From Boxes to Life! How to Prototype and Develop Creatures: Mass Effect 2 and 3 Case Study

Scylla Costa

Development Director, BioWare/EA

Goals for today

MASS EFFECT 3

Who am I?

What do I do?

MASS EFFECT 2

- Core Programming
- Tools
- Performance
- GUI
- Gameplay

MASS EFFECT 3

- Core Programming
- Tools
- Performance
- GUI
- Gameplay
- Character Art
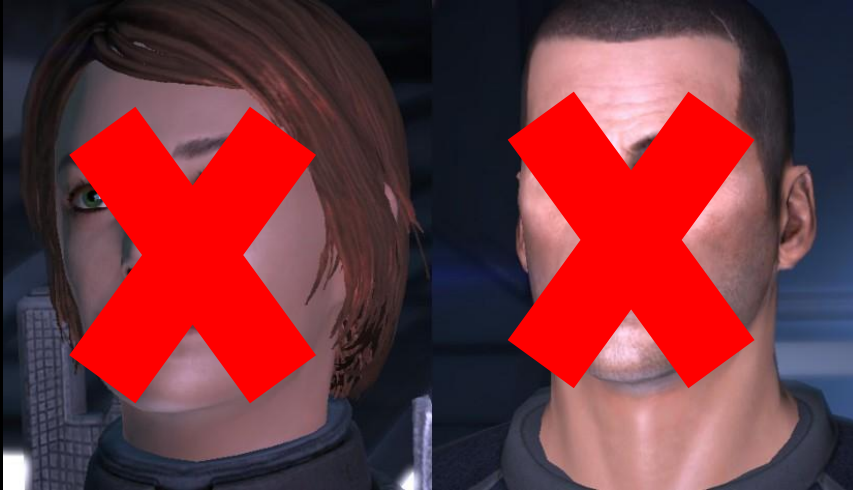- Animation
- VFX
- Online
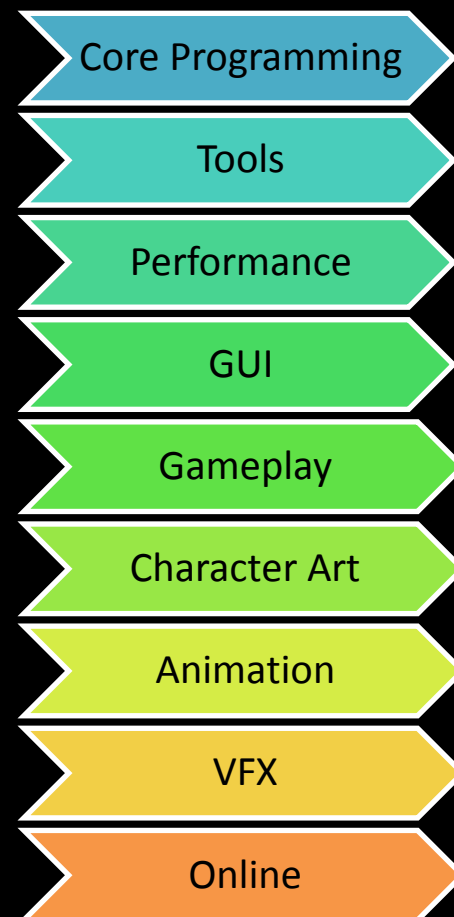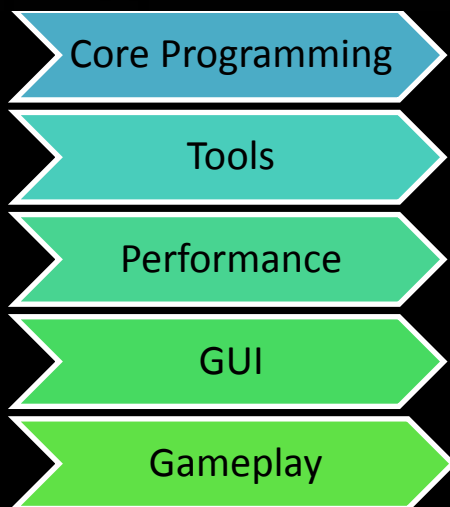
What is a creature?

What is a creature?

What is a creature?

