

Oracle's Larry Ellison says Apple's best days are over

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Oracle CEO Larry Ellison, never one to mince words, on Tuesday made clear to Charlie Rose on "CBS This Morning" that he thinks Apple's best days are behind it.

Calling its late co-founder and CEO Steve Jobs "irreplaceable," Ellison said, "Apple won't be nearly as successful" without him at the helm.

Yes, the world's third-richest man likes and respects Apple CEO Tim Cook. But without Ellison's old friend Jobs around anymore to ride herd over Apple's mad-genius workforce, he insists the company's future is dimmed.

Analyst Tim Bjarin with Creative Strategies said Ellison's pronouncement "should be taken with a grain of salt," because "it would be wrong to write Apple off, given the fact that Jobs' spirit is still very much alive both in Tim Cook's executive team and in the Apple board."

Ellison, who rarely speaks publicly with the press, sat down with Rose at the billionaire's compound south of San Francisco to offer opinions not just about Apple, but also about Google and National Security Agency snooping.

He bashed Google CEO Larry Page for what Ellison characterized as Google's theft of Oracle's software tools. And he said that while he's concerned about privacy, companies like American Express have for years been collecting voluminous data on American consumers. But

Steve Jobs was the focus of the conversation.

"What is it about him?" Rose asked his guest. "You - we recognize the fact that he loved Apple and he wanted to make Apple great, and he did. But what was it about him that enabled him to do it, other than he worked hard?"

Ellison: "He was - he was brilliant. I mean, our Edison. He was our Picasso. He was an incredible inventor."

Rose: "So what happens to Apple without Steve?"

Ellison: "Well, we already know We saw - we conducted the experiment ... it's been done."

Calling Jobs "my best friend for 25 years," Ellison appeared emotional when he reminded Rose about Jobs' forced departure in the mid-'80s from the company he had founded and how that move did not bode well for Apple.

"We saw Apple with Steve Jobs," said Ellison as he shot his finger up in the air to indicate the company's good fortunes in its first heyday. "We saw Apple without Steve Jobs," he said, lowering his finger to show its subsequent fall from grace. "We saw Apple with Steve Jobs," he said, raising his finger again, indicating Apple's second heyday.

Ellison paused and then said "Now, we're gonna see Apple without Steve Jobs." His finger stayed high for a moment, then arced downward.

"He's irreplaceable," Ellison said of his old friend. And Apple "won't be nearly as successful because he's gone."

So you'll bet on Apple to fail? Rose asked.

"I'm not shorting" Apple stock, he replied. "I like Tim Cook."

Then Ellison got personal, describing his last few visits with Jobs in the weeks and days before he finally succumbed to pancreatic cancer.

You watched him die? Rose asked Ellison.

"I'd go there all the time to see him and we'd always go for walks, but they kept getting shorter," Ellison replied, noticeably moved by the memories. The walks shortened to only a few blocks long, "and you watched him getting weaker. He was the strongest, most willful person I'd ever known. But he was tired of fighting."

Ellison said "they pulled him off his meds on a Saturday or Sunday and by the following Wednesday, he was gone. He was definitely suffering; there was so much pain."

Jobs died at his home on Oct. 5, 2011, surrounded by his family. He was 56.

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