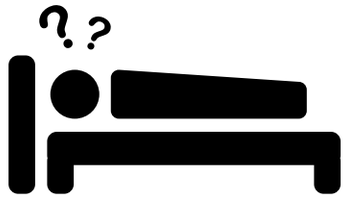
It Takes a Village

Growing Vibrant Game Developer Communities

GDC

Hello.

Generic Icebreaker



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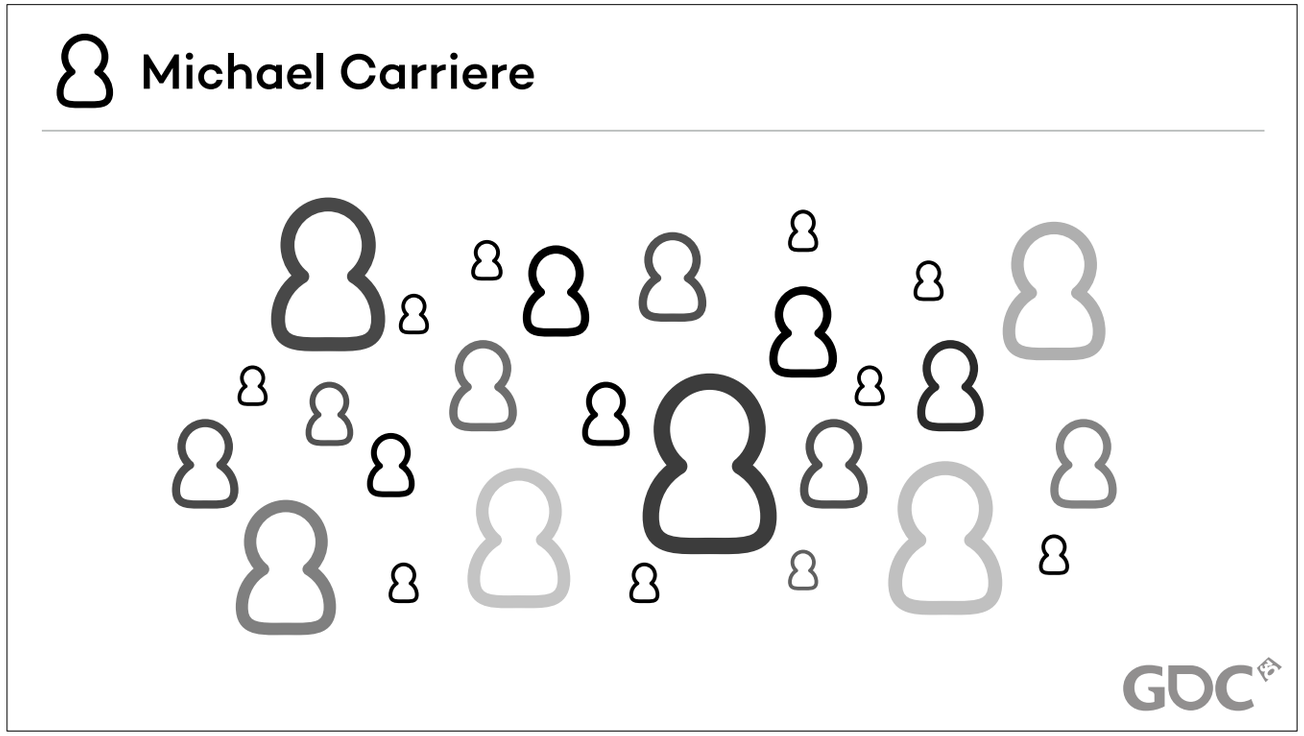
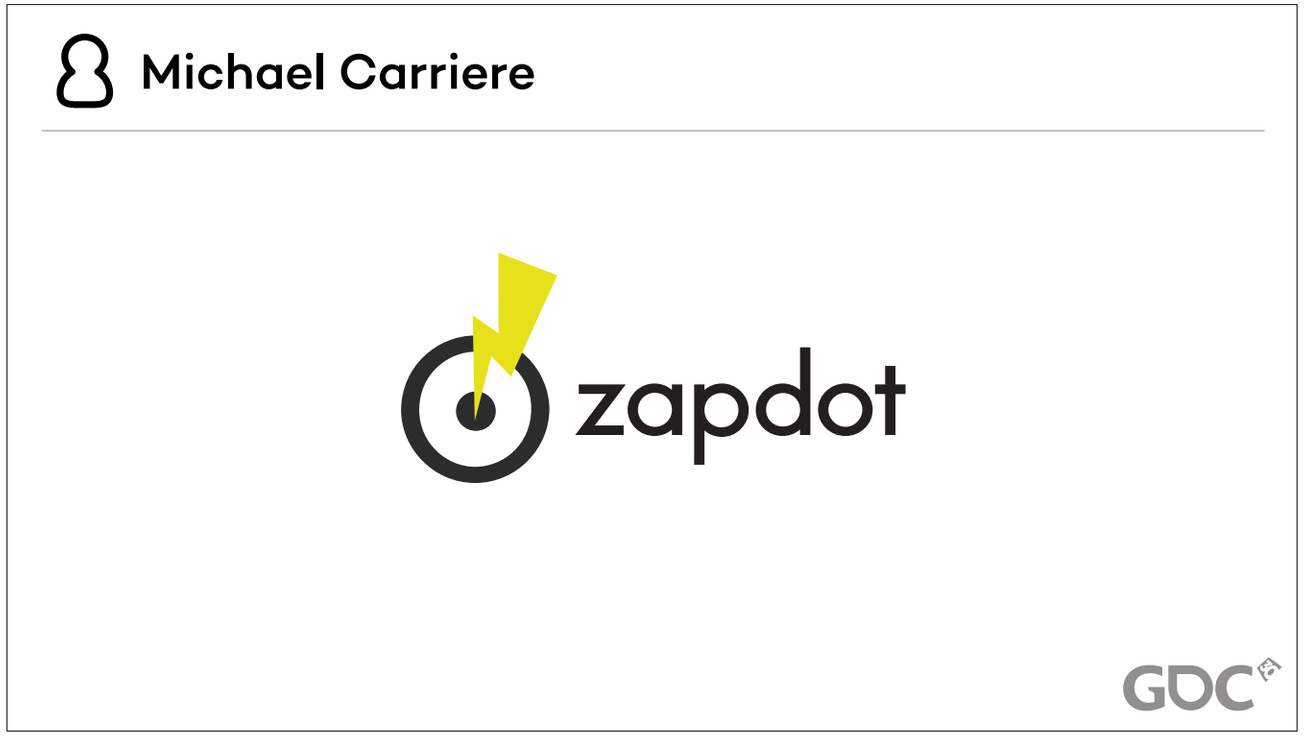
You’re probably wondering who I am.
Don’t worry, some nights I lie awake, sleepless, and wonder the same thing.



