

Apple's Think Different campaign

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22 November 2013

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“It only took 15 . . . 30 . . . maybe 60 seconds to re-establish Apple’s counter-culture image that it had lost during the 90s”, said Steve Jobs (Gallo, 2013). Only the power of marketing - our ‘modern storytelling’ - is capable of creating such a transformational shift in such little time. In this essay we will conduct a rhetorical analysis of Apple’s 1997 “Think Different” campaign. We will explore the campaign background, context and visual description. We will cover how it was successful, saved Apple from bankruptcy and led it to become the most valuable company in the world (Bilton, 2011). Apple’s 1990's vintage campaign, “Think Different”, was effective at reminding both customers and staff how Apple thinks differently, using rhetorical appeals of logos, ethos, and pathos.

In early September 1997, two weeks before the “Think Different” campaign launch, personal computing tech wizard Steve Jobs was formally named interim chief executive at Apple. The “Think Different” campaign symbolized the return of genius that was detrimentally removed from Apple. Jobs cofounded Apple in 1976, was fired in 1985 and returned in 1997 when his company Next computer was acquired by Apple (Isaacson, 2011). Jobs intrinsic qualities as a practical visionary, innovator, and creative had been lost at Apple in his absence. The “Think Different” campaign intended to enliven Apple’s counter-culture following and attract new creatives that value thinking differently. It was a critical time for the company, just four months away from acquisition or bankruptcy, and in desperate need of a miracle (Olson, 2011). Jobs began taking decisive action. Within a few months of his return, Apple’s 350 departments had been cut to 10 (Isaacson, 2013). Instead of hoping for some stunning technical breakthrough that would save the company, Jobs looked instead at improving Apple’s advertising

and restoring its cool, hip image (Deutschman, 2000). Apple's advertising budget continued spending \$100 million a year, but as Jobs said, now they were going to spend it better, because now they realized that the Apple brand was one of the most valuable things they had going for them (Appleseed, 2012). Jobs commissioned TBWA\Chiat\Day advertising agency, to craft a campaign that reminded the world what Apple was about, what the company *meant* (Kahney, 2009). TBWA\Chiat\Day agency was returning to Apple, as they had handled all the company's PR activities prior to Jobs leaving in 1985 (Apple Computer Inc, 1998). The agency had created Apple's world famous '1984' Superbowl commercial introducing the Macintosh personal computer (Hormby, 2013). Within 17 days, the "Think Different" ad campaign was created and aired, reestablishing Apple's brand and catalyzing the greatest turnaround in business history.

Apple's "Think Different" campaign ran from 1997-2002. Two strategies were implemented: a TV commercial and a print campaign. The TV ad was a 60 second black and white video called the 'Crazy ones'. The TV commercial displayed over a dozen inspiring revolutionaries, including: Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dali Lama, Richard Branson, Thomas Edison, Mahatma Gandhi and Pablo Picasso. No speech was audible other than a narrated manifesto, read by American actor Richard Dreyfuss.

"Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do." (Apple, 1997)

Print advertisements from the campaign were posters, billboards, and magazine ads. Each ad included a black and white portrait of one historic figure, a small colored Apple logo, and the

words "Think Different" in one corner (Figure 1, is one example). Posters were printed in small numbers between 1997-1998 and given to select educational facilities nationwide. Billboards similar to the posters were displayed in major U.S. progressive cities, like New York City and San Francisco. Ads were printed in many mainstream magazines, such as *Newsweek* and *Time*. The video and most ads were focused more on reenforcing the brand image than promoting specific products (Segall, 2013). Additionally, ads were printed, prominently featuring the company's computers or consumer electronics along with the new slogan. Apple's simple ad elements were the 'Think Different' slogan and color Apple logo on black/white icons. In select occasions the ads included the manifesto text, 'Here's to the crazy ones'.

