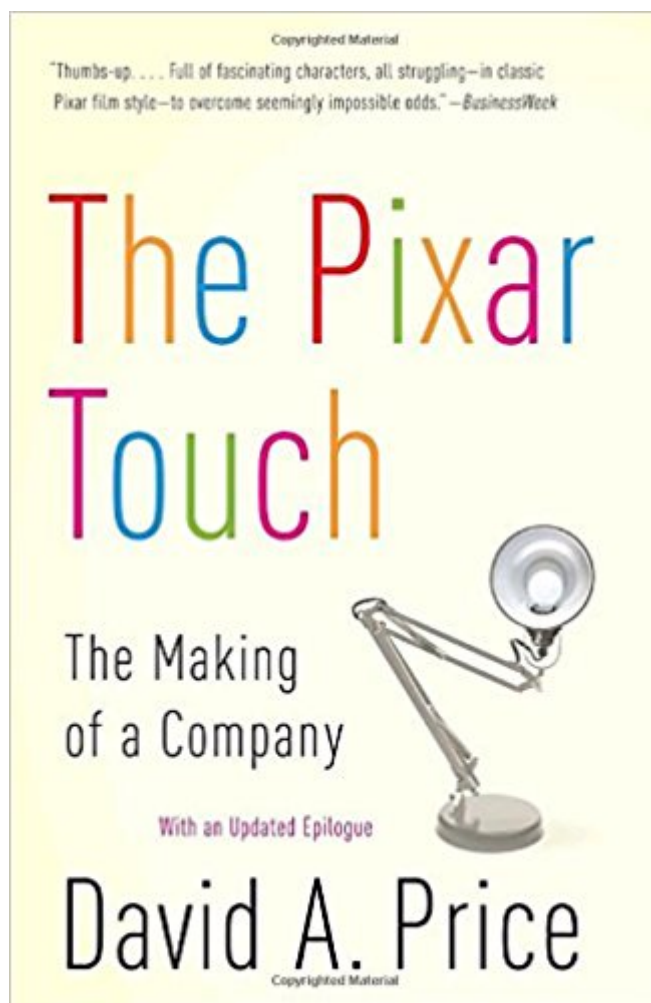


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# The Pixar Touch: The Making Of A Company



## Synopsis

A Wall Street Journal Best Book of the Year  
The Pixar Touch is a lively chronicle of Pixar Animation Studios' history and evolution, and the "fraternity of geeks" who shaped it. With the help of animating genius John Lasseter and visionary businessman Steve Jobs, Pixar has become the gold standard of animated filmmaking, beginning with a short special effects shot made at Lucasfilm in 1982 all the way up through the landmark films Toy Story, Finding Nemo, Wall-E, and others. David A. Price goes behind the scenes of the corporate feuds between Lasseter and his former champion, Jeffrey Katzenberg, as well as between Jobs and Michael Eisner. And finally he explores Pixar's complex relationship with the Walt Disney Company as it transformed itself into the \$7.4 billion jewel in the Disney crown.  
With an Updated Epilogue

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## Customer Reviews

**Product Description** The roller-coaster rags-to-riches story behind the phenomenal success of Pixar Animation Studios: the first in-depth look at the company that forever changed the film industry and the "fraternity of geeks" who shaped it. The Pixar Touch is a story of technical innovation that revolutionized animation, transforming hand-drawn cel animation to computer-generated 3-D graphics. It's a triumphant business story of a company that began with a dream, remained true to the ideals of its founders' antibureaucratic and artist driven; and ended up a multibillion-dollar success. We meet Pixar's technical genius and founding CEO, Ed Catmull, who dreamed of becoming an animator, inspired by Disney's Peter Pan and Pinocchio,