I’m Michael Carriere. Like many of the other masochists in this group, I hate the idea of free time, so I fill a good amount of it by organizing events and surrounding myself with awesome, inspiring people.



I run a small studio called Zapdot, we do a mix of client work, collaboration, and our own titles.

I co-organize Boston Indies, a group that's grown to over 700 members over the past six years.

I also founded the Indie Game Collective back in 2012.

A Brief History of Boston

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Four years ago, the local industry in Boston had a ton of talent floating around

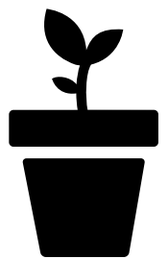
A Brief History of Boston

GDC

indie games were hitting a cultural tipping point

technological barriers were on their way down, and we had some great communities in the area. I was a bit frustrated to see that there were no resources for smaller studios looking to make a living in what was (and still is) a tough market to survive in.

A Brief History of Boston



Founding and maintaining a group of people who share the goal of survival and success is an ongoing response to the various market pressures we all deal with.

Our Goals

Impact the local industry.

Improve education.

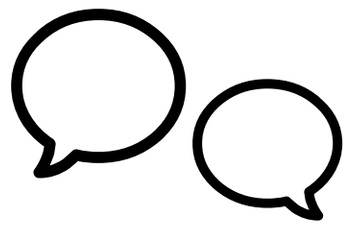
Challenge one another.

In creating the collective, I established it with three major goals:

Impact the local industry.

In order to impact the local industry, we try to offer whatever help, advice or insight that we can to other studios or students. We set aside our lunch every Friday, and give an hour to whomever wants to chat with us.

Impact the local industry.



