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Disney in talks to buy Pixar

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20 January, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Disney in talks to buy Pixar

Apple's CEO Steve Jobs is reportedly negotiating the sale of Pixar Animation Studios to Disney. Jobs is also CEO and chairman of Pixar, makers of a string of now classic movies such as *Toy Story*, *Finding Nemo* and *The Incredibles*. The deal could see Jobs get a considerable, but undisclosed, stake in Disney, who are eager to keep him on board to wave his magic wand over its fortunes. The Apple boss has been instrumental in raising animation standards at Pixar and creating one of the industry's most cutting edge and inspiring production companies. Disney and Pixar have been collaborating for the past twelve years. However, Jobs intimated last year that he would sever relations with Disney and search for a new distribution partner.

Mr. Jobs reportedly never saw eye to eye with Disney's former CEO Michael Eisner, leading to an untenable working relationship. A new CEO, Robert Iger, took over at the Disney helm and Pixar-Disney relations are now considerably less frosty. Since Iger took over last October, he has made concerted efforts to woo Mr. Jobs into continuing the highly lucrative relationship between the two companies. In an attempt to soften Jobs up, Iger struck a deal that allows hit Disney TV shows to be made available for download to Apple's phenomenally successful video iPods. Iger seems to have been successful in courting Jobs and in getting the partnership back on track. Jobs is the largest shareholder in Pixar. His stake is worth around \$3.4 billion.

WARM-UPS

1. BUSINESS SALE: You are currently negotiating to buy a famous company. Decide what company you are going to buy, the reasons you want to buy it and your plans for its future. Talk to the other business buyers in the class about your possible purchases. Give each other advice and warnings.

2. MAGIC WANDS: With your partner(s), decide on how a magic wand could be waved to help the following companies:

- Disney
- Livedoor
- Boeing
- Sony
- McDonalds
- Ford Motor Company
- Merck
- Other _____

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

CEOs / Steve Jobs / Pixar / Disney / "Finding Nemo" / magic wands / fortunes / cutting edge / severing relations / working relationships / softening people up / iPod

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. MERGERS: In pairs / groups, talk about the following mergers. Do you think they'd be very successful? What problems might there be?

- Disney and Pixar
- Boeing and Airbus
- Toyota and Hyundai
- Sony and Nintendo
- McDonalds and Starbucks
- Shell and Yukos
- Chanel and Burberry
- Other _____

5. SOFTENING PEOPLE UP: In pairs / groups, agree on how effective each of the following are in softening people up in business. Would they soften you up?

- Public flattery
- Flattery in private
- Expensive dinners and presents
- A seat on the board
- Promotion and a flashy job title
- An under the table cash payment
- Being asked to be a consultant
- Other _____

6. NEGOTIATING: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "negotiating". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Apple CEO Steve Jobs is also the CEO of Pixar Animation Studios. | T / F |
| b. Disney made the now classic movies <i>Toy Story</i> and <i>Finding Nemo</i> . | T / F |
| c. Pixar and Disney have been collaborating for twelve years. | T / F |
| d. Disney's CEO wanted to sever relations between the two companies. | T / F |
| e. A new Disney CEO has revived relations with Pixar. | T / F |
| f. The new CEO wooed Steve Jobs with fast cars and chocolates. | T / F |
| g. Disney's CEO softened Steve Jobs up with Disney TV shows. | T / F |
| h. Steve Jobs' stake in Pixar is worth around \$340 million. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| a. reportedly | curry favor with |
| b. instrumental | pooling resources |
| c. cutting edge | shaky |
| d. collaborating | cut |
| e. sever | concentrated |
| f. untenable | key |
| g. helm | extraordinarily |
| h. concerted | reputedly |
| i. woo | wheel |
| j. phenomenally | pioneering |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. reportedly negotiating | eye with Disney's former CEO |
| b. makers of a string | raising animation standards |
| c. wave his magic | relations with Disney |
| d. instrumental in | woo Mr. Jobs into continuing |
| e. he would sever | Jobs up |
| f. never saw eye to | the sale of Pixar |
| g. took over at the | of now classic movies |
| h. he has made concerted efforts to | courting Jobs |
| i. In an attempt to soften | Disney helm |
| j. successful in | wand over its fortunes |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WRONG WORD: Find the five incorrect or least likely words from the ten in bold. Agree on replacements with your partner(s).

