gamedesigninitiative at cornell university

Remote Working for Game Development

Today's Lecture

- Covers some of the best-practices for remote development
- ❖ Frames this event in wider history of the games industry (the very real silver linings)



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- * This discussion is for *your benefit* **Please** ask questions whenever they come up



Overview: What is there to gain?

- Managing work-life balance is an important skill to learn
 - Practice of time management improves quality of life
- Remote teamwork requires differentiation of roles
 - Closer to the practices of industry teams
- This is (hopefully) where the industry is moving



Overview: Challenges of Remote Work

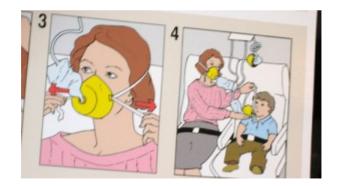
Managing mental health takes effort

- Work-life balance becomes harder
- * Requires self-discipline
- Establish spatial, temporal, and emotional boundaries between work and leisure
- Can be difficult to stay on the same page
 - Requires effort and infrastructure for communication



Responsibilities of a Remote Developer

- * Your *first responsibility* is to hold yourself accountable for your work
 - Task management tools become critical
- Your second is to hold your team accountable
 - ❖ See "Staying on the Same Page"





Holding Yourself Accountable

- * Treat your classwork like an appointment
 - Separate working and living spaces
- Set a daily schedule and hold yourself to it
 - Morning check-ins with your team are a great solution
- Treat your work appointment like you have a commute
 - Wake up, shower, get dressed, and go outside before you start your work.
 - * This is **important**!



Staying on the Same Page

Remote workers can't easily gather around the same screen

- The team must work to carefully define each member's role, including what information a team member must share, and what information must be shared with them.
- Like CRC Cards, define APIs between members

* Rely on "living documents"

* Keep some specification documents that can be edited and commented in real time as changes are made to gameplay / data structure / art.



Staying on the Same Page

Weekly team meetings are even more critical

- Host meetings digitally
- Summarize your week of work, display any work that is necessary to show the full team, and announce your work for the upcoming week.
- * This is your opportunity to show off deliverables to team members who don't have access to builds (such as some artists)
- Designate a note taker for each meeting



Remote Work in the Industry

- Remote working just makes sense for small games teams
 - Mitigates issues of commute, colocation, office culture, etc
 - ❖ Games industry has a history of remote work (Unreal engine was developed remotely until the team topped ~18)
- Industry has pushed against remote work, but Coronavirus is shifting mentalities
 - * Riot games office recently went remote



Remote Work in the Industry

- **Ultimately, this is an experience that will benefit you**
 - Remote work is impressive on a resume or in conversation with industry insiders
 - The games industry will (hopefully) move in this direction, many indie games are already developed independently



In Conclusion

- * Remote work will require more effort from you and your team
- **❖** Be mindful of your mental health, and work on separating work and leisure
- ***** The experience you gain will be both useful, and impressive to prospective employers
- * You will be prepared for a wider range of jobs in games teams and software teams

