

Focus on the Form

Spotting, pitching and executing alternative story forms

SOME PURPOSES ALT FORMS SERVE

10 products that defined Steve Jobs' career

Steve Jobs had no formal schooling in engineering, yet he's listed as the inventor or co-inventor on more than 300 U.S. patents. These are some of the significant products that were created under his direction:

- 1. APPLE I (1976)**
Apple's first product was a computer for hobbyists and engineers, made in small numbers. Steve Wozniak designed it, while Jobs orchestrated the financing and handled the marketing.
- 2. APPLE II (1977)**
One of the first successful personal computers, the Apple II was designed as a mass-market product rather than something for engineers or enthusiasts. It was still largely Wozniak's design. Several upgrades for the model followed, and the product line continued until 1993.
- 3. LISA (1983)**
Jobs went to Xerox Corp.'s research center in Palo Alto inspired him to start work on the first commercial computer with a graphical user interface, with icons, windows and a cursor controlled by a mouse. It was the foundation for today's computer interfaces, but the Lisa was too expensive to be a commercial success.
- 4. MACINTOSH (1984)**
Like the Lisa, the Macintosh had a graphical user interface. It was also cheaper and faster and had the backing of a large advertising campaign behind it. People soon realized how useful the graphical interface was for design. That led to desktop publishing, "accomplished with a Mac coupled to a laser printer to soon become a sales driver."
- 5. NEXT COMPUTER (1989)**
After being forced out of Apple in 1985, Jobs started a company that built powerful workstation computers. The company was never able to sell large numbers, but the computer was influential: the world's first Web browser was created on one, its software also lies on the basis for today's Macintosh and iPhone operating systems.
- 6. IMAC (1998)**
When Jobs returned to Apple in 1996, the company was floundering, with an overwhelming share of the PC market. The radical iMac was the first step in reversing the slide. It was strikingly designed as a bubble of blue plastic that enclosed both the monitor and the computer. Easy to set up, it captured the imagination just as people across the world were having their eyes opened to the benefits of the Internet and considering getting their first home computer.
- 7. IPOD (2001)**
It wasn't the first digital music player with a hard drive, but it was the first successful one. Apple's expansion into portable electronics has had vast ramifications. The iPod success prepared the way for the iTunes music store and the iPhone.
- 8. ITUNES STORE (2003)**
Before the iTunes store, buying digital music was a hassle, making piracy the more popular option. The store simplified the process and brought together tracks from all the major labels. The store became the largest music retailer in the U.S. in 2008.
- 9. IPHONE (2007)**
The iPhone did for the phone experience what the Macintosh did for personal computing — it made the power of a smartphone easy to harness. Apple is now the world's most profitable maker of phones, and the influence of the iPhone is evident in all smartphones.
- 10. IPAD (2010)**
Dozens of companies, including Apple, had created tablet computers before the iPad, but none caught on. The iPad finally cracked the code, creating a whole new category of computer, precisely "by track."
PETER DENNISON, ASSOCIATED PRESS

« PEOPLE DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY WANT UNTIL YOU SHOW IT TO THEM. » Jobs



port security



In the 10 years since 9/11, the federal government has spent \$2.5 billion on a security overhaul at U.S. seaports, paying for everything from perimeter fencing to motion sensors and training for security officers. Federal agencies such as the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection have added whopping sums such as \$420 million for a unified ID card system for 1.6 million truck drivers, longshoremen and port workers. There's also a huge cost to the nation's 185 public seaports, often passed along in fees to the shippers. The Savannah port, for example, tacks on a \$5.75 security fee for every cargo container it handles. Before 9/11, state port authorities typically established their own rules, and some ports didn't even have fencing. Not anymore. The Coast Guard now cross-checks crew lists for arriving ships in advance against terror watch lists. Customs and Border Protection officers screen similar cargo manifests submitted at least a day before arrival. Virtually every container arriving at U.S. ports is scanned for radiation, but officers look inside only a small fraction of those large steel boxes either by opening them or using imaging scans.

Space concerns

A narrative on "how we have changed" would need to be 100 inches or so in a 9/11 anniversary section. But examples can be broken out and expounded upon when 20-30 inches is all you have.

Perspective

An attempt to quantify Steve Jobs' impact on technology after his death in a manner that would have been lost in body copy.



DANGERS OF SOME SYNTHETIC DRUGS (Note: Costs reflect)

CANNABINOIDS
Touted as a marijuana substitute; mixture of dried herbs sprayed with chemicals and sold as incense.
Cost: \$7-\$23/gram



STIMULANTS
Sold as various products, including bath salts and plant food; can dangerously raise body temperature and cause renal failure.
Cost: \$25-\$70/500mg

Explaining an issue

Used with the kickoff to a package on synthetic drugs to quickly articulate concrete examples.



Multimedia Boston Globe

A non-narrative used to explain "how" in a way that traditional body copy could not.

Scan QR at left to read (and optionally hear) the story

AUDIO INTERACTIVE

Trial excerpts: Getting to 'not guilty'

How a driver who told police, "I was driving, I'm drunk and it's all my fault," was found not guilty by a Massachusetts judge

SPOTTING POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK

Is the issue heavy on numbers or data?

- Basic bar, pie or line charts
- By the numbers or simple data boxes

Is the story a narrative or profile?

- These often beg for timelines
- In print: quick bio box
- Online: video bio

Does the story explore an issue?

- If it's an ongoing matter, a simple update or "what's next" box can work
- If it's an in-depth issue, look to devote space to the key points at the heart of the issue, as well as show examples.

Is it a breaking news event?

- Simple forms: recap boxes, by the numbers, quote rails or what's next
- Disasters: Before-and-after photo packages, social media roundups
- Sports: Drive charts, key play breakdowns, analytical boxes

THE PITCH DEFENDING ALT FORMS

On deadline: A quick bit of information layering that gets to the heart of a story can free up 2-3 inches of body copy to better explain it.

For major projects: In print or online, long narratives will raise questions (how, why, etc) in readers' minds. Be willing to step out of body copy to answer them.

Day-to-day: If you control your story budget, include "story forms, layering" as one of your options. If you attend budget meetings, be willing to ask out loud, to the group, "What layering options do we have with this story?"

Your obligation: In print, it's lack of space. Online, it's short attention spans. Pick a form that will inform and engage the audience the most effectively.



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