

Dreams and Dreamers

How to Innovate Like Walt
Disney and the Pixarians

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Why Pixar?

- 1995
- Corporate Playground
- *Toy Story*, Looking at the World Through the Eyes of a Child

Through the Eyes of a Child

“As naïve as it may sound, making *Toy Story* felt like an extension of school, we were just making a film we wanted to make for us and our friends to enjoy.” Pete Docter

Goals

- Paint a picture of Pixar's magical playground
- Inspire you to create your own playground where collective creativity abounds.
- Provide ideas for addressing key issues in your own organizations

Key Issues

- Teamwork
- Turnover/Maintaining Talent
- Do More with Less
- Speed of Innovation

The Dreamers

- Walt Disney
- Ed Catmull
- Alvy Ray Smith
- John Lasseter

- Dream Like a Child
 - Believe in Your Playmates
 - Dare to Jump in the Water and Make Waves
 - Do Unleash Your Childlike Potential

Dream Like a Child

Where did the Creativity Go?

- First-mover advantage not always the case
- 1912 White Castle – 1961 McDonalds
- 1871 Woolworth – 1962 Wal-Mart
- 1919 Felix the Cat – 1928 Mickey Mouse

Short-Term Stupidity

- “It is never about cheaper faster. It’s creating for the long-term. People here love the characters and they are aware these films, if done correctly are living things.” Brad Bird

Hey Kids, Let's Put on a Show!

- “What makes a movie successful is not only the technology but the story that brings people to see it over and over—it’s got to be heartfelt and warm.” Andrew Slabin, entertainment analyst

Hey Kids, Let's Put on a Show!

- *Toy Story 2* (1999) “direct to video”
- “These were the people that put out *Cinderella II*. We believe that the only reason to do a sequel is if you have a great story, period... We want these (Pixar) films to be at the same level of the films Walt Disney made.” John Lasseter

Begin with the Story

“True earned emotion is something that you really have to craft.”

John Lasseter

- 3D Technicolor Images
- Magical Moments
- Unique, Memorable, Engaging Experience

The Setting

Part of the creative experience -
don't overlook or short-change it

Recruit the Cast

- Colorful, unique, memorable, magical moments will seldom be created by boring, myopic, unimaginative people!
- Brad Bird – *Incredibles*, 2005

Design the Backstage Processes

“ When technology and art come together – magical things happen...Walt Disney understood this.” Ed Catmull

**Believe in Your
Playmates**

Collaboration in the Sandbox

“I think we shouldn’t give up until we have found all we can about how to teach these young [people]...[how] to stir their imaginations so when they get into actual animation they’re not just technicians, but actually creative people.” Walt Disney 1935

Collaboration in the Sandbox

- PU – everyone given opportunity to take classes on company time
- Why teach drawing to accountants?
“It doesn’t just teach them to draw, it teaches them to be more observant.”
Randy Nelson
- "Alienus Non Diutius"

Collaboration in the Sandbox

- **Depth** - mastery in a subject
- **Breadth** - a vast array of experiences and interests; having empathy for others
- **Communication** - focusing on the receiver
- **Collaboration** - bringing together the skills, ideas and personality styles of an entire team to achieve a shared vision

Stand Together Against the Bullies

- You've Got a Friend in Me!
- Jeffery Katzenberg, head of Walt Disney Studios

How to Deal with Bullies in Suits

Establish milestones to:

- Report Routine Status
- Continue to Sell the Dream
- Gain Management Buy-in

How to Deal with Bullies in Suits

*There is no right way to do the
wrong thing!*

*Dare to Jump in the Water and
Make Waves*

Encourage Failure

“You have to honor failure, because failure is just the negative space around success.” Randy Nelson

Encourage Failure

- “The process of artistic inquiry is exploration and discovery. It’s making mistakes a million thousand times... and saving and valuing specific things...that is what you hold onto as an artist...” Rick Wamer, OMA

Encourage Failure

Failure can be exciting. It captures the imagination. But...you've got to fail at the speed of change. And when you do, rejoice and learn!

Recess

- “Fun squelchers” fear disruption and disorder, equates to a loss of productivity
- “...the most significant impact on a movie’s budget – but never in the budget – is morale. If you have low morale, for every \$1 you spend, you get about 25 cents of value. If you have high morale, for every \$1 you spend you get about \$3 of value. Companies should pay much more attention to morale.” Brad Bird

Quiz

- Is it common to hear laughter coming from your employees?
- Does the laughter continue when management is around?
- Is the workplace humor good-natured constructive ribbing rather than destructive sarcastic criticism?
- Does your boss usually have an optimistic and happy attitude?

Quiz

- When something gets screwed up, can the team step back and laugh at their mistake?
- Do you have fun celebrations on a regular basis?
- Is the physical workplace conducive to fun?
- Do you engage your customers (internal and/or external) in your fun environment?

If you answered “NO” to two or more, you may be suffering from:

“Sobriety Flippancy”
(abstinence of humor)

Fun

- “We worked really hard, but we also had so much fun, and it showed up in our work. We’d goof off, we’d laugh, we’d work together, and we’d look at and give feedback on each other’s stuff. And the creativity just sort of overflowed.” John Lasseter
- When you take yourself too seriously, life ceases to be fun.

Do Unleash Your Childlike
Potential

Let's Make a Dent in the Universe

- *Toy Story 2*
- Brain Trust
- Quality is the Best Business Plan
- The Team is Everything

***“Knowing is not enough;
we must apply. Willing is
not enough; we must do.”***

Goethe

Issues

- Do more with less -"Dream like a Child"
 - Every business is show business
 - Communication
- Turnover - "Believe in Your Playmates"
 - Orientation
 - Leadership

Issues

- Teamwork - "Dare to Jump in the Water and Make Waves"
 - Fun
 - Collaboration
- Speed of Innovation - "Do Unleash Your Childlike Potential"
 - Fail Forward Fast
 - Dream Big

The Dreamers

Alvy Ray Smith

- “...it is really important to have mutual respect and dignity across the technical and graphic divide.”

John Lasseter

- “Quality is the best business plan.”

The Dreamers

Walt Disney

- “I don’t make movies to make money; I make money to make movies.”

Ed Catmull

- “I really want to make movies that touch people and make a difference ...otherwise what are we doing here.”