



*“ The only way to predict the future is to invent it.” Peter Drucker*

## **COLLECTIVE CREATIVITY WORKSHOP RESULTS**

Facilitators – Charles Cox, Megan Gaiser

Visual Recorder – Anne Mann

September 3, 2015

The Workshop groups convened to propose solutions for the following game industry issues:

### **Diversity in Games & Teams, Ending Discrimination**

*The Workshop groups proposed an all-in effort, combining support of **Teams, Leaders, and Associations** like IGDA to inspire change and accountability industry-wide.*

#### **Teams Lead the Way.**

##### **Build diversity into your rules.**

Encourage collaboration and decision-making rules that welcome diverse perspectives to expand possibilities.

##### **Cast a wide net for feedback.**

Designers shouldn't just consult with other designers. Ask throughout your organization on representation, diversity, and perception in your design choices. Dispel the stigma of asking for new perspective. Reward the askers.

##### **Cross language barriers.**

Support localization in your games; consider crowdsourcing localization with developers and players in host nations.

##### **Make your characters diverse.**

Your game characters *are* your product. Challenge assumptions of gender, race, age, and ability.

##### **Seek new demographics first.**

Prioritize how to make your game more attractive to new demographics. Break the cycle of sameness by reaching out for new audiences.

##### **Build community, every day.**

Empower new communities to celebrate, play, and discuss games together.

**Make clear roles and expectations.**

In hiring and job posting, design and communicate to allow understanding and accessibility. Use descriptive titles, avoid “in-group” jargon in job descriptions. Get feedback on how titles are perceived both inside and outside your organization.

**Choose the leaders that represent you proudly.**

Choose leaders and leadership styles that fully and openly present your organization to the outside world as a champion of diversity.

**Leaders support and champion their teams.****Be accountable and authentic.**

You are portraying your company to the world, the press, and the public. Be transparent about your vision, mission, culture and operating principles.

**Be open to calls for diversity.**

You will never get all the way there. Always do more in your organization. Acknowledge bias exists and begin to eradicate it one person at a time. Make it a company wide commitment. Improve and iterate constantly to do better.

**Break the tight-circle of hiring.**

Bring in people from outside the core talent pool; other experiences bring great potential. Build diverse referrals and referral programs.

**Build from the bottom-up.**

When building programs and processes, don't impose decisions downward. Inclusive leadership will create buy-in from the organization from the bottom-up.

**Give the benefit to those that speak up.**

There will be problems and conflict. Take victims and whistleblowers seriously. Use 3<sup>rd</sup>-party mediation with provisions to protect whistleblowers.

**Make a hate-free zone.**

Consider a “no-strike” policy on harassment and hate-related offenses. Give your HR departments the power to mediate and take action. Focus on unacceptable behaviors, not on individual people.

**Associations like IGDA let us amplify and stay true to our mission.****Show us we can grow.**

Ensure published, public pathways and roadmaps exist to help grow game development skillsets across all demographics.

**Educate and shine a light in the press.**

Guide and support the gaming press by providing great examples of teams, leaders, and communities that are driving diversity. Always have a story to tell. Educate in every story.

**Teach games as a human fundamental.**

Encourage educators to adopt game-related teaching at all grades, ensuring games are thought about critically, and treated as a fundamental part of human experience and expression.

**Use games to teach games.**

Encourage the creation of games *about making games*, accessible worldwide. Build an understanding of the creative process and the need for diverse perspectives.

## Work/Life Balance and Compensation

*“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and you suddenly you are doing the impossible.” Francis of Assisi*

*The Workshop groups proposed a combined effort that looks to **Companies** to rethink their perspectives and process around life/work balance, and for **Associations** like IGDA to help set standards and influence policy to help employees.*

### **Companies must change their perspectives and process.**

#### **Leave crunch behind – it’s not always necessary.**

Disinvest in “crunch” culture. Do not tie bonuses to delivery dates. Do not sentimentalize the need for crunch in your company culture. Make crunch voluntary, and spend the time you need in planning to prevent the lost work that leads to crunch.

#### **Build checks and balances to prevent runaway crunch.**

Track all crunch periods and make them visible. Require leads and management to work the same crunch as their employees, to give them visibility into rising stresses. Consider allowing HR to veto or restrict crunch for employee health.

#### **Provide mental and emotional support – people are important.**

Have counselors on staff to help employees with overload, grief, and other stresses. Train managers to recognize trauma and recommend counseling options appropriately.

