**Book Review of Creativity, Inc.**

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As mentioned in my other paper, I originally sought out this book for a very simple reason: I absolutely adore Pixar. I was raised with it and have had a far-fetched dream to work for them one day, though I have no goals I currently intend to pursue in order to actually achieve that. That being said, I ingest as much Pixar as possible, so when I saw the cover, I knew I needed to read it.

What I was surprised to learn was that this book was about far more than the company itself- it was about the creative process, a process I am very familiar with. Yet it takes a turn that I was not expecting: it focuses on how to replicate and expand the creative process in a company setting where the creativity must be a day-in and day-out occurrence. Ed Catmull, author of Creativity, Inc. and co-founder of Pixar, focuses on the history of his interest, the creation of Pixar, and the refocusing of Pixar’s purpose. Through these lenses, he examines the success and shortcomings of a company more than thirty years in the making, and shares the knowledge he has learned, not as a secret glimpse into a private world, but as an offering of aid to those who can apply similar tactics.

The book begins with Catmull’s fascination, starting at a very young age, with Disney and animation. As he watched *The Wonderful World of Disney* on their small black and white TV, Catmull dreamed of working, and animating for Disney. Though he did not have the artistic vision for 2-D, hand-drawn animation, his love of the art and love for computers as he aged developed his desire and big dream of creating the first feature-length animated film that was completely computer generated. As wonderful as this dream was, though, the path to its fruition was a mixed, highly fluctuating one in which Catmull and his partner nearly failed time and time again.

Catmull takes the reader through his graduate school years and somehow helps even a non-computer programming focused reader like myself process the science and art that was his doctoral work. As he describes the work environment his doctoral work provided, he highlights the things that worked really well, but clearly foreshadows issues in that environment that were not to be as successful when recreated in a professional structure down the road. As he leaves graduate school and began his first position, Catmull is soon to learn not just what environments do and do not work, but just how critical the managerial role and style is to the success of a creative process.

His first job out of graduate school was at an up-and-coming business in New York City, financed by a millionaire with million-dollar ideas, but no people skills or focus to back them up. His attitude and intense push to do exactly what he wanted without understanding the parameters Catmull was operating under left Catmull feeling used, tired, and wondering how this position would allow him to pursue his dream of creating the computer animated film. And that is when George Lucas and Lucasfilm step in, literally out of the blue.

As Catmull experiences a director who is driven and has stunning ideas, he learns the value of hiring smart people to do great things. As Lucas sought a person to fill the position that Catmull eventually filled, the final question of each interview was to ask who else would be qualified for this position. Of all the candidates, Catmull was the only to list his peers with whom he knew he would be competitive. His candor and ability to recognize the value of others was what got him hired. In that moment, he realized that while good people are crucial, a great team that could speak freely was even more important.

Catmull describes his transition through Lucasfilm, its eventual scaling back, and his persistence to keep his creation (the Pixar machine) with its intended use. While his fledgling company nearly fails, on the second and most desperate attempt, Steve Jobs finally agrees to his terms and for the first time since he was a child, the accessibility of Catmull’s dream is at hand. In what can only be described as a dream, Disney reaches out to Catmull and the team at Pixar to create what would complete his first dream: Toy Story.

Though the book reads as a memoir, it is so much more than that. Catmull does not write in order to reveal the secrets of a magical company, nor to attempt to improve the name and reputation of his work. Rather, he writes with the intention to teach and to share the skills and lessons he has learned in his years as an artist, businessman, and manager. The book is filled with lessons that, despite being a part of a highly creative and successful company, are tangible for the average reader, no matter what subject area or line of work they pursue.

Creativity, Inc. is not a 1-2 step book about how to build a successful empire or business. It does not taut having all the skills or knowledge to avoid any complication or frustration of industry. It is a book about continual learning that has far more in common with a classroom than a standard boardroom. It is filled with the idea that people are people first and employees second; that great minds produce great products; that open candor and communication, with a good helping of great trust and respect for the opinion of others, is a recipe for great idea generation and cooperation. And that final lesson is the most pivotal and central to this course.

All students have the ability to learn and to create. But not all environments or managerial styles (re: teaching styles) are conducive to creating such atmospheres. It is up to the leadership of a classroom, workplace, and team to foster cooperative learning that values the input of all team members in various ways. It requires buy-in from those above and those below. It requires dedication to trying, acknowledging the benefit (not fearing) failure, and adjusting in kind as the team continues to learn. It is not stagnant and it cannot remain within the bubble of “but this is what we’ve always done!” without risking falling behind and dying as new lessons are trying to be learned.

As an educator and creative mind who already loves the ingenuity of Pixar, this book only furthered my passion and love for what they do, while propelling me to do my work even better. And yes, I admit, the dream of working there is back at the forefront of my brain. While I don’t know whether or not I want to, or how I would pursue it, my passion for this company has been sparked and I don’t intend to quench it any longer.