

One to One in Two

Written by Philip Roy

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I've spent the past week in the United States, at the Adobe Headquarters in San Jose. Having been appointed as NZ's first Adobe Higher Education Leader, it was great to be able to attend their Summer Institute for Education Leaders and meet some very talented people. It was also great to see the sharp and welcoming contrast I received from Adobe (spending 5 days in their building and meeting their staff) compared to my two attempts to visit Apple HQ in recent years...both as a writer for NZ Macguide and as the owner of this site...which has seen me do little more than stand outside and take photos.

I'm writing this at San Francisco Airport, having spent the day in San Francisco before I fly back to New Zealand. I'm pleased to report that despite any support from Apple, I've been to two separate Apple Stores on this one week trip, stood outside Mecca (Apple HQ) and purchased some goodies to give away on this site....but purchased nothing for myself.

The two stores that I visited are very different in layout and size. But at the same time, the atmosphere in both was impressive...as were the number of staff. I'm assuming these staff get paid little or that Apple makes a fortune, because at one point I actually started laughing with how often I was asked how I was doing by the same person.

The first store was in Westfield Valley Fair Mall in San Jose. I had a day off before I headed back to San Francisco and decided that any mall would do, to get some shopping done. It was a reasonably sized mall and I had forgotten that it had an Apple Store (<http://www.apple.com/retail/valleyfair/>). On the web, the store looks small....and it kinda is...but much bigger than a traditional store in New Zealand. Think of it a bit like a box of chocolates (no, no Forrest Gump analogy, I hate that movie) in shape....flat, wide, rectangular, and reaching back a fair distance.

The store was one level only and deceptively long and wide. At one end a wide door, at the very other end, the Genius Bar....with display tables throughout the rest of the store, Macs, iPods and iPhones on these tables and along the two sides....with plenty of boxed products (including software I always thought you'd get on the web only) to buy.

The Apple Store in San Francisco (<http://www.apple.com/retail/sanfrancisco/>) is quite different. You're met at the wide door by two options...go straight up the cool glass stairs, or detour right or left along the sides of the stairs to look around the downstairs area.

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Having been there before (<http://www.nzmac.com/features/reports/visit-to-an-apple-store.html>) , I decided to go straight upstairs to the training theatre area, hook up to the free wireless, check my emails and do some other work.

The training session that I happened to sit in on was an introductory session. I'd seen sessions before, but never one on getting started...and it really looked like everyone sitting there were new Mac users. Interestingly, they all seemed a bit older than you might expect (60+ maybe?) and were diligently following along to the instructor to learn how to get their screen saver going, set energy saver settings etc. The gentleman next to me had a very shiny new MacBook Air, but didn't quite understand how his Mac worked when going to sleep....so I had to show him to wait a moment before the glowing light started to 'breathe' in and out.

These free sessions are superb and add to the whole atmosphere of people just being invited to come in and hang around the store, play with Macs (theirs or the ones on display) and learn more and more about the Mac. But what has impressed me this trip is the new "One to One" (<http://www.apple.com/retail/onetoone/>) feature now available at these two stores (and all other stores).

It's easy to see why Apple have done it. Previously you got your Mac and little else by way of help...other than a reasonably brief booklet that came with your Mac. If you wanted to come back to get some help, you had to book in to a free session to see an Apple Genius.

The problem is that the Genius Bar was effectively designed for those challenging questions and problems....not for someone wanting to spend some time being shown how to use Pages or Numbers. So that's where One to One comes in.

One to One is \$99 USD and only available when you buy a new Mac. You can extend it once for another year. One of the nice features is that they'll help you move your stuff from your old Mac (or PC!!) to your new Mac...keeping in mind you have to bring your Mac in for this to happen. They'll also install all the software you've purchased to help get you set up.

"Personal training" is then on offer in three forms, and I saw this in action in the store...one hour personal support, training workshops (in small groups) and a website that you can access. I just love this idea....OK, I know you have to pay for it...but heck, for \$99 USD, how many people do

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you think would say "Heck yeah...I'll come back for training and setup sessions with you!!"....answer...loads I imagine. I mean, otherwise, you're at home and thinking "what do I do now?". Sure you can phone Apple Support or look on the web...but sometimes you just want a Mac user their. Sure they may be an expert, but from what I saw, they don't play the genius....they're your "One to One" friend, there to take you a few steps further.

There are a raft of personal training sessions on various activities and I'm really impressed with the idea...it not only gets your using your Mac...but possibly gets you using your Mac far faster and with greater variety than you might have originally planned.

"Personal Projects" then takes things further...and I'll be honest here, it's been my dream to have a Mac store that ran like this. I've always wished I had enough money to run a store that people came in and signed on to tutorials...hands on tutorials...not just 'chalk and talks'. "Personal Projects" is described as 3 hour sessions when you can come in and work on a project on your Mac, but in the shop. Want to edit a movie in Final Cut? Need someone there when things go wrong? Book in a personal project time and do the work in the Apple Store with an expert on hand when you need them. Brilliant!

Don't forget though....the Genius Bar is still free if you need a real expert for (I think) 30 minutes.....but they're the experts...there to answer the tricky stuff. Sometimes, you just want a one to one with someone to ask a few silly questions, be shown a few things and advance your Mac skills further. Apple (in the States at least) make that process that much easier.

<http://www.apple.com/retail/onetoone/>

<http://www.nzmac.com/features/reports/apple-stores-july-2009.html>