

Questions about Apple, Yahoo start at top

January 21 2009, By Eric Benderoff

Last week brought tremendous change to two of technology's bellwether firms. But it had nothing to do with product launches or job losses, common headlines these days.

The news was about new management, and the uncertainty that brings.

Let's start with Apple Inc., where the biggest uncertainty involves a simple question: Will Chief Executive Steve Jobs return?

Until Apple provides more information about Jobs' health issues, his leave of absence through June, announced last Wednesday, will dog the company and damage its well-polished image.

The big fear is that an Apple without Jobs at the helm means the return of the meandering tech company of the late '80s and early '90s that couldn't deliver good, reliable products. Jobs buried that version of Apple when he came back in 1996; the company has become technology's most noteworthy innovator this century.

But who is Chief Operating Officer Tim Cook, running the company during Jobs' leave? Who is Philip Schiller, Apple's senior vice president of worldwide product marketing, the executive who in place of Jobs gave the Macworld keynote this month?

I've never met Cook, who is highly regarded by analysts. I did, however, interview Schiller when he came to the Michigan Avenue Apple store for the iPhone's launch in July 2007. He was pleasant, attentive and

genial.

But can a marketing man help replace a dynamic pitchman like Jobs, the Ron Popeil of technology?

Meanwhile, Yahoo's future remains elusive, despite last Tuesday's appointment of Carol Bartz as its CEO. She's a veteran executive from Autodesk Inc., a software company.

Yahoo is an Internet company, not a softwaremaker. It offers e-mail services and fantasy-sports management. Other products revolve around music, video and news gathering.

Yahoo is a new media provider that needs ad sales to succeed.

Over the years, Yahoo has acquired novel start-ups, including photo-sharing site Flickr and the social-bookmarking site Delicious (formerly del.icio.us), but it has done little to bring them together under the Yahoo umbrella.

Can Bartz sell? Can she stitch this amalgam together?

Apple and Yahoo. Two companies, two new leaders.

Which leaves one last question: How long will each be around?

(Eric Benderoff writes about technology for the Chicago Tribune. Contact him at ebenderoff at tribune.com or at the Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago IL 60611.)

(c) 2009, Chicago Tribune.

*Visit the Chicago Tribune on the Internet at www.chicagotribune.com/
Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.*

Citation: Questions about Apple, Yahoo start at top (2009, January 21) retrieved 25 April 2024
from <https://phys.org/news/2009-01-apple-yahoo.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.