

[←](#) [→](#)[Blog](#)[Archives](#)[Tag Cloud](#)[RSS](#)[RSS Comments](#)[Trackback](#)[DropDMG](#)[EagleFiler](#)[SpamSieve](#)

## [Apple's Software Quality Decline](#)

[Russell Ivanovic](#):

I just wish that Apple would slow down their breakneck pace and spend the time required to build stable software that their hardware so desperately needs. The yearly release cycles of OS X, iOS, iPhone & iPad are resulting in too many things seeing the light of day that aren't finished yet. Perhaps the world wouldn't let them, perhaps the expectations are now too high, but I'd kill for Snow iOS 8 and Snow Yosemite next year. I'm fairly confident I'm not alone in that feeling.

[John Gruber](#):

From the outside, it seems like Apple's software teams can't keep up with the pace of the hardware teams. Major new versions of iOS aren't released "when they're ready", they're released when the new iPhone hardware ships. [...] Just today: My iPhone 6 rebooted after I changed the home screen wallpaper. Tapped a new image in the wallpaper settings, and poof, it rebooted. Worse, it never stopped rebooting. Endless reboot cycle.

[Tim Schmitz](#):

One thing that's striking is how many of Apple's troubles are self-inflicted. Gone are the days when Apple planned product announcements around conferences like Macworld Expo. That the company controls its whole ecosystem, from hardware to software to services, is supposed to be a strength. Controlling everything should mean that you can get all your ducks in a row before pulling back the curtain. The only thing that Apple is truly constrained by are its own self-imposed deadlines. The problem is, Apple keeps shooting itself in the foot. Rather than waiting until a new version of iOS is fully finished, for example, they rush an update out the door to coincide with the release of new iPhones.

[Kirk McElhearn](#):

I recently wrote about [Apple's string of bad luck](#), with bad press, a bad keynote stream, the U2 album spamming fiasco, and, above all, the iOS 8.0.1 update that bricked a lot of users' iPhones. If I were to go back in the archives of this website, I'd find other, similar articles about blunders when a new OS was released requiring an update quickly for some embarrassing problems, or when hardware issues that shouldn't have happened plagued many users. [...] I've increasingly had the feeling that Apple is finding it difficult to keep up with all these releases, and that quality is slipping.

[Matthias Plappert](#):

Apple: "We cannot keep up with developing stable software for OS X and iOS, so let's have a new programming language and create a watch OS."

[Caitlin McGarry:](#)

Apple's having a tough time. Its annual one-two punch of an iPhone launch plus an iOS upgrade—usually a time for celebration—has been followed this year by a compounding series of embarrassments.

[Daniel Jalkut:](#)

The biggest/richest company in the world, already staffed with many of the smartest and most creative people, shouldn't get so many passes.

[Tim Burks:](#)

The Swift language project has been a major distraction for the development community and *much more importantly* for Apple's internal focus on providing quality developer tools.

[Justin Duke:](#)

The review process and walled garden model, which was specifically designed to prevent bad customer experiences like upgrading to an app that breaks immediately, failed to keep out apps that literally cannot make it past the launch screen.

[Fraser Speirs:](#)

The iOS 7 and now iOS 8 rollouts have simply not been up to the quality of earlier releases. [...] We have seen issues with crashing, devices rebooting, rotation glitches, keyboards playing up, touch screens not responding. Indeed I'm typing this while babysitting the full restore of an iPad that one pupil "broke" - through no fault of their own - while updating to iOS 8.

[Gus Mueller:](#)

There's been a bit more grumbling than usual about the quality of Apple's software recently. And I can't help but feel like things have changed for the worse. Random crashes, system instability, background processes crashing and having to reboot to fix things. I'm sure I've said it before, but I really think Apple is trying to move too fast.

[Mark Crump:](#)

In hindsight, the trouble began in 2012. That's when Apple moved OS X to the same yearly release cycle as iOS. Since OS X has always been the Peter that Apple robbed to pay Paul (the iOS release cycle), I was concerned Apple would be writing checks it couldn't cash. [...] All of these show systemic failure in Apple's beta testing. It's inexcusable for a major new feature like HealthKit to be pulled right after launch due to missed bugs. It's even worse when an update makes your phone unable to make calls.

[Clark Goble](#):

Apple's been at a breakneck pace to compete with Google. However the time really has come to slow down a bit. The OS is mature. Yet the APIs have been changing so fast it's hard to keep up with what one is supposed to do.

