





GETTING STARTED

PROTECTING THE NEW

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING

TESTING WHAT WE KNOW



Getting Started



VALUE SELF-EXPRESSION

- When it comes to creative inspiration, job titles and hierarchy are meaningless.
- It is the focus on people, their work habits, their talents, and their values that is absolutely central to any creative venture.
- Ideas come from people therefore people are more important than ideas.
- Teach in a way that your people think smart when you're not around.
- Approach from this point of view: “How do we enable our people to solve problems?” not "How do we prevent our people from screwing up?"

INSPIRING MANAGERS PUSH THEIR PEOPLE TO EXCEL

- Be patient. Be consistent. Be authentic. The trust will come.
- My aim has been to enable our people to do their best work. We start from the presumption that our people are talented and want to contribute.
- My job as a manager is to create a fertile environment, to keep it healthy, and watch for things that undermine it.
- Managers must loosen the controls not tighten them. They must except risk. They must trust the people they work with and strive to clear the path for them.
- If we are in leadership for the long haul, we must take care of ourselves, support healthy habits, and encourage our employees to have fulfilling lives outside of work.
- When people go out on research trips they always come back changed. They challenge our preconceived notions and keep clichés at bay. They keep us creating rather than copying.
- To confide in employees is to give them ownership over the information.

Protecting the New

PROTECT THE FUTURE, NOT THE PAST

- Only when we admit that we don't know, can we ever hope to learn it.
- Getting the team right is the necessary precursor to getting the ideas right.
- Management's job is not to prevent risk but to build the ability to recover. To find the reason and to remedy it.
- We must be open to having our goals change as we learn new information. As long as our values remain constant our goals can shift as needed.
- You can not achieve creative success by clinging on to what use to be.
- The past can distort our view. It should be our teacher not our master.
- There is a sweet spot between the known and the unknown where originality happens.

HONESTY AND CANDOR

- The best managers acknowledge and make room for that which they do not know. Until one adopts that mindset, the most striking breakthroughs cannot occur.
- Lack of candor, if left unchecked, leads to dysfunctional environments.
- Look for ways to institutionalize candor by putting mechanisms in place that explicitly say that it is valuable.
- Without the critical ingredient that is candor, there can be no trust. Without trust creative collaboration is not possible.
- You do not want to be at a company where there is more candor in the hallways then in the rooms where fundamental ideas for policies are being hashed out.
- When managers explain what their plan is without given the reasons for it, people wonder what the real agenda is.
- Ideas are not singular. They are forged through tens of thousands of decisions often made by dozens of people.



Protecting the New

FEAR AND FAILURE

- What makes Pixar special is that we acknowledge that we will always have problems, many of them hidden from our view. That we work hard to uncover these problems even if doing so means making ourselves uncomfortable and that when we come across one, we marshal all of our energies to solve it.
- Managers must always pay attention and engage with anything that creates fear.
- Be wrong as fast as you can. Turn pain into progress. Failure is a manifestation of learning a new exploration.
- By ignoring my fear, I found that my fear was groundless.
- Do not be driven by the desire to avoid failure. Trying to avoid failure by not thinking about it dooms you to fail.
- Being open about problems is the first step to learning from them.
- The cost of failure is an investment in the future.
- There are two parts to any failure: the event itself and the reaction to it. We control the second part.

CHANGE AND RANDOMNESS

- Solving a problem is not as easy as fixing the original error. Often finding the solution is a multi-step endeavor. You can remove the oak tree but if you do not address the small saplings around the tree, the problem will not be solved.
- The good stuff can hide the bad stuff. When downsides coexist with upside, as they often do, people are reluctant to explore what's bugging them for fear of being labeled complainers.
- Experiments are fact finding missions that over time inch scientists toward greater understanding. Any outcome is a good outcome because it yields new information.
- You'll never stumble upon the unexpected if you stick only to the familiar.



Building and Sustaining



WHEN FACED WITH A CHALLENGE GET SMARTER

- There is nothing quite like ignorance combined with a driving need to succeed to force rapid learning.
- The responsibility for finding and fixing a problem should be assigned to employee from the most tendered manager to the entry-level employee on the production line.
- Use a brain trust to push you toward excellence and root out mediocrity.
- Frank talk, spirited debate, laughter, and love are the qualities of a brain trust. It's job is to excavate the truth.
- Being an artist is not about being able to draw, it's about being able to see.
- You need to assess each situation to see what's called for and then you need to become what's called for.

