

Sim Wong Hoo pays tribute to Steve Jobs in ad

By Xavier Lur



Creative Technology chairman and chief executive Sim Wong Hoo on Tuesday published a full-page newspaper advertisement paying tribute to the passing away of Apple's co-founder, Steve Jobs, despite the conflict between the two companies in the past.

The simple yet meaningful ad, which features a silhouette of Steve Jobs and three lines of thankful words expressing the Singapore entrepreneur's gratitude, is said to cost the 56-year-old local executive about \$18,000, based on the current advertising rates of The Straits Times, where the ad appeared.

It reads: "Thank you for the great lessons. Thank you for the great products. Thank you for bringing a bit of us to the whole world."

The ad ended with a simple signature, "Sim Wong Hoo, Chairman & CEO, Creative Technology Ltd".

Computer engineer Andy Tan told *Yahoo! Singapore* that the ad highlights the respect Sim Wong Hoo still commands for Steve Jobs, regardless of past dissensions.

Some observers, however, believed the ad could have been a marketing ploy or a subtle reminder of the legal tussle between the two firms.

Both Creative and Apple were previously embroiled in an intense legal dispute in 2006 over patents of music players, specifically the patent covering a navigation interface that lets users choose songs to play back by selecting an artist, an album or a song.

According to media reports back then, the lawsuit was "unnecessary and was done out of desperation by Creative Technology".

While Creative's MP3 players were arguably better and cheaper than Apple's iPod based on a feature-by-feature comparison, it failed to sell and the company was losing money, resulting in a downward spiral of its stock prices. Apple's iPod, on the other hand, was a huge hit.

In 2005, Creative sold 8 million players worldwide, compared with 32 million sold by Apple, according to market research firm iSuppli.



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To save its digital music and MP3 players business, Creative then filed a lawsuit in a U.S. court over a patent that it said Apple's iPod infringed, and also sought to ban the sale of the device in the U.S.

Multiple countersuits by both companies eventually ended with a US\$100 million settlement paid by Apple to Creative. "This settlement resolves all of our differences with Creative, including the five lawsuits currently pending between the companies, and removes the uncertainty and distraction of prolonged litigation," said Steve Jobs in a press release dated August 2006.

Failure to surpass Apple in music player sales could be attributed to the iPod's simplistic yet sleek and cutting-edge design, which attracted the young consumers.

Moreover, Creative's extensive model line for its ZEN players, which were launched in 2007, brought about confusion among customers, a contrast to a single iPod model with only a few music storage choices that Apple offers.

Associate professor of marketing Seshan Ramaswami of the Singapore Management University (SMU) said Sim's ad was also an advertisement for Creative.

"I personally think this is not the best time to hint at the 'bringing a bit of us to the whole world' as it can give the appearance of capitalising on the unfortunate event even if that was not the intent," he was reported by The Straits Times as saying.

Following the death of Steve Jobs, a horde of prominent technology titans, some of whom have been engaged in business rivalry with Apple, paid tribute to the highly-respected Apple chairman, who has been touted as "the genius who pioneered the personal computer industry and changed the way people think about technology".

Bill Gates (Chairman of Microsoft), Larry Page (CEO of Google), and Mark Zuckerberg (CEO of Facebook) have each released statements to pay tribute to Steve Jobs last week.

Samsung has also gone to the extent of postponing the launch of its Nexus Prime smartphone, as a mark of respect of Steve Jobs. While the Korean conglomerate corporation enjoys a close relationship with the Californian-based Apple, as one of its component suppliers, the firms are also involved in a patent dispute.