

GIVING YOUR PLAYERS A SEAT AT THE TABLE: FEEDBACK FUNDAMENTALS

EMMA BRIDLE
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER VOICE

WORLD'S
EDGE



AGE OF EMPIRES

MARCH 21-25, 2022 SAN FRANCISCO CA

INTRODUCTIONS



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SENIOR PRODUCER, LIVE OPS



AGE OF EMPIRES IV

3 CORE PRINCIPLES



CURATE



COLLATE



CHANGE

WHY GET PLAYER FEEDBACK BEFORE LAUNCH?



IMPROVED
GAME
RECEPTION



HAPPIER TEAM



BUILD
FOUNDATIONAL
COMMUNITY



CREATE
PRODUCT
EVANGELISTS

“AFTER BEING INVOLVED WITHIN THE COUNCIL AS WELL AS WITH MY WORK ON THE OFFICIAL COMPANION BOOK, I'M MORE HYPED THAN EVER BECAUSE ***YOU TRULY UNDERSTOOD HOW AN AGE OF EMPIRES GAME MUST BE! THE CAMPAIGNS, THE CIVS, THE MECHANICS... IT ALL FEELS LIKE AGE OF EMPIRES.***”

- COUNCIL MEMBER

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?



USER SCORE



RETENTION



HAPPY GAMERS



UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

USER RESEARCH
FOCUS GROUPS
SURVEYS

GAME TELEMETRY
SOCIAL ANALYTICS
WEB TRAFFIC



ENTERING A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP

WHAT DO
YOU WANT
FROM YOUR
PLAYERS?



WHAT DO
THEY GET IN
RETURN?

CARDINAL COUNCIL CHARTER

THE CARDINAL COUNCIL EXISTS TO BRING TOGETHER HIGHLY VALUED AGE OF EMPIRES PLAYERS TO PROVIDE KEY INSIGHT THE WORLD'S EDGE AND RELIC TEAMS AS THEY PRODUCE AGE OF EMPIRES IV. THE COUNCIL ARE FANS OF THE FRANCHISE, EXPERTS IN WHAT MAKES AGE GAMES SPECIAL AND HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A GROUP WHO CAN ASSIST THE AGE OF EMPIRES TEAMS IN ENSURING THE AGE IV EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST IT CAN BE.

THE COUNCIL:

- TAKES PART IN PRE-LAUNCH TESTING FOR AGE OF EMPIRES IV. THIS TESTING WILL TAKE THE FORM OF TIME-LIMITED PLAY OPPORTUNITIES WHERE DEVELOPERS CAN REQUEST FEEDBACK ON SPECIFIC FEATURES AND CHANGES.
 - PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK ON THE BUILDS PRESENTED.

THE DEVELOPERS' COMMITMENT TO THE COUNCIL:

- THE AGE OF EMPIRES TEAMS UNDERSTAND THAT WE'RE ASKING COUNCIL MEMBERS TO DEDICATE HOURS OF THEIR SPARE TIME AND WE WANT TO ENSURE THAT THE COUNCIL SEES A RETURN ON THAT INVESTMENT.
 - THE TEAM WILL GIVE AS MUCH NOTICE AS POSSIBLE OF A FLIGHT SO COUNCIL MEMBERS CAN PLAN AROUND IT.
- THE TEAM IS COMMITTED TO TAKING THE COUNCIL'S FEEDBACK TO HEART AND USING IT WHEN MAKING DESIGN AND BALANCING DECISIONS.
- THE TEAM WILL INFORM THE COUNCIL OF CHANGES MADE BASED ON THEIR FEEDBACK. THESE CHANGES MAY TAKE SOME TIME.

“GETTING OUT OF YOUR OWN MIND AND INTO THE MINDS OF OTHERS IS HOW YOU BROADEN YOUR PERSPECTIVE WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING GAMES. WITHOUT ADDITIONAL PERSPECTIVE, YOU ISOLATE YOURSELF TO JUST YOUR TEAMS’ MENTAL PROCESSES, AND WHILE Y’ALL MAY BELIEVE IT ALL MAKES SENSE, THE REST OF THE WORLD LIKELY WON’T AGREE.”

