URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/the-hungry-beast-and-the-ugly-baby

Ed Catmull, president of Pixar and Disney Animation Studios, describes how companies often don't spend enough time nurturing and improving an initial idea and quickly produce something lacking because of the pressure to "feed the hungry beast."

Transcript

The bulk of your people are working on your products, it's a creative, active thing.. And it is the group that generates your revenue, but it's also where your costs are.. So I don't mean it's the Hungry Beast in the derogatory sense, but it's this beast that's got to be fed.. Or think like the news or newspapers, right you've got to feed this thing.. So upfront we have to generate new ideas, what happens with a lot of companies is after the founders go away or move on or get hit by cars or whatever happens to founders, the most organized people are the ones who run the beast.. So they put those people over the whole thing and they bring the values to the upfront process which is okay let's go on schedule, let's get this, because we've got to feed this beast here.. Our issue, and I think this is true in most places, is the very nature of what we're doing at the front is fundamentally different than when we're running the beast.. We're doing something which is unknown, we're in wild territory, we don't what's going to happen and what we first do - or if I think of movies, people think making the movie sounds exciting, and it is exciting.. But there's an imagination of what it must be like.. It's sort of like having this beautiful baby and that baby grows up to be this beautiful movie star..

But what do you do if the baby is ugly? And that is our reality, is that the new ideas are fragile, they don't look good, they take protection, you cannot judge them at that point.. You can see how well the team is working together but you can't judge the ideas.. So we have to go from that stage to somehow with engagement with that beast and this is a long process but the normal thing that happens is people screw up the front-end...