ME2 Process
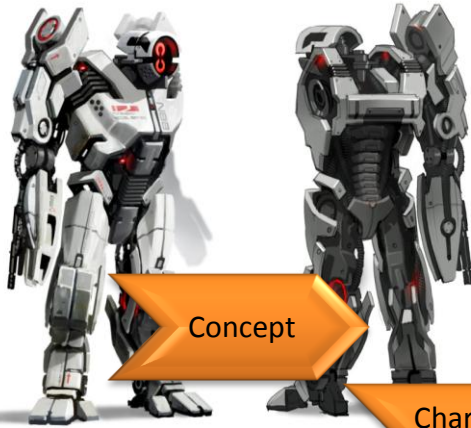
Concept

Character Art

Animation

Gameplay

VFX

Audio

Example

Clearly fusing Collector DNA with the combined brainpower of several human heads, the Praetorians are another example of horrific Reaper experimentation.

Example

Praetorian
Armor

EDI: GARDIAN anti-ship batteries at 100%. I have control.
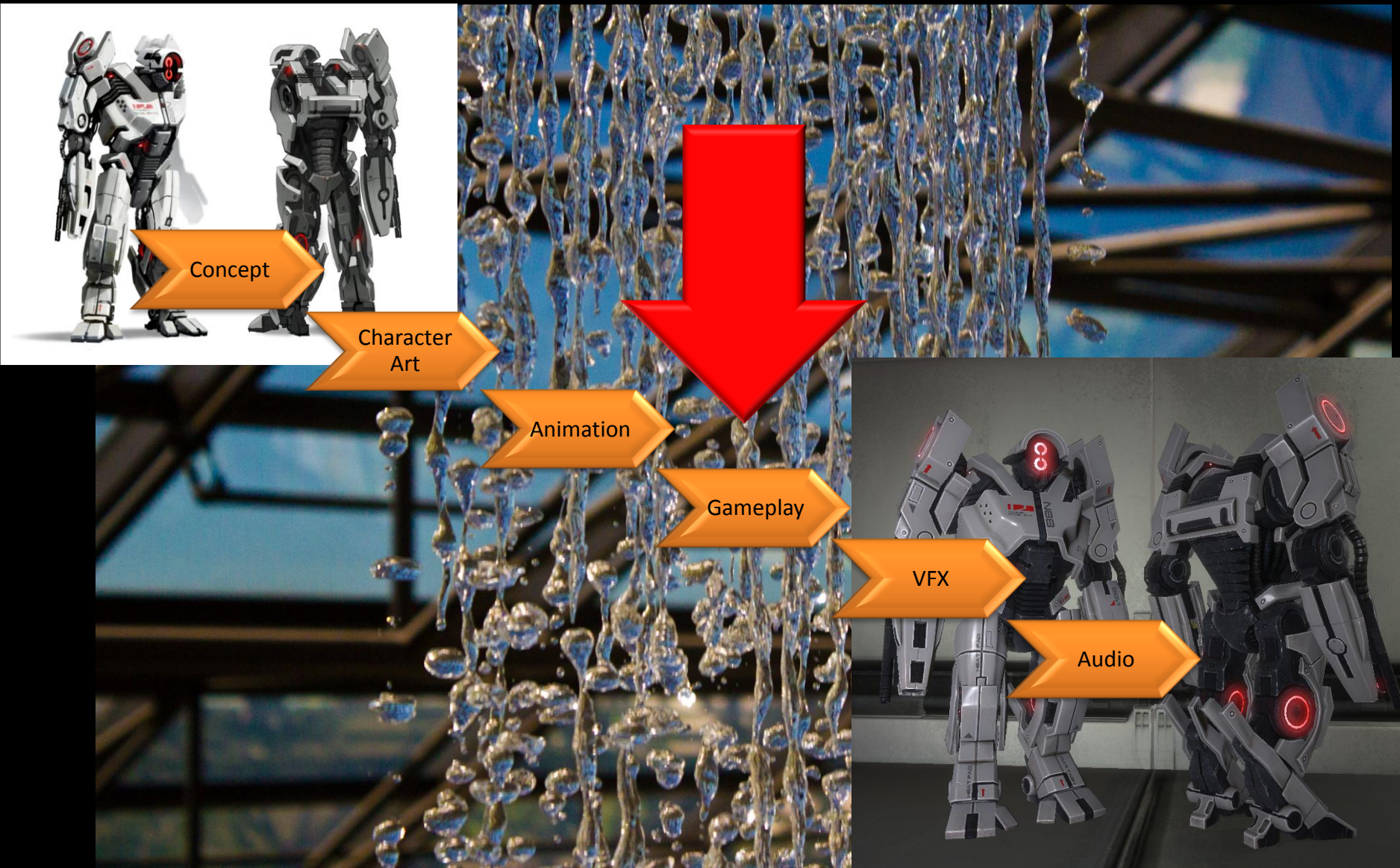
Clearly
the Pra

