



THE HEART OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
Members of Council

From: Finance Director Vernon Blaze

Date: Friday, August 25, 2023

Re: Finance Office and Related Topic Updates

Management/Leadership Lessons

There are so many sources of knowledge. Benchmarking off other organizations that are doing things particularly well is one “real time, real world” source of knowledge that can effectively be implemented by other organizations to increase performance, efficiency, productivity, etc.

Pixar Cofounder Ed Catmull was profiled in a recent Weekend Confidential column in the *Wall Street Journal*. The following are some quotes of Ed’s from the article that caught my attention as being useful in managing and leading other organizations too – including the City of Independence.

- *“I saw my job at Pixar was actually to look at our process and find out why things worked or didn’t work.”*
- Ed was determined to build not just a winning company but a “sustainable creative culture” by encouraging communication and removing hierarchies.

Management/Leadership Lessons – Continued

- The work of fostering an atmosphere of candor, collaboration and problem-solving is never done.
- *“People think, OK, we’ve figured out how to do things, let’s just get to that sweet spot. Even when you get to a place where everything seems right, people come in with new ideas, new technology, new expectations. What we need is a mindset that allows us to adapt when nothing is stable.”*
- *“Steve Jobs fired only two people from Pixar’s board of directors, because they never disagreed with him, so he believed they weren’t of any use to the company. Steve wanted people to speak their mind. If he was wrong, he would change.”*
- As the studio grew, it became Catmull’s job to ensure that employees continued to take risks and speak up about their ideas or concerns.
- He says that Pixar’s films are so costly to make because of their lengthy iterative process. *“Early on, all of our movies suck. It’s only through reworking, reworking and reworking again that characters can find their souls.”* (That quote isn’t only about making movies. It’s about life!)
- Catmull is quick to admit that even the most vigilant and nimble leaders can miss big problems.
- Failure, Catmull says, is a natural byproduct of innovation, and change is the only constant in every industry.
- *“...There are a lot of challenges coming right now. But you can’t hold off what’s coming any more than Kodak can go back to selling film. You just need to try to step into it and see where it goes.”*

Some very insightful quotes and lessons from Ed Catmull. Lessons learned from an animation studio can even be applied to a public sector organization like the City of Independence – Thank you, Ed!

