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## **The iPhone 5 Suggests That Without Steve Jobs, Apple Is Becoming A Normal Tech Company**

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[Tim Cook](#) has just wrapped up his introduction of the iPhone 5. On paper, the iPhone 5 is an impressive update. It has a faster processor, a bigger and brighter screen, supports LTE networking, and is thinner than its predecessors. It will doubtless prove to be a capable phone and a worthy competitor to the latest Android gear.

Still, judging from the Twitter chatter and early coverage by tech sites, what's striking about the phone is what's missing: a compelling story about what makes this phone better than its predecessor or distinguishes it from its competitors. The iPhone 4 had the Retina Display, [Apple's](#) marketing term for a display with twice the horizontal and vertical resolution of previous models. Sure, the term was silly, but it captured the imagination of consumers and became a must-have feature across Apple's product lines. Similarly, the big story of the iPhone 4S, announced shortly before Steve Jobs died, was Siri, the voice-activated personal assistant that attracted a ton of attention and coverage from the tech blogosphere.

I don't think it's a coincidence that the iPhone 5, the first iPhone to be largely developed after Steve Jobs's passing, seems to lack a comparable sales pitch. Jobs instinctively understood that most customers don't care about technical specs, they care about what you can do with a device's raw hardware. Sometimes, if a new product had a particularly impressive technical improvement—as with the Retina Display—he'd come up with a whimsical brand name for the new feature and make that the focus of the presentation. But more often, his presentations would focus on small number of applications or characteristics, like Siri, that weren't directly tied to any specific hardware upgrade but made the product dramatically more useful for ordinary consumers.

In contrast, Tim Cook is an operations guy. He's reportedly very good at packing ever-more-powerful hardware into Apple's products at ever-lower prices, and that capability was on full display in today's announcement. But as far as I can see, he doesn't have any larger story to tell about why the iPhone 5 is dramatically better

than an iPhone 4S, or why you should buy an iPhone 5 rather than the latest feature-packed phone from Samsung or Motorola.

Apple has a lot of smart engineers, so I'm sure the iPhone 5 will prove to be a solid product and will be snapped up by the millions by Apple's existing base of devoted customers. But today's announcement suggests that Apple is gradually becoming an ordinary technology company. It will continue pumping out faster, smaller, cheaper hardware. But without a product visionary at the top of the Apple hierarchy, the firm is unlikely to continue setting the agenda for the industry the way it did over the last decade.