realized he would never be good enough, and instead enrolled in the then new field of computer science at the University of Utah. It was Catmull who founded the computer graphics lab at the New York Institute of Technology and who wound up at Lucasfilm during the first Star Wars trilogy, running the computer graphics department, and found a patron in Steve Jobs, just ousted from Apple Computer, who bought Pixar for five million dollars. Catmull went on to win four Academy Awards for his technical feats and helped to create some of the key computer-generated imagery software that animators rely on today. Price also writes about John Lasseter, who catapulted himself from unemployed animator to one of the most powerful figures in American filmmaking; animation was the only thing he ever wanted to do (he was inspired by Disney's *The Sword in the Stone*), and Price's book shows how Lasseter transformed computer animation from a novelty into an art form. The author writes as well about Steve Jobs, as volatile a figure as a Shakespearean monarch . . . Based on interviews with dozens of insiders, *The Pixar Touch* examines the early wildcat years when computer animation was thought of as the lunatic fringe of the medium. We see the studio at work today; how its writers, directors, and animators make their astonishing, and astonishingly popular, films. The book also delves into Pixar's corporate feuds: between Lasseter and his former champion, Jeffrey Katzenberg (*A Bug's Life* vs. *Antz*), and between Jobs and Michael Eisner. And finally it explores Pixar's complex relationship with the Walt Disney Company as it transformed itself from a Disney satellite into the \$7.4 billion jewel in the Disney crown.

Little-Known Facts from *The Pixar Touch: The Making of a Company* by David Price

- Pixar, not Apple, made Steve Jobs a billionaire. Jobs bought Pixar in 1986 from Lucasfilm for \$5 million. In 1995, the week after the release of *Toy Story*, Pixar went public and Jobs's stock was worth \$1.1 billion.
- Ed Catmull, Pixar's co-founder, dreamed as a youth of becoming an animator, but decided in high school that he couldn't draw well enough. Instead, he became an early visionary of computer animation as a graduate student in the 1970's. "Computer animation was sort of on the lunatic fringe at that time," remembered Fred Parke, a fellow Ph.D. student in Catmull's class at the University of Utah.
- When John Lasseter joined Pixar, which was then the computer graphics department of George Lucas's Lucasfilm; he had just been fired from his dream job as an animator at Disney. He became the first person to apply classic Disney character animation principles to computer animation.
- Before it became an animation studio, Pixar went through years of struggle and multi-million-dollar losses. It started as a computer company and John Lasseter's short films, such as *Luxo Jr.* and *Tin Toy*, were promotional films to help sell the company's computers.
- Pixar was almost bought by Microsoft? Yep: Jobs

remained worried about the company's finances even after Pixar made a deal with the Walt Disney Co. in 1991 to produce Toy Story, Pixar's first feature film. The Pixar Touch details the effort to sell Pixar to Bill Gates's company while Toy Story was in production. When writing Toy Story, to find inspiration for the relationship between Buzz and Woody, Lasseter and his story department screened classic "buddy" movies, including 48 Hrs., The Defiant Ones, Midnight Run, and Thelma & Louise. John Lasseter has instilled an intense commitment to research in the studio's creative staff. To prepare for the scene in Finding Nemo in which the fish characters Marlin and Dory become trapped in a whale, two members of the art department climbed inside a dead gray whale that had been stranded north of Marin, California. To learn how to make a realistic French kitchen, the producer and first director of Ratatouille worked as apprentices at an elite French restaurant in the Napa Valley. Pixar deliberately avoided making the humans in The Incredibles look too realistic. They knew that as animated human characters became too close to lifelike, audiences would actually perceive them as repulsive. The phenomenon, known as the "uncanny valley," had been predicted by a Japanese robotics researcher as early as 1970. Thus, the details of human skin, such as pores and hair follicles, were left out of The Incredibles' characters in favor of a more cartoonlike appearance. The signature of most Pixar feature films is characters who appeal to children (toys, fish, monsters), but who have adult-like personalities and are dealing with adult-like problems. Prior to the acquisition of Pixar by Disney in 2006, Lasseter loathed the idea of Disney making sequels to Pixar films without Pixar's involvement; as Disney's contract with Pixar allowed it to do. "These were the people that put out Cinderella II," Lasseter remarked. Pixar is more than an animation studio. Pixar's innovations in computer graphics technology pervade movies today. Special-effects houses like Industrial Light & Magic (Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest, The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix) use Pixar's software to create out-of-this-world places and characters. (Photo © Simon Bruty) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Pixar animation studios, the company behind such blockbuster movies as Toy Story, A Bug's Life, Monsters Inc., and Finding Nemo, started in the late 1970s as a project in a garage on Long Island by a soft-spoken former missionary named Ed Catmull. The computer-graphics researcher possessed the tenacity to follow through on the painstaking process of making 3-D computer characters come to life on the screen; he accidentally fell into the role of business leader when his

