

An Open Letter to Steve Jobs

Big news this week, Folks. Apple Inc. has sold its 100-Millionth iPod. Ah, those perfectly aesthetic little high-tech devices for enjoying your music, yes. Which gives me an idea... Why, oh why, do consumers everywhere get the most "[insanely great](#)" little MP3 player, while we whose lives depend on medical devices get the clunky stuff of yesteryear? It occurred to me that this is never going to change unless we call on the Gods of Consumer Design to champion our cause. So... I have penned an "Open Letter to Steve Jobs" asking him to tackle the medical device design conundrum on our behalf.

What do you all think? Would you, could you, sign your name to an appeal like this to the Big Man of Consumer Design-ism?

Dear Steve Jobs,

I'm writing to you on behalf of millions of people who walk around wired to little tech devices and won't leave the house without them. No, I'm not talking about the iPod – and that's the point. While your brilliant product line enhances the lifestyle of (100) millions, I'm talking about the little devices that keep us alive, the people with chronic conditions.



Let's talk about diabetes, the disease that affects 20 million Americans, and I'm one of them.

Whether blood glucose monitor or insulin pump, thanks to the achievements of medical device companies, we can now live a normal life by constantly monitoring and adjusting our blood sugar levels.

But have you seen these things? They make a Philips GoGear Jukebox HDD1630 MP3 Player look pretty! And it's not only that: most of these devices are clunky, make weird alarm sounds, are more or less hard to use, and burn quickly through batteries. In other words: their design doesn't hold a candle to the iPod.

Most people on this planet can't agree on much, but most do agree that Apple knows how to design outstanding high-tech devices. It's your core expertise. It's your brand. It's you and Jonathan Ive.

We are, of course, deeply grateful to the medical device industry for keeping us alive. Where would we be without them? But while they're still struggling with shrinking complex technologies down to a scale where we can attach them, hard-wired, to our bodies, design kinda becomes an afterthought.

This is where the world needs your help, Steve. We're people first and patients second. We're children, we're adults, we're elderly. We're women, we're men. We're athletes, we're lovers.



If insulin pumps or continuous monitors had the form of an iPod Nano, people wouldn't have to wonder why we wear our "pagers" to our own weddings, or puzzle over that strange bulge under our clothes. If these devices wouldn't start suddenly and incessantly beeping, strangers wouldn't lecture us to turn off our "cell phones" at the movie theater.



In short, medical device manufacturers are stuck in a bygone era; they continue to design these products in an engineering-driven, physician-centered bubble. They have not yet grasped the concept that medical devices are also life devices, and therefore need to feel good and look good for the patients using them 24/7, in addition to keeping us alive.

Clearly, we need a visionary to champion this disconnect. We need an organization on the cutting edge of consumer design to get vocal about this issue. Ideally, we need a "gadget guru" like Jonathan Ive to show the medical device industry what is possible.

What we need here is a sweeping change in industry-wide mentality — achievable only if some respected Thought Leader tackles the medical device design topic in a public forum. We therefore implore you, Mr. Jobs, to be that Thought Leader.

We have begun by brainstorming a number of actions that you and/or Apple could take to jumpstart this discussion:

- * Sponsor a contest by Apple Inc. for best-designed med device from an independent party, and the winning item will receive a makeover from Jonathan Ive himself
- * Conduct a "Med Model Challenge": the Apple design team takes several existing medical devices and demonstrates how to "pimp" them to be more useful and cool
- * Establish Apple Med Design School – offer a course on consumer design concepts to selected engineers from leading pharma companies

We need a creative mind like yours to help change the world, again. We, the undersigned, call upon you to take action now.

Yours Truly,

DDD (Digital Device Dependent)

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