

# **CREATIVITY, INC.**

## **Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration**

**ED CATMULL with AMY WALLACE**

**ED CATMULL** is a co-founder (along with Steve Jobs and John Lasseter) of Pixar Animation Studios. Since Disney's acquisition of Pixar in 2006, Ed Catmull has also served as president of Pixar Animation and Disney Animation. As of 2014, he has been honored with five Academy Awards as well as a lifetime achievement award in computer graphics. Ed Catmull is a graduate of the University of Utah.

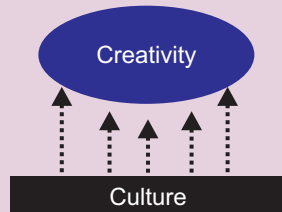
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The Web site for this book is at [www.creativityincbook.com](http://www.creativityincbook.com).

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**MAIN IDEA**

How can you help the smart and ambitious people in your organization work together effectively to create great stuff over and over?



Your capacity to be creative really depends on your culture more than anything else. Build a great culture and make it a fertile environment for new ideas to bubble up and that's precisely what will happen. You then have to protect that culture from the destructive forces which come along over time.

To do this, Pixar has developed throughout its history seven core principle for building (and sustaining) a successful corporate culture:

- 1.... Always have the approach quality is the best business plan of all
- 2.... Don't look at failure as a necessary evil – instead it's a necessary consequence
- 3.... Work on the basis people are more important than ideas
- 4.... Prepare for the unknown because random events are gonna happen
- 5.... Don't confuse the process with the goal of making something great
- 6.... Everybody should be able to talk with anybody in your organization at all times
- 7.... When giving candid feedback, make sure you give good notes

**Pixar's 7 Core Principles for Building a Successful Creative Culture**



**Principle #1 – Always have the approach quality is the best business plan of all . . . . . Page 2**

Quality is never the consequence of following some prescribed set of principles. Instead, it's a mindset you need to have before you set out to do what you're trying to do. You have to live and breathe what you're doing to deliver genuine world-class quality.

**Principle #2 – Don't look at failure as a necessary evil – instead it's a necessary consequence . . . Page 3**

When you set out to do something great, you're going to have a couple of initial failures. If you can uncouple fear and failure and give your people permission to fail while learning, that will be helpful. In creative endeavors, the cost of fixing errors is normally less than the cost of trying to prevent them in the first place.

**Principle #3 – Work on the basis people are more important than ideas . . . . . Page 4**

When you hire people, focus on potential more than current skill levels. Why? The fact is if you give a great idea to a mediocre team, they will usually screw it up. If you give a mediocre idea to a great team, they will fix it or generate something better. People matter.

**Principle #4 – Prepare for the unknown because random events are gonna happen . . . . . Page 5**

Random events are always going to happen. If you waste time playing the blame game, you're going to fall further behind. Empower your employees to own problems and give them freedom to solve them without asking permission.

**Principle #5 – Don't confuse the process with the goal of making something great. . . . . Page 6**

Making every process faster, easier and cheaper is great and worth working on but it's not really your goal. You're trying to make something great. Stay focused on that.

**Principle #6 – Everybody should be able to talk with anybody in your organization at all times . . . Page 7**

An organizational chart is nice but obsessing over making sure everything happens in the "right" order and only through "official" channels is never efficient. Your internal communication structures should never mirror your organizational chart.

**Principle #7 – When giving candid feedback, make sure you give good notes . . . . . Page 8**

One great way to ensure excellence is happening is to always provide truly candid and genuine feedback. Write people notes which tell them:

- What's wrong with their idea
- What's missing in their idea
- What isn't clear about their idea
- What doesn't make sense

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