[Brent Simmons](#):

These days, programmers spend hours and days and weeks working very hard, and usually unsatisfactorily, on getting around bugs in their platform.

[Michael Yacavone](#):

The hard edge of the watch image is an homage to the state of modern software development tools, exemplified by the typical developer experience of everything working fine, and then one day looking up to find a new language, 1,500 new APIs, yet another beta version of the IDE, your old code not working properly in the new SDK, a supposed "GM" release that is more buggy than the last beta, an end-user release recalled in hours, an update for a shell exploit dormant since the '90s, as well as a wide variety of application interaction WTF, all marching toward a ship schedule so disconnected from quality, stability, and reliability it's like walking off a cliff.

[Kristopher Johnson](#):

Apple's operating systems, applications, services, and development tools are all pretty janky. I hope someone at Apple worries about that.

I [didn't think](#) yearly OS releases would be good for quality, and I continue to believe that Apple is trying to move too fast.

Update (2014-10-11): John Gruber and Guy English discuss this issue on [The Talk Show](#).

Update (2014-10-12): [Collin Allen](#):

There are so many bugs in iOS 8. How did this ever get through testing? Frustrating.

[Landon Fuller](#):

For Apple to fix quality, it seems like they'd have to step back from deeply embedded process/cultural changes that arose with iOS' success.

There are lots of comments on [Reddit](#).

Update (2014-10-14): There are more comments [at MacRumors](#).

Update (2014-10-15): [Rob Griffiths](#) writes what he would like Tim Cook to say about all this.

Update (2014-10-16): [TUAW \(comments\)](#):

With engineers at Apple working at full throttle to keep new updates coming down the pipeline, some have started to

wonder if Apple's resources are being stretched too thin. Especially for a company like Apple which tends to have leaner teams, some have voiced the opinion that Apple needs to take its foot off of the gas just a bit to help ensure that future software releases have the level of polish longtime Mac and iOS users are accustomed to.

Update (2014-10-18): [Brice Pollack](#) (via [Dave Verwer](#)):

Unfortunately, despite the awareness of these daily challenges, it is unclear what is being done to improve upon them. This brings me to my next point. Although Apple has nearly limitless financial resources, I found the company to be incredibly reactive. Eagerly throwing resources into addressing the current biggest user facing issue rather than building the necessary tooling and testing needed to prevent those in the future.

[...]

When project managers start tracking bug numbers upon nearing release dates, tactics or tricks are often used to hide or kill bugs in order to meet milestones. One common tactic was to simply make further investigation so onerous on the person who filed it that they give up and kill the bug, marking it as "not enough information to resolve".

Update (2014-10-19): [Nick Heer](#):

Apple's been busy this year. But, as Michael Tsai's quote roundup reveals, it hasn't been smooth sailing — the buggy yearly iOS and OS X releases, in particular, have revealed a very rushed schedule. [...] That Apple is working on yet another OS — Watch OS — isn't a free pass for their declining software quality, however. While they were never perfect, the company has long been revered for its consistently-high quality bar. Now? Certainly not as much.

Update (2014-11-22): [Peter Cohen](#):

Yosemite and iOS 8 are fraught with enough difficulties for enough users that I feel like neither of them are fully baked.

Update (2014-12-27): [Lloyd Chambers](#):

Apple Core Rot is accelerating. I deal with it every single day many times over. Stuff that worked for years breaks, while new visual crapware is piled on endlessly. Apple Mail deletes my VIP list every day, file open dialogs are sluggish in most programs, to 4-8 second delays in DreamWeaver and with display glitches. APIs are removed breaking apps some users depend upon. In 10.10.1, Apple broke display scaling APIs in 10.10.1 leading to all sorts of issues with Photoshop and dual and 4K displays, so much so that I *cannot use a large 4K display as the main screen* and still with problems as a 2nd.

Update (2014-12-29): [Marco Arment](#):

I hope Apple realizes how deeply their reputation has been

damaged, in an alarmingly short time, by their rapid decline in software quality.

I'm not excited about the Watch — I'm afraid of the toll it will take on Apple's greatly strained engineering resources.

[Chris Adamson](#):

What the hell has happened? Remember two years ago when there was such an uproar over Core Data in iCloud not working? It was a hot-button issue, but very limited in scope: Core Data was still a trusted tool when used locally, and even iCloud behaved for most developers using it for documents or simple plists. It was a problem that didn't involve a lot of collateral damage.

By comparison, what we've seen in the last six months is pervasive, if not ubiquitous. It's in the developer tools, it's in the operating system, it's in iLife and iWork. It's like the floor has utterly dropped out from beneath all Apple software, across the board.

