

**Column for Manila Bulletin**  
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**Of Trees and Forest**

### **Cool Guy**

MANILA, Philippines — He's cool. He's an entrepreneur. He's Steve Jobs!

I wrote about Steve Jobs earlier in this column a few days after he died, and I focused on his being an entrepreneur rather than as a techno-genius.

His success as a businessman is something that I believe can very serve as a model for our young Filipinos to emulate.

Apple, under Jobs, dislodged oil giant Exxon as the most valuable company in the United States on August 10, 2011, when it ended trading with a market value of \$337 billion against Exxon's \$331 billion. Exxon had held the No. 1 position since 2005.

While other companies were reeling from the economic meltdown, Apple was growing in high double digits: net income surged 70 percent to \$14 billion in its fiscal year ended in September and revenues by 52% to \$65 billion. Apple grew its net income 70 percent to \$14 billion and its revenue by 52 percent to \$65 billion in the fiscal year that ended last September.

In my earlier column I talked about the traditional way of Filipino families in raising their children. The parents' vision was to see their children become stable in certain jobs, meaning regular salaries, attractive employment benefits, and secured retirement.

That's what I call a culture of employment and that's how we have become a nation of employees rather than of entrepreneurs. And because of such a culture, Filipino students dream of landing high-paying jobs in prestigious companies when they graduate. Their ultimate dream is to become a supervisor, a manager, or even a president, but still an employee, and not as owner of a company.

These are the career positions that many Filipinos, especially the young, aspire to become. To them being manager of a big company is a status symbol.

Sadly, entrepreneurs do not share the same public image. Except for the prominent businessmen or the owners of conglomerates, entrepreneurs somewhat belong to the lower rungs of the public's image of the career ladder.

One of the main problems of entrepreneurship in this country is that it is not viewed as important. Entrepreneurs are not even recognized for their managerial competence, as if they can be successful without being competent.

An owner of a small hardware store, for instance, may be earning ten times as much as a manager in a multinational corporation, but the former does not receive the same admiration or even respect as the latter.

It may just be something about appearances: business executives go to work in freshly ironed shirts and slacks, or even in ties and shiny shoes.

In contrast, entrepreneurs generally don casual clothing, especially those who are hands-on in their businesses.

So it is more of recognition. Young Filipinos do not look up to entrepreneurs as role models.

In a way, some members in media may be partly to blame for it. They portray businessmen in a bad light. But media, too, can play a role in changing the Filipino youth's perception of entrepreneurship and businessmen.

In the US, Jobs and Microsoft's Bill Gates are idolized as "cool" guys. And so, given the worldwide attention on Steve Jobs, his example can be played up to change Filipinos' perceptions about business.

Local media can, therefore, provide a local spin on Steve Jobs and make him, as a "cool" entrepreneur, a role model for the Filipino youth.

I always say we really need to push entrepreneurship to drive economic growth, and Jobs' fame can be used to encourage more young people to go into business.

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