



# BEING AN APPLE EMPLOYEE

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND COMPANY  
PHILOSOPHY AT CUPERTINO

Cupertino is located in the heartland of Silicon Valley. It's right next-door to two important Silicon Valley cities: Santa Clara and San Jose. All three are so close together that it can be indistinguishable which city you are actually in when driving through Stevens Creek Blvd. and Lawrence Ave. I had a chance to live in Silicon Valley and currently live not that far off in Santa Cruz. I actually lived in two Silicon Valley cities: of which was Cupertino, the other being Palo Alto. What was always a mystery to me and many other visitors is what working at Apple is like.

Apple employees frequent BJ's restaurant right next door and I had a chance to talk to a few of them. Most of the conversations were not related to Apple, however. Despite this, I did have a pretty interesting conversation with a friend of mine who happens to work at Apple's Cupertino headquarters. I haven't seen the man for a couple of years and out of the blue ran into him at a San Jose shopping center, only to find out he was working for Apple. A few days later, I was talking to him at none other than BJ's restaurant.

I will not disclose his name because he signed a confidentiality agreement and we never conducted a formal interview. What he told me was general chitchat and never really revealed any groundbreaking information. He did divulge what working at Apple is like, though from the standpoint of a software engineer.

In this article, I will deal with the work environment and company philosophy. In future articles I may reveal certain hints or rumors he gave me regarding products. However, he never really gave away anything too juicy or secretive. The crux of my chat with him really dealt with what being an Apple employee feels like.

## APPLE IS A VERY STRICT AND TIGHT-KNIT COMPANY

My buddy from Cupertino and I sat down for a beer and I ordered the funny strawberry flavor, which happened to cost close to \$10 if I recall correctly. The tab was on him, so I didn't mind. At first, we rekindled old memories, but the subject quickly turned to his new job next door at the long Apple compound with buildings spread across both sides of De Anza Blvd.

My friend made a point to mention just how tight-knit and strict Apple's hiring process is. The company looks for talent literally everywhere and is willing to relocate people, and even house them for free, but wants them to be loyal to the brand. My friend sometimes literally spoke as if he was Steve Jobs himself when I criticized any aspect of Apple's products or software. For instance, when I asked why not create an iPad stylus or add a more precise digitizer (think Wacom) he said, "If you need a stylus or an additional peripheral, what's the point?" He basically repeated Jobs' catchphrase, "**if you see a stylus or a task manager, they blew it,**".

My friend also mentioned that Apple, in general, has very few employees doing a lot of work on inside operations – at least when compared to most other companies. Apple is very selective in who they hire, and relies on inside secrecy related to product developments (both software and hardware). He gave me an example of Apple's modus operandi when related to the Safari Web browser. He couldn't tell me exactly the amount of people working on Safari's Java programming, but that it is a very small number of people; incredibly small. "It is about 1/30th of the amount

Microsoft has working on Explorer,” as he put it. So I am presuming what he was trying to tell me that it is one to two people -- working on Safari – since he told me Microsoft has like 20-30 on Explorer. It was as if he was speaking in code trying to get me to decipher the clues he was providing.

The other thing he told me is how intelligent many people within the company are and how incredible Steve Jobs’ vision is – again he kept praising Apple in general as if he was a fan boy, and not an actual employee. He said there is an engineer at the company who made and inherited millions of dollars before even being hired to work for Apple. “He chooses to work for Apple out of passion not out of any amount of money he is making,” my friend said. He also made a similar statement regarding Steve Jobs’ latest work for the company. My friend said that Steve Jobs’ vision was so “incredible and forward thinking” that Jobs just could not leave and risk having it disintegrated. He said that Jobs, like his co-worker at Apple, chose to work for Apple to see his vision advance, and not out of any monetary gain. Jobs was basically making a dollar annually, he explained.

## **GREAT BENEFITS OF WORKING FOR APPLE**

My friend also told me that when he first moved to Cupertino, Apple actually paid for his rent for a few months to get him situated.



Apple Campus  
One Infinite Loop



When I lived in the area, I recalled speaking to another Apple employee, who told me the same thing. However, I never expected Apple to actually give away its top-of-the-line products to employees, free-of-charge, as well.

He told me that he asked to test certain Macs, like the top-of-the-line MacBook Pro, and Apple gave it to him. He showed me his list of gadgets he owns courtesy of Apple and they include the latest iPhone, iPad, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro, and iMac. I am not sure he got all of them “for testing purposes” from Apple, but he admitted to getting a couple of them directly for this reason from the company.

Overall, it was an interesting conversation, but for obvious reasons he couldn't reveal or tell me much outside some corporate info not related to products. Mostly, what he told me is not entirely unique for Silicon Valley corporations. However, it is interesting to note just how secretive Apple really is and how seriously employees take the confidentiality agreement. Everything he told me was basically through code or by catching his tongue, including trivial things related to general work at the company. It is also interesting how loyal and fully supportive he was to the company. You often hear of workers using an iPhone but working for Google. It appears the opposite is definitely not true, at least in his case. Everything he owns has Apple's logo on it. ■

by Mike Lata