

## Class 1: August 26th

### Innovation at Pixar:

In 2000 Pixar brought in creative mind Brad Bird. Pixar was unusual in that they not only afraid of becoming complacent, but they actually acted on it. Some of the particular topics of note from the interview with Brad Bird were as follows:

- Bird sought out the "Black Sheep" which are the restless contributors with unconventional ideas. He wanted the people that were committed but frustrated. He felt these people that were almost out the door had a new way of doing things but weren't being given the opportunity to try them. From this he hoped to gain insights on new ways of achieving the same or better results. It worked.
- He directly confronted what he called purists and instilled in them the idea that certain shots need to be perfect and some shots need to be very good. The concept that you might be able to cut corners in certain areas to make an ultimately better product with the assurance of finishing was important to him.
- Part of Bird's ability to get the most out of his employees was the ability to get input from everyone. He rarely acted like he was above any of the employees of Pixar and he felt it important to let them know they had a voice. They also reviewed work as a group so that the best product was created. Employees soon realized that working together would make the movies better and no one would get their head chopped off.

Most people want to get rid of their "Black sheep" because they think they'll turn into a cancer or a destructive force. It turns out, they're probably right. Black sheep will in fact be a destructive force. The problem is, that's exactly what might be required for innovation. If people are unable to try things differently firms will fall behind without even knowing it. Pixar's ability to recognize that they don't want to become complacent before it happened is rare but vital to long run success. Perhaps the most important part of Bird's "Black Sheep" concept is his comment that "*Involved*" people make for better innovation. It is not enough to find the malcontents that just don't like their jobs or any form of authority, but rather the passionate people who want to make a difference but haven't been given the opportunity. Those are the people that are likely to thrive once given the chance, because of their passion and commitment to doing things a better way.

### Cognitive Fitness:

Finally, prove for some of my theories! This article first makes me think of the old saying, healthy body, healthy spirit, healthy mind by which I try to live my life. I have noticed times in my life where I have been able to remember things better

and times when I seem forgetful. I have had phases of being a great creative problem solver and phases where I could not find my way out of a paper bag. I often times link these ruts to my physical workout routine. I assume that when I don't workout my mind isn't as clear and doesn't fire as fast. As this article suggests, that might only be a part of the puzzle. I used working out as a way to clear my mind, but what I might also be doing is stretching it. I might be finding new ways to think and new approaches purely by removing myself from the academic or professional mindset. The article also stresses the importance of 'play' which I traditionally get from working out (either at the gym, or by playing a sport). It makes sense that this is my way of stretching, and strengthening other parts of my brain. Problem solving is often largely driven by the ability to evaluate context rather than to analyze. It then makes sense that by waking up the right side of the brain I would be able to problem solve, or think more creatively about the context of problems.

The beginning of the article refers to musical instruments as a way to shape, stretch and strengthen the mind. I've always been an advocate of a well rounded approach to learning. I think it's important to stretch the mind through music, sport, art, history, science, literature and play. Each has a different set of attributes that most likely effect slightly different parts of the brain. All too often though people find something they like and they stick with it, rather than challenging themselves to do things they don't like. I am a believer in the content of this article and do think that it's possible to keep the mind sharp throughout the aging process.

I also found it important that the article made reference to humor. Humor and laughter in my estimation is the staple of strengthening a creative mind. I believe that there is fun to be had in everything - even the most notoriously boring professions (Tax accountant comes to mind). To me it is more a matter of finding that humor and not being afraid of it.