THE PROCESS EITHER MAKES YOU OR UN-MAKES YOU

- If you give a good a idea to a mediocre team they will screw it up. If you give a mediocre idea to a brilliant team, the will either fix it or throw it away and come up with something better.
- Even the smartest people can form an ineffective team if they are mismatched. That means it is more important to focus on how the team is preforming than the talents of the individuals in it.
- Successful leaders embrace the reality that their models may be wrong or incomplete.
- Measure what you can. Evaluate what you measure. Appreciate the fact that you cannot measure the majority of what you do.
- If you're sailing across the ocean and your goal is to avoid weather and waves, then why the hell are you sailing? You have to embrace that sailing means you can't control the elements and that there will be good and bad days and whatever comes you will deal with it because your goal is to eventually get to the other side.
- The process of problem solving often binds people together and keeps the culture in the present.

Building and Sustaining



EASY ISN'T THE GOAL. EXCELLENCE AND QUALITY IS.

- Quality is a company's greatest asset and its best business plan.
- Quality is a mindset that you must have before you set out to do you're going to do. You must live, think, and breathe it.
- Excellence must be an earned word attributed by others to us, not proclaimed by us about ourselves.
- Making the process better, easier, and cheaper is an important aspiration but it isn't the goal. Making something great is.

BROADENING OUR VIEW

- If you don't try to uncover what is unseen and understand its nature, you will be ill prepared to lead.
- Hindsight is not 20/20. Our view of the past is hardly clearer than our view of the future. Our understanding of the factors that shaped it are severely limited.
- The magician doesn't create the illusion, we do. It is our perception of reality.
- Our models (preconceived notions we have built over time) of the world so distort what we perceive that they can make it hard to see what is right in front of us.
- We typically do not see the boundary between new information coming in from the outside and our old established mental models. We perceive both together as a unified experience.
- When we become caught up in our own interpretations we become inflexible and less able to deal with the problems at hand.
- People who work or live together have, by virtue of proximity and shared history, models of the world that are deeply intertwined together.
- Organizations see the world with a lens of what they already know what to do.
- Our mental models aren't reality. They are tools. The key is knowing the difference.

Building and Sustaining



IT IS ALWAYS ONGOING

- Creative people must accept that challenges never cease, failure can't be avoided, and vision is often an illusion. They also know they must always speak their mind.
- The future is not a destination but a direction. It is our job to work each day to chart the right course and make corrections when inevitably we stray.
- We begin life as children being open to the ideas of others because we need to be open to learn.
- In general, people are hesitant to say things that might rock the boat. Use brain trust meetings, post mortems, and notes days (mechanisms of self-assessment that seek to uncover what is real) to reinforce the idea that it is okay to express yourself.
- Our job as managers in creative environments is to protect new ideas from those who don't understand that in order for greatness to emerge there must be phases of not-so-greatness.

UNLEASH CREATIVITY

- Unleashing creativity requires that we loosen the controls, accept risk, trust our colleagues, work to clear the path for them, and pay attention to anything that creates fear.
- If there are people in your organization who feel they are not free to suggest ideas, you lose.
- As a manager, it is your job to coax ideas out of your staff and constantly coach them to contribute.
- It is not the manager's job to prevent risks. It is the manager's job to make it safe to take them.
- The people responsible for implementing a plan must be empowered to make decisions when things go wrong without approval.
- The healthiest organizations are made up of departments whose agendas differ but whose goals are interdependent. If one agenda wins, we all lose.

Testing What We Know



CREATE A CULTURE THAT WILL OUTLAST YOU

- Managers of creative enterprises must hold on loosely to goals and firmly to intentions.
- The hallmark of a healthy creative culture is that and people feel free to share ideas, opinions, and criticisms.
- Keep your brain nimble by pushing yourself to try things you haven't tried before.
- It is precisely by acting on our intentions and staying true to our values that we change the world.
- Creative people realize their visions over time, in a dedicated protracted struggle. Creativity is more like a marathon than a sprint. You have to pace yourself.
- To change the world we must bring new things into being.

BE THE COMPANY THAT NEVER SETTLES

- One of the most crucial responsibilities of leadership is creating a culture that rewards those who lift not just our stock prices, but our aspirations as well.
- Being too risk adverse causes many companies to stop innovating and reject new ideas. This is the path to irrelevance.
- Companies, just like people, do not become exceptional by believing they are but by understanding the ways that they aren't exceptional.
- Pulling focus away from a particular problem and instead looking at the environment around it can lead to better solutions.
- “We are successful so what we are doing must be correct” or “We failed so what we did was wrong” is shallow thinking.
- People and companies are resistant to self-assessment. Left to our own devices we avoid unpleasantness. We would prefer to talk about what went right not what went wrong.
- “The best way to predict the future is to invent it.” - Allen Kay