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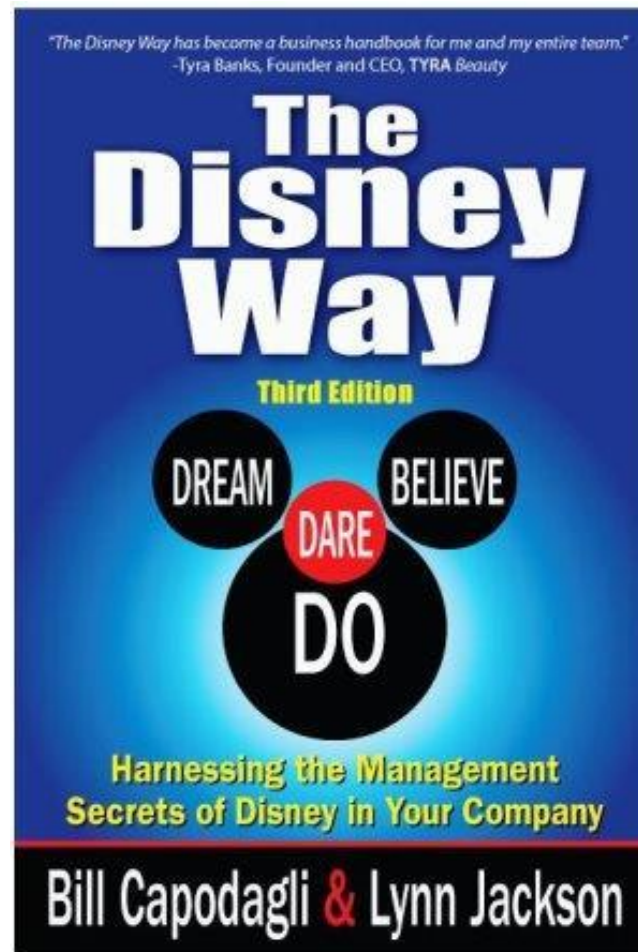
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Making The Disney Way: Your Way



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Transcription of Interview

Joe Dager: *Welcome everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 podcast. With me today is Bill Capodagli. Bill is one of the most recognized storytellers on the cultures of Disney and Pixar, educating audiences with Walt Disney's original success formula of 'Dream, Believe, Dare, Do' that is used by entrepreneurs and Fortune 500 companies alike. I'm honored by your appearance, Bill. I see that you have the storyboard behind you. So, as we talked before, you sort of walk the walk.*

Bill Capodagli: *What we do. Thanks for having me, Joe. It's a pleasure to be here.*

Joe: *Thanks for your participation and excited about the 3rd edition of The Disney Way. When did you first publish the 1st edition?*

Bill: *Well, the 1st edition, I think the publishing date is 1997, but it was like December of 1997. So, 1998 was the first year.*

Joe: *An understatement maybe to say it was well received. It has lead to several other books but what did you really think excited people back then?*

Bill: *I think it was the culture of Disney. I mean everybody is, and we've all grown up on Disney and Disney has created one of the best-known brands in the world. For business people to be able to identify with that brand and then see how their secret of, Walt's secret of 'Dream, Believe, Dare, Do' could apply to just about any business around. I think that's*

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the thing that really enticed organizations and leaders to read about it.

Joe: *I have both of the first 2 editions. I justified the 2nd edition because I had to buy the Kindle version. I justified it to myself. I also have the Field book, Leading the Speed of Change. I have attended Disney training. Why do I want to buy that 3rd edition?*

Bill: Sure, the 2nd edition deals with; after the 1st edition had come out, some of our criticism was that “Oh gee, this is something that you helped with other companies, and we featured some of our prime clients in that like Whirlpool and Bristol-Myers and such. So, after about 7 years of the 1st edition coming out, we looked around for companies that we were working with that have embraced these principles, and that’s how the 2nd edition came into being. Companies like the accounting firm of Ernst & Young, the Men’s Warehouse, Four Seasons Hotels, all those that embraced Walt’s principles of ‘Dream, Believe, Dare, Do’.

This edition, when McGraw-Hill approached us about a year ago and said “Gee, do you have any new clients and new stories and how about implementation, how can people do this?” Over the past years, we’ve been working with a lot of startups and a lot of organizations that were trying to really change their culture, really trying to revamp their culture to become more customer-centric. The same week that McGraw-Hill asked us to think about revamping the book into the 3rd edition, we got this call from a little company out on the West Coast and they said that they really loved our book and invited me to come out and talk to their startup organization, and I was scrambling at the time I got this e-mail, and I didn’t recognize the name. But, when I came back, and I talked to my wife, who is my co-author, she says “You don’t know who Tyra Banks is?” When I saw her picture, of course, I remembered, who she was. When I thought about that I talked to Tyra, and I said: “Would you be willing to be featured in our book as a startup organization

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if I came out and helped you for the better part of a week get things going?" And, she said, "All right, I'd love that." And, she has, and it was a great experience.

Joe: *Well, maybe some of my listeners don't know who Tyra Banks is.*

Bill: Well, Tyra Banks is a supermodel, a talk show host, a producer. She is a very successful The World's Top Model and an actress. Now, she is the CEO of a cosmetic company called Tyra Beauty and rather than just put her name on a product like many celebrities do, she went out and went to Harvard Business Training for 3 years, not an MBA but she learned about business from the Harvard Business School of Training, and she is putting together this company that she wants to be her legacy.

Joe: *'Dream, Believe, Dare, Do' that motto as you call it 'The Disney Way,' how was that motto put together? Was it something that Walt Disney actually did or was that naming it something that you just created to organize the approach?*

Bill: Well, legend has it that he was once asked what his secret to success was, and he said he would dream of things that have never been done before. He would test those dreams against his beliefs and values. He would dare to take the risk to make those dreams come true and lastly put plan skills, so those dreams do become a reality. 'Dream, Believe, Dare, Do' when we started examining the Disney Company, it all fit into place. Walt was very true to his values. He did dare to take the risk. He was on the verge of bankruptcy and many times and always came out of it. I believe from Walt's death in 1966 to 1984 when Michael Eisner and Frank Wells came into reawaken the sleeping giant of the company, for those years they really didn't dare. They had a lot of the dreams of Walt, and they still believed in their beliefs, but they didn't dare to take the risk. Everybody stood around and said, "What would Walt do?"

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Joe: *There is a process to this isn't there. When I use the Disney Way Field book, I'm sort of looking at similar things that Toyota, the Toyota Way, I mean there's a lot of similarities to success, is there not?*

Bill: There is. I've taught Six Sigma, and I was in consulting for many, many years. I was trained by Dr. Deming for 1 year. We sponsored The Deming Institute when I was at a large consulting firm. My staff, and I were all trained by Dr. Deming and put on seminars with him and such and I would take clients to see Disney, to see their total quality management process. The people at Disney would tell me, they'd say "Well, we don't have a TQM process here." I said "Yes, you do. You just don't know you have it."

Joe: *Yeah, it's so interesting because it just a little bit different way, and more of that is just the words that that are used, the show thing and the plussing. I see so much similarity and like I said, The Disney Way Field book could practically, okay, not to demean either book here, could be very similar to The Toyota Way field book.*

Bill: It is. It is by all means.

Joe: *I always thought that the Disney Way was the precursor to Design Thinking, Lean Startup, the innovation models of today. Is it, do you see that? Am going down the right path?*

Bill: Well, I do. I do, I mean the storyboard in concept, people talk about mind mapping now. I mean it's, basically storyboard and such and the voice of the customer. Walt's thinking about the customer and knowing the customer, trying to solve customer problems, trying to make that customer experience, as special as he could are all things

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that companies are striving for today.

Joe: *Let's just go to that storyboard for a second. Everybody's building customer journey maps, and they're doing service blueprints, and they're making 3M a fortune on post-it notes, okay, in what they do. But, that storyboarding concept, that's something that is engrained in cartooning and started back with Walt back when he, how did that evolve, I guess I'm asking. Did it start with Mickey?*

Bill: Well, yeah, it actually did when Walt started his cartoon studio back in the '30s. The way that studios were back then, they would have these stacks of drawings around the studio, and you thumb through them and remember those books when you were kids, you would thumb through, and you'd see the characters actually move. Rather than do that, Walt had his artists with their sketches on boards and hung these boards on the walls so that he could see the story unfold. They could talk about the dialogue. They can move scenes around, and his cartoons had much more detail than the cartoons of his peers at that time, so he had hundreds and thousands of more drawings and before they would start the very extensive process of hand drawing the thousands of cells, he wanted to make sure that storyline was correct and, hence, the word storyboarding came into being. And then, the motion picture industry and advertising industry picked that all up. The first movie that was actually storyboard was 'Gone with the Wind'.

Joe: *Oh, that's very interesting. Did Walt take that same concept then and then moved it into a business practice? And, to build Disneyland, let's say.*

Bill: In the late '50s and '60s, early '60s he turned that into a problem-solving technique, where he would ask a group of people about a problem or concern and have them all write their cards on one idea per card, put it up on a wall and move things around. I like to call

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this my idea landscape because you see the ideas kind of unfold and such.

Joe: *Well, that's, an idea landscape, that's interesting. In my training at Disney, they always talked about getting the headers right, and then organizing and then kind of the dots on the cards. Can you just touch upon that because I think there're so many similarities to the Customer Journey, and that's such a big thing with UX and designers these days?*

Bill: When you throw out an idea to a group. One of the things we do with groups many times are 'what are the barriers to providing Disney like service in your organization.' That could be what we call the topic card in that, and then everybody starts writing ideas down on 5x7 or 3x5 cards, and the facilitator picks them up, shuffles them up and then they start posting them on the board, and they start clustering them by like topics. When you get 3 or 4 in a cluster, then you ask the group "What do you want to call that?" That becomes the header card. So, at the end of this storyboard, you'll have maybe a dozen or so header cards and all the barriers and hundreds of detail cards on 'what are the barriers to providing service'. We do something else with the groups, and we give them little dots, these sticky dots, and we usually give them 3 or 4 dots, red dots, to put on the header cards on the topic that they feel is one of the biggest barriers and then blue dots to put on the detail cards. In the matter of about an hour, you get a group of people that really focus in on what are the top 2 or 3 barriers that they need to change in order to start providing a more customer-centric culture for their organization.

Joe: *I thought that was some of the best training that I've ever had. What do you think one of those secrets in the Disney Way that makes that model sustainable? And is it still evolving?*

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Bill: Number 1, I think, one of the things that a lot of organizations don't realize, and I look at my own career in consulting over the past 40 years, and I started with organizations doing industrial engineering, and anyone can come in and make a lot of improvements in an organization and save money in a short period of time. But, that's not sustainable if you don't have the proper culture.

What I learned from Dr. Deming and from Disney, both, is that the culture needs to be right. I mean you need to start trusting the people, and you start needing to put great teams together. One of the co-founders of Pixar, Ed Catmull, I just love what he tells us about teams. He said "You can give a great idea to a mediocre team, and they may screw it up. But, if you can give a mediocre idea to a great team, they'll turn it into a great product." Putting together a culture where people's ideas are valued, and they're respected, and they're trusted is one of the most important things, and when people know that they're being trusted to do their work, they'll rise to levels that surprise even themselves many times.