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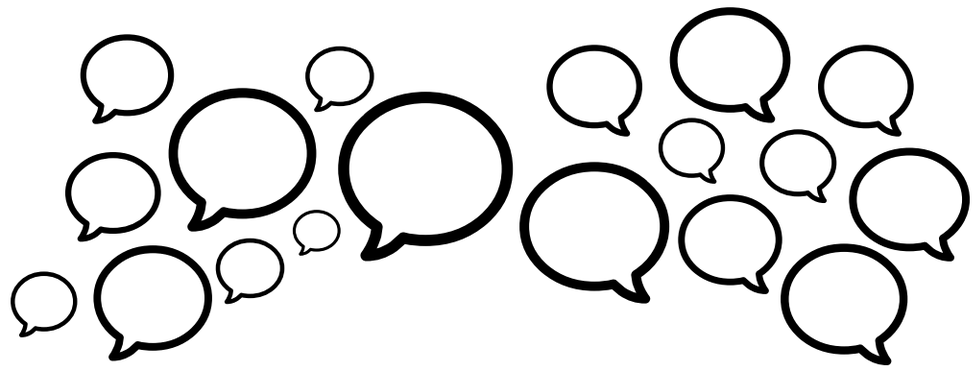
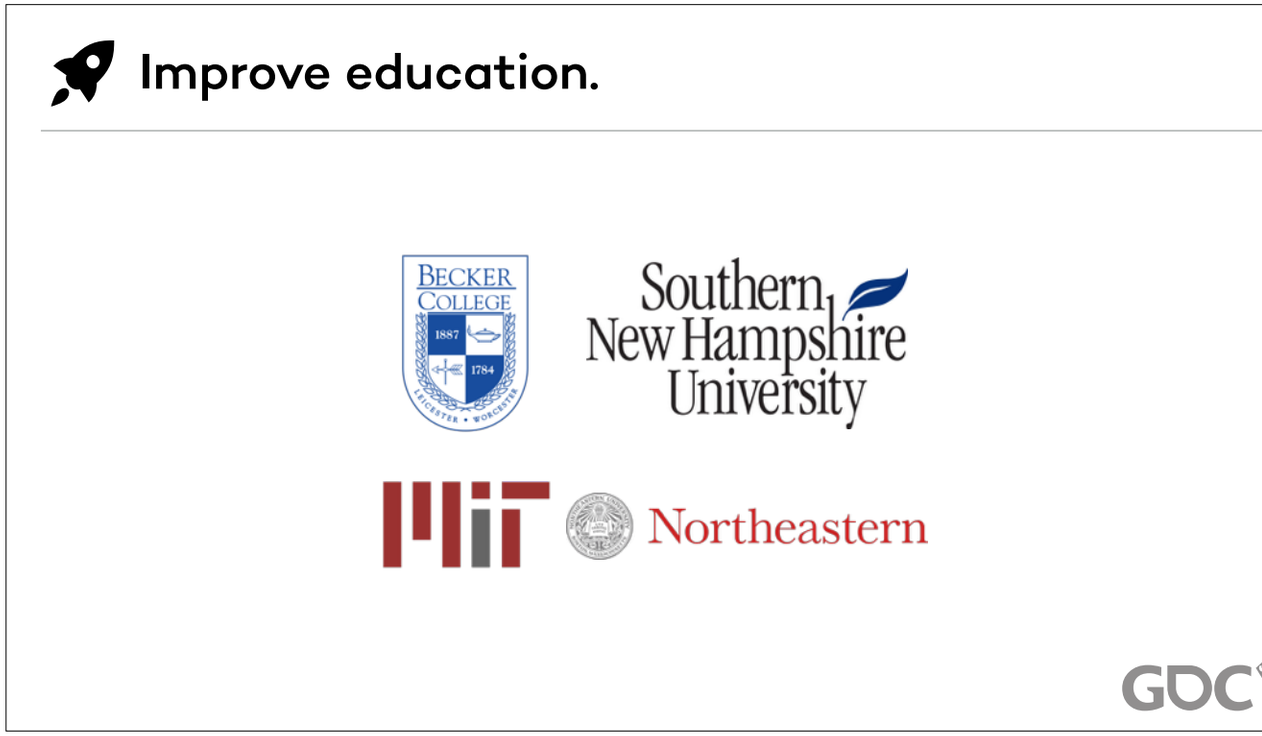
Typically, we’re discussing options for launch and marketing plans, crowdfunding campaigns, or giving some feedback on a fledgling game design, in an effort to help other developers direct their ideas and hone their pitches.

