

Stuff I've Learned about Projects and Life

Axioms for Improvement

(They're not all technically axioms, but I like calling them that)

1 Don't take away too much freedom.

2 When we make a mistake, we can ask ourselves what it is about our nature that led to the error and resolve or improve on that, rather than simply changing our behavior so that one specific thing won't happen again. What I mean is if we improve on our tendencies, we can prevent problems that haven't occurred yet.

3. This is really the same thing as the second: Learning is a gradual process, but if we feed what we learn back into the function of learning, we will learn exponentially. Said another way, we want learning to be an iterative process, not just a repetitive one. Much of life is repetitive, but we could learn to build on the things we received before.

4 Sometimes people want to believe they are incapable, because it rids them of responsibility. I have heard it said another way:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

-Our Deepest Fear 1992, Marianne Williamson

5 Synergy can be a hundred times better than compromise. (See Steven Covey, *The Third Alternative*)

6 Our own willpower is not always enough. We need to change our hearts.

7 It's important to have a vision. Think about what you'd like to do and then figure out how to do it. This contrasts with merely thinking about your knowledge, tools, and resources and what you could do with them.

It is worthwhile to study project management methodologies and it is most effective to experiment and determine what the best processes are for your teams. Methods will change between departments, across projects, and over time. Although individual departments need the ability to customize their workflow, it is helpful to have some company-wide conventions, especially surrounding communication and vocabulary.

It is best to test the completion of a product early so that problems can be detected earlier in the development process.

In general, complete tasks as early as possible.

Although doing less to avoid depression seems like a good idea, doing more builds our ability to do more.

It is more effective to allot smaller portions of time to complete activities because it makes you work more quickly and forces the most crucial elements to be finished. After enough tasks are completed, you might revisit the activity to improve its quality.

Don't underestimate the power of sleep and taking a break.

Live in the moment: Don't worry about things that are not currently at hand. Enjoy what you are doing now.

Sometimes you must set aside a task with a near deadline to do something important that doesn't have one.

Team members should report and follow up.

Develop a system rather than just doing when no one makes you create one.

Have values as a team.

True, a solution might not work for every scenario. It rarely does. The process of iteration or improvement or success, whatever it is, will vary, but the thing that should be present in everything is that there is evaluation. If you wait to evaluate it will be too late.

Sometimes you drop a design completely.

We often learn more from our failures than our successes. We tend to learn from our failures because we are more emotionally involved with them. We should learn to make our successes an emotional experience.

A lot of it is about seeing things and admitting them as they truly are. — Kory Godfrey

Writing things down usually helps them stick.

If you double check and get a different value, check a third time.

Quotes and Paraphrases

“Far better an approximate answer to the right question, which is often vague, than an exact answer to the wrong question, which can always be made precise.” – John Tukey

Adapt for yourself. There’s a reason there are so many methods. Waterfall can be the perfect solution in some cases. ... Get to know the people and the way that they operate. – Kory Godfrey

Challenge assumptions. – Tahari Julander

“Keep it simple, stupid.”