



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on September 8, 2011

Steve Jobs' Charitable Contributions: He Gave at the Office

Sorkin explained: "None of this is meant to judge Mr. Jobs. I have long been a huge admirer of Mr. Jobs ... because of the enormous positive impact his products have had by improving the lives of millions of people through technology.... But the lack of public philanthropy by Mr. Jobs ... raises some important questions about the way public views business and business people at a time when some 'millionaires and billionaires' are criticized for not giving back enough while others like Mr. Jobs are lionized."



He then compares Jobs' stinginess to the generosity of Bill Gates and Warren Buffet in establishing a [foundation](#) to "enhance healthcare and reduce extreme poverty" around the world. The unstated question to Mr. Jobs in Sorkin's article is: Why not you, Mr. Jobs?

Part of the answer may be that Jobs feels he can make a better contribution to reducing poverty by making Apple more successful through its innovative technological breakthroughs. Two friends of Jobs said that he "could do more good focusing his energy on continuing to expand Apple than on philanthropy ... [that] he's been focused on two things — building the team at Apple and his family. That's his legacy. Everything else is a distraction."

Perhaps Jobs is echoing the philosophy of Sam Walton, who didn't create his foundation until just before he died: "We have never been inclined to give money to charity. We feel very strongly that Wal-Mart really is not, and should not be, in the charity business."

Perhaps Jobs has a different slant on how things work in the real world compared to Sorkin. A bright and accomplished writer, reporter, and author at age 34, Sorkin has perhaps absorbed the *Times'* worldview that wealth is static in quantity and that if some have less and some have more, that is unfair. [As Thomas Sowell noted](#), "Judging businesses or their owners by how much wealth they give away — rather than by how much wealth they produce — is putting the cart before the horse. Wealth is ultimately the only thing that can reduce poverty [and] the most dramatic reductions in poverty, in countries around the world, have come from increasing the amount of wealth, rather than from a redistribution of existing wealth."

James Altucher [says](#) that Jobs doesn't need to apologize: "I actually think Jobs is probably the most charitable guy on the planet. Rather than focus on which mosquitos to kill in Africa (Bill Gates is already focusing on that), Jobs has put his energy into massively improving quality of life with all of his inventions." Altucher continues:

People think that entrepreneurs have to some day "give back." This is not true. They already gave at the office. Look at the entire iPod/Mac/iPhone/Disney ecosystem and ask how many lives have benefited directly (because they've been hired) or indirectly (because they use the products to improve their quality of life).



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A quick review of that “ecosystem” will suffice to prove the point. He founded Apple with Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne in 1976, introducing the [Macintosh](#) in 1984, the first commercially successful small computer with a graphical user interface.

After being fired from his own company in 1985, Jobs founded NeXT, which provided [the first server](#) to the World Wide Web. In 1986 Jobs bought Pixar from LucasFilm, which, in a joint venture with Disney, produced *Toy Story* in 1995. That relationship unleashed a series of blockbuster computer-animated films, including *A Bug's Life*, *Toy Story 2*, *Monsters, Inc.*, *Finding Nemo*, *The Incredibles*, and others.

In 1996 Apple bought NeXT, which brought Jobs back to his old company. Rescuing the faltering company, Jobs brought out the iPod along with iTunes digital music software and, in 2007, entered the cellphone business with the iPhone, which is now in its fourth iteration. Last year Apple's profits exceeded \$14 billion. Despite Jobs stepping back slightly in his role at Apple due to health reasons, his company is on a growth trajectory that is expected to fill the new Apple home office, [Spaceship Apple](#), in Cupertino, California, with 13,000 employees.

As Walter Williams noted in his essay “[Understanding Liberals](#)”:

The sane among us recognize that in a free society, income is neither taken nor distributed; for the most part, it is earned. Income is earned by pleasing one's fellow man. The greater one's ability to please his fellow man, the greater is his claim on what his fellow man produces. Those claims are represented by the number of dollars received from his fellow man....

Who should give back? Sam Walton? Bill Gates? Steve Jobs? Which one of these billionaires acquired their wealth by coercing us to purchase their product?

Each ... is a person who served his fellow man by producing products and services that made life easier. What else do they owe? They've already given.

Photo of Steve Jobs: AP Images



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