- ADAM ISGREEN, CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT WORLD’S EDGE

CREATING SPACE FOR OTHERED VOICES



DESIGN
FOR ALL



WHO AREN'T
YOU HEARING
FROM?

FEEDBACK GOALS

WHY?



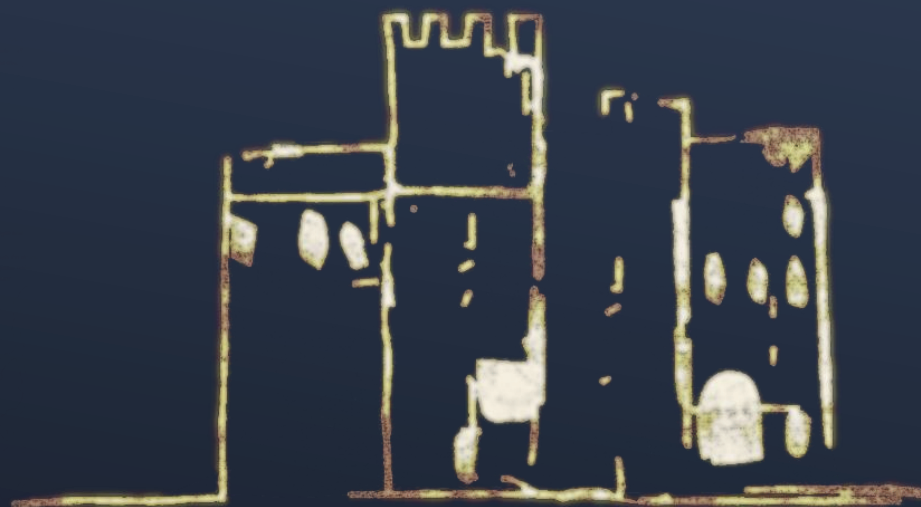
WHO?



WHAT?



PULL IT TOGETHER



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SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEAM



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FEEDBACK MUST BE A LOOP



“IT’S CRITICAL SEE THE NEEDS OF THE TRIBE VS THE INDIVIDUAL. WE NEED PLAYER FEEDBACK EARLY TO UNDERSTAND THE ‘SENTIMENT’ TOWARD VISUALS. **THAT’S NOT TO SAY WE JUST RESPOND TO EVERY SMALL PIECE OF FEEDBACK BUT GATHER THE EMOTIONAL CONTENT AND MAKE CREATIVE DECISIONS THAT SERVE THE NEED AS WELL AS CREATING A VISION THAT COMES FROM WITHIN.**

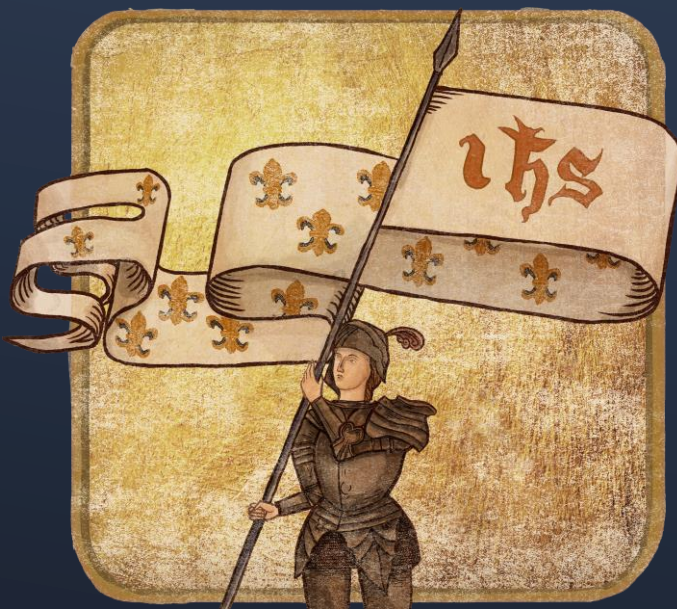
ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT WITH A GAME WITH A STORIED LEGACY IS HOW HAVE FANS RESPONDED AND CELEBRATED THE VISUALS, WHAT IS THEIR PREFERRED CONSUMPTION? ALSO, AS AN ARTIST I SEE WITH MY SENSIBILITIES, **HOWEVER A POWERFUL TOOL IS TO SEE THROUGH EYES OF OTHERS WHO ARE NOT NECESSARILY ARTISTS. THE INSIGHT FOUND IS INVALUABLE.** THIS IS NOT A ONE AND DONE, WE CONTINUE TO HEAR VOICE OF THE PLAYER AS THE IP GROWS. “

