

Creativity, Inc.

Ed Catmull

January 31, 2019

- **Dream**

The animators who work here are free to—no, encouraged to—decorate their work spaces in whatever style they wish. They spend their days inside pink dollhouses whose ceilings are hung with miniature chandeliers, tiki huts made of real bamboo, and castles whose meticulously painted, fifteen-foot-high styrofoam turrets appear to be carved from stone. Annual company traditions include “Pixarpalooza,” where our in-house rock bands battle for dominance, shredding their hearts out on stages we erect on our front lawn.

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February 3, 2019

- **Believe in the Future and Your Ability to Shape It**

Whether evoking wagons or ships, George [Lucas] thought in terms of a long view; he believed in the future and his ability to shape it. The story has been told and retold about how as a young filmmaker, in the wake of *American Graffiti*’s success, he was advised to demand a higher salary on his next movie, *Star Wars*. That would be the expected move in Hollywood: Bump up your quote. Not for George, though. He skipped the raise altogether and asked instead to retain ownership of licensing and merchandising rights to *Star Wars*. The studio that was distributing the film, 20th Century Fox, readily agreed to his request, thinking it was not giving up much. George would prove them wrong, setting the stage for major changes in the industry he loved. He bet on himself—and won.

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- **Magic of Storytelling**

As Alvy [Ray Smith] tells it, John [Lasseter] then “proceeded to save [*The Adventures of André and Wally B.*]. I’d foolishly thought I’d be the animator, but frankly, I didn’t have the magic. I could make things move very nicely, but not think, emote, and have consciousness. That’s John.”

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- **“Boy, is He Arrogant”**

*After Steve [Jobs] left, Bill [Joy] turned to me and said, “Boy, is he arrogant.”
When Steve came by our booth again later, he walked up to me and said of Bill: “Boy, is he arrogant.”*

I met with Steve [Jobs] and gently asked him how things got resolved when people disagree with him. He seemed unaware that what I was really asking him was how things would get resolved if we worked together and I disagreed with him, for he gave a more general answer.

He said, “When I don’t see eye to eye with somebody, I just take the time to explain it better, so they understand the way it should be.”

(p. 43)

February 13, 2019

- **We Also Learn from Our Mistakes**

In a fear-based, failure-averse culture, people will consciously or unconsciously avoid risk. They will seek instead to repeat something safe that's been good enough in the past. Their work will be derivative, not innovative. But if you can foster a positive understanding of failure, the opposite will happen.

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- **Dare to be Creative**

While experimentation is scary to many, I would argue that we should be far more terrified of the opposite approach. Being too risk-averse causes many companies to stop innovating and to reject new ideas, which is the first step on the path to irrelevance. Probably more companies hit the skids for this reason than because they dared to push boundaries and take risks—and, yes, to fail.

To be a truly creative company, you must start things that might fail.

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