19   168

Example

Other examples

ME2 Process

Focus on the Most Important Problem

MASS EFFECT 3

Changes can
be scary!

Creature Creation Process

Gameplay Concept	Prototyping	Final Prototype	Rough Creature	Polish

Gameplay

Prototyping:
- Concept
- Character Art
- Animation
- Gameplay
- VFX

Final Prototype:
- Concept
- Character Art
- Animation
- Gameplay
- VFX

Rough Creature:
- Character Art
- Animation
- Gameplay
- VFX
- Audio

Polish:
- Character Art
- Animation
- Gameplay
- VFX
- Audio
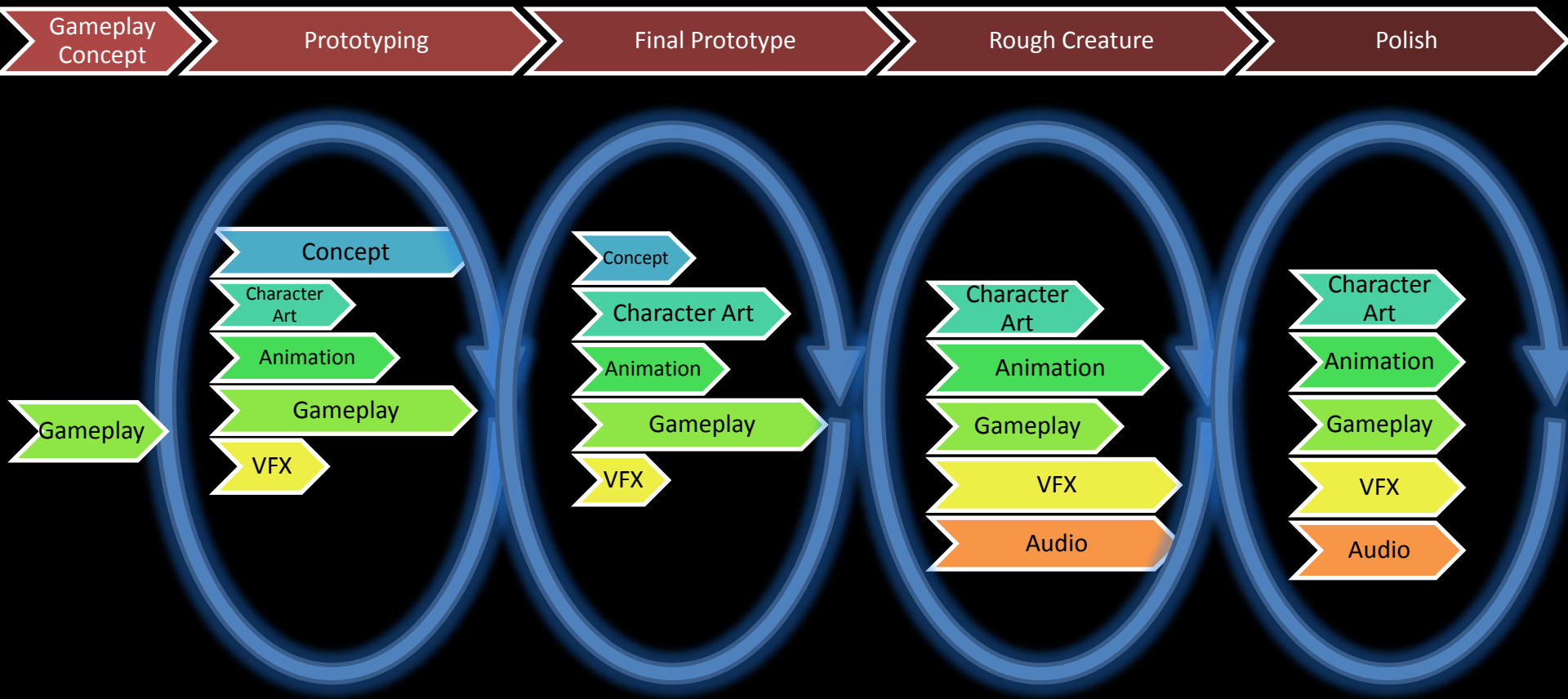
CCP - Gameplay Concept Phase

