



# Quotes

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**Alan Kay:** *The Power of the Context*

projects are important parts of today's interactive computing and networked world.

Giving a professional illustrator a goal for a poster usually results in what was desired. If one tries this with an artist, one will get what the artist needed to create that day. Sometimes we make, to have, sometimes to know and express. The pursuit of Art always sets off plans and goals, but plans and goals don't always give rise to Art. **If "visions not goals" opens the heavens, it is important to find artistic people to conceive the projects.**

Thus the "people not projects" principle was the other cornerstone of ARPA/PARC's success. Because of the normal distribution of talents and drive in the world, a depressingly large percentage of organizational processes have been designed to deal with people of moderate ability, motivation, and trust. We can easily see this in most walks of life today, but also astoundingly in corporate, university, and government research. ARPA/PARC had two main thresholds: self-motivation and ability. They cultivated people who **"had to do, paid or not" and "whose doings were likely to be highly interesting and important"**. Thus conventional oversight was not only not needed, but was not really possible. "Peer review" wasn't easily done even with actual peers. The situation was "out of control", yet extremely productive and not at all anarchic.

"Out of control" because artists have to do what they have to do. "Extremely productive" because a great vision acts like a magnetic field from the future that aligns all the little iron particle artists to point to "North" without having to see it. They then make their own paths to the future. Xerox

**Sydney Brenner:** *interview*

A Fred Sanger [born 1918] would not survive today's world of science. With continuous reporting and appraisals, some committee would note that he published little of import between insulin in 1952 and his first paper on RNA sequencing in 1967 with another long gap until DNA sequencing in 1977. He would be labelled as unproductive, and his modest personal support would be denied. We no longer have a culture that allows individuals to embark on long-term—and what would be considered today extremely risky—projects.

**Gerald Jay Sussman:** *Robust Design through Diversity*

A computational system is very much a dynamical system, with a very complicated state space,

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different and sometimes opposing points of view. For example, Engelbart and McCarthy had extremely different ways of thinking of the ARPA dream, but ideas from both of their research projects are important parts of today's interactive computing and networked world.

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complementary intellectual partner for people pervasively networked world-wide". By not trying to derive specific goals from this at the funding side, ARPA/PARC was able to fund rather different and sometimes opposing points of view. For example, Engelbart and McCarthy had extremely different ways of thinking of the ARPA dream, but ideas from both of their research projects are important parts of today's interactive computing and networked world.

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Our game is more like art and sports than accounting, in that high percentages of failure are quite OK as long as enough larger processes succeed. Ty Cobb's lifetime batting average was "only" .368, which means that he failed almost 2/3s of the time. But the critical question is: what happened in the 1/3 in which he was succeeding? If the answer is "great things" then this is all the justification that should be needed. Unless I'm badly mistaken, in most processes today—and

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