

What a 'Guy!'

Kawasaki is an evangelistic leader who inspires others; are you?

BY DEBORAH PENTA

A few years ago, I invited Guy Kawasaki to speak at a conference in Phoenix on behalf of a client. Guy is most recognized for his work at Apple Computer as the guru who evangelized Macintosh in the 80s—a time when the world was dominated by IBM.

The creative genius who put secular evangelism on the map, Guy authored several compelling books including *Art of the Start*, *Rules for Revolutionaries*, *Selling the Dream*, *The Macintosh Way* and *How to Drive Your Competition Crazy*. He also wrote *Hindsights*, a book that got its inspiration from a personal experience of challenge and pain when he and his wife were considering divorce.

He is an energetic entrepreneur with contagious passion. When I had lunch with him in Arizona, he had me in stitches with his great sense of humor. He shared stories of his love for his kids and the San Jose Sharks. And we laughed about our pre-parental days BK (before kids) when we vowed never to give our kids McDonald's or let them watch TV. It felt really good when Guy told me that McDonald's has also become a destination for his kids, and that he too believes that TV is a necessary part of parental sanity at times.

While at Apple, Guy became widely recognized as an evangelist leader who continually spread the fine word about Macintosh and inspired a national movement to persuade people to jump on the bandwagon and make the switch from IBM. He was so adept at evangelizing that many people were fast becoming customers of this revolutionary new machine that, with Guy's help, shook up the computer industry as we knew it. Currently, as the managing director of Garage Technology Ventures and as a columnist for *Entrepreneur Magazine*, he continues to evangelize innovation and has developed quite a following of people who respect his work and believe in his message.

Evangelizing works

When business leaders become "corporate evangelists," they use their enthusiasm and passion for their work to bring awareness to their customers and the world. Employees become energized and are so enthused by their leader, they can't wait to join the cause. Employees become evangelists and when this happens, customers receive such a memorable experience that they too participate in helping you achieve your mission by spreading the good word. Evangelizing works and at full steam it produces incredible results.

Effective evangelist leaders craft messages that people can understand and embrace. Their strong spirit stimulates public consensus and generates a desire for people to join their crusade.



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Effective evangelism can engage an entire community and generate unprecedented interest. What needs to emerge is the leader's genuineness and integrity—and a passion to achieve meaningful objectives. Each and every person within an organization has the power to be an effective evangelist when their leader comes from a good place and "walks the walk."

As I think back to meeting Guy five years ago, I realize that his passion was truly motivational and his creativity sparked opportunities to think differently. With his comfortable and easy-going style, he reinforced my belief that it is essential for leaders to be themselves so that people will want to join a winning team led by an authentic person. When this level of dynamic synergy exists, corporate teams or boards can evangelize and move mountains. I am convinced that the only obstacles out there are the ones we create or allow for ourselves.

Leaders inspire

Throughout history, many of our most influential leaders have been phenomenal evangelists. If you think of those leaders who have inspired you the most, chances are they were passionate and evangelized their beliefs.

Passion and evangelism in leadership accelerate positive momentum and encourage a world in which supporters help their leader, whether to get a company to the next level, get people to support a cause or to inspire change. The experience becomes greater than the outcome sometimes, because it is so elevating and fulfilling.

In business, those leaders who possess this particular style believe in their people, products and services, and often radiate confidence and contagious enthusiasm. But, when the going gets tough, they can also address the most difficult challenges and complex obstacles with professionalism and grace.

Evangelist leaders believe wholeheartedly in their mission and as a result people want to join them in their quest. Oftentimes, morale is high and all members of the team recognize the importance of the key roles they play and how collectively they can reach a successful outcome. As defined by Guy, "evangelism is the process of convincing people to believe in your product or service as much as you do."

Would you define yourself as an evangelistic leader?

We'd like to know your thoughts. Please email me at dpenta@femaleleaders.org.

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