- **Factions**
- **Roles**
- **Creature Pipeline**
- **Creature Bible**

Cerberus Faction

Reaper Faction
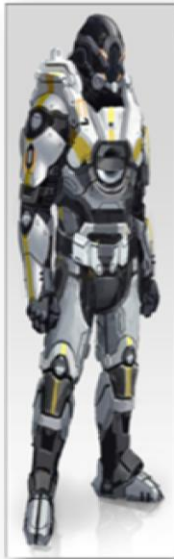
Roles

- **Cover Taker**
- **Slow Pressure**
- **Support**
- **Suppressor**
- **Cover Buster**

Creature Bible

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1				Overview	Audio	Role
2	Cerberus - (Technology Assisted Super Soldiers)					

(Cerberus) Assault Trooper

Assault Troopers are basic cover taking unit for the Cerberus Faction. They are normal enemies and can take a moderate amount of damage before dying, they do not have shields.

They fight from medium range with assault rifles. They have several leans which they can use (full, partial). When under fire or if they are about to be hit by a projectile power, they can do a combat roll maneuver to evade.

On higher difficulties, they will roll to evade more often. They will also do more damage and will have stronger self preservation instincts (hiding in cover for longer when wounded).

Size: Humanoid (1.85m)
Weapon: M-8 Avenger Assault Rifle, Shock Stick (Melee)
Defenses: None
Engagement Range: 15-25m
Abilities: Shoot, Take Cover, Mantle, Swat Turn, Cover Slip, Climb Up, Ladder Climb, Combat Roll, Melee Attack
Supported Entrances: Boost Down
Combat Idle: Squatting, playing cards

Audio: Assault Troopers communicate a lot about maneuvers, warning about the player flanking them. Their audio should sound like com chatter about targets, it should have hisses and pops in it (but not be unintelligible).

Role: Cover Taker (COTA)

Cerberus Centurions are advanced cover taking unit for the Cerberus Faction. They are intelligent and can take a moderate amount of shield and health damage before dying.

They fight from medium range with advanced assault rifles, their assault rifles have underslung grenade launchers. They have several leans which they can use (full, partial). When under fire or if they are about to be hit by a projectile power, they can do a combat roll maneuver to evade. When in trouble they can also deploy smoke grenades which will obscure the player's vision and targeting abilities.

Creature Pipeline Doc
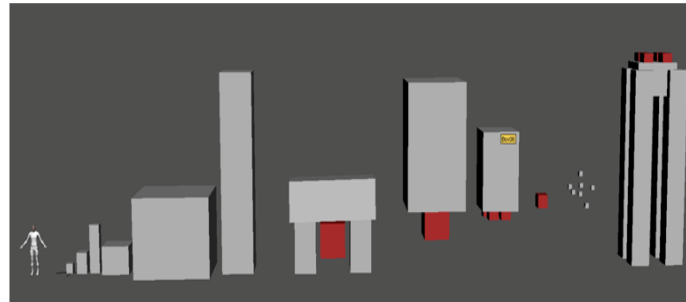
Creature Pipeline

Prototype

The prototyping phase is primarily to lock down the basic idea of the creature. How does it fight? How does it move? What are its attacks? Does it have any custom combat entrances? How does it respond to the player? Does it use the "Battle Damage[1]" system? How does it scale with difficulty?

At the end of this phase we should be able to see a functional creature in a map that behaves in a way that is representative of the creature. It should have box art and very rough animations (1-2 frame). Movement and behaviour should be defined, rough VFX and weapons should be present. Any programming features required for the behaviors should be prototyped out (if applicable). A test level should also be created for this creature – one designed to work with its behavior. When evaluating the Prototype creature we should see how it could be fun when tuned properly (which will occur at a later phase).