Disney in talks to buy Pixar

Apple's CEO Steve Jobs is reportedly **neglecting** the sale of Pixar Animation Studios to Disney. Jobs is also CEO and chairman of Pixar, makers of a **string** of now classic movies such as *Toy Story*, *Finding Nemo* and *The Incredibles*. The **deal** could see Jobs get a considerable, but undisclosed, **stake** in Disney, who are **eager** to keep him on board to wave his magic **wind** over its fortunes. The Apple boss has been **instrumental** in raising animation standards at Pixar and creating one of the industry's most **blunt** edge and inspiring production companies. Disney and Pixar have been **corroborating** for the past twelve years. However, Jobs intimated last year that he would **severe** relations with Disney and search for a new distribution partner.

Mr. Jobs reportedly never saw **eye** to eye with Disney's former CEO Michael Eisner, leading to an **untenable** working relationship. A new CEO, Robert Iger, took over at the Disney **helm** and Pixar-Disney relations are now considerably less **frosting**. Since Iger took over last October, he has made concerted efforts to **wool** Mr. Jobs into continuing the highly **laxative** relationship between the two companies. In an attempt to **harden** Jobs up, Iger struck a deal that allows hit Disney TV shows to be made **available** for download to Apple's phenomenally successful video iPods. Iger seems to have been successful in **courting** Jobs and in getting the partnership back on **trick**. Jobs is the largest shareholder in Pixar. His stake is worth around \$3.4 billion.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'cutting' and 'edge'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WRONG WORD: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about business negotiations.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- reportedly
- string
- eager
- wand
- edge
- sever
- eye
- helm
- woo
- soften
- courting
- track

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you like to know what's going on with Disney and Pixar?
- c. Which company do you like better, Disney or Pixar?
- d. Why do you think Steve Jobs wants to sell part or all of his stake in Pixar?
- e. What do you know of and/or think about Steve Jobs as a CEO?
- f. What are the biggest differences between Pixar and Disney?
- g. Do you think Pixar without Steve Jobs would be as successful as Pixar with Steve Jobs in the future?
- h. Have you ever been wooed or courted by anyone?
- i. What kinds of things would be successful in softening you up?
- j. Have you ever severed relations with anyone, either in your business or private life?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What are the differences between Apple CEO Steve Jobs and Microsoft CEO Bill Gates?
- d. Which movies do you like best, Disney, Pixar or DreamWorks?
- e. How do you think Steve Jobs might wave his magic wand over Disney?
- f. Do you think Steve Jobs could be a successful CEO in other industries?
- g. What do you imagine the average day of a powerful CEO to be like?
- h. What questions would you like to ask Steve Jobs?
- i. What do you think his answers would be?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

MAGIC WANDS: You have an extra magical wand. With your partner(s), decide how you will wave your wand on the following Disney, Pixar and Apple related products. Decide what is lacking with the present product. Discuss what things your magic wand waving will change. Describe the finished products.

PRODUCT	LACKING	CHANGES	END PRODUCT
Disney movies			
Pixar movies			
Disneyland			
iPods			
Computers			

Change partners and share and compare your ideas. Give each other feedback on your changes.

Return to your original partner(s) and talk about what you discussed with your other partner(s).

Change partners again and make presentations based on your ideas. Vote on the best ones.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Steve Jobs. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. NEGOTIATING: Write an essay about the kinds of negotiating skills you need to be successful in business. Show your essay to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. A DAY IN THE LIFE: You are Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computers and Pixar Animation Studios. Write an account of one day in your life. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone have similar days?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. T d. F e. T f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. reportedly	reputedly
b. instrumental	key
c. cutting edge	pioneering
d. collaborating	pooling resources
e. sever	cut
f. untenable	shaky
g. helm	wheel
h. concerted	concentrated
i. woo	curry favor with
j. phenomenally	extraordinarily

PHRASE MATCH:

a. reportedly negotiating	the sale of Pixar
b. makers of a string	of now classic movies
c. wave his magic	wand over its fortunes
d. instrumental in	raising animation standards
e. he would sever	relations with Disney
f. never saw eye to	eye with Disney's former CEO
g. took over at the	Disney helm
h. he has made concerted efforts to	woo Mr. Jobs into continuing
i. In an attempt to soften	Jobs up
j. successful in	in courting Jobs

WRONG WORD:

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