

10 years on, the iPhone has revolutionised life and freed us from multiple tyrannies

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Steve Jobs introduces iPhone. Credit: YouTube

It is 10 years this week since Steve Jobs walked onto [a stage](#) and said "Every once in a while, a revolutionary product comes along that changes everything". He was referring to the iPhone, launched on January 9th 2007.

Like many products, it could be argued that it wasn't until version 3 in

2009 and the iPhone 3GS when everyone else started to really share Jobs' vision. The [App Store](#) had been available for a year by then and the notion of the smartphone as a truly portable general purpose computing device was born.

Since 2007, Apple has sold more than 1 billion iPhones, generating [about](#) US \$650 billion in revenue for the firm. In addition, Apple's App Store [generated](#) US \$28 billion of revenue last year alone.

Of course, Apple's sales in smartphones are [now only](#) 13% of smartphone sales globally, but Apple takes nearly all of the profit.

Apple didn't invent the smartphone and has to share honours with Google's Android in driving the development of smartphone technologies and in particular the development of the mobile app environment. Certainly there would be nowhere near the adoption worldwide if Android had not enabled the development of inexpensive handsets.

Smartphone adoption now [stands at](#) 43% of adults globally but goes up to as much as 77% in Australia and 72% in the US. This is now greater than the number of adults who own [computers](#).

There is not a facet of life that hasn't been changed by the advent of the smartphone, with most of these changes occurring within the last 5 years. Australians spend on average an hour [a day](#) on mobile devices, with the majority of that time being spent on social networks. This is not as much as the nearly [three hours](#) a day spent by Americans on TV, but as TV itself moves increasingly to streaming, more of that time will be on mobile platforms.

Irrespective of the total amount of time spent on smartphones, what they have given us is freedom and control in our lives. In health, education,

politics and social discourse, smartphones have provided the universal accessibility for an almost fully democratic participation. On a more practical level, we have the freedom to buy products from anywhere at any time and not be constrained by what is on offer in our physical location. We can consult with health providers anywhere or even check on their advice.

We have the freedom to share our opinions and thoughts with anyone at any time. The mobile phone played a significant role in the last US election and is now the primary means by which the US president will communicate with the country and the rest of the world.

We have the wisdom of the world at our fingertips and even the ability to converse with our devices to allow them to guide and advise us. Most importantly, we can communicate and relate with our family, friends and colleagues at all times from anywhere in the world.

We can use the phone to document our lives and share whatever portion of it with whichever audience we choose.

None of this was really viable or possible before the advent of the smartphone, and certainly not before Apple and Google created the platforms to enable this to happen. Of course, the world had to change to adapt to the possibilities created by the smartphone. Businesses like Uber would not have been possible but they had to put the technology together with the idea and drivers to enact them. Technologies like Bluetooth have been developed alongside the smartphone to enable the connection of devices to the phone that have made possible wearables, headphones and other devices.

The smartphone itself would have been worth nothing if the Internet had not existed and the [world wide web](#) and browsers hadn't created the means to communicate and interact on a global scale. So many different

technologies have been brought together in the past 10 years that it is wrong to think that it was simply Apple or Google that brought the world we live in to bear. What Apple did however was to create the vessel in which these other technologies were able to work together to achieve what they have done. They would not have worked in a world of desktop or even laptop computers, or other devices.

Although we don't know the exact details of what the smartphone will look like in 10 years time, we know it will still be here and the main [device](#) we interact with. As the TV has not gone away but simply got smarter, the same is likely to be the case with the smartphone. The artificial intelligence capabilities of the phones will be far greater and the technologies that interact with the phone will catch up to match its capabilities.

Apple may not have invented the [smartphone](#) but it certainly made them the life transforming devices that we have now.

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