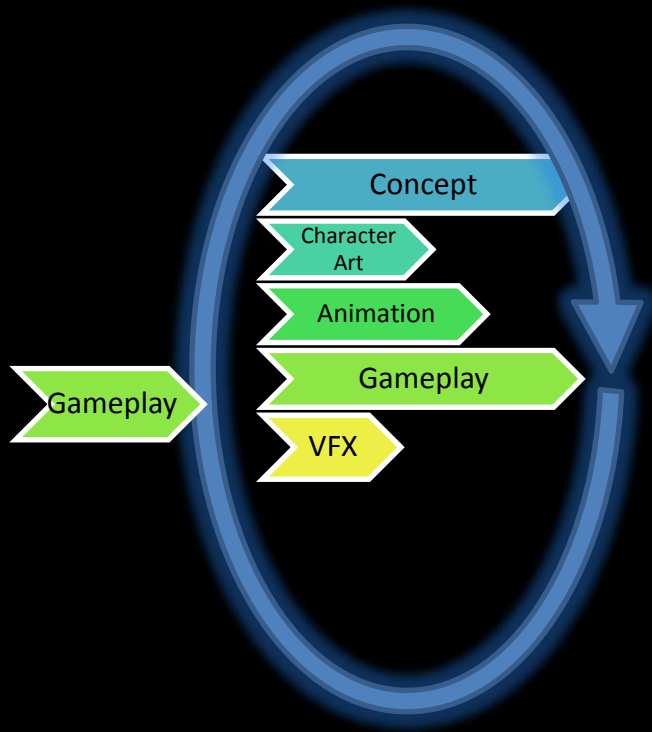Prototype creatures are not for use in production levels.

Deliverables:
- Abilities and Tactics defined
- Damage presentation determined (Battle Damage)
- Movement speed roughly determined

Example: Box art for creature prototyping
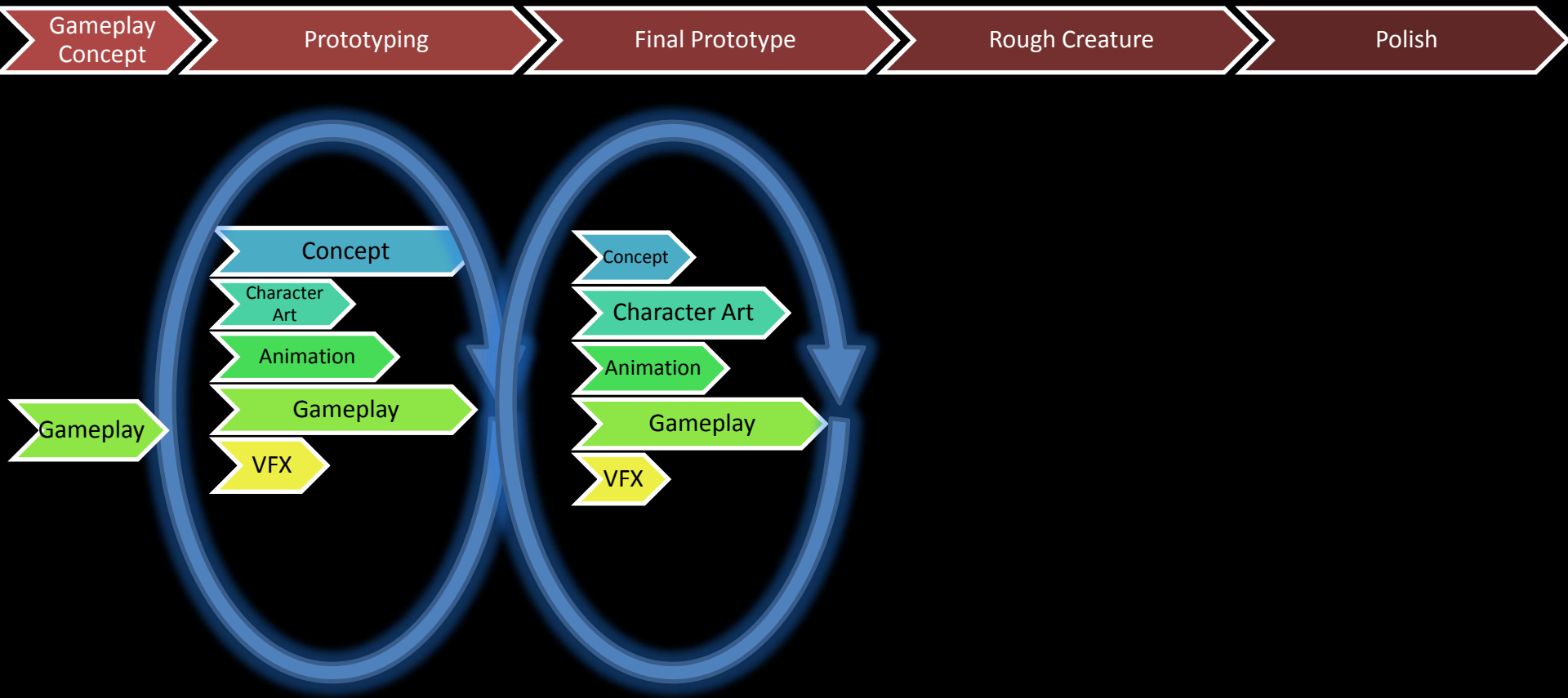
Creature Creation Process