Joe: *Putting those people first is the Disney Way? That Disney Way is really getting people involved the right way? And, expanding on their excellence.*

Bill: Exactly. And, letting people know that "Hey, we're trusting you and to deal with customer problems in the best way you can." I mean one of the things that really amazed me when I was interviewing some of the customer service people at Disney, that they had at their disposal a half a million dollars of tickets and cash to solve customer problems at their disposal. I said, "Well, do you have some limit? I mean if you give out a thousand dollars of tickets to somebody, do you have to get that approved?" And, they said, "No. We have to justify it. We have to document it. We have, and everything. Make sure that we're not giving out tickets to our brother-in-law and sister-in-law and things like that." But they

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trust the people to make the right decision.

Joe: *Well, one of the things that I think about Walt Disney and I think about Steve Jobs, some of the icons are credited with knowing their customers. How did they develop that innate knowledge and how did they transform that to an organization; learning about customers?*

Bill: I think what the secret to both of those men and very different in many of their styles but I think they were interested in solving customer problems. I mean Steve Jobs didn't go out and say "Gee, I want to make a better Walkman." He went on and said "Hey, I carry around dozens of CDs and how can I get music? How can I solve that problem?" Same thing with Walt Disney, he looked at amusement parks and said "Gee, these things are dirty and ugly, and parents don't like going to those. I want to put a place together where parents and kids are going to have a great time."

Joe: *I think it's so true. I remember a statement by Steve Jobs that I'll probably not get it quite right, but he said when he was comparing Zune and some of the things Microsoft was doing, he said "Our people like music." And, what he was, I think what he meant by that is that they were involved in making the great user experience that they liked. That they're just making it like they would want it for themselves?*

Bill: Right and I think the other similarity between the 2 gentlemen is their love for the aesthetics, love for making it look good and feel good. I mean part of the Apple experience is opening up your product. When you go to an Apple store, and you buy something, the clerk will actually give you the package. They'll say "We want you to open it up. We want you to experience the packaging and the joy of actually opening it up."

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Joe: *So true because when you think of Walt Disney or Disney World or Disneyland, you get off the train, and you walk in and the first thing you smell if I remember correctly, is like fresh baked cookies somewhere. Isn't that true?*

Bill: Cookies and popcorn, yeah.

Joe: *Yeah, yeah. I mean you, that experience is right there when you just walk in, right?*

Bill: Right and everything. I mean Walt used to send a gentleman, John Hench, to the park for one day, once a month, all day to look for colors that didn't work. So, I mean colors, smells, everything was important to the experience.

Joe: *You've encapsulated so much in the Disney Way book, what has been something that you've taken from it? Why do you continue writing that book? One, you probably make money on it, but I mean, but you have to have a passion for it.*

Bill: Well, I think that passion for this edition is seeing some of these companies that are less well-known or just starting up or are really trying to change their cultures. My co-author, my wife, and I have really enjoyed doing it. We had enjoyed featuring an organization which we've worked for, for 3 years, a government organization that has just had outstanding results, Ottawa County, Michigan and they have just totally embraced the Disney Way, they call it the Ottawa Way in their organization. And, third element that I wanted to include in this book is a brand new chapter that we call 'The Real Pixie Dust is Love' and we talked about Walt's passion for his customers, for his people and for his product and the fourth part of that chapter is for himself because a person has to feel good about what you're doing, feel good about themselves in order for them to really deliver that world-class customer service.

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Joe: *I think you said something that was really unique there that I don't hear from a lot of people, and I've always kind of expressed an idea that you never become Lean, you never become a Lean company until you stop calling it Lean, and you call it your own.*

Bill: Right.

Joe: *And, you just said it's not the Disney Way? It's the Ottawa Way, and it jumped out at me.*

Bill: Yup.

Joe: *And, that, because that's so important to embrace that because that's when it becomes a culture, right?*

Bill: It does, it does. They need to embrace it. They need to; it needs to be theirs.

Joe: *I look at your website, and you're just returning from a speaking tour, I think, that you did to maybe promote the book. Are you still out giving speaking engagements?*

Bill: Most definitely. We're doing speaking keynotes and working with clients to help them implement to become more customer-centric in their cultures.

Joe: *Okay, well, what's, is there anything you'd like to maybe add about the Disney Way that I didn't ask and some deep secret that's maybe not even in a book?*

Bill: Well, I think you touched on it, Joe. That people need to internalize this. I said, "You

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can't copy a culture that's right for Disney or the Four Season's or Ottawa County." You need to define a culture that's right for your organization then make it work, and there's no other way of putting it. It's hard work but the results can be phenomenal.

Joe: *Well, and I think you hit that point, and that's what everybody does. When I go from the marketing side, they're always looking for a template to use that was someone else's.*

Bill: Right.

Joe: *I've enjoyed this time very much, Bill. What's the best way for someone to contact you and learn more about The Disney Way?*

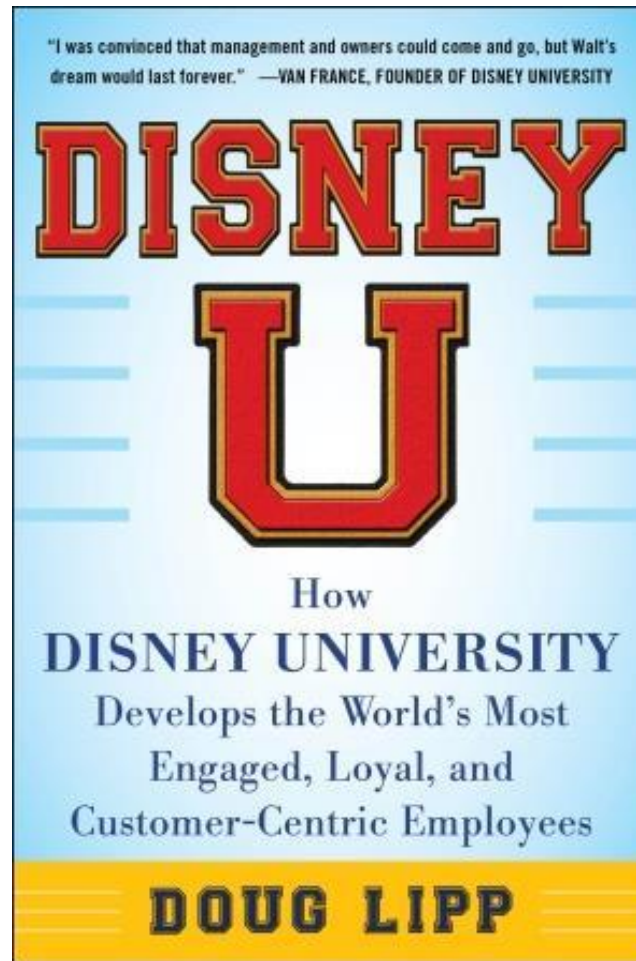
Bill: Sure, at our website, www.Capojac.com.

Joe: *I encourage everybody to take a look at The Disney Way. I can't think of a better way to spend the weekend than reading that book, okay.*

Bill: Thanks, Joe. You're very kind.

About: Bill Capodagli has nearly three decades of management consulting and corporate research expertise. Bill co-authored the best-selling business book, [The Disney Way, 3E: Harnessing the Management Secrets of Disney in Your Company](#), now in its 3rd edition. The first edition was cited by Fortune magazine as **"so useful you may whistle while you work."**

Are you Plusing your Show?



Transcription of Podcast

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Joe Dager: *Welcome everyone this is Joe Dager, the host of Business901 podcast. With me, today is Doug Lipp. Doug has led a storied career at Disney, primarily participating and leading the training programs and Disney University. His background also includes being an integral part of the development and opening of the Tokyo Disneyland. He has been consulting, writing and speaking the Disney Way for the past 20 years and recently published a new book called Disney U. Doug, I would like to welcome you and I am honored to talk to someone so closely associated with what has to be the most famous and most successful Customer Experience training program on the planet. So, thanks for participating.*

Doug Lipp: I love it. Yes, I had a wonderful run at Disney, and I love your lead in. Thank you for inviting me to Business901 and I am more than thrilled to chat with you and all of your listeners about some of the things that I've learned at Disney University and my career at Disney and from so many wonderful legends, some of whom worked directly with Walt and all of whom worked directly with my mentor, the man who started the Disney University, a groundbreaking leader by the name of Van France. So, thank you for inviting me.

Joe: *You're more than welcome and I would have to ask you, what has taken you so long to write a book?*

Doug: Well, let's see. I'm 57 years of age, and I started it when I was 2 years old. So, it is about 55 years in the making. Yes. To do something right, it takes a while, doesn't

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it. You know what's interesting is, the reason I wrote this is precisely what you said is no one outside of some of the original Disney Leadership Team and some of the folks had retired now knew anything or know anything about this guy Van France. I learned so much from him and as did so many others. It took me several years, just to kind of put my thoughts together. To be honest with you, everyone that I interviewed for the book and these were men and women that I've worked with or who were many layers above me when I was in the company or they were colleagues or whomever. Everyone said: "Gosh it's about time somebody wrote about Van. Thank you for doing that." I realized that I was in the right place when I got those kinds of comment.

Joe: *What I'm amazed about Disney is the sustainability of it. Does sustainability go back to training?*

Doug: Yes, in fact, one of the things that really resonated with me in doing this research and in looking at the organization culture that Walt Disney and Van France and so many people created was it's about the culture that leads to the training that leads to the sustainability. You keep pulling back the layers of this onion and you start to see. What amazes me Joe is how many of my clients and my consulting business will say: "Well, gosh, you were head of the training team at Disney University, and if we have all those fancy characters and all the names and all the fame and legacy, we would have no problem getting people to our programs and doing what we teach them in class". Then I say: "No, that's not it at all." It is about capturing people's minds and hearts. It's much more than putting a fancy name on a building and calling it the so-and-so University or calling it training program or something. What I've come to realize even more after my Disney career, Joe, is that the culture of education and the value placed on education and learning in Disney are one of the

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precursors to the success of the Disney University and as you mentioned that sustainability.

Joe: *Was Van France kind of the toolsmith behind this?*

Doug: Yes, he was hired by Walt Disney and some other key players about 5-6 months before Disney opened around in 1955. In the first few years, the park did very well. As well know, in fact, it was ground breaking success model that no one had ever done before. Van, and his protégé Dick Nunis who rose to be one of the Board Members of the Disney Corporation and he was the Head of the Outdoor Recreation at Disney. The 2 of them started the original employee orientation program in 1955. It wasn't until about 1962 that Van actually proposed to Walt and the park operating committee, this concept for a more robust systematic training program called the Disney University. I think that would really resonate with your listeners who are very involved in Lean, quality control and PDCA cycles because really up until the University was started it was kind of ad hoc thrown together on-boarding process for new hires. That worked when the park was small and there was I guess a population of people that knew the business and it was small enough that you could transfer by oral tradition. But as it got more complex, as you and I know, then you start to lose some quality.

