

# How Do You Market Like Steve Jobs?

*All the questions a rabbi receives—answered by Steve Jobs.*

## Market Research

There's hardly a person on the planet today who doesn't use one of Steve Jobs' technological innovations. It's told that when he first introduced the iPad to a group of journalists, they asked him, "Did you do any market research before developing the iPad?" His answer was classic Jobs: "We don't do market research. It's not the customer's job to know what they want."

If there's one line that perfectly captures the approach of Judaism, it's that one. Imagine if Moses had gathered a "focus group" and asked their opinion on this new idea called Yom Kippur—a day where you can't eat, drink, shower, or even brush your teeth. And what do you do instead? Sit in shul all day, listening to the cantor's tunes (which, let's face it, aren't always the most tuneful), and, worst of all, not just one, but two sermons from the rabbi. I'm not sure that would have gone down well with any group...

The unanimous feedback might have been: "This is crazy! There's no way you can sell this to the masses." Maybe the first time we'd get a few curious people, but no one's coming back for round two.

Yet, in practice, as we can see with our own eyes, every Jew

who walks out of shul after Neilah feels uplifted, cleaner, purer, and more Jewish. I'd even venture to say that they leave as a better person than they were before Yom Kippur. It's a wonderful feeling. I've never seen someone leave the synagogue after the holiest day of the year without a satisfied smile on their face.

Turns out, "It's not the customer's job to know what they need"...

Imagine if someone asked the Jewish people for their thoughts on a holiday where, every single year, for an entire week, you have to go outside and eat in a hut without a roof—sometimes in the cold and rain. And if you're lucky enough to have a nice day, the bees decide it's the perfect time for a full-on assault, completely ruining your appetite. I can't imagine this idea would have been a popular one.

Yet, in reality, Sukkot is one of the most joyful and festive holidays of the year. Even people who don't build their own sukkah are delighted to receive an invitation to dine in one. And in many cases, even in freezing weather, they refuse to give up the experience. They come bundled in warm clothes and insist on sitting and enjoying a meal in the sukkah. Sometimes, the host is ready to throw in the towel on this "pleasure," but the guests happily stay put, savoring every moment.

Once again, it seems Steve Jobs had a point: "It's not the customer's job to know what they want."

What's more, Jewish history has proven time and again that when the "customer" comes up with their own original idea, it

not only fails to take off, but often ends in disaster. The first time the Jewish people had their own bright idea, we all know what happened—the Golden Calf. Moses didn't return from Mount Sinai on time, so they pitched a new plan to their “company representative”: “Make us a god.” We all know how that ended—with full-blown idolatry.

The second time also happened in the desert, as Moses recounts in the Book of Deuteronomy: “You all approached me and said, ‘Let's send men ahead to scout out the land’” (Deuteronomy 1:22). The Jewish people came up with another seemingly brilliant idea: to send spies before conquering the Land of Israel. On paper, it sounded perfect, but we all know how that turned out—the Jewish people ended up wandering in the desert for forty years, and only the next generation entered the Land of Israel.

## **Every Detail**

Another characteristic of Steve Jobs was his involvement in even the smallest details of every Apple product.

People often ask, “Why does Judaism need to get so caught up in all these tiny details?” Sure, we need to build a sukkah, but does it really matter how much *schach* is on top? Why is it so critical that “the shade must be greater than the sunlight”? Why does the Torah have to dictate what we do in the sukkah and when exactly we should say the blessing *leshev ba'sukkah*? You only say it when you eat bread or *mezonos*, but not if you're enjoying a piece of steak. Why all these tiny, seemingly trivial rules?

On the surface, the main thing is the general idea: we sit in the sukkah to remember that G-d protected us for forty years in the desert. How each person chooses to celebrate in their sukkah should be their own personal decision. Everyone can do what fits their family best, right?

Well, Steve Jobs taught us something crucial: success lies precisely in those tiny, seemingly insignificant details.

## **The Packaging**

Another lesson Jobs taught the world: the packaging of a product is a vital part of its marketing and success. The experience of unboxing that sleek, innovative package is just as important as using the product itself.

This idea is precisely what the Rebbe brought to the forefront. For the past 250 years, Judaism didn't always appeal to the younger generation. It seemed like something old and outdated, gathering dust on the shelf. To many young people, Judaism was for the elderly, for the old generation, and as a result, in every generation, many young Jews left the path of Torah and mitzvot. The outside world had this attractive packaging—colorful, exciting, fun, and full of energy.

When the Rebbe arrived in the United States, he began to market Judaism with fresh, appealing packaging. Instead of just reminding Jews about Chanukah, he launched the idea of giant menorahs in city centers, complete with big parties and the distribution of latkes. Instead of rabbis simply talking about Sukkot, the Rebbe initiated mobile sukkahs on trucks that would drive to city squares with music, where Jews could come inside

and say *l'chaim*.

It's the same mitzvah, but it's a whole different story. It's not the old sukkah that's been standing next to the shul for thirty years; it's something entirely new, fresh, and exciting. Judaism, with a new, attractive package, began to captivate the interest of young people once again.

## **Judaism—With A Smile**

Shavuot, let's be honest, hasn't exactly been the luckiest of Jewish holidays. Hardly anyone has heard of it. Maybe it's because it falls at the start of summer, when Hebrew school is already on break, so the kids miss out on learning about it.

Then the Rebbe came along and launched a bold initiative: Every child should be brought to shul to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments. After all, there's not a person alive—Jewish or not—who hasn't heard of the Ten Commandments. When you tell a Jew, "Hey, on this date, at this time, we're going to read the Ten Commandments in shul," they immediately connect with it, because it's a concept they know and understand.

In the early years of the Rebbe's leadership, a newspaper requested to publish a picture of him. His secretary entered the Rebbe's office, laid out several photos on the desk, and asked which one should be used. The Rebbe smiled and said, "It doesn't matter which one, as long as it's a picture with a smile."

Because the packaging is important. Judaism—with a smile.