- HAN RANDHAWA, ART DIRECTOR AT WORLD’S EDGE

DEALING WITH THE NEGATIVES



HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE



FEEDBACK IMPACTS REVIEWS



POST-LAUNCH



BUGS = PRESENT



FEEDBACK = FUTURE

GIVE FEEDBACK A HOME



WHERE DOES FEEDBACK LIVE?

THIS IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT



“YOU CAN REALLY FEEL THE PASSION AND COMMITMENT AND WORK THAT WENT INTO IT WHILE PLAYING! THANK YOU FOR YOUR COURAGE TO STEP INTO THE BIG FOOTPRINTS OF THIS POPULAR, WELL KNOWN AND GENERATION OVERSPANNING GAME SERIES AND PUTTING YOUR NEW CREATION OUT THERE. THANKS FOR INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY CLOSELY THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE PROCESS, AND FOR TAKING OUR FEEDBACK SERIOUSLY AND PROMPTLY, THIS REALLY IS EXCEPTIONAL AND VERY MUCH APPRECIATED!”

- COUNCIL MEMBER

THE FEEDBACK FORMULA



FEEDBACK

&



DATA

3 CORE PRINCIPLES



CURATE

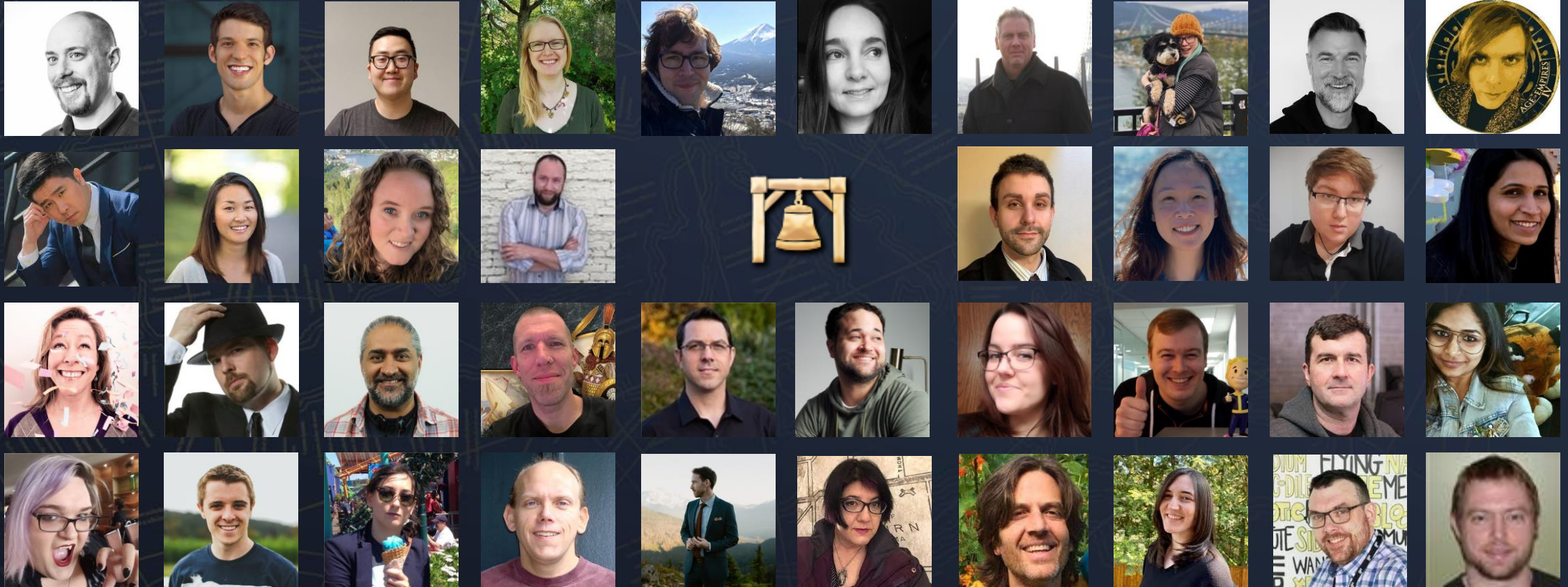


COLLATE



CHANGE

IT TAKES A VILLAGE



KEY TAKEAWAYS



RELATIONSHIP



LOOP



COMMIT

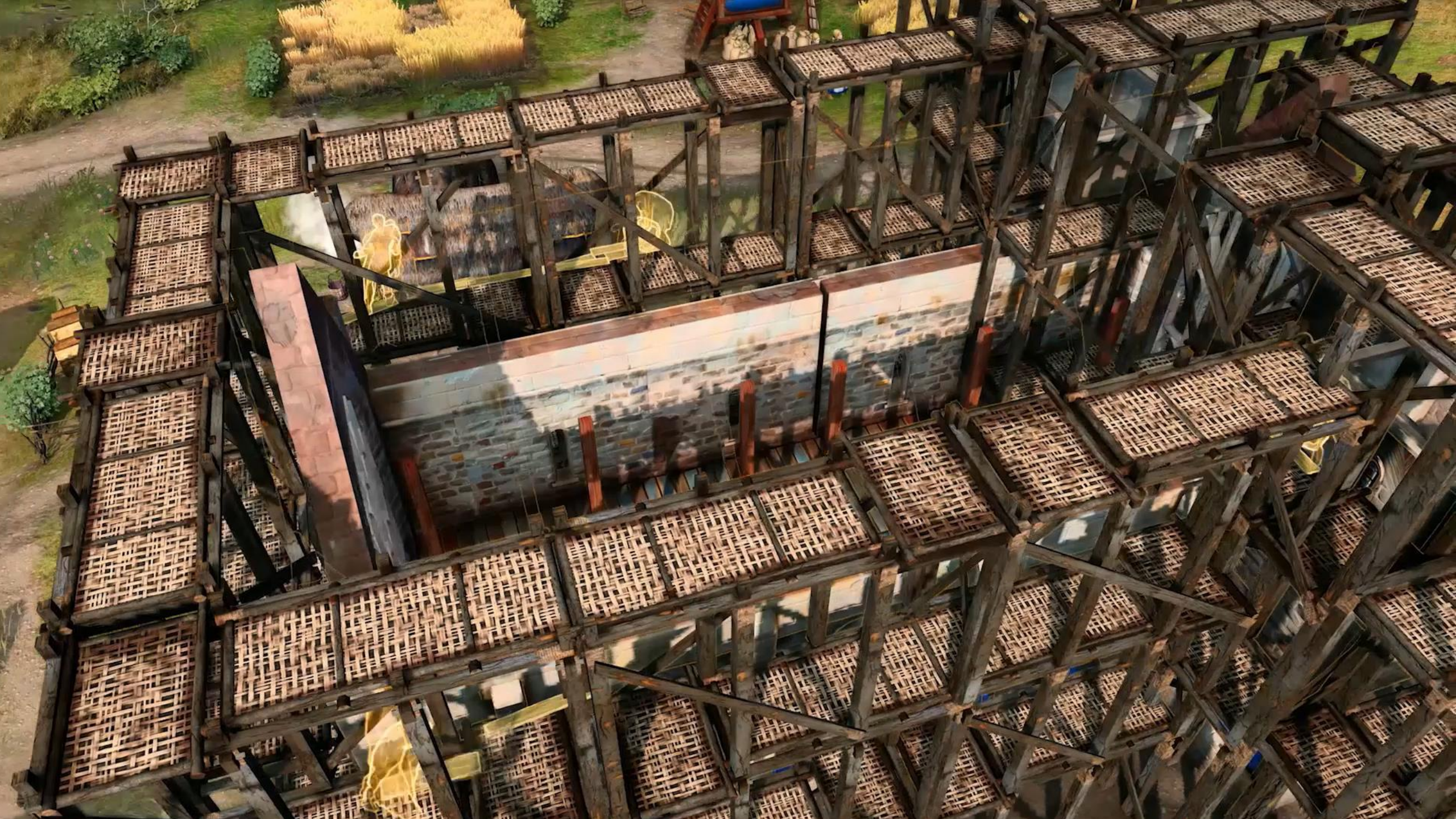


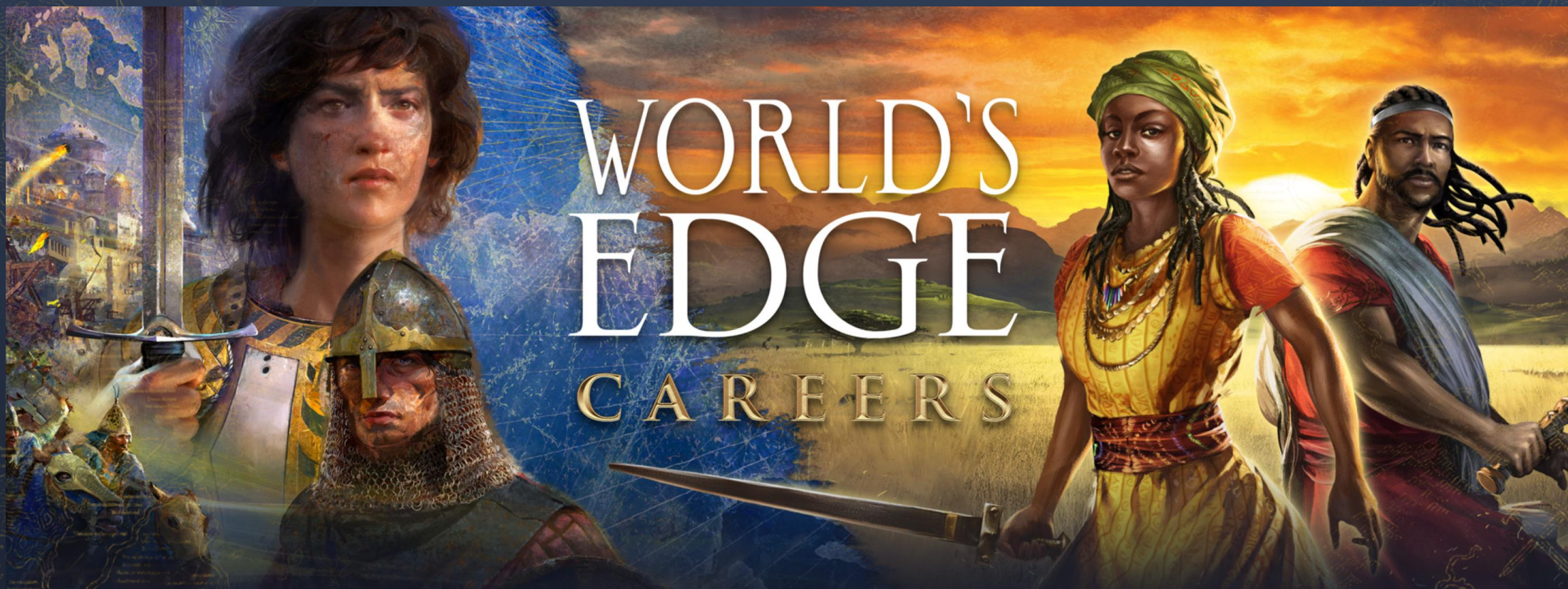


“FOR A GAME LIKE AGE OF EMPIRES IV, WHICH IS A SEQUEL IN A FRANCHISE THAT HAS OVER TWENTY YEARS OF HISTORY, **THERE ARE A LOT OF PRE-EXISTING PLAYER EXPECTATIONS WHICH NEED TO BE TEMPERED AGAINST NEW INNOVATIONS WHICH ARE COMING TO THE FRANCHISE FOR THE FIRST TIME. GETTING COMMUNITY INPUT EARLY SERVES AS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR STRIKING THE BALANCE BETWEEN FAMILIAR AND DIFFERENT, AND FINDING THE BOUNDARIES OF WHERE INNOVATION MUTATES THE GAME EXPERIENCE PAST A POINT THAT IS IN KEEPING WITH THE HISTORY OF THE FRANCHISE.**