Impact the local industry.



Through this, we've had over 80 meetings over the past three years, some as repeat visitors to check in on the progress of a project and continue to grow our relationship with other developers.

On our goal to improve education, we've had the opportunity to work with a bunch of schools, in various ways.



We've been able to work with Becker College, Southern New Hampshire University, Northeastern University and MIT, giving lectures, providing feedback for student projects throughout development, and participating in some of their summer programs.

Improve education.

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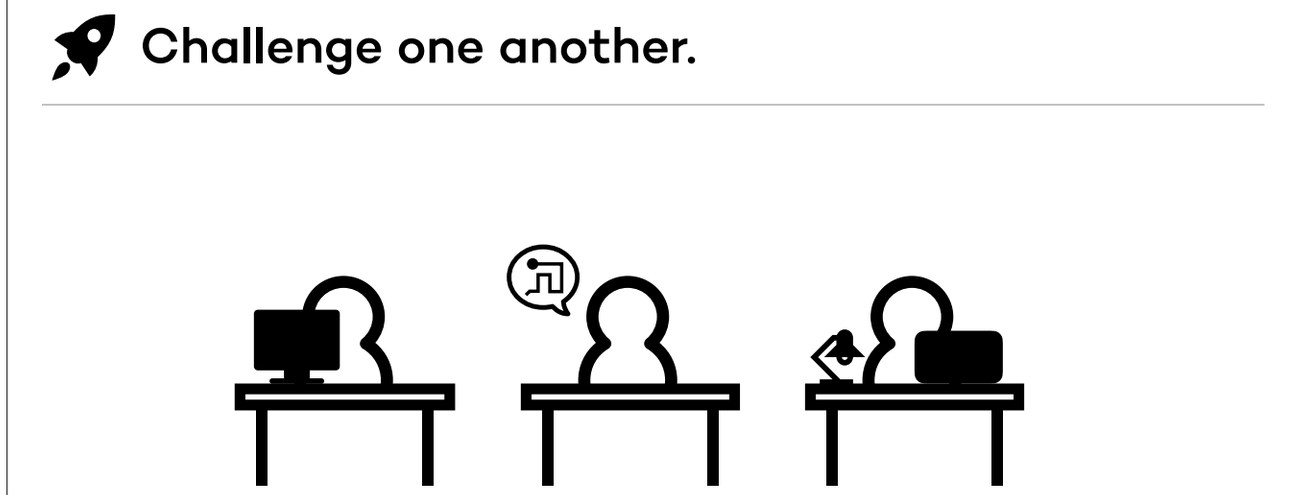
We worked with Miami Dade College and provided some feedback to the curriculum that they’re developing for a game program, ensuring that their students are being driven toward a strong approximation of the tools, skills, and expectations they will face when trying to get into the industry after they receive their degrees.

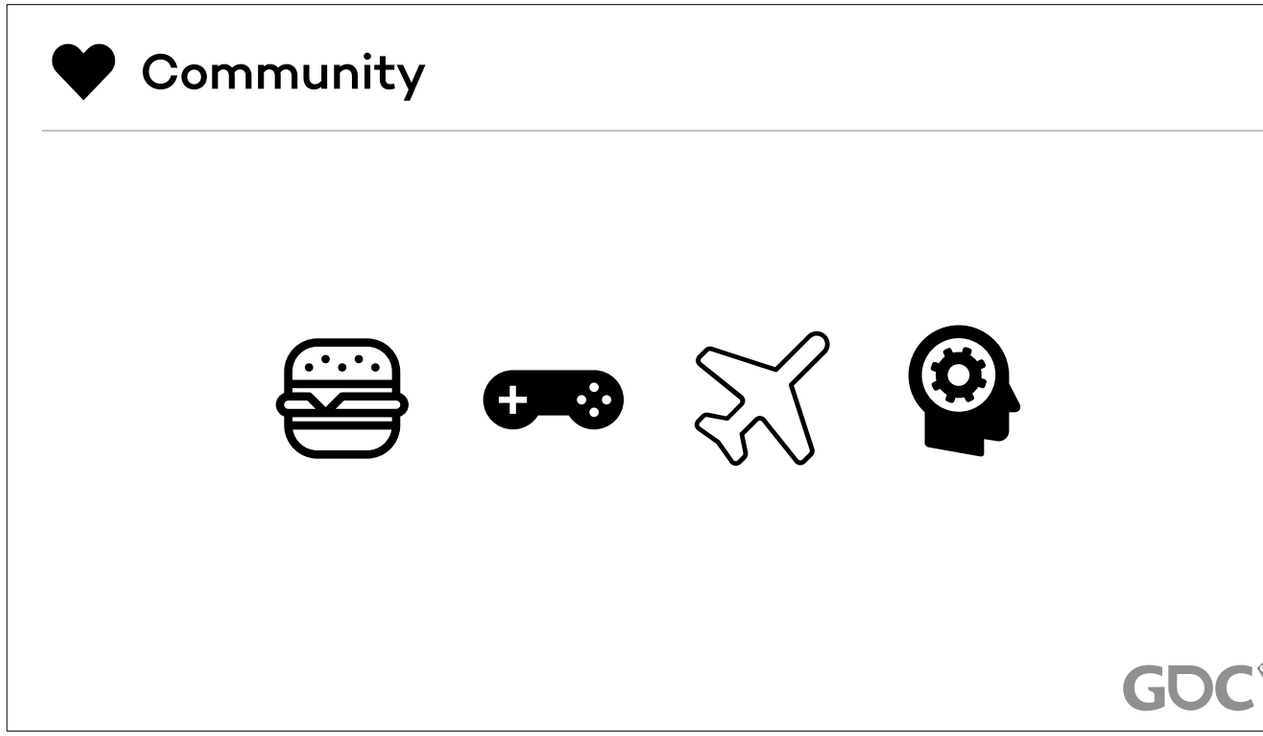
Improve education.

