

## Lueberry, Grape, Strawberry, Orange or Lime– Which One Do You Prefer?

Thomas Ash

A few weeks ago, an Apple employee was sacked. Not that big a deal, you might say. One of the good things about Steve Jobs' Apple is that it has been a tightly run ship. But this employee was not fired because his job was found to be redundant (pardon the pun) after one of Steve's famous elevator interviews. He wasn't fired because he wasn't getting his job (as a software engineer, by the way) done properly. He was fired for thinking different.

To be specific, he walked around barefoot to be more in touch with his surroundings, he put up posters of Gandhi and the like to inspire him while he walked, and when faced with a tough challenge, he would stand on his head to help him concentrate. OK, this may not be the way everyone goes about their work, but it certainly doesn't do any harm. If it helps someone concentrate, then so much the better.

Of course you'd expect StandardHugeCorp, Inc. to look down on this behaviour - but not Apple, the company which tells us to think different. And the decision to fire this employee was not made by some same thinking (or for Apple, different thinking - well, you get the idea) middle management drone. Avie Tevanian himself justified it, saying that employees are only permitted to take off their shoes within a four metre radius of their work area.

ersonally, I find that unbelievable. You might think that this is a stupid thing to spend 440 words complaining about, but I'm writing this column, and I couldn't care less. This seems such a stupid thing to regulate, and it makes me worry that Apple doesn't live up

to the image of itself it promotes, like every other company under the sun. Call me naive, but I've always thought that Apple has had a really different take on things, especially under Steve Jobs.

Which brings me onto my next point - that Apple had pretty different thinking employees under the relatively conservative leadership of Gil Amelio. Ruth Hennigar was the engineering manager of Raptor, the project to develop a kernel for the Mac OS. She rode a Harley-Davidson, wore black tights and black leather boots. One side of her head was shaved, and the other was dyed in the six rainbow colours of the Apple logo. Compared to this, working while standing on your head seems pretty normal - but no one fired Hennigar.

Getting angry with Apple? Ready to fire off an irate e-mail? Don't bother. This story was, in fact, a satire by The Onion [www.theonion.com](http://www.theonion.com) Apple's thinking different for now, at least - but we should make sure it always does.

All previous iThink Different columns can be found at [thomasash.hypermart.net/bnet/list.cgi](http://thomasash.hypermart.net/bnet/list.cgi)

\* Hmm... getting a bit arrogant there. My humble apologies.

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