Update (2015-01-06): I've posted a new series of links at [Apple's Software Quality, Continued](#).



[26 Comments](#)

## 26 Comments

**Derek Bolander**

[October 11, 2014 3:42 PM](#)

But isn't this precisely what the coliseum crowd wanted from Apple? Innovate! Innovate! Now! Now! The masses will be bored if iOS 7 UI changed in no time and will want something else. Stockholders will criticize that Apple isn't shipping new stuff every other week.

Wish this publicly traded corporation could go private.

**Alger Pistoli**

[October 11, 2014 3:47 PM](#)

is this an anti-Apple site, paid by its competitors? The rollout for iOS8 wasn't flawless, NONE of them ever were. Patches are to be expected - this is a business, not a magic show. 8 works flawlessly on my older iPad. If Apple's "wounds" are self-inflicted, then they're simply a casualty of ever-higher expectations due to each new product - including software - surpassing the standards.

**David Becker**

October 11, 2014 5:48 PM

Whiners all, Apple is damned if they do, damned if they don't, the bottom line is, anybody making money on Apple stock? I sure did

**Michael Tsai**

October 11, 2014 5:53 PM

@Derek I think most of the calls for Apple needing to innovate were about hardware, e.g. whole new products, which was ridiculous. On the software side, they probably did feel pressure to catch up to what Android and Windows Phone were doing in certain areas. But I think Apple has generally been good about doing what they think is right rather than what shareholders say they want.

@Alger The iOS 8 rollout was pretty bad: a bug that erased all iWork documents and the 8.0.1 update that prevented people from making calls, among others. Has that happened before? It's hard to measure this sort of thing, but my impression is that this is not a matter of higher expectations but that there really are more bugs. I would argue that Mavericks and iOS 7 never even got to the (mostly) bug-free releases that Apple has typically shipped towards the end of a major version. And, as a developer, I ran into more, and more serious, bugs with Yosemite this summer than with previous pre-releases.

**Stefan Youngs**

October 11, 2014 5:54 PM

Software development is a process, not a product. Perfection is impossible. Why? Because it's written by people and people don't get everything right every time, and even when they do get it right, something else changes to break it. That's how it is.

Let's just look at a couple of comparable software development environments.

Android: unbelievably fragmented. Highly susceptible to security exposures. Almost impossible to update massive parts of the installed base. Riddled with tracking and advertising hooks designed to serve its owner, not its users.

Windows: Vista. 'Nuff said. Oh! And the world's biggest vector for malware.

It's right that Apple should be held to a higher standard. That's only what the company expects, and what we demanding Apple users expect. And there will be times when things go awry, especially as the depth and breadth of its software Eco-system expands. But let's not get carried away with the trope that this is something Apple isn't addressing and cannot improve.

Apple provides me and my team with a richly endowed, high productivity environment, with high security and does this all with panache and elegance. Sometimes we forget just how good this all is.

Could it be even better? Of course. Will it be? I'm pretty sure I know the answer to that one.

**Michael Tsai**

[October 11, 2014 6:05 PM](#)

@Stefan It's fine to put this in a broader perspective, but where is the evidence that Apple is addressing this and improving it? This entire post is about how the trend seems to be going in the wrong direction. iOS 8 seems to be *more* ambitious than iOS 7. If they announced that they were dropping the yearly schedule, or decoupling hardware updates from software updates, or doing a Snow Leopard-style release—that would be something. Instead, we have Apple Watch, Apple Pay, and Photos coming mid-cycle; possibly an Apple TV SDK; and a brand-new programming language.

**Andrew**

[October 11, 2014 7:15 PM](#)

Tim Cook sounded very proud of Apple's 1-year cadence at the keynote recently. He promoted it as a competitive advantage the firm has. However, I'm concerned that advantage could backfire given the depth and breadth of bugs that are appearing in their releases.

I think they can continue to develop rapidly, but don't necessarily need to release rapidly.

**Dr.ool**

[October 11, 2014 10:05 PM](#)

1000s of developers were put on Apple Watch will be so niche that all the geeks will even more epileptic.

PC industry no longer has growth, when you don't have growth and people upgrading for any reason. Apple will be force to move to fashion.


Answer to complexity is Swift even though Frameworks, compilers, debugger and XCode are very fragile compare to past.

Safari was very stable before forced to do multi-process and sandbox because of Chrome and Security.

after SJ and at the time of Forestall, a lot of engineers were

retiring.

