LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH FROM STEVE JOBS: COMMUNITY

Posted on October 24, 2011 by Eddie

Category: Observations

An awful lot of ink has been (and will be) spilled over whether Apple make better products than their competitors. However, one thing that can't be denied is that Apple create a unique experience for their customers. On a commuter train or in a conference, you can always spot the Apple users. Amid the functional greys and black laptops the shiny white Macs with their distinctive Apple logo on the lid stand out a mile. Likewise, when the first iPods were released, not only were they able to store lots of music, they also came with *white* earphones. These are commonplace now, but at the time they marked out the iPod owner from people who merely had a cassette Walkman or some inferior brand of MP3 player (and, yes, I do have an iPod).

The thing is, Apple don't just sell you a computer, phone or what have you, they also welcome you into the club of Apple users and provide you with an identifying badge (headphones, logo, etc). Like any good club, the Apple club is always happy to welcome new members. You see it on Facebook and twitter, if someone says they are thinking about buying a Mac or an iPad, they will immediately be inundated with lots of comments saying how much better their life will be if they do. No one is more keen to encourage people to join the Apple club than the newest converts!

However, the evangelistic zeal of the Apple club is also off-putting for those outside it. The sheer enthusiasm of many Apple club members and their insistence (against all logic) that Apple phones or computers are the solution to every possible telephone or computing need alienates many who might otherwise be agnostic about the value of Apple.

Apple don't just make electronic products; they have tapped into a deep human need for community and given people a club, a fraternity that they can belong to. This is rather ironic, given that one of the primary functions of some Apple 'stuff' is to cut people off from the wider world. Complete strangers rarely talk to each other on crowded trains in the south of England, but if someone breaks out a MacBook to do some work, it is more than likely that a fellow Apple club member will say something complimentary to them about their choice of computer.

Now Apple don't do anything other than make good shiny electronic devices. They don't save lives, they don't feed the poor or do anything seriously world-changing - but they have created a fantastic sense of community and belonging. I think the Church may have lessons to learn from this!

Community is a powerful thing.