#### **Keep work at work – let employees disconnect.**

Do not force or even encourage employees to take their work home after hours, regardless of how “easy” it appears, or how technologically connected they are. People need to recharge.

#### **Make family raising a supported and respected option for all employees.**

Provide paid maternity and paternity leave, and review your performance incentive plans (bonuses, raises, etc) to ensure you’re not punishing employees who take leave to raise families.

#### **Make compensation – and feedback – transparent.**

Build a standardized compensation model. Show it to your employees. Don’t hide your pay scales for any job function. Provide a way for employees to anonymously share their stories and situations encountered when working with the company.

#### **Do not police employees’ personal lives.**

Employ and broadcast a policy against crawling employees’ social media profiles – diverse lives and ideas lead to new solutions, and policing stifles this diversity.

**Associations like IGDA must represent developers and push for policy.**

**Develop and support a code of ethics.**

Build the playbook – the list of do’s and don’ts – that great companies will use to reward and support their employees, and push for its use in all sectors of the industry.

**Coach employees to know and hold to their value.**

Provide coaching to employees on industry pay scales, compensation models, and the latest pay data for standard job titles so employees have the knowledge to negotiate good wages.

**Close the overtime and contractor loopholes.**

Encourage political action to prevent unpaid overtime and withholding of healthcare benefits, through the common “high-tech” overtime exemptions and contracting loopholes.

**Take calls for unionization seriously.**

Developers are demanding representation, sometimes in the form of defined collective action and unionization. Consider resourcing a study on the feasibility of this approach.

## Career Placement, Advancement, and Security

*"No one will listen to us until we listen to ourselves." Marianne Williamson*

*The Workshop groups proposed actions that studios can take to **retain and advance** their employees, and a special set of actions focusing on **entry-level employees**, a category that has been hard to place.*

### **All studios need to take actions to retain and advance their employees.**

#### **Illuminate paths to advancement.**

Build a map of stepping stones through your company levels, including expectations of each level so that employees know how to work toward the next level of seniority. Do not require all advancement to have a management component – let your employees build their best skills.

#### **Provide a real roadmap of studio health – including financials.**

Employees are invested in your success. Be honest with them. Provide reports on the health of the studio – including financials and the scenarios those financials represent in terms of employee retention and incentives – so employees know what to expect.

#### **Cross-train and build a mentoring culture.**

Sponsor interdisciplinary training for employees to allow horizontal moves. Broad-level introductions can be provided to many employees in an offsite, and consider formalizing a mentorship/shadowing program for those employees that show a deep interest in developing a new discipline.

#### **Make new technology a studio learning exercise.**

Do not silo new technology to small groups. Encourage brown bags and other teaching tools to allow employees to understand new technology and systems being used by your teams, and encourage deeper explorations by interested employees in any discipline.

#### **Take on collaborations with other studios.**

Avoid project-end layoffs by supplementing your title work with support work on other titles with other studios. Collaborative actions can build new skills as well as cement business ties.

#### **Work to ease turnover at the end of projects.**

If post-project layoffs are necessary, create offers of guaranteed return to work or right of first refusal on new projects to hire back displaced employees. Offer future projects ahead of time to employees in order to prevent surprise mass-layoffs.

## **Studios should consider ways to help entry-level employees.**

### **Take the opportunity to teach.**

Games are a difficult business. As you consider your educational outreach opportunities, be honest with the students and others you encounter to help them decide if the games industry is truly where they want to work. Expectations often don't match reality.

### **Tap the QA talent pool.**

Often, entry-level employees will start in QA. Consider the advancement prospects you're offering QA positions, and build in horizontal as well as vertical ability to advance.

### **End unpaid internships.**

While internships are useful to companies, they aren't always useful to the interns – and they're opportunity cost. Help entry-level employees build their value by providing them real employee slots – or at the least, paid apprenticeships.

### **Create side projects or incubators to take risks on new talent.**

Large studios can take on small-studio mentality by creating “side projects” or incubation efforts that are shallower in scope and iterative in nature – an ideal environment to bring on new talent for evaluation and advancement, rather than individual intern slots on larger projects.

### **Find unique roles for unique people.**

Great employees often have unconventional experience, even early on. Consider an employee hiring strategy that measures potential first – even in unrelated disciplines – and the more obvious development role readiness second.