Joe: *Well, what I always found out is when I have grown a couple of small businesses. That first growth cycle usually goes pretty well because you have that core set of people that was really good. Okay, that is what made you successful. Then with that core set, you could handle the new group. It was when you grew into that next stage that you started to find some cracks.*

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Doug: Well, that's exactly it, and that's what Van France, in fact, Van left the company for a couple of years to go out and do some consulting. When he returned to the Park, the park opened in 55 and Van came back in 61-time frame. He was gone for a couple of years, and he notice dramatically that as you describe, it was occurring. He went out and did some needed assessment. Start talking to cast members, found out what needed to be changed and then he started to promote this whole idea for the Disney University as a more structured training program.

Joe: *So, is the Disney way of process?*

Doug: It is absolutely a process. It is a mindset, really. The Disney Way, that philosophy is really found in the phrase the Walt Disney started and everybody in the Disney Organization knows and it is called "Plusing the Show." Walt would say: "We have to keep plusing our show. If we ever lose them, meaning the guests, it will take us 10 years to get them back." Constantly improving, not only the processes, but also the people. Naturally, what is the beauty of this sustainability, you mentioned earlier, is certainly the University is about the on-boarding of new hires and training of supervisors and the soft skills. Equally important is what they are teaching in the University is alive and well in the operation's side of the business. Both the operations people and the training people are singing from the same sheet of music, which is so unusual in so many organizations.

Joe: *You attribute a lot of Disney success to continuous improvement and in the Lean world we talk about the andon cord and building that culture of continuous improvement in everyone. Is Disney that way that they drive it down to the individual level or is it more structured than that?*

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Doug: Well, I think it is a combination of things. If you look at some of the tenets of what Deming talked about, Juran talked, Ishikawa talked about, I speak fluent Japanese, so I've been involved in QC circles, in fact, when I was an intern in Disneyland, my proposal was to implement quality control's circles, QC's circles in the Company. When you think about the tenets of all this Hoshin Kanri using English pronunciation and Hoshin Kanri is knowing your direction. Really, Hoshin is direction and Kanri is management and the whole concept of Hoshin Kanri is knowing where you're going. When you've got a founder like Walt Disney who says: "Keep plusing the show." When you've got a man like Van France or man like Dick Nunis who said: "Education is not negotiable. It is something that has to be in place." It doesn't mean that you don't get rid of training programs that are not appropriate or effective, but it is an idea that to the front line person, all the way to the senior executive, everybody has to know what exceptional quality service looks like at Disney. What I see in a lot of organizations, whether you call it Lean, whether you call it total involvement or total TQC is all too often, I see front line employees going to orientation, executives not and there's this definite class system. I think that the fundamental that Disney lives to this day and certainly there are changes from the 50's to the 60's to now for what the organization is doing is that the direction that Hoshin Kanri is most definitely in place and every cast member, whether on a crew shift, they are the resort, they were one at the theme parks, knows why they are there and what they need to do for the guests. That kind of clarity is something that is lacking in a lot of organizations.

Joe: *The book is more of a history book or does it talk about the secret sauce of Disney?*

Doug: It absolutely talks about both because the secret sauce of Disney is based on the history and so that would underscore, Joe, is that it's part of the DNA of the

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organization, part of the fabric of the organization. It's really for the reader, whether that the reader is a team of 2 or 20,000; whether they are for profit or not for profit, it talks about creating an organizational culture. It is not your typical how-to book. It is really an assessment when you think about what is the culture of your organization and what needs to be altered in that culture to enable that clarity and that sustainability. It is not applying tools to a machine that is totally broken. That's part of that culture that we are talking about a few minutes ago.

Joe: *In your work, you try to pass on the Disney way to others? How tough is that?*

Doug: It is really tough because leadership often times does not show the commitment that they need. As an example, actually the man that wrote the foreword to Disney U, Jim Cora, who retired as the Chairman of Disney International, opened up Tokyo Disneyland, he opened up Disneyland Paris. He was my boss in Japan. He was tough son-of-a-gun, but also fair. He is an example of the kind of leader that knows both the training world and the operation world, and he gave me an interesting quote, he said that: "I never cut training if it affected our show." That is huge. He knew that the show was one of the most important part of our culture. He said: "Doug, what if I'm going to frontier land and the bales of hay that are stacked, around there, to make it look good and give ambience, what if they are weeds growing out of those bales of hay? Do I go after the training team and say, 'you need to train the maintenance crew and the custodial crew to trim weeds better.'" He said: 'No, this is not a training issue; I'm going after the operations that are being too chincey to buy new bales of hay. Those bales of hay should have been replaced months ago.'

Joe: *How do you go about changing culture then? We all don't have a mouse to rely on*

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or Cinderella's castle.

Doug: You ask the leaders to take a look at their state of their business. Is it where you want it to go right now? I always ask leaders to look in the mirror. If there is a culture that is leading to success, you helped create that. If there is a culture of lack of trust or of risk adverse behavior, you helped create that. You have to own that and leaders have to go out and let their teams know what kind of culture they are going to have and they are going to support both in words and in actions. I think that's was lacking. You own these wonderful posters that say: "Our employees are our number 1 assets" or "Customers are number 1", but in reality when you interview and do need assessments with middle managers and frontline employees, the opposite is so true. They don't feel valued and customers feel ignored.

Joe: *Well, in the training that I've received from Disney, it was very much about storyboarding. Is it that way at the University?*

Doug: Well, I think when you're blue-skying something, you need this storyboard, you need this mind mapping, there are numbers of techniques that can help people get out of the linear thought process if that's limiting their creativity. But what I find even more important than the actual tactic or process of mind mapping is having a leadership team and it doesn't have to be at a C level, it could be supervisors, it could be managers that balance both ends of a creative spectrum. You've got the dreamers and you've got the doers. You've got the dreamers who were thinking of new stuff and they are always thinking outside of the box and at the other end of that continuums are the operations mindset. People who are saying: "Yes, that's a great idea but now we have to make it work in a factory. Now, we have to make it work at an operational level and we have to be able to sustain that." What I see in

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the team set really hit it out in the part, Joe, are the ones who have those dreamers and doers in place. It could be multiple people that represent that. The teams that don't survive are the ones that are heavily skewed either towards the dreamers or the doers and they don't have that balance or that creative tension that keeps you on a straight and narrow.

Joe: *I always remember that Walt Disney kind of fit someone in between them, to balance them. It was the realist wasn't it?*

Doug: Well, that's an interesting point. I interviewed Martin Sklar for Disney U and Marty, of course, is the retired Vice-Chair of Imagineering and he said working with Walt was an amazing opportunity in his career, 50 plus years at Disney. This is Marty's quote: "Walt Disney had one foot in the past and one foot in the future." So, remarkably he was able to kind of bridge that. Certainly with his brother Roy, who is more of a doer mindset, they had that wonderful balance. Once, Walt passed away, we kind of lost that creative spark and we spiraled and ultimately as you know, we almost lost the Company in 83 because of the lack of taking risks and staying ahead of the curve. We were well behind the S-curve on creativity and growth. So, generally, you do not find in one person the ability to be a dreamer and doer.

Joe: *What have you learned along the way now that you've stepped back from Disney. What are some of the positives and the negatives of Disney that now that you've stepped back from it?*

Doug: Well, one of the things that I learned especially when writing Disney U and revisiting my roots in the company and meeting with so many leaders that helped create this

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culture. One of the benefits of the Disney culture that Walt started was, learning and having fun go hand in hand. In fact, there's a great quote from Walt that says: "When the subject permits, we let fly with all the satire and gags at our command. Laughter is no enemy to learning." That's one of the things that I incorporated with a lot of my consulting is all look at curriculum and I will say, this is good stuff at a cognitive level at a knowledge level, but it is boring and nobody is going to remember it. The other thing that I realized Joe is the importance of that cultural DNA and what Walt and Van and Dick and so many of these founding executives created was the ability to say: "You know what, this is a lot more than slap on a coat of paint on a building that's run down. We're going to make sure that the foundation of that building is set in stone and then we will play with what color of paint we are going to put on it, metaphorically.

Joe: *Well, you also are very active on the speaking circuit. I'm inquisitive what started you down on that direction?*

Doug: I'll tell you what, I saw a guy, to be honest with you, a guy speaking about Disney who was not a Disney guy. This is years ago and his content was either widely available that anybody could read or it was completely inaccurate and I thought: "You know what; I could do a better job than this guy." My wife said: "Why don't you do it?" I put together a proposal for one of the largest speaking bureaus in the Country. Sent them a tape and they liked it and that was kind of the beginning. The lesson that I referred to in a lot of my presentations in my private consulting are extensions of what I write about in Disney U. I have an active blog on my website and I tweet a lot as you do and we all do. There are a lot of ways to share the information and occasionally, I'll do seminars that are open to industry or it might be an industry of healthcare professionals. But I haven't done a purely public

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seminar in about 5 years.

Joe: *You've also written several other books, I believe.*

Doug: I wrote a book based on my passion on cross-cultural teamwork. I wrote a book called "The Changing Face of Today's Customer" about 8 years ago and in that, I talked about the globe is shrinking and the question is, is your business expanding? Even in the United States, even if you do not have an international footprint, international has come to you. You've got more multi-national, multi-cultural employees as well as customers and the opportunities are tremendous for people to tap into the needs of linguistic or cultural minority customers and employees. Give them what they need or want and build your business exponentially.

Joe: *In Lean, when people tried to instill Lean in their practice, the argument always comes back that it is a cultural thing and leadership fails. You sound like that's the way you believe. You've got to change the culture and leadership has to buy into it. How do you go about changing the culture? That seems like a long drawn out process?*

Doug: It is and, unfortunately, in most cases, I don't see change in culture occurring until an organization is brought to its knees. Most of us individually don't like to change unless we are forced to do it and why would an organization be any different? That is the biggest challenge that I see in my consulting work. The only thing that I can do, Joe, is to lay out what I see as a consequence for the leadership team if they don't enact some change, whether it's Lean, whether it is whatever it is. Absolutely, the cultural change or the maintenance of culture, always, always, always starts at the top and whatever they are saying or doing is magnified as it goes through

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organizational hierarchy. If the leadership isn't willing to constantly monitor this and live and breathe what they're talking about, then whatever the initiative is going to be, whatever the change is going to be, will not have legs and will not be sustainable.

Joe: *Is that what basically makes Disney different?*

Doug: I think so. I think so, because again, the idea, for example, something is simple as education, as I mentioned earlier, Jim Cora's that I'm not going to eliminate training if it affects the show. Walt Disney created his own training school for animators because what was being taught in art school back in the 30s wasn't appropriate. He brought in luminary speaker's visionaries such as Frank Lloyd Wright into the Disney studio to give a presentation to his animators. You can see that for decades, the value of education is there. In fact, one of the things that Van France highlighted and I speak, especially about in Disney U, are the four circumstances or the four values that he feels are the essence of the Disney culture. He talks about innovate. Being willing to take risks and think outside of the box. Innovate is huge and then you have to have organizational leadership support. Innovate, unabashed leadership support. So, for example, in Disney, Dick Cook was up until a couple of years ago, the Chairman of Disney's studios, he would come in and participate in training programs, training classes at Disney University, because he, himself, saw the value of that as a monorail operator early in his career. You've got innovate, you've got support, you've got the concept of educating, and I've already talked about that and the concept of entertainment that I've already talked about. You've got innovate, support, educate and entertain. Van France said if it weren't for these 4 circumstances, all being in place, the Disney University would not have survived.

