



Stanford eCorner

Adapt to Reality

Ed Catmull, *Disney/Pixar Animation*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3323/Adapt-to-Reality>

In response to a question from Stanford Prof. Bob Sutton, Pixar and Disney Animation Studios President Ed Catmull talks about believing in organizational strategy, and more importantly, being ready to adapt to the unexpected.



Transcript

This is an aside, but do you believe in organizational strategy after going through that. Because we haven't got to the story about how Pixar emerged and became a film company, what's your view of a long term planning and organizational strategy? Well, at the time I didn't, I was reading a lot books to try and figure it out but I couldn't actually connect with them. It's like surfing, you have to be at the right place to catch the wave. Well I was never at the right place. So we were just tumbling around there in the ocean. But in terms of strategy, in one sense you could say yes we had a business plan, we had a strategy. But I believed, and I'd say this is very early on, is that for all the planning, when the reality hits I am going to adapt to the reality. So our plans quickly went out the window for a variety of reasons. Either because we had miscalled it or we didn't know what we were doing. there were a variety of reasons there.

But in our case we kept re-thinking and trying to adapt to what was there. So you were... they call it improvisation. Our colleague Cathy Eisenhower always talks about how a lot of times you just improvise and respond to what's in front of you and the plan goes out the window constantly. So let's talk a little bit about the early... Still doing that... You're still doing that.