OUR INTERNAL PLAYTEST TEAM HAVE A HUGE WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE IN EACH OF THE PREVIOUS AGE GAMES, BEING ABLE TO BRING THEM INTO THE PROCESS HAS ENABLED US TO ITERATE AND TEST CHANGES FAR FASTER BY FREEING UP DEV RESOURCES. WE'RE ABLE TO BRING MANY DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS TO THE DISCUSSION AND UNDERSTAND WHAT WENT WELL AND WHAT CHALLENGES WERE FACED IN THE PREVIOUS TITLES.”

- ZAK ROBINSON, SENIOR BALANCE DESIGNER AT RELIC ENTERTAINMENT





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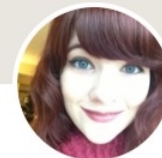
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Emma Bridle

Director of Customer Voice at World's Edge, Age of
Empires Franchise



Savannah Harrison

Senior Program Manager at Microsoft



“AGE HAS A SUCH MASSIVE COMMUNITY THAT’S BEEN BUILT OVER 2 DECADES. IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM TO UNDERSTAND THE BREADTH OF EXPERIENCE WE NEEDED TO LAND TO MEET THEIR EXPECTATIONS. WE WANTED TO AVOID “GROUP THINK” AND “ECHO CHAMBER” SCENARIOS WHERE ONLY THE LOUDEST OR “HARD CORE” VOICES WERE HEARD. BALANCING “INNOVATION” AGAINST “AGE-NESS” WAS AT THE HEART OF OUR REVIEW PROCESS. WE NEEDED HELP TO IDENTIFY AND PROTECT ELEMENTS OF THE EXPERIENCE THAT DIDN’T NEED TO BE CHANGED AND WHAT AREAS NEEDED TO EVOLVE TO BE MODERNIZED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR PLAYERS.

QUITE SIMPLY PUT, IT MADE THE GAME BETTER. THERE WAS ALWAYS MIXTURE OF PRAISE AND CRITIQUE BUT IT WAS SO OBVIOUSLY DRIVEN BY THE SAME PASSION AND LOVE FOR THE FRANCHISE THAT WE SHARED AT WORLD’S EDGE AND RELIC. WE MAKE GAMES FOR OUR PLAYERS AND THE STRONGER THE BOND WE CREATE AND FOSTER, THEN BETTER WE CAN DO OUR JOBS. INSTINCTS AND DATA ARE NOT ENOUGH. WE KNOW WHERE TO START AND WHAT DIRECTION WE WANT TO HEAD. WE CAN CROSS REFERENCE THAT AGAINST WHAT PLAYERS ARE ACTUALLY DOING (OR NOT DOING!) AND TALKING TO OUR PLAYERS CREATES A HUGE BRIDGE TO COVER THE GAPS. IT MAKES EACH OF INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS MORE IMPACTFUL. **IT WAS A BOOST TO THE TEAMS’ MORALE – LONG DEV CYCLES WITH THAT ADDED COMPLEXITY OF WFH/ISOLATION LEAD TO A GENERAL FEELING OF BEING DISCONNECTED. AS WE STARTED TO SHARE BUILDS WITH OUR PLAYERS AND COMMUNITY ADVOCATES THERE WAS A NOTICEABLE UPLIFT IN THE TEAM’S “SPIRIT”.**

- GREG WILSON, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER AT RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

A large fleet of Age of Empires III sailing ships, including galleons and frigates, is shown sailing on a dark blue sea. The ships are arranged in a loose formation, with some in the foreground and others further back. The sails are white, and the ships have dark hulls. The overall scene is dimly lit, with a dark blue background.

QUESTIONS?