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Joe: *When we go back to the sustainability through these leadership changes that even happened at Disney, is that 4 ingredients of culture that has been instilled throughout the organization has made it very difficult to change it to the worse, could I say it that way?*

Doug: Well, with change in leadership with evolution, there are changes in an organization and certainly, the product line-up of Disney today is much different than it was when Walt is alive. Certainly, there were the management changes that occurred after 1983-1984 when Michael Eisner and Frank Wells came on board. In fact, Michael Eisner was one of the endorsers of my book, Disney U, and he talks about the importance of leaders supporting the training program. But, getting back to some of the basic roots of Van France and his call at Disney University, he said, here's another quote that I love from Van. He said: "I was convinced that managers and owners could come and go, but Walt's dream would last forever." If you have a strong organizational culture, the changing of the guard won't necessarily affect it that much. Now, certainly, any executive can come in and try to append an organizational culture and in some cases, it is important to do so, to kick them out of their doldrums. A strong organizational culture will transcend changes in leadership.

Joe: *I think that's great and I think if we go back to the book and read the history of Disney, it shows how that happened because I would hate to try to be a leader and try to change the existing culture there. I don't think it happened.*

Doug: Well, you know, it is interesting because, frankly, when Eisner and Wells came on board in 84, they had the kind of kick the company back a bit. It had gone through a period of time where there wasn't enough risks taking. It had gone to the point

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where some people that had been amazing stars early in their careers, were just kind of hanging out. What Eisner and Wells brought back to the Company was the sense of urgency and intensity that quite frankly Walt Disney had because he was a taskmaster. In fact, one of the guys that I interviewed for Disney U, one of my former bosses talked about Walt riding on the jungle cruise and getting very upset because the skippers on the jungle cruise were acting nonchalant. They've driven these boats multiple times during the summer season and weren't getting excited when the hippos would jump out of the water and spray the guests. The guests are all excited, and they are "Whoopee! Whoopee! Whoopee!" But the cast members, who were driving the boats, are kind of yawning and saying: "Yawn, seen that a thousand times." That's when Walt said: "We've invested millions of dollars in the hardware but now you guys and you gals, you can dash that in a heartbeat if you're not showing the proper enthusiasm." I think that enthusiasm is what Eisner and Wells brought back in 84 when they started with the company as outsiders who needed to re-invigorate the organization.

Joe: *You've expressed my favorite line in the book, the one sub-title is "The Attractions don't Breakdown and Snow White Never has A Bad Day."*

Doug: Yeah, that kind of captures it all, doesn't' it?

Joe: *Yes, it sure does. It sure does. Doug is there anything you'd like to add in this conversation or even plug, I'm a marketing guy, I don't mind.*

Doug: Well, I think that I'd like to plug quite frankly, yes. There is world class museum in San Francisco that any Disney fan should try to visit, and it's called the Walt Disney's Family Museum and it started 2 years ago by Walt's daughter, Diane and by her

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husband Ron Miller who was the CEO of the Company when I was there. He left when Michael Eisner came on board. My wife and I spent 2 days doing through that museum. It's amazing. It's full of world class displays, and I have to say Joe, one display that stuck in my mind the most that resonates with me and it's all about the cultural stuff that we've been talking about is a beautiful little cartoon Walt Disney drew when he was a high school newspaper editor. So, this is back in 1917 time frame, and it's got a beautiful, whimsical cartoon of a man. Most important is above that is a little quote and it says: "Develop your sense of humor and eventually, it will develop you." Develop your sense of humor and eventually, it will develop you and isn't that the essence of the work hard and play hard. That was started by a man who was a high school student at that time, and it's gone through how many decades of changes to still have this world class organization where, yes, you work you backside off but you had fun at the same time.

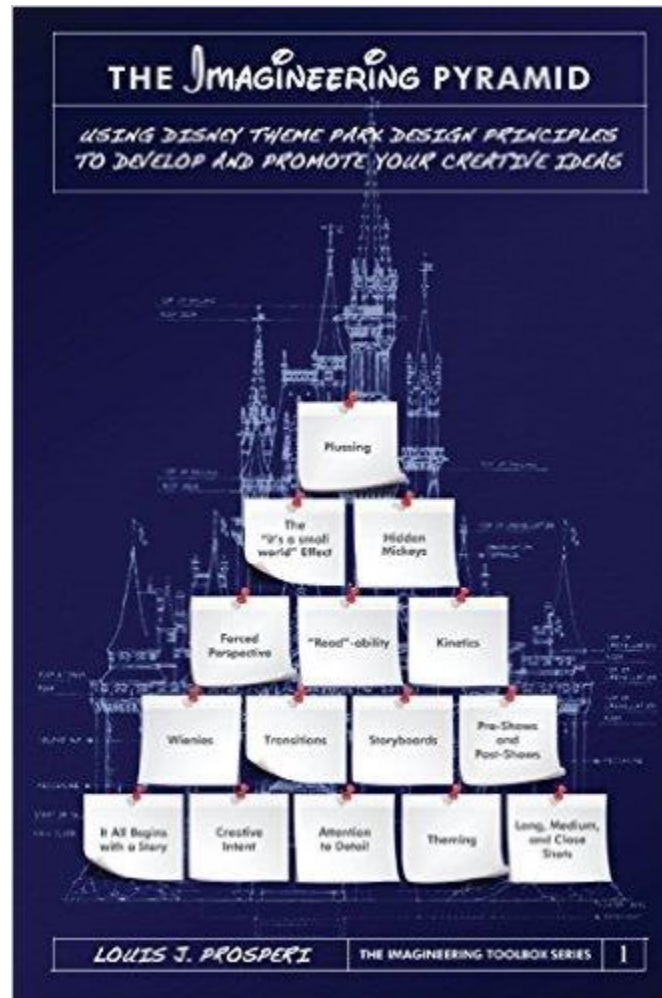
Joe: *Why I would like to thank you very much, your book is available, of course, on Amazon and all the regular outlets. It's a McGraw-Hill publication, and the name of it is Disney U. So, I would like to thank you very much Doug.*

Doug: Joe, thanks very much for your time and the questions you ask. It's a real pleasure.

About: [Doug Lipp](#) is a world-renowned speaker and acclaimed expert on customer service, leadership, change management and global competitiveness. Doug recently published a book, [Disney U: How Disney University Develops the World's Most Engaged, Loyal, and Customer-Centric Employees](#).

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Using the Imagineering Process



Transcription of Podcast

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Note: This is a transcription of an interview. It has not gone through a professional editing process and may contain grammatical errors or incorrect formatting.

Joe: *Welcome everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 Podcast. With me today is Lou Prosperi. Lou wrote the first book in the Imagineering Toolbox Series called The Imagineering Pyramid. When not visiting Disney parks, Lou is a manager, technical writer, instructional designer and former game designer. Lou's book outlines 15 practices and principles that will enable you to make your project a Disney production. Lou, thanks for joining me and tell the listeners what is your story and how did the book come about?*

Lou: Joe, thanks for having me. My story is I grew up knowing a little bit about Disney but had never gone as a child, and my first trip to Disneyworld was on my honeymoon. It really was a bit of a transformative experience when some of the initial attractions I saw really blew my mind like they do for many people. But it really struck me powerfully. And so I wanted to learn as much about Imagineering as I could and as books came out, I would study the and I realized that Imagineering, the process they use to develop parks was a great model for creating other creative ideas. I'm a big believer that principles and ideas from one place can be used in others. I'm a technical writer by trade. I shouldn't just be reading about technical writing to learn more about how I can do what I do. So I'd like to read outside my field, and I identified Imagineering as a great model for the creative process.

In particular, I ran across a line in a book by Jason Surrell about Pirates of the Carribean about that the Imagineer creates scenes that are very recognizable, and they can be read very quickly. I realized that that was exactly what we do in instructional design. I was working as a trainer and a teacher, a corporate trainer at the time, and I realized that

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that's what we do; we'll create a picture or an illustration to quickly communicate ideas.

I started looking more deeply through my collection. I had been building a collection of books for more ideas like that and so I identified a set of them and eventually came to a group of 15 of them and arranged them into a pyramid, which we'll talk about a little bit later. I had put together a presentation about Imagineering and Instructional Design. I presented it at a conference, and I did a webinar. Bob McLean from Theme Park Press found it online. I had posted it online. He found it and approached me about expanding the ideas into a full book, and so that's sort of how The Imagineering Pyramid came to be.

Joe: *What does the book center around? Is it about just principles or practices?*

Lou: The pyramid comprises 15 practices, concepts, and principles that the Imagineers use in the design of the theme parks. And so some of these are named specifically for things that Walt Disney himself created and named; others are my name for things that the Imagineers do. These include anything from focusing on their story, to strict attention to detail, to the use of wienies which are these visual magnets that draw people's attention, to their use of storyboards and their use of forced perspective. They span a range of different types of practices, but they are all born from practices that the Imagineers have used in the design of Disney theme parks from the earliest days with Walt Disney himself.

Joe: *Then what is the toolbox series? Is that different than what is in the pyramid or will it be similar things? What is the series?*

Lou: The original title of the book was the Imagineering Toolbox, and it was originally going to contain two main pieces. One was the pyramid that we'll talk about today, and the

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other is the Imagineering process which is a distillation of the process the Imagineers go through when they develop an attraction, something with the blue sky where they're told, hey we need a new attraction for Fantasy Land. They'll have brainstorming and blue sky sessions to identify the idea they want to pursue, and then they move to concept development where they flush out that idea. They move from there into the formal design where they do blueprints and other design documents, and then finally they move into construction.

The process takes you through step by step how did they do that and it's a simplification of the real process because the real process is very involved. The toolbox contains these two types of tools but during the development of the book for a couple of different reasons, the publisher and I opted to remove the process piece from this book and focus this book on the pyramid. Part of it is because of one of the principles. The very first principle in the pyramid is called 'It begins with a story', and that's about using your subject matter. I began to feel that the toolbox was a little too broad a subject matter for a single book and that by focusing it on the pyramid, I could keep it a little bit more narrowly focused and do a better job with it. I plan to be writing the second book which is about the process in the new future.

