

READING

1 Read the article about Pixar. Answer the questions.

- 1 What is Pixar's current status in relation to Disney?
- 2 What single idea is at the heart of Pixar's philosophy of successful creativity?
- 3 How does the company guard against the risk of failure?
- 4 In what way has the company physically encouraged interaction between staff?
- 5 What does 'the trap of becoming a world unto itself' mean?

VOCABULARY Idioms with back

2 Look at the expression *on the back of* (line 2) from the article. Choose the correct meaning (i-iii). Then match the expressions with *back* (1-10) with their meanings (a-j).

i following on from ii even in spite of iii as a reward for

- 1 turn your back on
 - 2 go back on your word
 - 3 go behind someone's back
 - 4 put it on the back burner
 - 5 turn back the clock
 - 6 take a back seat
 - 7 know something like the back of your hand
 - 8 get your own back
 - 9 go back to the drawing board
 - 10 be laid back
- a be very familiar with something
 - b return to an earlier time
 - c start a plan or project from the beginning again
 - d break a promise
 - e refuse to help
 - f take revenge
 - g act without consulting someone (often deceitfully)
 - h be relaxed
 - i have a less active role
 - j leave for later (while you concentrate on other things)

3 Complete the sentences with expressions from Exercise 2. Use the appropriate form.

- 1 I'm going to _____ in the meeting – it's your idea and you're best placed to make the case for it.
- 2 A lot of people find fame difficult to handle but he _____ about it.
- 3 One leading critic who was not invited to the official launch of the film _____ by writing a negative review later on.
- 4 You can't _____. The economy has changed and we need to adapt to the new environment.
- 5 The government made certain financial commitments to pensioners before the election, but now they have _____ and _____ them.
- 6 The advertisement we created wasn't approved by the management, so we need to _____.
- 7 My colleague _____ and told my boss that I had applied for a new job.



PIXAR

– AN EXERCISE IN NURTURING CREATIVITY

Pixar is the world's leading computer animation studio. On the back of its box office successes, such as *Toy Story* (1995) and *Finding Nemo* (2003), it was bought by Walt Disney studios – already a film-making partner – in 2006 in a deal worth over US\$7 billion. Yet Pixar remained an independent entity, true to its own principles of creative enterprise.

Pixar believes that creativity is not about single original ideas; it's a collaborative effort made by a community of people who trust and get on with each other. Movies contain thousands of ideas – about characters, sets, dialogue, lighting, pacing – and each participant must contribute suggestions that will collectively make it a success. So a community of 'good people' is key to Pixar's philosophy. As its founder, Ed Catmull, says, 'a mediocre team can make a mess of a good idea, whereas a great team can make a success of a mediocre idea.'

But, inevitably, creativity is also about taking risks and because of the enormous costs involved in making a movie, there is always a tension between original creative expression and copying ideas that have been known to deliver commercial success. Pixar's solution to this dilemma is to follow the principle that management is not there to prevent risk but only to ensure that the company's financial recovery is possible if a particular project should fail.

So Pixar creates an environment where it's safe to have ideas, breaking down barriers between employees and management. Its offices contain large communal spaces where people can bump into each other regularly and have free and open exchanges. To avoid the trap of becoming a world unto itself, it also urges employees to keep an eye on technological innovations in the academic community and on how people are using technology in the wider world. In the words of its Chief Creative Officer, John Lasseter, 'Technology inspires art, and art challenges the technology.'

GRAMMAR

- 4 Choose the correct options to complete the summary about animated films.

There ¹ *was / has been* a steady rise in the popularity of animated films ² *over / since* the last fifteen years. Among the top thirty most popular films in the world in 2011, one ³ *in / of* four were animated films. Although a significant ⁴ *element / proportion* of the top thirty films (23%) ⁵ *were / have been* produced outside the USA, all of the animated films were American. *Avatar* has been the highest grossing film (US\$2.7 billion) ⁶ *already / to date*. Some say it is not a true animation film, because the makers ⁷ *have used / used* motion capture and CGI (Computer Generated Imagery) when it ⁸ *has been / was being* made. In fact, in the last ⁹ *little / few* years, the ¹⁰ *vast / enormous* majority of action and adventure films have been made using these techniques.

- 5 Complete the text about Pixar's future with these words.

about to	bound	is going to produce	is to
likelihood	may well	will	will be producing

We've already got *Toy Story 1, 2, 3* and *4* and in all ¹ _____ we will see a *Toy Story 5*. Sequels of other Pixar successes like *Cars* and *Finding Nemo* are also ² _____ to come out. But at what point does the public get tired of sequels? If Pixar ³ _____ realize its founder's ambition – that Pixar ⁴ _____ films long after he is gone – it will need fresh titles too. But this ⁵ _____ be its (and Disney's) thinking: that if it ⁶ _____ creative new films, these will have to be funded by material that is known to work. Is this a risky strategy? Time ⁷ _____ tell. For now it seems to be working, but it doesn't take into account that another innovative film studio could be ⁸ _____ make a breakthrough.

VOCABULARY

- 6 Choose the correct options to complete the two personal accounts about working in film.

A

'I took ¹ *up / in* filmmaking at college. I had always wanted to come at it from a different ² *side / angle*, to break ³ *out of / with* convention. So when I met Amir at college and saw what he was doing with computers, I thought, 'This is it. If we can use this technology in films, ⁴ *the sky's / the stars are* the limit.' So we set out to make our first animation film together. It was a leap in the ⁵ *dark / night*, but it was very exciting.'

B

'I never meant to get into film work. I had actually ¹ *pinned / nailed* my hopes on becoming a stage actor and I had ² *directed / devoted* myself to achieving that goal. But my hopes were ³ *dashed / devastated* when I failed to get into drama school. Luckily I was living with someone who came

⁴ *up / out* with the idea of making our own short film about life as students and putting it online. It was a ⁵ *flare / flash* of inspiration, because very quickly the first film went viral.'

SPEAKING

- 7 Work in pairs. For Pixar, the key to creativity lies in collaboration. In what areas of your work, studies or interests do you like collaborating with people? When would you rather be independent? Give reasons.
- 8 In Pixar's films, toys, fish and cars are given human characteristics and have feelings. Think about an idea for a new animated film which gives human characteristics to something non-human. Then take turns to present your ideas. Try to develop / improve on them with collaboration.

IMPROVE YOUR WRITING Sequencing words and connectors

- 9 Read the account. Look at the underlined sequencing words, connecting words and comment adverbs. Correct or improve them where necessary.

¹ The last summer we booked a two-week holiday in Greece through a travel agent. ² In the first place we were going to book our flights and hotel directly, ³ like we usually do, ⁴ but my husband thought using a package holiday operator would be easier and ⁵ with the addition cheaper. How wrong he was! ⁶ Even the flight itself wasn't luxurious, ⁷ nevertheless it was reasonably comfortable and, ⁸ with good luck, it arrived on time. ⁹ However, from this moment, things went downhill. ¹⁰ Once the plane arrived at two in the morning, there was no bus waiting to transfer us. It had broken down and we had to wait two hours for a relief bus. ¹¹ When it arrived ¹² at the end, I refused to get on it, ¹³ because of it looked so ancient and unsafe. ¹⁴ Instead, we waited until the car hire firm opened at 8.00 a.m. and ¹⁵ after we booked our own transport.

RATING ★

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COMMENTS 9

- 10 Work in pairs. Compare your edited versions of the account in Exercise 9. Did you make the same changes?