

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/will-you-be-open-or-closed>

Ed Catmull, president of Pixar and Disney Animation Studios, discusses how freely works were published in the early days. In conversation with Stanford Prof. Bob Sutton, Catmull said the intention was to attract top talent and contribute to a community.



Transcript

Well, I came out of a university environment which was very open, so I was inspired by that and I would say it was.... At the time I knew it was an extraordinary environment, in the way that we shared things with each other.. So I came out with this idea of making a film, and I wasn't the only one around who wanted to do that.. And I was aware, because it was actually a really small field, we're talking about a handful of people here.. And they wanted to get there first, they were very competitive with their ideas, and so they did not want to share their discoveries.. And at this time SIGGRAPH, the computer graphics community, was brand new.. But my belief at the time was that we were so far away from what we needed that the ideas that are current today would get completely by-passed.. So we published everything and the rationale was that if we publish everything we are more likely to attract the best people.. So we began to accumulate people that not only shared in the vision, but they were very good because they liked the idea of sharing.. And we were rewarded because not only we got these people but we were participating in a bigger community, and today most of my friends are still in this community..

I really highly value them, we get together all the time.. And actually Steve never actually tried to even when Steve was there we always published and to this day, we still do.. In fact for the last couple of years, the papers coming out of Disney and Pixar have been the single biggest block paper submitting institution.. So, you've maintained that openness despite Jobs' infamous secrecy at Apple, he was okay with you operating.... He never applied it to us.. He said we could do it my way...