Joe: *I think you made a wise choice because there's a lot of information in the book. Could you do the Pre-show here as you allude to in the book to tell the listeners, I mean maybe not all of them really understand what Imagineering is and how it originated.*

Lou: Sure! Imagineering is a term, and technically it's what's called a 'portmanteau,' I believe is the word, and that's a combination of two words to form a new word. It's been popularized by Disney, and it's the blending of technical know-how and creative imagination. They did not originate it, despite legend, urban or Disney legend, the Disney

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Company did not originate the term. The first instance I was able to find in my research was Alcoa in the 40's. The Alcoa Corporation used it in the 40's to identify creative approaches to engineering. And so it's all about creative know-how, creative imagination and technical know-how. That technical know-how doesn't have to be.... with the link of Imagineering in terms of Disney Parks; it doesn't have to be just about ride design and show design. Any sort of technical know-how we have, we can apply creative imagination to it. And that's one of the foundational ideas of the book which is you can imagine your teaching, you can imagine your cooking, you can imagine any number of things by taking your specific technical know-how and applying your creative imagination to it. What I've tried to do in the book is say to get one step more and say okay, some specific things that the Imagineers do when they design theme parks also have principles that you can apply to other projects.

Another key idea in the book too is that we're all creative. There's creativity in everything that we do. Very typically, we think of creativity as a specific subset of people. The creatives are sometimes the weirdoes in some companies or that if you're involved in art, or music, or the typical creative field, but the truth is software engineers have to be creative in their jobs, project managers have to be creative in their jobs, and so I firmly believe that there's creativity everywhere, and everyone can be creative. We all have creative work to do, so why don't we all look for models and examples of where we can learn some lessons about creativity. And so this book is sort of my attempt at how do the Imagineers build these wonderful environments of the Disney Parks and these 15 principles are among some of the core ideas and practices that they use to do that, so I'm trying to identify the principles behind them and how we can apply those to our own projects outside the parks.

Joe: *You have 15 principles, and they're pretty tough to cover all of them in the podcast,*

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but you did a great job I thought of organizing them in peers, building basically the pyramid. You have a foundation tier there. Let's just start; there's all these principles, especially the ones in the foundation, do we need them all to be able to go ahead and make a good story and create it? Why are they the foundation I guess?

Lou: The foundation as I look through them, I realize, so what are the cornerstones of Imagineering, what are the real basics that they practice all the time that they really set the stage for what they do, and I just thought about some of the cornerstone things. The first of those is about the story. It all begins with a story. Everything in the Disney Parks has a story behind it or is informed by its story, and that's the subject matter. That includes, if you go on Peter Pan's Flight, the story of Peter Pan informs every decision, all the way down to the types of materials they use in the queue for the walls and the wallpaper and things like that. Or if you go to town square theater to visit Mickey Mouse backstage, all the design decisions are based on Mickey Mouse. And so that's a cornerstone.

Another one is creative intent which is what is their objective? What is the experience the designer wants the audience to have? That's pretty foundational because until you know that, you don't know how you're going to do all these other things. Attention to detail is something the Disney Company is famous for, and again I felt that it was certainly a foundational skill. Some of the other principles in the pyramid on the higher tiers leverage attention to details, using details in a specific way to create specific effect or reaction in your audience. Theming is critical. I mean Disney is credited taking the concept of an amusement park and turning it into a theme park, so that's another critical one. And then the last, Long, Medium and Close shots, which is about organizing your information and your details to lead your audience from a big picture down into the details.

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Those 5 really do set the stage. Without some of those in place, without understanding your story and your objective, using details, paying attention to your details and using the right details and arranging them the right way, you really have no foundation to start from. I set those as the cornerstone's foundations and all the other techniques build upon those. And in the book, there are a lot of references to go back to those as we talk about the principals, I end up making references back to subject matter and objective and creative intent and detail and things like that. So I really found those to be just the basics, and so I believe as you said, can you move on without them? I don't really think you can. You have to have some of these in place before you can move on, on your own projects.

Joe: *The foundation is pretty important. But your second one, Wayfinding, it sounds like a search and mission type arrangement or something. Let me go and find my way. Is this where I would get better direction?*

Lou: The term Wayfinding actually comes from the use of signage to direct audiences and some people like, you know, simple signs to say Fantasy Land is that way and Adventure Land is that way. I used it because all the principles in the second tier are focused on navigation and guiding and leading your audience. You have an idea how are you going to guide into and through your experience. Those include things like wienies, which I mentioned earlier, which are these visual magnets that attract your audience's attention and capture their interest and a classic example of that in Disneyland is Sleeping Beauty Castle at the end of Main Street. You enter the Main Street and down at the end, you see Sleeping Beauty Castle, and it's intriguing, and you want to go down there and get a closer look and see more.

As you move through the park because you see a wienie, and so you're going to go investigate, you're going to move from area to area, so the next ideas transition, which is

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how do we move our audience, how do we make a change that the audience will experience smooth and seamless. We don't necessarily want to make these changes abrupt. You don't want to be one-step. As you're walking down a pathway, so we want to cross the line and all of a sudden you've moved very abruptly from Main Street USA to Adventure Land. They want that to be more seamless, and so the Imagineers use what they call visual pros dissolves. They change the textures, they even sometimes change the background music, to facilitate that.

The Imagineers also use storyboards to plan out everything they do. And so when we're working on a creative project, we want to maybe step back and see the big picture and use storyboards to understand the overall experience. And then the last idea there in Wayfinding which is more specific, meeting your audience into and out of your experience, which are pre-shows and post-shows, and that's about introducing your ideas. Usually, when you go to an attraction, oftentimes the queue of the line that you go through will have Theming and queues about what you're going to see. That's the pre-show. It's preparing you for what you're going to experience, and then some attractions, particularly in Epcot have activities like video games or other things that you can do after the attraction to keep you engaged and reinforce what you've just seen. So Wayfinding is all about sort of how the audiences led through and in and out of experiences.

Joe: *I identify so closely to that because one of the most magical things about Disney is that Wayfinding because all at once you're in one section and then seamlessly, you magically appear in another.*

Lou: And you didn't even know they did it, right.

Joe: *I mean it's like, poof!*

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Lou: You know it's interesting, I wrote the book about taking these ideas out of the parks, but I shared it with a few people ahead of time before it was published and a couple of the observations I got back were... And I sort of knew this but I didn't really write the book around this is, these principles, the way they're described, hopefully, they can also for some people when they go back to the park, they can actually look for these things and they may become more attuned to how the Imagineers create the magic that they really do. And so for instance, the next time you're in a park, this may actually cause you or you may think to look more carefully at the way they actually manage those transitions; not to spoil the illusion but just that I love to learn, and I love to see how things are done, and so my hope is that for some people, as they read this, the next time they go to the park, they'll actually look closer and see how some of this magic is done.

Joe: *The visual communication is that third tier there. What are your 3 steps that you put in there and how do they relate to each other and to the rest of the story?*

Lou: The third tier as you say is visual communication, and these are techniques and practices that Imagineers use in almost every attraction that they design. They help communicate information quickly. And so the first of those is forced perspective, which is using the illusion of size. Very often, the buildings that we see in Disney Parks are not quite as large as we think they are. For instance in Florida, in Walt Disney World, there is a 200 foot limit to how tall the buildings can be. If they're 200 feet, they have to have an airline marker on them, like an air traffic marker, and that would ruin the illusion, you know. If you went to see Expedition Everest and at the top of the mountain, there was a flashing blue light, that would really kind of take you out of the experience. They never go above 199 feet.

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What they'll do is they'll use forced perspective which is a theatrical technique used to make some things in the business look larger than they are to help communicate that. For instance, in Cinderella Castle, as you move up the castle, the sizes of the windows, the stones are smaller. A simpler example is Main Street USA. The first-floor façades are 90% of actual size. The second-floor facades are 80% of actual size, and the top floor facades are even smaller. It looks like a 3-storey building; we see it; we think we're walking down between these 3-storey buildings, but they're really not 3-stories tall. And so that helps this illusion size. They use this the other way too in Epcot, at the American Adventure. That building is a colonial building. Because of the operational needs of the building, with the number of people they need to cycle through and the show and all those other factors, it turns out it's a 5-storey building. Well, they didn't have 5-storey buildings in colonial times, so they actually used forced perspective the other way to make it actually seem smaller. When you look at it from a distance, it looks like a 2-storey building, but in reality, it's the equivalent of a 5-storey building.

So that's one. The second one which is at the heart of the pyramid, and I'm really happy about that coincidence; it worked out that way but this readability, readability is the principle of the heart of the pyramid. That is the idea that I mentioned earlier on that I caught in Jason Surrell's book about Pirates of the Caribbean about the ability to quickly communicate an idea, and that's about simplifying complex subjects. The best example of that is found in the Pirates of the Caribbean. The wench auction scene or the scene where they're dunking the mare in the well or perhaps the best of all is the jail scene when you go by, and you see the pirates are in the jail, and the dog has the key. It doesn't take us but three seconds to understand that. And the reason that the Imagineers do this is in these dark rides, the audience is continually moving. They only will be seeing them for a short period of time, so they had to design scenes that were very quickly read and understood by the audience. And so that's again about simplifying the subject and this I

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think really ties into what you're talking about being visual and lean. Communication quickly through illustration and metaphor and example are all about readability.

The last in terms of visual communications is kinetics, and that's about dynamism or keeping the experience dynamic and active. The Imagineers do that by this movement throughout the parks. There are very few spots in Disney Parks that are quiet and still, where you don't see something moving. There's either a fountain or flags waving in the breeze, or a ride or attractions moving in the background, and so these are just visually to keep the experience alive and active. These three, as I said, are techniques they use throughout many, many parks and attractions to sort of visually communicate this experience they want us to have.

Joe: *Well that fourth tier, making it memorable, I was surprised about that one when I got to it because I assumed I already knew what it was about. It was going to be about uniqueness, but you surprised me. Tell us about it.*

Lou: The fourth tier, only two blocks, and this one is about reinforcing ideas and engaging the audience, and that's just to make it memorable. The two principles there, the first is called the 'It's a Small World' effect, and that is about using repetition and reinforcement to make your audience, your message memorable. For some people, I'm sure by just saying the words 'It's a Small World' it puts that song in their head. Imagineers use repetition particularly in their music and songs to reinforce these ideas. In fact, there's a story about Walt Disney for the New York Fair; I think it was, talking about he spent a lot of time working with composers on the 'It's a Small World' song. And when asked about it, he said, well the people don't come out of these places humming the architecture. He really wanted them to understand and have a memorable song. Some of the other examples that I talk about in the book, so there's the 'It's a Small World' effect, there's the

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Tiki Room that uses a lot of repetition. Even the Pirates of the Caribbean with the 'yo ho' song. You hear that over and over, and you come out of there, and you hear it. These are ways that they use repetitions and other reinforcement, and that comes back to Theming again, so we're going back to our foundation of Theming and attention to detail by making sure all the details and thematic elements are consistent and tell the same story, it reinforces the message, and it really helps to communicate that.

The other block in this tier is called 'Hidden Mickeys.' Hidden Mickeys are either partial or complete profiles of Mickey Mouse. Technically there are three circles; you know that shape of Hidden Mickeys head that are incorporated into the design of the parts and attractions, but they're not obvious, and they're hidden. There are actually books about Hidden Mickeys with guide books and scavenger hunts that you can find them. What I find interesting about them is it really engages the audience. It encourages the audience to look for them and really engage with the environment.

