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How to Argue with Steve Jobs

Ed Catmull, *Disney/Pixar Animation*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3326/How-to-Argue-with-Steve-Jobs>

Ed Catmull, president and co-founder of Pixar Animation Studios, describes how he would demonstrate patience and persistence when he and the late Steve Jobs did not agree on something. Jobs co-founded Pixar and was its CEO at the time.



Transcript

Yes, so certainly as we started with Steve, Steve had a reputation. Which everybody knows, it's part of the public record, people talk a lot about it. And I want to later address some of that. But I did ask Steve to begin with, I said, so what happens or how do you work if somebody doesn't agree with you. And he said, well I just explain it to them until they understand. So I go back to my colleagues and explain this and they all have this nervous laugh. Now the thing you should understand is, in all the 26 years with Steve, Steve and I never had one of these loud verbal arguments and it's not my nature to do that. So I never actually had an argument with Steve, but we did disagree fairly frequently about things. And the way it worked was, I discovered, it was that I would say something to him and he would immediately shoot it down because he could think faster than I could. So it would end the conversation and I would then wait a week, and usually this was on the telephone.

I'd call him up and I give my counter argument to what he had said and he'd immediately shoot it down. So I had to wait another week, and sometimes this went on for months. But in the end one of three things happened. About a third of the time he said, oh, I get it, you're right and that was the end of it. And it was another third of the time in which you'd say, actually I think he is right. The other third of the time where we didn't reach consensus, he just let me do it my way, never said anything more about it.