So new blood is just not up to it and may never be.  
Old school NeXT have left the building and know the new generation has to do the heavy lifting. Basically new code need to replace the old code just so it can be maintained.

Apple will need to beta test for 6 months instead of 3.5 months. You would think that HealthKit (Tim Cooks baby) would be get extra attention instead he is too buy playing with .

**highlysuspicious**

[October 12, 2014 4:41 AM](#)

@Stefan Youngs

"Android: unbelievably fragmented. Highly susceptible to security exposures. Almost impossible to update massive parts of the installed base. Riddled with tracking and advertising hooks designed to serve its owner, not its users."

You are 100% right. Yet 85% of smartphone purchasers last quarter chose Android.

"Windows: Vista. 'Nuff said. Oh! And the world's biggest vector for malware."

Oh man.. so true! But 89% of our more traditional computer users chose Windows (and they have been choosing Windows over Apple in similar numbers for decades, in fact the ratio was slightly \*more\* in Microsoft's favor back when Vista was a current product).

It's like 85% of the world just doesn't get it. They're probably just poor or in some cases slaves, so I know I shouldn't care, but somehow it still really irks me.

**someone**

[October 12, 2014 9:31 AM](#)

@Alger "is this an anti-Apple site, paid by its competitors?"

Sure, let's just shoot the messenger.

**Chucky**

[October 12, 2014 10:07 AM](#)

*"Sure, let's just shoot the messenger."*

The proof positive of Alger's perfectly cromulent allegation is all



those anti-Apple folks, paid by its competitors, that Michael pull-quotes.

(BTW, this is a by far the best roundup of the issue I've seen, Michael. Mandatory reading.)

**NotTellinYou**

[October 12, 2014 6:58 PM](#)

Wow...first Apple is hit for going too slow...not too fast. I've seen the same thing but suspect the issue is more of increasing complexity to satisfy the "not moving fast enough" cabal than anything else. As someone in the software business I can't imagine the QA and regression testing needed and Apple's most recent move to public betas may help that alone and hostage to the current situation. I also know we've been down this road before with prior releases and as was the case then it will pass. Carry on!

**Gert**

[October 13, 2014 5:33 AM](#)

Apple needs a Snow Leopard like break.  
No new features. Just refinement - everywhere.  
Even if it takes them 2 years.

**John Davis**

[October 13, 2014 9:02 AM](#)

What a lot of negative comments!

iOS8.02 works perfectly on my iPhone and iPad. The battery life on the iPad has improved ENORMOUSLY. I've been playing with Yosemite for the last month or so. It's snappy, easy on the eyes, has some great features and it's a good solid update.

I don't think Apple software has gotten worse in the last few years. I do think that Apple has expanded HUGELY during this time. And, as it expands, it takes in more bleaters and moaners.

**mike**

[October 13, 2014 11:12 AM](#)

Couldn't agree more with all the concern from the original posters. I loved Apple's OS X up-date earlier in the year that destroyed my laptop's WiFi connectivity for 7 months until Apple finally got around to fixing it. There is no arguing that Apple is releasing software and up-dates not ready for prime time. Whose that sound like?

**Chucky**

[October 13, 2014 11:31 AM](#)

*"What a lot of negative comments!"*

What a lot of negative pull-quotes that accurately reflect sentiments from long-time Apple developers and long-time positive-on-Apple reporters.

-----

*"There are lots of comments on Reddit."*

I had initially been wondering how the ignorant fanboi commenters were getting here. Then I finally guessed the post must have made it to Reddit, where the "Which Is The One True God?" folks hang out. Always feels nice to have guessed right.

**Sean Bergin**

[October 17, 2014 1:33 PM](#)

I would like to add my small voice to the chorus of "Snow iOS" and "Snow Yosemite". As a developer all this fragility and change is draining and as a user I am seeing the fraying edges in other software that I depend on such as drivers and system utilities.

**Mike Llewellyn**

[October 22, 2014 6:04 AM](#)

I have to agree with the sentiments expressed in the quotes above. New hardware doesn't require new software version every single time, and solid stability has to be the deciding factor for release to the public.

And an ObjC 3.0 would have been far preferable to a new static language. It feels like change for the sake of change, rather than for the sake of improvement.

**OS X and iOS Software Rushed, Buggy | NSLog();**

[November 1, 2014 9:44 AM](#)

[...] Apple's Software Quality Decline [...]