The campaign used reasoning (logos) rhetorical appeal to stimulate viewer's common sense, beliefs, and values by honoring revolutionary heroes and rationalizing that creative thinking produces positive change (Paine, 2012). Apple built upon the preexisting simple fact that a set of historical influential people have certain traits in common regardless of their diverse and ostensibly disconnected impact on society. A few of these commonalities are questioning the status quo, thinking differently, and a strong will to change the world. The message honors those who think different, like Apple, since those who do are the ones who 'change the world.' The message is a metaphor differentiating two groups, the status quo, symbolizing Microsoft and IBM, and the heroes we

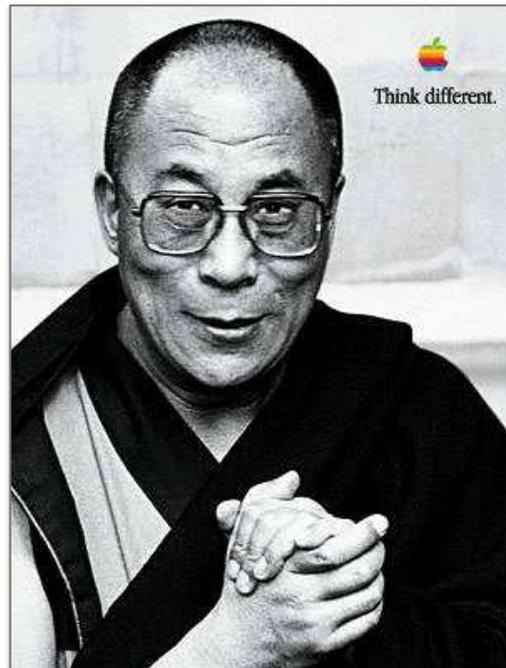


Figure 1

all respect, representing Apple. The campaign introduced its new slogan *Think Different* and thus redefined the company's image, values, and attitude - internally and externally. The logos of Apple's simplistic ads rely on an implied fact of the superior quality of their consistent and reliable technology. The campaign was a tribute to remarkable social figures who think creatively, which is one of the great catalysts of civilization.

The campaign used credibility (ethos) rhetorical appeal of reputation, character and values of revolutionaries to support the claim to think different (Paine, 2012). The professional actor reading the narration adds credibility to support the powerful inspiring message. Our individual ethics and values are questioned throughout the message. By describing the change agents as the crazy ones, misfits, rebels and troublemakers the message invites the viewer to question their own ethics and think differently. The message states whether we glorify or vilify the 'crazy ones', it is impossible to ignore them because they change the world for the better. We are reminded to reflect on the strong character of icons we respect and admire, to sway opinions of the viewers and see genius in thinking different.

The campaign used emotion (pathos) rhetorical appeal to awaken feelings, desires, and fears to influence viewers. This aroused inspiration, wonder, and connection (Paine, 2012). Viewers felt joy observing the revolutionaries, which may have been the first time most had ever seen such an inspiring compilation of icons who had sculpted civilization. The inspiring images and footage stimulate emotions of awe, confidence, delight, happiness, inspiration, joy, love, peace and pride. Those who resonate with the message think differently, vicariously holding Apple as a symbol of their unique opinions and values as the counter-culture (Farber, 2012). One may feel fear or shame questioning Apple for being different while the brand stands behind

dozens of historic leaders. Apple positioned itself as a creative, acknowledging the revolutionaries of time - past and present - who “change things” and “push the human race forward.” Apple suggests that if we agree to think different, potentially we can change the world too.

The campaign appealed to viewer's common sense (logos) by honoring heroes, rationalizing that creative thinking produces positive change. We are reminded to reflect on the strong character (ethos) of these icons to see genius in thinking different, Apple's new slogan. Viewers felt joy (pathos) observing the ads, which may have been the first time seeing such an inspiring compilation of icons. The success of the "Think Different" campaign, along with the return of Jobs, bolstered the Apple brand and reestablished the counter-culture aura of its earlier days (Siltanen, 2011). The “Think Different” campaign miraculously saved the company from bankruptcy, catalyzing the greatest turnover in business history and transforming Apple into the most valuable corporation in the world (24/7 Wall St, 2011). Apple prospered because it had the wherewithal to capitalize on a paradigm shift and the guts to think different (Burnett, 2012). Apple's effective communication through its “Think Different” campaign, touched the hearts and minds of viewers using rhetorical appeals of reason (logos), credibility (ethos), and emotion (pathos) and transformed Apple into the dominant company it has become. Apple has indeed changed the world.

Think Different campaign video: [youtube.com/watch?v=nmwXdGm89Tk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmwXdGm89Tk)

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