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**Darren Root, CPA, CITP, CGMA • Oct. 18, 2011**

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I, like many, am still mourning the loss of one of the most innovative thinkers in history. In fact, I was such an avid follower of Steve Jobs that while traveling, my wife texted to see if I was okay after hearing of his untimely death. She knew that though I'd never actually met him, I would feel a profound loss and it would affect me greatly.

My recent travels took me to Palo Alto, California, to meet with a technology vendor

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As I waited for my new iPhone, I looked up to see Guy Kawasaki walk in. For those who don't know who Guy is ... well, he was Apple's first product evangelist, and over the years he's written many books. His latest is "Enchantment: The Art of Changing Hearts, Minds, and Actions," which I highly recommend. Guy ended up standing next to me in line, so I took the opportunity to engage him in conversation. We chatted for quite awhile, and needless to say the dialogue was highly motivational. Kawasaki has been a key "voice" in propelling the need for technology that helps users work more efficiently and with inventive zeal. I eventually did make it to my meeting, even more inspired to discuss ideas and strategies to develop solutions to help practitioners more effectively run their practices.

When work was finally behind me, I headed to Apple's headquarters to take it all in. It was everything I expected it would be. I passed the humble memorial to Steve Jobs displayed at the entrance to One Infinite Loop, and then wandered around. I thought about why I have such an affinity for Apple. The answer is quite simple. It's a brand that is trusted — one that, like few others, has acquired unprecedented loyalty from its user base. For years, Apple has consistently produced phenomenal products that are not only of the highest quality, but also extraordinarily beautiful. It's a brand presence that is incredibly powerful — one that has served as inspiration throughout my career to be a better leader ... to perform at a higher level ... and to offer a better product. Overall, it's a brand that has pushed me to *think differently*. How many brands can we really say that about?

If Steve Jobs taught us anything, it is to think differently ... about why we do what we do and how we do it. So I challenge each and every one of you to think about how you can offer your clients insanely great services that lead to a rich client experience. Think differently about how you operate your firm — be creative, be a leader and focus on building your own Next Generation Accounting Firm™!

Special thanks to Steve Jobs for motivating the masses! We will remember you

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