creations took the world by storm. Price, author of *Love and Hate in Jamestown* (2003), writes for the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*, among others. He charts the course of Pixar from obsession to its relationship with LucasFilm, the purchase by Apple Computer's Steve Jobs, and finally the Disney buyout. It's an eye-opening account that pulls back the curtain to reveal the process of evolution, the labor of love, and all the business dealings behind the magic of 3-D animation. --David Siegfried --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I highly recommend this book for anyone that is interested in hearing about a true Cinderella story. Pixar was able to come back from rejections from Disney and eventually became a huge part of Disney films. It brings to our attention what it takes to make someone's dream come to life and how hard you have to work to get to where you want to be. Although Catmull was turned down for computer graphics he was offered a position to help with the Disney parks, but he in turn rejected Disney because he had his own goals that he wanted to reach. The book also talks about how *Toy Story* almost never came to life because it did not fall under what Disney believed and was part of the reason that they had planned to not finance the film. With a few adjustments to the film's story, Disney did eventually finance the film and it turned out to be one of the best decisions either company could have ever make. The film not only brought in money for the two companies, but it also set up a partnership that has been very successful and will continue to be successful.

This book should be a must-read for any business student. It is a great summary of how the company Pixar struggled to life and then found great success. The book covers ground-breaking innovations in animation and software development. It's also a candid view of start-ups. The audio book has a wonderful narrator, but there is so much information that reading the hard copy is a better option.

This is of course a story about Pixar. But Pixar's story is the history of computer animation. When *Toy Story 1* was released, I had some reservation about computer animation because I was such a fan of Walt Disney's traditional, cell animation films. But I was so wrong. With computer, you can do much, much more in animation. This book answered some of the questions I've had about how computerized animation films are made and who these people are at Pixar. Plus, if you are interested in Steve Jobs, Pixar's story can't be told without Jobs mentioned. Although Jobs definitely played a critical role in sustaining and growing the company, it is sometimes regrettable that people tend to overemphasize his role while undermining those of others at Pixar. "The Pixar Touch"

somewhat demystifies that part. All in all, this is perfect for all animation fans.

This book chronicles the rise of Pixar up until acquisition by Disney. Fascinating and well written if you want to learn how technology can blend with creativity then this is for you.

Great book. For anyone who is interested in business or animation, it will be an enjoyable book. You will see how Pixar and their founders started with a vision, struggled for years and finally achieving their lifelong dream in the end. Very inspirational for those who also have goals and dreams that may seem impossible.

Hard to put down! This was one of those books which was difficult to put down. Prior to reading this book I was aware of how Pixar came about but not to the extent the book delved into. It showed the perseverance of people's dreams and fight for that dream to come true. The technology which came out of the dream and how those magical movies showed up on screen were enjoyed by millions maybe even billions of people around the world, now that's a dream very few have come true. The book shows what we already knew about Steve Jobs and his gut instincts to stand behind a product when no one else would. The vision of Jobs and the perseverance of Pixar led the world into technology and the standards trying to be obtained by others. These people were visionaries to technology and I don't see that challenge changing anytime soon.

Just as described!! My son loved it!! Fast shipping. Thank you!!

As a long time fan of Pixar and a fan (and critic at times) of Disney animation, I found this to seemingly be one of the better books written about Pixar and the evolution of 3D animation from Pixar's perspective. It is a solid look at Pixar from the Catmull's early years at the newly formed New York Institute of Technology to the arrival of Lasseter, to the investment of Jobs and his evolution from seeing Pixar as a hardware company to an animation studio, and finally to the Iger's epiphany (although perhaps obvious to others) that Disney Feature Animation needed Pixar. This book not only serves as a good case study of Pixar, but as a reminder that great animated films all start with a great story and are made absolutely fantastic in the execution of the details of that story's characters - concepts that held true when Disney first introduced animated features and still hold true today. It also makes clear something I had long thought, that Disney Feature animation lost its way under Eisner, substituting short term profit for long term value. The whole reason for the Disney

Company's rise to success in the first place was its feature animation work. That work flowed to everything - it's theme parks, merchandising, resorts, etc. Pixar and Lasseter, ironically, brought this back to Disney. I would recommend this book to anybody interested in feature animation, story-telling and/or the business of either. It's filled with rich experiences of how business works and sometimes doesn't, and how a group of passionate animators with a knack for storytelling and drive for their trade brought animation into the mainstream once again.

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