**10 things we learned about Apple this year – Quartz**

[December 12, 2014 7:06 AM](#)

[...] seem to work by accident. Apple Maps is still not in the same league as Google Maps. Here is an entire list of Apple-watchers talking about a decline in software [...]

**[Ari Goldstein](#)**

[December 22, 2014 12:57 PM](#)

There is plenty of excerpts of Steve telling Tim 'don't try to do what I did', which I think is open to so much interpretation that it is dangerous to the future health of the company. In Steve's defense and for who he is, I believe he was great at making decisions and putting simple order to failed systems. He also understood the mentality of users, had a history of understanding systems like the Mac, Next, BeOS, SGI, etc. He drew off of historical references. He also drew from a base of experiences with his employees, and used that experience to rebuild Apple from failure to success.

To Tim is amazing at picking up the company and making it run, but the lessons that Steve had and the 'common sense' that he had was not well documented. Therefore, it is more so left to people to verbally say what Steve wanted and what he did not want.

While the critics in this forum have stated in various articles that Apple is veering away from what Steve re-established into a new era, it is in the best interest of the current Apple board, Tim and the entire company to both appreciate and take seriously these comments.

A good start would be something I have not read about, but came from my brain - to review in detail what happened to the company after Steve left the first time, and how he brought it to success. It happened in all areas: From the board, to his fellow C level folks, to all different teams like QA, iOS Engineering, OSX Engineering, Design, etc.

SO while the idea that 'don't try to be like me' is one worth considering, I don't believe the MARKET Steve re-created (i.e., the people who bought the product) is wanting TOO much of a change, nor

So the concept of "do what's right" in Steve's mind came from a completely different area than what is operating today. What's right is simply too vague and open up to more than enough interpretation that it could bring the company to its knees. CEO of Starbucks left for esoteric marketing and product development, but was called back to fix the business. The lessons there should be reviewed by people at the top like Tim. In short, Schultz at Starbucks allowed his company to be a publicly traded company, and the entire company shifted focus to exist for the sake of the stock market and profits, and left behind the focus and purpose of the business that built it.

So I believe the purpose of Apple, who its market is, what purpose the company serves to the world, and how it operated under Steve needs to be reviewed and understood before anything else happens. I don't think Apple is making a conscious decision to walk away from Steve's ideas and structures, but didn't

have enough legacy written and dictated in order to maintain a constant cadence. Therefore we see a lack of quality control, larger design changes, and overall a much much bigger product line that is complicating and wrecking the old direction and creating a new direction.

I am proposing a well defined and regularly groomed discussion of these things:

What were we?

How did Steve change focus and better the company?

Where are we headed?

The biggest problem that these highly qualified critics and I have are: Does Apple really know what they are, and where they are going? Are they familiar with what they are walking away from? I believe the answer is no. I think they know where they are going, but not what was established to get them there.

By the way - this is management consulting, and deserves proper compensation to really go about this properly.

**[Michael Tsai – Apple’s Software Quality Decline | jeffmueller.net](#)**

[December 29, 2014 2:07 PM](#)

[...] Michael Tsai – Apple’s Software Quality Decline [...]

**eptx**

[January 1, 2015 12:49 AM](#)

Sadly, core productivity apps like email and calendar suffer the worst problems in my day to day use. They crash, they hang, they consume system resources, they're often out of sync, etc. This is the 1st time in a decade that I'm starting to rethink mac as my platform of choice.

**[Michael Tsai - Blog - Apple’s Software Quality, Continued](#)**

[January 6, 2015 12:01 PM](#)

[...] Marco Arment (comments) continues on the theme of my post from October: [...]

**[Brice Pollock » Enjoy Your iPhone More by Ditching These Apps](#)**

[January 12, 2015 9:25 AM](#)

[...] 8. This frustration is mainly due to the atrocious syncing between OS X and iOS. I’m definitely not the only one who has noticed the drop in quality. So, if you are feeling the pain as well, here are some great [...]

**[Tell them, my song. » What sucks about the MacBook Pro when you're an IT guy](#)**

[January 15, 2015 5:19 AM](#)

[...] Performance. Yes. You only know how slow OS X really is when you use Windows or Linux natively on the same Apple hardware. Except for the not correctly localized keyboards, Apple builds very beautiful hardware. It really is their software that sucks, as even some of the more renowned software developers in the OS X community have recently posted. Just read the related article on Forbes or Michael Tsai's blog. [...]

Stay up-to-date by subscribing to the [Comments RSS Feed](#) for this post.

## Leave a Comment

Name

E-mail (will not be published)

Web site

Submit Comment