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The Wright brothers fully recognized the severe consequences of their development endeavor. Failure surely meant death. Initially they did not set out to invent the airplane because they deemed the problems to be too difficult. Instead they resolved to undertake a study to contribute and help advance the knowledge of flight. This mindset of creating reusable knowledge rather than designing an airplane laid the foundation of their development process-a process that cost them roughly $1,000 over five years and resulted in powered flight on the third attempt. Allen argued persuasively that their process merited investigation and was the foundation of knowledge-based product development.

The Wrights set about purposefully and meticulously creating the knowledge necessary to design a flying machine rather than just designing a flying machine.

Through deliberate learning cycles they safely discovered the limits of what worked and more importantly what did not work. They tested the limits and evaluated trade-offs in relative safety.

The Wright brothers achieved the dream of flight through an organized, disciplined process of diligently orchestrated learning cycles. Each learning cycle was designed to create knowledge, which they captured on limit and trade-off curves. They had set out to undertake a study of flight and make a contribution in advancing the knowledge of powered flight. The process they employed was so successful that the result was the invention of the airplane. Clearly, there is much to be learned from their process.

From “The Lean Machine: How Harley-Davidson Drove Top-Line Growth and Profitability with Revolutionary Lean Product Development” - Dantar P. Oosterwal

> Message: “Focus on producing what you need to learn to get the result, not the result itself.”

StoryTelling, Learning

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