadell (BSE CE ’91), who came to Apple to spearhead development of the original iPod, and who led engineering for subsequent iPod models as well as the first iPhone. As a matter of fact, I find myself surrounded by a number of successful Michigan alums at Apple – there are certainly a lot of us here! I visit Michigan regularly, and we recruit heavily from both the Business School (where an EECS undergrad degree and an MBA provides a leg up for our marketing organization) and the College of Engineering.” ●