



Ahrendts reveals the new store layout in a press preview.

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THE DRAMATIC MAKEOVER OF APPLE'S RETAIL STORES

Entertainment, relaxation, and a few iPhone sales too. BY DON REISINGER

APPLE IS THINKING DIFFERENT—AGAIN. This time, the tech giant wants to revolutionize the havens where it hawks its wares by making them destinations for far more than just gadgetry.

Since 2014, retail chief Angela Ahrendts and design chief Jony Ive have been collaborating to revamp the wildly lucrative Apple Store, its glassy temple for iPhones, iPads, Macs, and Watches.

In May the first fruits of that collaboration were on display at a new flagship store in San Francisco's Union Square. Apple installed a 50-foot-tall video wall and created several areas for visitors to congregate. It also upgraded its familiar Genius

Bar customer service stand to a "Genius Grove," situated under a canopy of ficus trees grown at a local nursery. Piper Jaffray analyst Gene Munster describes it as "the heart and soul of the Apple Store."

"We are reinventing the role our stores and employees play in the community," Ahrendts tells *Fortune*. "We want to be more like a town square, where the best of

Apple comes together and everyone is welcome."

That includes businesses too. With its new store design, Apple has worked to attract enterprise customers by adding what it calls a "Boardroom," where Apple's business team staff are on hand for consultations.

And at select Apple Stores the company will install "The Plaza," an area with free Wi-Fi, additional seating, and weekend concerts.

"We are renewing our focus on liberal arts—humanizing technology through experiences that educate and entertain visitors and empower entrepreneurs," Ahrendts says.

The Apple Store remains at its core a retail shop, but much like how Starbucks revamped its cafés with better sight lines and seating arrangements, Apple seeks to reimagine its stores to be their own attractions.

With nearly 500 locations worldwide, Apple stands to rack up quite a bill renovating its retail stores. But if the company gets it right, Apple will continue doing what it has always done exceptionally well: sell a lifestyle, not just a gadget. **T**



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