Another related idea is that of what we call 5-legged goats which go back to the big mural that Mary Blair, Imagineer, and artist Mary Blair painted in the contemporary resort, well Disney World has a number of goats but one of them is 5-legged, and so it's this little thing that you would spot, and you see. The Imagineers do other things like by putting records as to Imagineers names or particular people in the signage or in some of the Theming. What's interesting to me about Hidden Mickeys though is that once you find them, you never see that object the same way again. You've engaged with it, and you don't just see... For instance, the example that I use in the book is about a set of light switches that are arranged in the shape of Mickey Mouse's head in the queue for Expedition Everest. In my experience, once you see that Hidden Mickey shape, you don't know longer see them as light switches; you only see them as Hidden Mickeys.

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I take that as for instance in an instructional design perspective or a teaching or training environment, if you can identify ways that your students can come to learning on their own or put the pieces together on their own, they'll learn and retain far better than by you just telling them. The Hidden Mickeys again makes it memorable; so these two are all about making the experience memorable and having your message stick with your audience.

Joe: *All my continuous improvement people will enjoy the last tier of course, which is only one block and it's called Plussing. Did it just work out that was the last block up there or one block left? How did Plussing end up the king of the mountain?*

Lou: Well, I think there're two answers there. The first is it really is Walt Disney's cardinal rule. He was all about Plussing. He was always constantly asking his people to do things better. Some classic examples of this in animation were adding sounds to animation, adding color to animation. The development of the multi-plane camera that he did that added to animation. He was constantly looking for ways to improve what he did and plus what he did, and he encouraged his people to do that, and when they moved into theme parks, that tradition carried on, and so the Imagineers are constantly looking for how do they things better? The first answer, it ended up on the top because it is really one of just Walt Disney's Imagineering primary rules but it goes back to their founder Walt Disney.

The second is as I identified these and I grouped them, and a couple of them moved here and there as I went through these, some of my formative and my own concept development if you will, I realized I had three visual communications ones that we talked about earlier. I identified my foundations and really there was no place else for Plussing to go. I don't want to say it was leftover. It was clearly important, but it really is by itself, it stands alone, and it's the king of the mountain for a reason.

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The other interesting thing that I discovered while writing the book, I hadn't really planned it this way, but when I went to write about Plusing, I realized that the other 14 principles really are ways to plus your experience. If you design something or working on something, you can go back to these other 14 ideas and say, hey am I really focusing on my story? How could I focus on my story more to make it better? Or how can I communicate my message more readable, or can I use the illusion of size a little differently, or how can I make them more memorable?

All these other principles really are ways to plus what you're doing. I guess there are a couple different reasons that it ended up on the top, and again, it is really a central idea. What's interesting is it's not unique to Disney. Deming was very into continuous improvement. On the sports side, Coach John Wooden was very much about continuous improvement.

Joe: *What does the other people working in the field, the Imagineers themselves, have you gotten any feedback from them, what they thought of the book?*

Lou: I have actually. Some of the people I sent it to for review are some former Imagineers. I've sent copies to some current Imagineers. They weren't able to be involved for legal reasons. For instance, Jason Surrell, who wrote that Pirates of the Caribbean book now works for NBC and Universal Creative. I sent it to him, and one of his quotes about the book is that I identified these principles, these tenants of design that has been around for a long time. He reinforced the idea that yes, these 15 are definitely things that are used. I also sent it to a gentleman named Rolly Crump who was one the original Imagineers. He participated in the design of the Haunted Mansion, and It's a Small World, and the Tiki Room. He had kind things to say about it as well, but it was still nice to get that feedback from this former Imagineers to say yes, I recognize all those and I used to

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do those. That was very flattering actually.

Joe: *What did you learn from the book? At the end of the book, when you put that body work down, what did you say this is what I'm taking from the book?*

Lou: If you seek, you will find. As I had ideas about how I would describe these principles, both inside and outside the parks, but one of the interesting things that happened as I ended up finding completely other examples. And I think it was a reinforcement of the power of goal setting as well, in that I had this focus and then seemingly serendipitously, I would find examples that help me explain these principles. Like I was working on this book, and I was traveling, and I picked up a copy of 101 Things You Learn in Architecture School. Looking through it and there's an example that I pulled directly, and it's in the book.

One of the things I sort of... I don't know if I learned it but it sort of reinforced this idea of focus and one of the things that happens when you set a goal is your attention gets focused on it, I talk about that at the beginning of the book when I talk about what I think of as magnetic words which are these words we carry with us that draw our attention. Like creativity is one of those for me; when I'm like looking through, on a Website if I see an article about creativity, it grabs my attention, and I reach out to it. So I don't know if that really answers your question, but one of the ideas that was reinforced for me was the power of goal setting and how it can really help you focus and find solutions to your problems in potentially unexpected ways.

Joe: *Well what I just took from that is sort of interesting and maybe what this pyramid is all about is that having this focus, having this structure involved really creates an easier way for creativity to prosper.*

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Lou: I think that's true and what I've noticed myself doing is I use this pyramid as a lens, and I look at almost everything through that lens. I have been living with this for a year and a half, so it makes sense, but I would be doing that. But I hope that the same is true for other people that once they read about these principles, they start looking at things like oh, this is a good example of readability. Here's a simple little example. Over this past weekend, our high school put on their spring musical and so as one of the parent volunteers, I was there helping with ticket sales and we had set up this area for concession and things, and I found examples so there of wienies, of Theming, of Plussing. Each night, the person in charge was trying to tweak things a little bit to make them better. Now, I'm not saying he read my book and is consciously doing it, but I saw these examples of the principles in action. I think carrying around a model like this is a way to look at what we do and look for ways to improve it or plus it, and this gives you a whole set of tools to do that.

Joe: *Oh, I think that's a great thing to take from it. What's next for Lou? The Imaginary Toolbox, is that something that's going to be expanded upon? You mentioned the book on processes that you're working on now, is there more down the line?*

Lou: Right now, since the book came out, I started working on a couple sort of supplements, not that would be published but would be made available online. So a discussion guide in case a group at a workplace would read it or a book group might read it. Some questions that elaborate on some of these ideas to allow people to talk a little bit more about some of the ideas in it. So a discussion guide and a workbook which basically takes the questions that form the checklist. So each pyramid, at the end of each chapter I included a set of questions about how to think about and focus on that principle. And I collected those, and then I provided space for people to jot down notes and so the idea is you have a project, jot down some notes about your project, then as you go through this workbook, you can look at these principles and how might you apply these principles to

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your specific project. So those are a couple small things I'm working on. I'm going to start more focus work on the next book which is The Imagineering Process.

Joe: *How could someone contact you and learn more about the book?*

Lou: The book is available from Theme Park Press at the Theme Park Press Website. That's themeparkpress.com. It's right on the front page right now. That might move as they publish more. They publish quite a few books. My contact information is in the back of the book. I'm on Facebook. Facebook.com/louprosperi. I'm also on Twitter @louprosperi. I have a Pinterest board where I post pictures of the different blocks in the pyramid, what the pyramid highlighted in different ways to highlight individual blocks. And in the back of the book, I have my contact information and email address as well. The Website will be Imagineeringtoolbox.wordpress.com. It's not quite live yet, but it will be hopefully soon.

Joe: *Well Lou, I would like to thank you very much. This podcast would be available on the Business901 iTunes store and the Business901 blog site. Thanks everyone for listening.*

About: [The Imagineering Pyramid: Using Disney Theme Park Design Principles to Develop and Promote Your Creative Ideas](#) was Lou Prosperi first book in the Imagineering Toolbox Series. When not visiting Disney parks, Lou is a manager, technical writer, instructional designer and former game designer. Lou's book outlines 15 practices and principles that will enable you to make your project a Disney production.

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Business901 Blog Posts



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Mickey's 10 Commandments

In the marketing process, how many times do you start with a customer/prospect telling the marketing department how they use or will use the product or service? I know we interview people or perform won/loss analysis, but I wanted to go an additional step. What if we would paint the picture of how a user will interpret this marketing campaign or for that matter this blog, advertisement, whitepaper, etc? If we would take the time to determine that reaction, would we not create a better product?

The master of telling the story is of course Disney and who better to help than the mouse himself.

Mickey's 10 Commandments:

1. **Know your audience:** Before creating a setting, obtain a firm understanding of who will be using it.
2. **Where your guest shoes:** That is, never forget the human factor. Evaluate your setting from the customer's perspective by experiencing it as a customer.
3. **Organize the flow of people and ideas:** Think of a setting as a story and tell that story in a sequenced, organized way. Build the same order and logic into the design of customer involvement.
4. **Create a weenie:** Borrowed from the slang of the silent film business, a weenie was what Walt Disney called a visual magnet. It means a visual landmark is used to orientate and attract customers.

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5. **Communicate with visual learners to:** Language is not always composed of words. Use the common languages of color, shape, and form to communicate through setting.
6. **Avoid-overload - create turn-ons:** Do not bombard customers with data. Let them choose the information they want when they want it.
7. **Tell one story at a time:** Mixing multiple stories in a single setting is confusing. Create one setting for each big idea.
8. **Avoid contradictions; maintain identity:** Every detail of every setting should support and further your organizational identity and mission.
9. **For every ounce of treatment provided a ton of treat:** Give your customers the highest value by building an interactive setting that gives them the opportunity to exercise all their senses.
10. **Keep it up:** Never get complacent and always maintain your setting.

After applying these ten commandments, keep telling the story over and over again. Are you staying on track?

The Ten Commandments were taken from, [Be Our Guest: Perfecting the Art of Customer Service](#). Proper attribution should be given to Marty Sklar and his book, [One Little Spark](#).

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Disney Way A3

In this introduction, we discussed the relation of The Disney Way to Lean, The Toyota Way and Design Thinking and how storyboarding was the precursor to many activities of today. The 3rd edition does not publish till April 18th, 2016 but while you are waiting, I would purchase [The Disney Way Fieldbook: How to Implement Walt Disney's Vision of "Dream, Believe, Dare, Do" in Your Own Company](#) and get started with your Dream.

The Disney Way A3 may not guide you through the podcast, but can be used for an outline while reading the book. It is more intended to be while you are putting an actual Disney Way project together. Use it in combination with the 3rd edition where you will find several examples and descriptions of six Disney Storyboards. The six storyboards described in the book:

1. Idea Storyboard
2. Barriers Storyboard
3. Planning Storyboard
4. Customer Feedback Storyboard
5. Leadership Storyboard
6. Communications Storyboard

I picture The Disney Way A3 being used along with one or several storyboards.

[**Download The Disney Way A3 PDF**](#)

[**Download The Disney Way A3 Excel Sheet**](#)

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The Disney Way: Dream

A dream is a wish your heart makes. -Jiminy Cricket

It is no easy matter to convey a dream. Dreams are, by nature, deeply personal experiences. But true to his imaginative genius, Walt Disney was able to transform his dreams into stories that effectively articulated his vision to others. More importantly, the stories served to draw others into his fantasies, thereby marshaling the power of their collective creativity for the benefit of his dream. – The Disney Way

Starting a project “The Disney Way” is very similar to how we think about most projects. Create the vision, mission, identify outcomes (objectives), scope, and architecture. The biggest difference though is in the picture you paint. You start packaging the Dream as a story from the very beginning. You are not waiting for the story to unfold, but you are creating the dream in a very factual way. You are building characters, personas in business terms, that come to life that the problems and gains that they want to receive and making them real, even attainable.