Singularity Pursuit - itch.io

We even worked with an industrious sophmore in highschool who wanted an internship at our office, and we guided him through pitching and developing his first full game this summer.

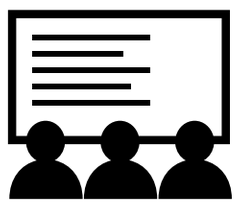


Our third goal, “Challenge each other” is a bit nebulous. We didn’t really know what to expect when we started coworking together. We did know that creating an intimately curated group such as this would allow for a pretty strong support system. What has followed in the past four years has had a few remarkable results.



First, and most obvious, we've developed a little microcommunity of all of the studios that participate in the Collective. You have lunch with the same people day in and day out, you hang out with those people as you decompress for the day or the week. You travel to events with those people. Outside of your own team, they're going to know you and your problems more intimately than anyone else, and they might just help you deal with them in interesting ways you wouldn't have considered.

Education



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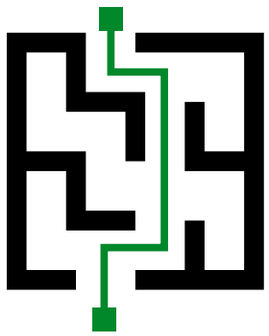
This brings me to another great benefit of the group. Ongoing education. Postmortems are great, I’m sure a few have been given this week that maybe you have drawn some lessons from.

