

Waking Sleeping Beauty Video Assignment

1. Describe the culture of the Disney Animation Department before Michael Eisner and Frank Wells were hired.

Before Michael Eisner and Frank Wells were hired, it was Ron Miller led the way of the Disney Animation Department. Because many talented animators left Disney, and creativities and motivations faded away from the Studios, the animations produced over the early 1980s did not as successful as it used to be. Moreover, years of constructions of the Disney theme park has also reduced the animation outputs substantially. As a consequence, the company's financial performance and productivities were both deteriorated during the early 1980s. Moreover, with the development of movie and film industry, Disney also started to target the teen and adult market. In this case, the culture of the Disney Animation Department was unordered, disharmonious, stressful, and lack of creativities and teamwork. Ruther than pushing new ideas, at that time, employees of Disney were confused about the unclear future of their company.

2. Discuss the internal threats to the Disney Animation Department present during the 1980s.

By the mid-1980s, after Eisner was named Disney's chairman and CEO, and Frank was named president and COO, the company had fallen on several hard times. Internally, there is a lack of commitment and teamwork among the organization. And many of the employees have lost faith to their company, because of the downsizing and revenue reduction (e.g. the crushing defeat of *The Black Cauldron*). As a consequence, Disney was gradually losing its corporate values of creativity, motivation and entrepreneurship. Moreover, Disney's culture faded rapidly, and the organization did not have a training system to underscore their values and spirit. In addition, there was a conflict between artistic pursuing and profitable pursuing, and the

organizational level did not share the same goal with the individual level. For instance, Disney launched many new TV programs, such as Disney Channel, for higher profits, while almost stopped producing some of the great shows and animations, such as its movie division and so on. Also, the employees often had high volumes of work, and could not achieve a regular work-life balance. Lastly, with the boost of new computer technologies, Disney animators were polarized between new innovations and old-time sketching, and they needed to equip new skills and learn updated techniques.

3. How did Howard Ashman's death affect the morale of the animators? Why was he so influential?

Howard Ashman composed soundtrack of Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, and this animation won a great commercial and critical success. Then he went on to compose the soundtrack for *Beauty and the Beast*, which nominated for best picture. Although Ashman died of AIDS two years later in March 1991, his musical influence continued. Besides *The Little Mermaid*, his talent subsequently passed on *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, and many other animations. In other words, his influence was a major factor in the regeneration of Disney during the 1980s. He kept his spirits and devotions up to the last possible moment for his company, and set a good example for Disney animators to follow. Additionally, the corporation between Ashman and other animators has produced several famous animations, which proved the potential for long-run profitability and artistic value. In this case, his quality of work and efforts also brought hope and faith for the animators. And his story was a cultural symbol of Disney that motivated the animators to produce long-run products and achieve creativity.