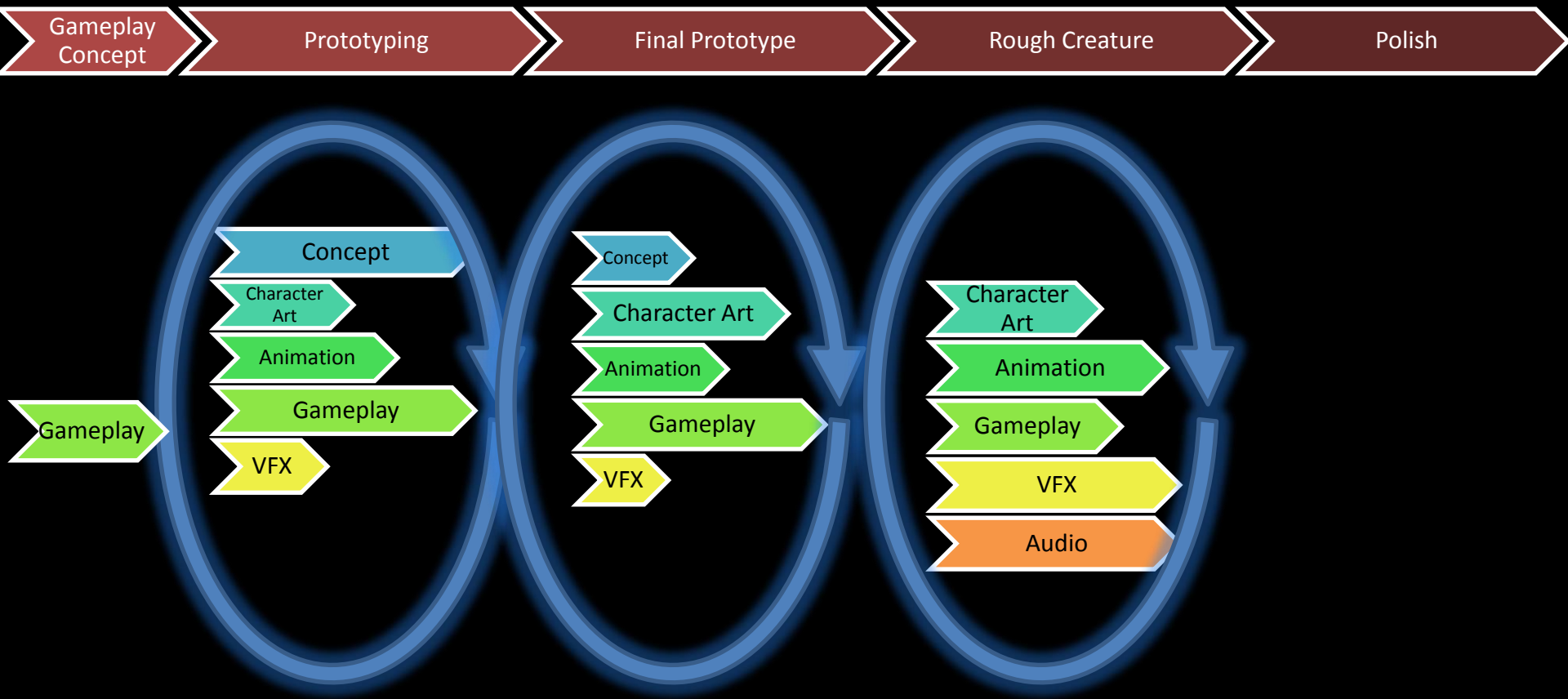| Gameplay Concept	Prototyping	Final Prototype	Rough Creature	Polish