Education



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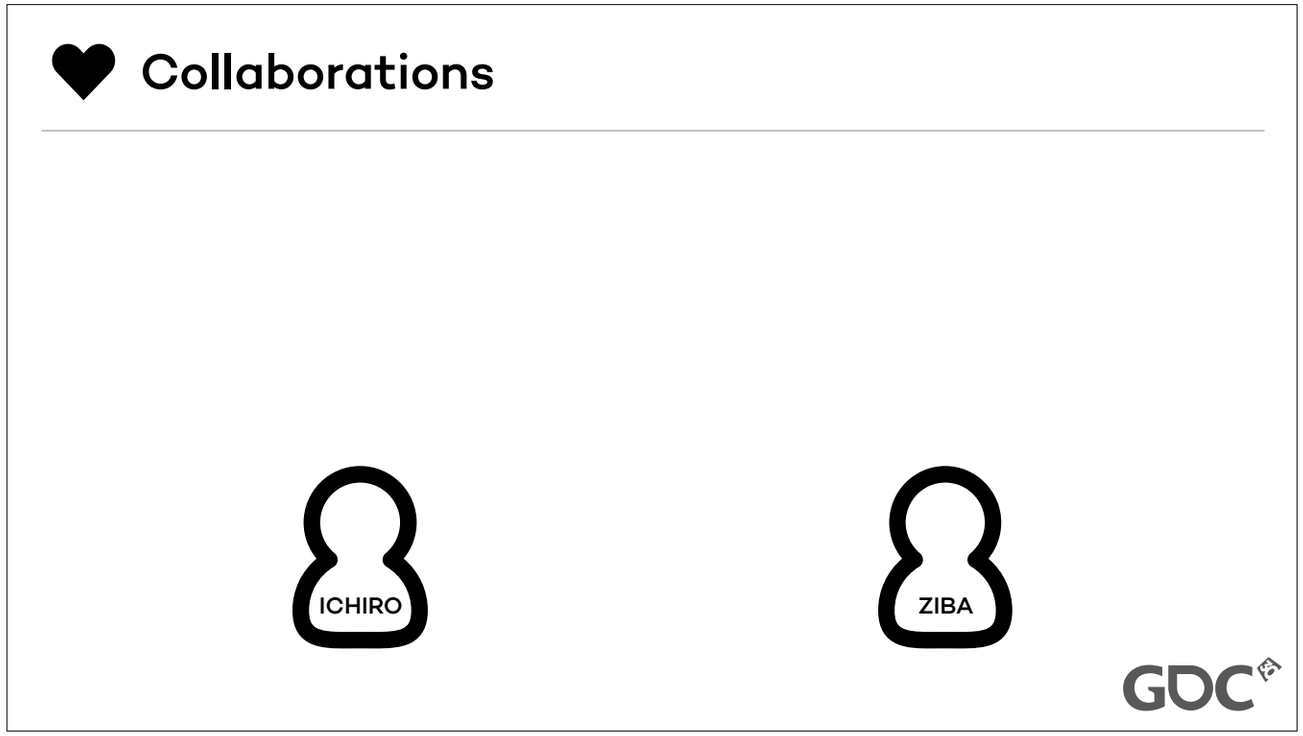
However, they don’t provide the intimate knowledge of the entire development cycle of the product, nor the vast amount of lessons learned and challenges overcome throughout that entire cycle.

Working alone, you get that education, but just for your own successes and failures throughout the lifecycle of development.

Education

In the past three years, we've had the pleasure of seeing the following titles developed and released.

Doesn't include dozens of gamejams and prototypes, or the eight titles that are currently in development at the office.

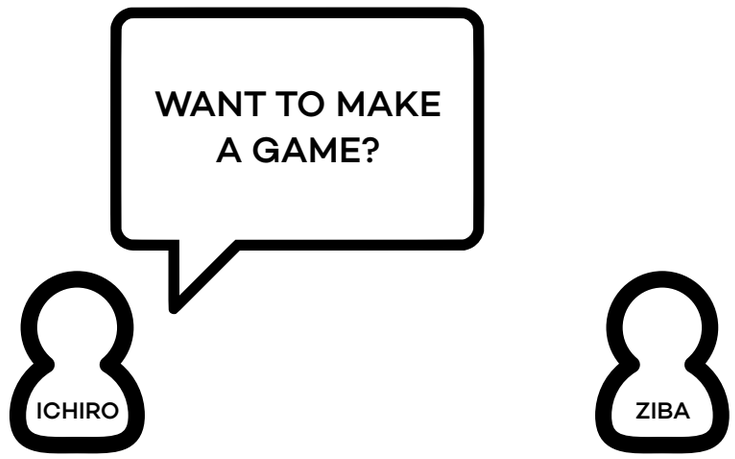


When you start combining these things — getting to intimately know the people working around you, their strengths and skills, and having chats with them pretty often, you open up the opportunity to serendipity to strike.

One day Ichiro Lambe and Ziba Scott were having lunch. I’m guessing it probably went like this:

Collaborations

Collaborations



Collaborations

Collaborations

ONE YEAR LATER.

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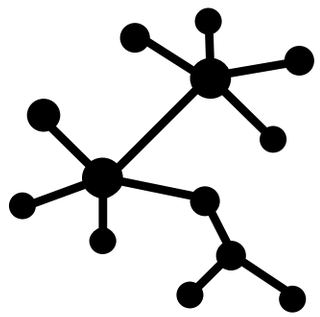
Collaborations

Over 200 press outlets covered Elegy for a Dead World, their kickstarter hit 150% funding, they were invited to speak at the Experimental Gameplay Workshop, selected for IndieCade, and were nominated for an IGF award.

Without that lunch, that opportunity may not have ever presented itself.