In many of our products/services we develop around an idea versus a dream. The idea will create something and most of the time something of value. I contrast this difference often in Lean terms; we make something faster, better and cheaper than the other product/services out there. We might even have a defined niche, a target market that we have defined. However, our customers find the product uninspiring. They rather just continue doing the same old thing of slower, not quite as good and maybe, more costly.

Why is that? Well, we all know just the functional aspects are not the only thing we must consider. We know we need to find the emotional connection; purchases are driven by emotion. Or, at least social, maybe we need stronger influencers?

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The Disney Way does not dispute those facts but at the Dream Stage, it inspires people from the very beginning. It creates the story with a cast of characters that support and become engulfed in the outcome. I like to think about what Steve Jobs said about the competition, Microsoft, when they were developing the Zune. He said, "Our people like music." Which was not a reflection on Microsoft but a reflection that at Apple the people were inspired by being part of the story, part of the dream.

When the Dream stage at your company is created, it should move your product/service to a higher level. It should inspire all the characters to visualize the world that has not been created yet. I cannot think of better words than how Bobby Kennedy said it, "*There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why... I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?*"

The Dream stage is not something that we create that is not attainable. If you are a Lean person, Toyota Kata follows a very similar path. Think of the dream as the vision, the challenge. But phrase that challenge in a story that talks to real people with outcomes that will inspire them. Not all of us may have a product/service that can put a thousands of songs in our pockets. However, all of us can and should dream and make those wishes from our heart.

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The Disney Way: Believe

Believe: Create a quality cast experience - establish strategic partnerships.

"When values are clear, decisions are easy." - Roy Disney

Carrying that theme a step further, we might add that if "seeing is believing," then the unparalleled success of The Walt Disney Company is convincing proof of the power inherent in the Believe principle. But as our clients know, before success can be achieved, a personal set of core values must be formalized, communicated to the company at large, and actually lived day to day. Disney has shown the way. – The Disney Way

The Believe stage of The Disney Way certainly is about values and having the core values in place to support your dream. At face value, that is what most of us will think Believe is all about. Believe is also having the confidence that you can make that dream come true. As Imagineer Tom Fitzgerald (not Walt Disney) said, "If you can dream it, you can do it." You have to believe, however, to believe you have to understand and accept current reality.

Developing a current state is an integral part of the Believe stage. It is where we strive to understand the capabilities of ourselves, partners and customers. As much as the Dream stage challenges, I think the Believe Stage equally challenges us. Challenges us to accept our current position. It is at this stage that we really lay the groundwork in making the Dream a reality.

With our initial set of characters in our story, we have created an outline on how this particular project/campaign will be started, developed and end. We have created the journey. Now, is the time to look at who will be caring these tasks out. Are customers in position or understand the pain/gain clearly? Can our company deliver the outcomes needed for this entire journey? Do we

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have the right partners? Who else may we need? And, are we all inspired by the story to make it all happen?

We first focus on the story breaking it down into manageable parts. Much like a release plan that we use in agile project planning. We evaluate the process needed to carry out each of these stories and who most likely will be needed. This is not a small effort in itself because it is imperative before we exit this stage that we and others truly believe that we can make it happen.

In my reading of Disney projects and some of the work that was done in developing properties, I also “believe” that at this stage an idea was developed for the financial side of the project. Having proper funding at this point is imperative. One, of course, that you have resources to carry out the project, but also so we start understanding the trade-offs necessary during the project. We will at some point have to understand what we can and cannot do based on the scope of our dream, the time or schedule, and the cost.

As you can see believe is just not a culture thing. We may consider that we are narrowing the focus but without, this foundation seldom will we turn our Dreams into reality.

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The Disney Way: Dare

Dare: What would Walt have Done?

"What would Walt have done?" became the most frequently heard question at company headquarters. Some employees said they felt that they were working for a dead man. Net income dropped 18 percent in 1982 and slid another 7 percent the following year.

The Walt Disney Company, an American Institution, was on a slippery slope, and with its low stock price reflecting the company's disarray, it became ripe for takeover by corporate raiders who were circling like vultures. – The Disney Way

A company that is unwilling to push itself and step out of their box or as I like to put it towards the edges of their markets and products are next years giants. It is understanding and managing the risk that separates great leaders from poor ones. Few great leaders would bet the farm on an unknown unless they forced into it by the external environment. But we need to explore; we need to find edges in hope to reach our dream.

Most of us look for a prescribed road map that we can follow. I think a lot of that is because we are not risk takers. We are not willing to explore. In the Toyota Kata, we talk about first setting the Challenge (aka Dream). Next, we determine the current condition (aka Believe). We now look at what is our Target Condition (aka Dare). At the Dare step, we once again set what you might call an intermediate, obtainable target towards the Challenge. We create and group our stories and prioritize learning and determine risk. We look at the order of things, what can we do to take a step towards our dream.

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I think this step is about how much risk is tolerable. However, too often we internalize this thought. When we were in the believe stage, we discussed partners and customers as part of the structure. I think it is equally important that a common understanding of risk exist between the participants, the characters. The old exercise of falling backward and having someone catching you is the most obvious metaphor I can use.

At this point if someone is not sharing the Dream, does not have the same Beliefs, the Dare stage brings this to the forefront. In fact, this character should stand out like a sore thumb, and you should start wondering how they fit into the story.

Don't become confused that you need a total agreement. We welcome antagonists into the story. They are the ones that will drive us to the edges. However, they need to have similar Dreams and Belief. Where they differ is maybe in the approach we are taking or that our story structure is wrong. Which is OK as long as everyone is on the same page before we move to the last step of Do!

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The Disney Way: Do

Do: Create Plan to become the Best Show & Monitor
Carefully Managed Creativity, The Disney Way

There have always been two basic schools of thought on business creativity. The first insists that researchers and other in-house innovators be given the loosest rein possible, allowing new ideas and projects to develop on their own momentum with a maximum of independent decision making. The second approach demands that the reins be kept taut, that the generation of ideas is part of the corporate process, and like the other parts, that it be carefully managed.

Walt Disney was definitely of the second school. Although his famously forceful and controlling management style was largely attributable to his personality, there was also a practical consideration: the cost of making animated pictures. Makers of live-action films could shoot extra footage and then piece together their final product through artful cutting in the editing room, but animation costs were such that cartoon makers couldn't even consider this whittle-down approach.

So to keep costs in check, Disney exercised extremely tight control of the creative process itself by instituting a rigorous, nine-step regimen for project management. Only by demanding that his people follow⁷ this standard procedure could he continue to turn dreams into tangible products, whether he was dealing with films, amusement parks, television shows, or any of the other Disney enterprises. In the Disney system, nothing was or is left to chance. – The Disney Way

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This may surprise a lot of people that the process was so tightly controlled. But I think creativity thrives with a rigorous process. It simply gives more time to be creative. How many good ideas have been wasted because of a poor plan?

The Do stage The Disney Way leaves little to chance. We build in financial results, the cast and the guest experience through the use of storyboards, and improvement efforts. But in addition, we are developing and evaluating our monitoring practices all the time.

One of my favorite subjects is Outcome Mapping and one of the reasons is its emphasis on evaluation and monitoring. In this process, they monitor outcomes, performance, and strategy with regular evaluation. I find that very similar in the Disney approach that there is an emphasis not only on collecting data but maybe even more in what I might choose to call the Lean term of going to Gemba. Even more importantly, maybe who is going to Gemba. Many of the stories that I have heard involved Walt Disney himself making suggestions about little things that could be noticed if only he was the person that was there and participating.

Also in the Do Stage, we use Storyboarding as a visual display and monitoring techniques. What I really like the efforts that are used to capture Customer Feedback as part of the Storyboarding effort. Making this feedback visual, I believe makes it more real and creates an urgency.

The Dream-Believe-Dare-Do cycle of The Disney Way has a very similar approach to Lean, and Deming/Shewart's PDCA or maybe the terminology of CAP-Do would be more fitting. However, what I think the Disney Way, mostly because of the legacy of Walt Disney, does better than most planning or improvement cycles, is the Dream. Capturing the story and instilling the Dream for an outcome is still the most effective way of achieving any "Dream" or solving any problem.

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How Good of a Team You Put Together

Your Ability to Succeed Comes Down to How Good of a Team You Put Together

I think a Kaizen Event offers leadership a unique opportunity to “walk the talk.” They can participate in open and frank conversation, promote empowerment and break down many organizational barriers. This may be the first step in developing an ongoing continuous improvement culture. Their expressed enthusiasm for recommendations and recognition of other participants will go a long way in implementing the course of actions. Even if they raise the negatives they have the opportunity to state the reasons in a non-leadership role that can be very much more effective. However, they must be willing to accept being challenged and must not start exercising a sole person power of approval.

Leadership should enjoy a Kaizen event. It gives them the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and participate, solve problems and communicate with the people that actually carry out the implementation. In fact, I think it would benefit any manager if it would be required that they participate in a Kaizen Event at least once a year.

The Hidden asset of a Kaizen vent is its ability to develop Leadership. The story [Copy This!: Lessons from a Hyperactive Dyslexic who Turned a Bright Idea Into One of America’s Best Companies](#), discusses Paul Orfalea difficulties, which gave him "learning opportunities." He explained that it propelled him to think differently, and to develop an unorthodox, people-centered, big-picture business model that relied heavily on the intelligence and skill of his franchise managers. Orfalea’s exuberant and irreverent attitude — he freely admits to cheating in school and relying on others to get him through college and his positive acceptance of his dyslexia should inspire many others. **He mentioned in his book that when he walked into a room, he knew he was not the smartest person in it! Wonder if most leaders do that when they walk into a Kaizen Event?**

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The book; [Innovate the Pixar Way: Business Lessons from the World's Most Creative Corporate Playground](#). was written by Bill Capodagli and Lynn Jackson. The pair that wrote [The Disney Way, Harnessing the Management Secrets of Disney in Your Company](#). It wasn't long into the book that they discussed stories and development that my mind drifted to agile and scrum comparisons. What they really brought home was the importance of collaboration and building a team. They even discussed the great lengths they go to hire people who are interested in working in a "network" type environment in solving problems, building and supporting each other. Here is a short excerpt from the book; the definitions of a set of proficiencies by Bill Nelson of Pixar:

1. Depth – demonstrating mastery in a subject or a principal skill; having the discipline to chase dreams all the way to the finish line.
2. Breadth – possessing a vast array of experiences and interests having empathy for others; having the ability to explore insights from many different perspectives; and being able to effectively generate new ideas by collaborating with the entire team.
3. Communications – focusing on the receiver; receiving feedback to ascertain whether the message sent was truly understood. Realizing only the receiver can say, "I understand!"
4. Collaboration – bringing together the skills(depth, breadth, and communications), ideas, and personality styles of an entire team to achieve a shared vision. Fostering an attitude to say, "Yes, and...", rather than "No, this is better."