Concept

Character Art

Animation

Gameplay

VFX

Gameplay

Heavy Mech and the Atlas

Prototyping Phase

- **Box Creatures (videos)**

Creature Creation Process

Gameplay Concept → Prototyping → Final Prototype → Rough Creature → Polish

Gameplay

Concept
Character Art
Animation
Gameplay
VFX

Concept
Character Art
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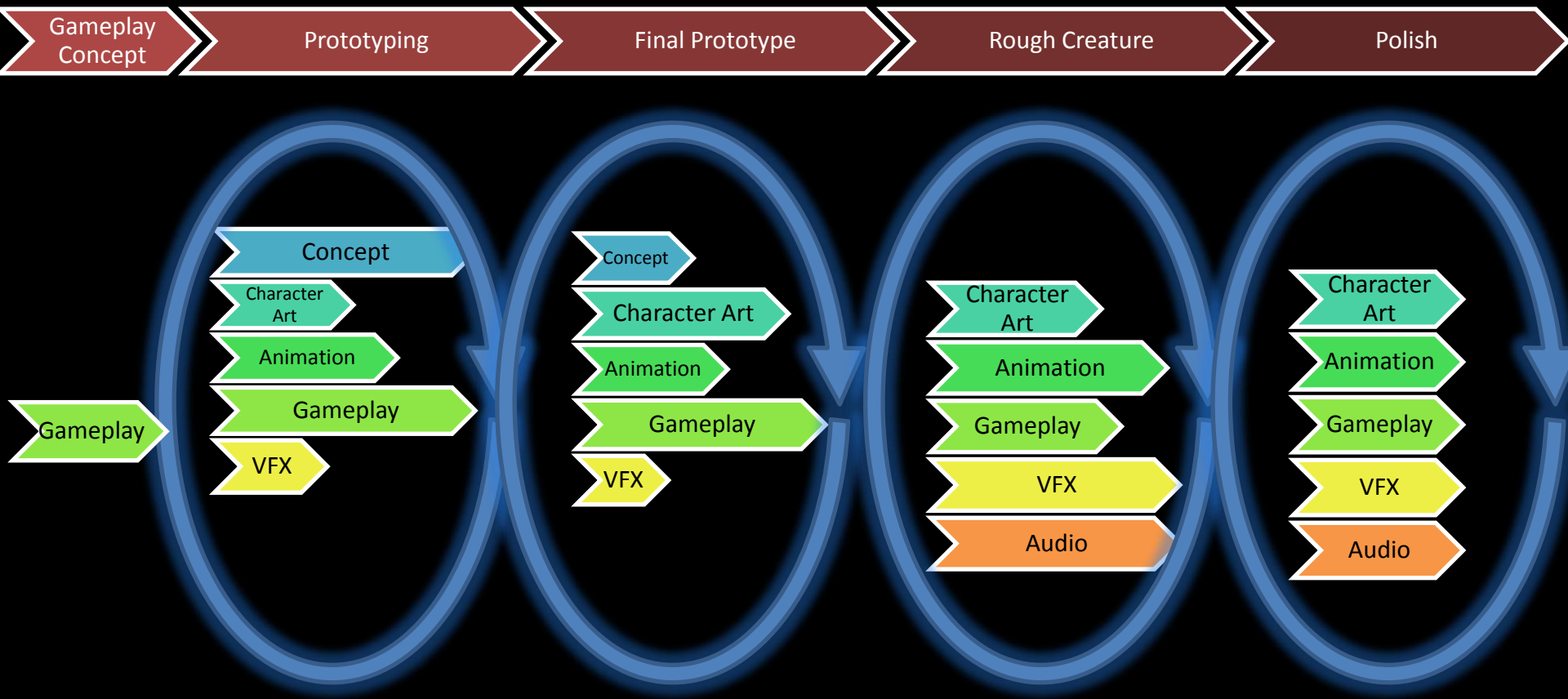
RESULTS?