Power in numbers

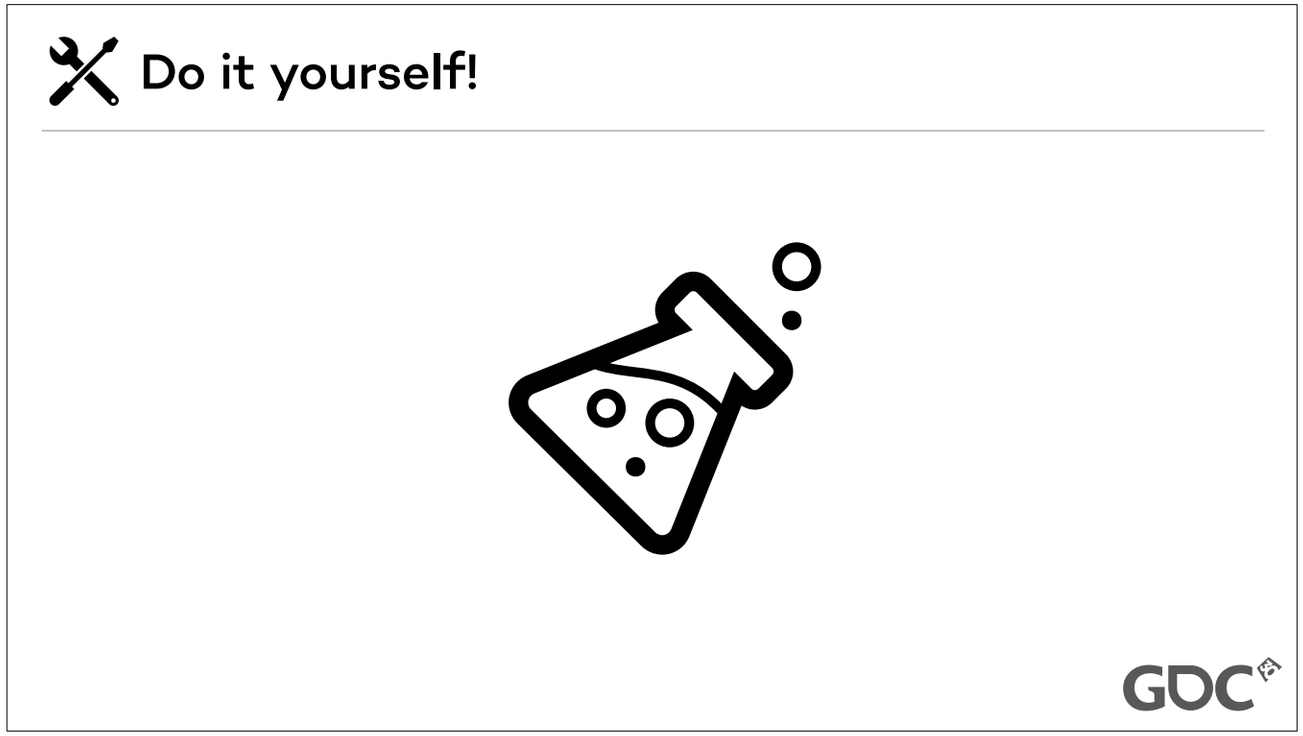


There is also is a power in numbers that has helped the group out on multiple occasions. A slew of smaller projects have been able to create some stable work for a myriad of artists, musicians, lawyers, and marketing folks that help us all create and deliver our projects.

Additionally — press, platform holders, hardware manufacturers, and other partners have an strong interest in maintaining relationships with developers, our concentration of that resource makes the IGC an attractive connection for everyone.

David Carrigg decided that rather than drive 90 minutes to the IGC office everyday, that he’d start up something similar at home.

Game Assembly was established in June 2015, and within four months of opening their doors, they had paid back their startup costs, and within nine months have accumulated 40 members to the space. Anyone can rent a permanent desk or come in from time-to-time, and Dave has established some great connections to both Southern New Hampshire University and New Hampshire Institute of Technology.



Even after three years, I consider this an ongoing experiment. Starting a coworking group like the IGC or a space like Game Assembly is not without it’s fair share of effort, but the the rewards for doing so come back in so many wonderful and unexpected ways that can benefit you and your community. I hope that this talk leaves you as excited as I was four years ago to head home and do the same in your hometown.

If you have any more questions, want some advice, or just want to chat, please reach out to me. Thanks!