How Pixar fosters collective creativity
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BACKGROUND

One simple question
Is it more difficult to find good people or good ideas?

The ‘myth’ about creativity
- Solo vs many people
- Not just a snapshot but a long, arduous process that typically takes four or five years
- Creativity ≠ Innovation?

An unparalleled track record
The archaeological dig ...

• To constantly challenge our own assumptions
• The ultimate test → see if they are transferable (after combination with Disney Animation Studio)

Challenges

• Resist the natural tendency to avoid risks
  – Management is there to troubleshoot and revive the organization ...
• Getting talented people to work effectively together
  – Takes trust and respect (and time) ...

THE CASE

The defining moment for Pixar ...

A dangerous gap

• “A” creative team occupied with ‘A Bug’s Life’
• “Toy Story 2” originally intended to be a direct-to-video film
• Technical people left to develop “Toy Story 2”
• 8 months were left to finish a 18-month plus job

How they made it
Lesson # 1

Give great ideas to a mediocre team

Give not so great ideas to a great team

Lesson # 2

There has to be one quality bar for every film, no matter what

Turning a new page ...

- Old mission: come up with new (and great) ideas
- New mission: assemble small incubation teams to help directors refine their ideas
- At this stage do not judge the teams by their work, judge on the dynamics and the pace of progress

Trick #1: Brain Trust

- The group is convened whenever needed to go through the work so far, followed by a candid discussion
- The beauty of segregating decision making and communication
  - Evidence: did not work out in technical team until the two were segregated

Trick #2: Dailies
Trick #2: Dailies (Cont’d)

- Stands for “daily reviews”
- Constant feedback on a larger scale

Benefits
- More creative when people get over the embarrassment
- Communicate with the entire crew
- Cross learning and inspiration
- Minimize work wasted for ‘wrong’ direction

How to stand the test of time

- Postmortem
  - Do it differently every time
  - Top 5 do’s and don’ts
- Fresh blood
  - Welcome surprises
  - How to orientate new comers (share with them past mistakes)

To reflect ...

- Where to source for good ideas?
- How to work on those good (or not so good ideas)?
- How to maintain creativity in every step of work?
- How applicable to our setting?

Thank you