

Computer Mouse

A computer mouse is a small box. Its purpose is to move a line on a screen and help users do work and play games. Where did the mouse come from?

The story of the mouse begins in 1967.

The first mouse looked like a large block of wood with a red button on top. In 1973, a company called Xerox improved the mouse. It was small, light and easy to use.

Six years later, Steve Jobs visited Xerox. He saw a special computer with advanced technology and software. This machine used a mouse to touch small images on the screen. The images opened files and programs.

Steve loved it. It was easy to use, but expensive. He directed his team to make a computer with those features. It should have a nice design and sell for a low price.

In 1984, Apple released a home computer called the Macintosh. People loved using the mouse. Soon, many companies were making computers with a mouse.

Some people say Steve took the idea from Xerox. Maybe that's true. It's also true he saw an idea and made it better. He also made it less expensive. The first mouse cost \$300. Apple made it for \$15.

The story of the mouse teaches us about business. We often need a new idea to be successful. Some people, like Steve, take an old idea and improve it. Then they tell a story. The story usually tells people that their lives will be better with this machine.

Steve Jobs did not make anything new. But, he was a good storyteller. And telling a good story is an important business skill.

iPad

Here's a question. Which Apple product sold a million units in 28 days? Not the iPhone. It was the iPad, a tablet with a touch screen but no phone. From 2010 to 2015, Apple sold 250 million of these machines.

Many people think Steve Jobs created the iPad. Not true. The history of the tablet at Apple goes back to 1987, long before Steve worked there.

In 1996, Apple made its first tablet. It was called the Newton Message Pad. It didn't do very much. When Steve returned to Apple in 1998, he stopped the Newton. Many people thought he was going to make a tablet. Apple surprised everyone with the iPod in 2001.

iPhone was next. Apple made a Smartphone before a tablet. Part of the problem was the iPad's large touch screen. It needed special software and microchips that did not exist at that time.

The first iPhone was for sale in 2007. One year later, Apple decided to produce a tablet. The software and microchips were ready, but there was a question. What was the iPad? Was it a big iPhone or something completely different, something between a phone and a laptop? Many people wondered which option Apple would choose. In 2010, the iPad was for sale. Apple sold 300,000 in the first week.

Quite quickly, it proved to be a major financial success. It also changed the world. People began reading online and bought fewer newspapers and magazines. Sales of laptops dropped.

The iPad was a game changer. Its beautiful design mixed with an easy to use operating system changed the way people work, read and play.

Google

Everybody knows Google. It searches the internet for text, pages, documents and pictures. It's also a big company. What do we know about the two people who started Google?

The history of Google goes back to 1995.

Larry Page was 22. He was visiting Stanford University in California. He was going to study computer science. Sergey Brin was showing him around. Sergey was 21. He studied computer science. They became best friends. They also started Google.

When Larry was a kid, he lived in a house filled with computers. His parents taught computer science.

Sergey Brin was born in Russia. His family moved to America when he was six. Sergey was smart. He finished high school early and studied computer science in university. Then he attended Stanford.

Larry and Sergey came together because of a project. They wanted to study how documents on the internet were linked. They made a program that searched the web and made a list of popular pages. That was an original idea. In the 1990s, search programs only looked at words on pages. Finding useful information took a lot of time.

Their software helped people find useful information immediately. They called it Google, which means the number one plus one hundred zeroes.

Larry and Sergey thought their program was good and wanted to sell it. They contacted several web executives but nobody wanted to buy it. So, they decided to take a chance and start their own firm. Their first office space was in a friend's garage in 1998. Six years later in 2004, Google was a big company and Larry and Sergey became rich.

Wind Energy

Is there an energy problem? Some people think so. Using oil is bad because it makes dirty air.

In addition, there might not be much oil in 30 years. One possible answer is energy from wind.

How does wind power work?

Special machines change wind into electricity. They are called wind turbines. These big, heavy machines can weigh 300 tonnes and stand 130 meters. Sometimes you can see a large group of turbines in the countryside or near the sea. That is called a wind farm.

Many wind turbines have three long sticks called blades. When the wind moves, the blades turn.

When blades turn, they move a special stick called a shaft. The shaft turns a generator which makes electricity.

One large turbine can produce enough power for about 300 homes for a year. That number depends on the size of the turbine and amount of wind.

Not everyone thinks wind turbines are good. Turbines make a lot of sound and kill a lot of birds. They also cost a lot of money. One big turbine costs about 4 million dollars. Wind turbines don't save money. Often, people in a city with a wind farm pay more for electricity, not less.

There is one serious problem. Wind power cannot replace other energy, like coal or oil. That is because wind power does not always work. When the wind stops, there is no electricity. That means a city needs another way to make power. Cities that buy wind power have to purchase another source of energy. Wind power seems like a good idea, but today the cost is high and its benefits are limited.