Creature Creation Process

| Gameplay Concept | Prototyping | Final Prototype | Mesh in Game | Rough Creature | Polish |

Gameplay

Concept
Character Art
Animation
Gameplay
VFX

Concept
Character Art
Animation
Gameplay
VFX

Character Art
Animation
Gameplay
VFX
Audio
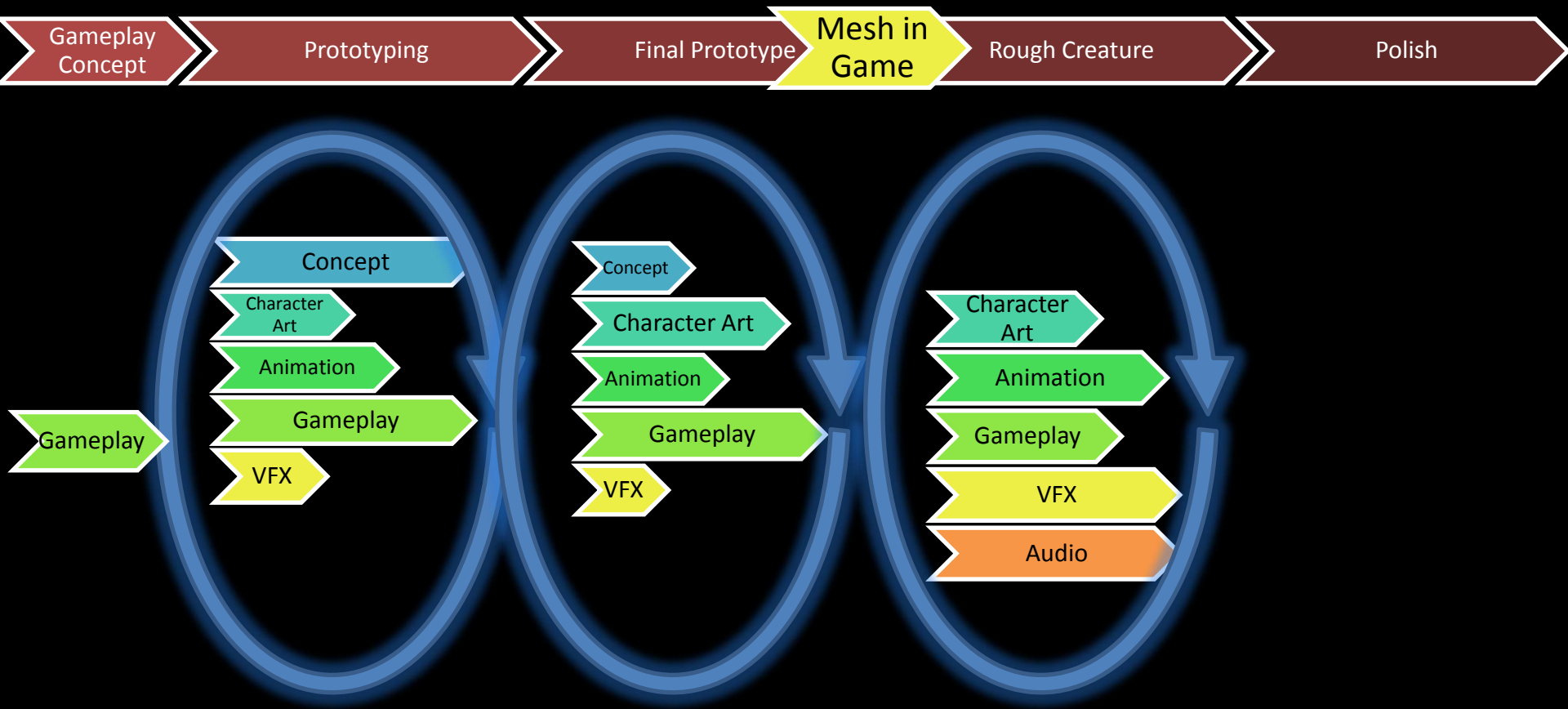
Committed team!

Work on expectations

Use cross teams

Improve communication and visibility!

How are you getting there?

Questions?

Big thanks to the entire Gameplay, Character Art, Animation, VFX, Audio and QA team. You guys rock!

Special Thanks to Brenon, Boldwin, Noel and Preston.

scylla@bioware.com

@scyllacosta