T Tuition statement by a morning DJ on a popular local radio show - "If at first you don't succeed, why are you going to try again?" - remarkably came even as the news of Steve Jobs stepping down as CEO of Apple was spreading.

When Steve Jobs did not try again. When I watch the lines at the cellular service providers, I am always impressed by how they are offering active efforts to acquire the latest technology. The iPhone, the iPad - surely there are monumental queues which would discourage most people from spending their day in hopes of acquiring something readily available in a few short months. It is a testament to those early adopters, but mostly it is a testament to the pull of the product.

The appetite for the latest and the greatest is even more amazing when we follow the path of the person who made it possible.

My Jobs is a remarkable story wrapped in the life of a man. We all celebrate his creative productivity in giving us the lifestyle product innovations. But his path to success was anything but certain and, in fact, was mired in failure.

How many of us would keep working in a field in which we were publicly humiliated? What is our family's or friends' or colleagues' tolerance for mistakes and failure? What are the characteristics of a person who can get up, dust themselves off, and get back in the game - even while others are writing him off?

As a college dropout, he found a garage to put Apple in a garage. The excitement of their new world was aptly described in the February 1996 Business Week: "Apple created the legend of two kids in a garage inventing a computer - and then building a New Age company where the old corporate rules were scrapped. No sales clerks, no formal meetings - nothing to get in the way of what really mattered: creating computers that Apple promised, would change the world.

That was the good part. A quick look at the cover of this edition, however, reveals a dauntingly dark theme: The striped multi-colour Apple logo is set on a field of black embossed with the words: The Fall of an American icon.

The story of course takes the sad turn reflecting what appears to be the inevitable end of Apple: "Today, that Apple - the very icon of a post-industrial, high-tech America - is barely recognizable in the troubled $1 billion company that bears the name. Visions of overlooked opportunities, flip-flop strategies and a mindset bogged down in market realities have caught up with Apple.

Industry leaders, including Michael Dell, were encouraging Apple to "end its insanity" and declare bankruptcy.

Many things contributed to the decline of Apple, but the beginning of the end happened on Mr Jobs' watch where he demonstrated that the only cure for market realities. Both Microsoft and Intel (the "Wintel" platform) had created a network effect, essentially creating product advantage to those inside the network (IBM and its clones) while reducing the value of solutions outside of this network (Apple). Users in network benefited from connectivity and file-sharing capability. But if you were Apple, you could only compete with other Apple owners. Helping build this network effect was IBM, which opened the system to clone manufacturers thus penetrating the market with the Wintel platform. Sadly, IBM still thought the machine mattered most (another strategic failure).

Microsoft and Intel knew better. It was not so much that the products were better, but rather the computing experience for those in the Wintel platform was more productive because they were part of a larger network. It is a stunning example of how product advantage does not necessarily lead to competitive advantage.

In this case, the garage-creation ethos (much more so than the American football game played that year). In it, Apple told the masses that despair and group think was the destiny of the Wintel world. Only Apple would set you free. Sadly, it was too little and it was too late. The game was done. The network effect was in place. And shortly thereafter, Mr Jobs was fired from the company he started. His own admission, it was a public humiliation and he wondered what to do.

So, what did he do? Well, quite simply, he did what he least from the painful lessons at Apple. The very practices that

led him and Apple over the cliff were now reversed. He opened their system. He reduced the number of products. He outsourced manufacturing overseas. He focused on technology design. He went direct to buyers, opening retail stores around the world.

He even welcomed Intel and Microsoft, which beat him in the network that excluded Apple from serious market share in the PC industry. And, importantly, he redefined the industry Apple would lead as consumer lifestyle electronics. Today we have iPods, iPhones, iPads and seem to be in fashion. And we usually anticipate the next iPhone, regardless of the corresponding game.

Understanding this is important. Apple has become an icon again, and last month Apple Inc achieved the status of world's most valuable company. The story of Apple and Mr Jobs is interesting in any context. But the story of someone getting up again after humiliating failure is the most inspiring one. It is a story of learning from your mistakes, staying with what you love, and never giving up. What if Mr Jobs lived his life as the radio DJ suggested? What would our lives be like if Mr Jobs gave up?

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