Collaboration is critical to the process of generating ideas and problems in any organization. When you review the principles of Kaizen and Agile, your ability to succeed really comes down to how good of a team you put together.

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Core principles that we can all learn from Disney

Related Article: [How would Walt Disney Market in 2009!](#)

Core principles that we can all learn from Disney:

1. Know the story is king.
2. Utilize the newest technology to tell that ancient story in a new way.
3. Coordinate the message across the media.
4. Have the courage to innovate.
5. Ride your uniqueness.
6. Stay on message.

"We can draw wisdom from Walt Disney, who understood the multi-media, multi-channel, multi-experience world four score years (what are you thinking of now?)"

Read his article but more important in this world of "Change" take ownership of the word that describes your organization and you will live through it. Do you question what Disney stands for when you see the Castle.

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Dreamer, Realist and Critic

Innovation requires a balance between ideas and reality. In this segment Ed Muzio describes a method of keeping those two competing elements in balance to create new, innovative ideas. Ed uses an approach developed by Walt Disney and based on the roles of Dreamer, Realist and Critic.

In the video are some great tips on how to put this into practice. I once read that Walt could play all the roles and many times when he walked into meetings everyone wondered which role he was going to take on. He also experimented with having separate rooms for each role.

[Video Link: Dreamer, Realist and Critic](#)

About: Ed Muzio, president and CEO of [Group Harmonics](#) was a guest on the Business901 podcast, [Creating a Great Workplace](#). During the podcast, he discussed several more innovative ideas in transforming your workplace. He has just recently published a new book [Make Work Great: Super Charge Your Team, Reinvent the Culture, and Gain Influence One Person at a Time](#).

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Bringing your Storyboard Alive!

Your storyboard should not be a **dry report** but an active document that truly makes your project come alive! Storyboarding has become a popular way of transferring the details of a Six Sigma project to a graphical representation. Very much like your child's fifth grade science fair project. The purpose of course it gives the Six Sigma team a way to summarize their efforts and let other people outside of the team understand their efforts. On the Lean side, I think that is why A3 reporting has become so popular. It is a graphical way of displaying the project. Though we are all not visual learners the majority of us find learning by stories and pictures and diagram much easier.

"The first storyboards were originated in the Disney animation studios in the 1930's. According to Walt Disney, the storyboard was invented by Web Smith, an animator and one the first story men at the studio. When Web planned a story, he would draw it instead of describing the action in words. At first he simply spread the drawings out over the floor of his office, but soon graduated to pinning them in order on to the walls. In this way, the unfolding story gains the valuable visual dimension. According to legend, Walt was none too happy with the innovation. He had just redecorated the offices and the marred walls in Webb's office stuck out like a sore thumb. But Walt also recognized the order imposed by the posted drawings and the ease with which the entire feature could be analyzed and manipulated. So he ordered 4' x 8' corkboards and the storyboard was born.

Soon, every Disney cartoon for so life on the storyboard, and the board themselves moved to new departments as the project progressed. The story men would pitch their ideas to Walt on storyboard, color and sound were both added using the storyboard as reference point, etc. When Walt hijacked the studios innovators to design the attractions for Disney land, they brought the storyboard along with them. And today, it has evolved into a standard technique among the Imagineers."

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I think there should be a happy medium somewhere between the Disney storyboard and the Six Sigma storyboard. However, if you error, error toward the Disney side.

As many of you already know, the PowerPoint presentation was developed by engineers for exactly the same reason that most develop a Six Sigma storyboard, to tell the story of a project. However, the main purpose of a storyboard is to tell others outside of the team the story and maybe more importantly to depict to others what is going on inside the project as it is unfolding. Try hanging your Storyboards in the hallway or cafeteria much like the trophy cases in a school. You may be surprised on the amount of activity and comments that it may stimulate. Ask for comments by putting a suggestion box or post it notes next to the storyboard. Get people engaged in the planning process not just at the end.

You may create the typical PowerPoint utilizing SIPOC, VOC, House of Quality and other Six Sigma or Lean Tools. If you are on the team ask yourself, how will you get others engaged? Consider your audience, the storyboard is not about you it is about them. Take a lesson from Disney or even have your fifth grader help you on this project. For example, using a DMAIC process, below are some simple guidelines on how to develop an entertaining storyboard.

Define the problem: What is the first thing you learned in 5th grade about writing a story? You have to have a hook! Appeal to the emotions of your audience!

Measure: Your metrics must clearly define the problem and visually display it. Do not limit yourself here to simple metrics; maybe pin the defect on the wall or the cause. If a failure causes a catastrophic condition, display visually what that means.

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Analyze: Create some drama in analyzing the problem. A typical process here would be identifying the vital few metrics that are important. Create some drama in finding the root cause. Think about how if you don't find the real problem what may happen.

Implement: We have taken the story to the critical stage, there has to be a solution. This is where everyone wants to jump in and help. We are all problem solvers but are we all MacGyver's? We have to find the best answer that addresses root cause and is measurable. Who will be the Hero?

Control: Now, is the time of the story that the problem is solved and life goes on happily ever after. Can you depict that in your storyboard? Can you show and prove the results that prove this? Did you reach the other side of the rainbow?

Creating a compelling presentation that depicts the story accurately and allows others outside the team to participate is extremely important. Remember, your storyboard should not be a report but an active document that truly makes your project come alive!

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Storyboards give Insights to Space & Time

Would like to have additional insights to your customers' ACTIONS? Maybe, additional insight to your organizations RE-ACTIONS? The benefits of visualizing your processes have been proven over and over again with the practices of Mindmaps, Value Stream Mapping, Process Charts, and other visual tools to include Powerpoint! Through the use of Storymapping, you can extend these tools and create a more graphical description. I believe this adds a better understanding of space and time to your process through.

In the book, [Visual Meetings: How Graphics, Sticky Notes and Idea Mapping Can Transform Group Productivity](#), author David Sibbet points out some of the successful companies that have utilized the Storymapping Process. We are not talking Disney or Pixar but maybe less creative types. Examples of organizations that have achieved great results this way include:

1. **National Semiconductor** shared its turnaround vision worldwide in the early 1990s, and in four years achieved **95% vision recognition** throughout the company.
2. **Hewlett Packard** Labs shared potential new business ideas to top management using plotter-generated murals instead of slides.
3. **Raley's** top management shared its history, vision of the future, and strategy of their grocery store chain store with managers.
4. **Save the Redwoods League** shared its vision, strategies, and goals with all its stakeholders in three different 5 year planning processes.
5. **VISA** corporation orients all new employees with a large graphic history (updated three times so far).

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6. **Adobe Systems** created a graphic history of Adobe and Macromedia when the two organizations merged.
7. The **RE-AMP** collaborative illustrated how its system works to the 120 environmentally oriented non-governmental organizations and 15 foundations at its annual meeting in the upper midwest. They also used large charts to map progress toward their goal of cleaning up global warming pollutants in the energy industry.
8. **Nike** communicated its visions for its Treasury function, and then later for its IT function using large Storymaps.
9. **National Academy Foundation** designed large Storymaps to illustrate its process of establishing high school learning academies.
10. The **San Francisco Film Society** used a large Storymap as a centerfold for its five-year business plan focused on growing this very successful, full-service film arts organization.

They went on to further explain the results of the National Semiconductor Vision Map in more detail stating:

Every top executive could tell this story, using this mural as a backdrop. It shows the overall vision to the far right, the history to the left, leading to the unassembled spaceship represented current realities. Critical business issues lie in front of the ship. Key values are the windows. Marketing messages are in the talk balloons. The top of the spaceship illustrates the new organization. The way forward has question marks intentionally; because Amelio wanted to enroll the rest of the organization in redesign. This vision got 95% recognition in employee surveys by 1994.

So how can you use Storymaps in your business? Use it as a communication tool. People learn through pictures and it directly engages people if designed correctly. A Storymap

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won't do it all. You still have to show up and tell the story. However, having all the information visible allows a person to leave the story unfold as they tell it. I like the big visuals where everyone can soak in the entire picture as you are talking.

After the presentation, leave the Storyboard up or have small handouts. I thought the added question marks in Amelio's NS Vision Map was an excellent way to stimulate additional thoughts. Welcoming comments by having additional post-it-notes lying around is the best form of suggestion box that you can have. The notes can be anonymous or not. I would encourage a different color so that you can tell that they were added at a glance.

The authors went on to suggest a few ideas that Storyboards could be used for...

- Orienting to histories and culture of an organization.
- Communicating the need for change.
- Understanding driving forces in an industry.
- Understanding customer needs.
- Sharing new visions and strategies.
- Sharing implementation plans.
- Communicating new process designs

Think of a storyboard representing an experience in purchasing a car. They may be considering, price, payments, usability, function, gas mileage and looks. Storyboarding the process tells a little more on how they look at it, what is important to them and what the choice says about them. It seems much easier to develop your sales and marketing process from this type of description?

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Disney was a Storyboarding Freak!

Not only does a storyboard allow for a dress rehearsal of the final product but by the very fact of being posted on the wall, it elicits early feedback and encourages quick, painless editing, leading to significant savings in time and resources.

Below are the takeaways I received from a lesson and how I apply this 25 step process to Marketing is in parenthesis.

1. Storyboard artist is a communicator (Marketing)
2. Blueprint of movie before production (Customer's Value Stream).
3. Panels of the entire movie (Record all the Value and non-Value steps of the process)
4. Use to develop a visual story (Create story in pictures(post-it-notes))
5. Before expensive animation takes place (Plan before doing)
6. Minimum amount of info but enough for a quick read (Post-it-note)
7. Express what your feeling (Tell like it is)
8. Drawing has to have meaning (Customer Value Defined)
9. Storyteller must be a good pitch artist (Talk out loud and tell the story)
10. Put it on a Story Reel?(Gemba)
11. Leave the experts work the scenes they are strong at (Include others)
12. Everyone must be aware of overall needs of story (Understand the big picture)

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13. If you show it graphically, you can do it! (Clarity = Flow)
14. Cut out a lot of unnecessary work (Reduce the Non-Value added steps)
15. Working together Storyboard artist and director (Sales and Marketing)
16. Keeping everyone on the same page (Ditto)
17. What if Scenarios (Reduce Risk)
18. Start out with the important scenes (CTQ's of Customer)
19. Tool for staging (Our response)
20. Prepare for the scene(Customer Engagement – Sales Calls)
21. Develop story and character (Customer Support)
22. Don't become in love with an idea (Keep an open Mind)
23. Every storyboard recorded – Change was OK! (If it doesn't fit, throw it away!)
24. Ideas are not necessarily used immediately (Accept Relevancy)
25. Saved the unused work for future reference. (Backlog)

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Related Material:

Podcast with Bill Capodagli: [Making the Disney Way: Your Way](#)

YouTube Video of the Podcast: [The Disney Way; Interview with Business901](#)

Podcast with Doug Lipp: [Are you Plusing your Show?](#)

Podcast with Lou Prosperi: [Using the Imagineering Process](#)

YouTube Video: [How Movie-Makers use Storyboarding in their Planning](#)

**And to think it all happened because of
a Mouse is, even more, reason to
believe in the Disney Way.**