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## Quality of Life - Best Practices

### *GDC Roundtable Moderator's Report*

Despite a scheduling mishap that sent several people to a nonexistent Wednesday session and the fact that the roundtable was held during the conference's very last timeslot (and in a noisy glorified corridor to boot), we attracted almost 50 people for this roundtable – at least three times as many as in any previous installment. Discussion was as lively and productive as could be expected given the physical setup and the host's complete lack of composure caused by the presence of a certain industry luminary ;-)

Four main topics were discussed:

- ❖ The Code of Conduct that the IGDA wants to give itself in regards to quality of life;
- ❖ Updating the quality of life survey;
- ❖ How the participants achieved better QoL in their own studios;
- ❖ Further areas of research that the committee should investigate.

### **Code of Conduct**

Several rules were suggested for the code of conduct:

- ❖ No rewards for managers of projects that go into crunch – the fact that crunch was necessary means that they didn't do their job properly to begin with.
- ❖ Use formal processes to organize projects in sensible ways that are suited to the size of the team.
- ❖ Assume no more than 4-5 productive hours a day, or 4 productive days a week, to leave a margin for error.
- ❖ No artificial deadlines.
- ❖ No deadlines announced at the last minute, causing chaos.
- ❖ Training all managers in problem solving and human psychology.
- ❖ Active implementation of a 40-hour week.
- ❖ No work on holidays.
- ❖ Consistent communication within the team, with management actively involved.
- ❖ Treating people as adults, not as underlings.
- ❖ Recognizing that free time leads to innovation; Resident Evil was created on the weekend, by developers just messing around!
- ❖ No penalty for going home when one's work is done, no matter what others may be doing.

- ❖ Veterans should teach rookies to pace themselves and adopt healthy practices early.
- ❖ While being sensitive to family issues, don't take advantage of those without families by forcing them to pick up all of the slack.
- ❖ No discrimination against older candidates/employees and those who have children.
- ❖ Take vacation and sick days into consideration when building schedules.

### ***Quality of Life Survey***

For the next installment of the survey, the participants suggested tracking the following data in addition to the information we gathered the first time:

- ❖ Vacation and comp time policies – the official policy and what people actually get to take.
- ❖ Relationship/family breakups as a function of crunching.
- ❖ What people think a reasonable work week should be, in terms of hours OF work and hours AT work.
- ❖ Correlation between good QoL practices and profitability.
- ❖ Studio policies regarding flex time and core hours.
- ❖ Trying to measure the wear and tear that crunch imposes on the team.
- ❖ Whether managers have received any formal management training.
- ❖ Does management take vacation and sick days into consideration while building schedules.
- ❖ Where in the chain of command do the bad management decision get introduced? In contract negotiations? Planning? Production control?

### ***How Studios Have Achieved High QoL***

In a show of hands, roughly a third of participants indicated that they were happy with their current quality of life. Some volunteered reasons why:

- ❖ The company has a formal 40-hour week policy.
- ❖ Pre-production lasts 3+ months. Before a project goes into production, the whole team must buy into the plan (i.e., ownership).
- ❖ Strict change control during production.
- ❖ Effective negotiations with publishers and team members: every time a feature is added, another one of equal complexity must be dropped.

### ***Further Research***

Participants suggested the following areas for further research by the committee and/or academic partners:

- ❖ Effective ways to measure the output of a programmer's, artist's or designer's work – we need something to replace hours spent behind a desk as a measure of productivity.
- ❖ Suggest books on leadership.
- ❖ How can the IGDA facilitate training for leads and managers.