

Producer Boot Camp



Learn. Network. Inspire.

www.GDConf.com

Agenda



- ❑ **10:15 AM** – “So You Want to be a Great Producer”
 - ❑ Rod Fergusson, Executive Producer, Epic Games
- ❑ **Morning Coffee Break**
- ❑ **11:30 AM** – “Communication Scaling: How to Keep People Talking to Each Other”
 - ❑ Matt Allen, Executive Producer, Monolith Productions
- ❑ **12:30 PM** – **Lunch Break**
- ❑ **2:00 PM** – “Effective Management: Getting the Best from Your Team”
 - ❑ Pete Isensee, Principal Program Manager, Microsoft
- ❑ **3:15 PM** – “Bend MS Project to Your Will 2010”
 - ❑ Mike McShaffry, Executive Producer, Red Fly Studio
- ❑ **Afternoon Coffee Break**
- ❑ **4:30 PM** – “By the Seat of Our Pants: How Naughty Dog Produced Uncharted 2: Among Thieves”
 - ❑ Richard Lemarchand, Lead Game Designer, Naughty Dog
- ❑ **5:00 PM** – “Wrangling Engineers”
 - ❑ Matt Priestly, Senior Producer, Bungie

Producer



- ❑ Ah, the irony...
- ❑ Trip Hawkins established the title when he founded Electronic Arts in 1982
- ❑ Look at us now
 - ❑ Executive Producer, Producer, Senior Producer, Lead Producer, Associate Producer, Assistant Producer, Program Manager, Group Program Manager, Project Manager, International Project Manager, Development Director, Outsourcing Manager, External Producer, etc.



Challenges



- ❑ Increased Capabilities
- ❑ Increased Expectations
- ❑ Increased Complexity
- ❑ Increased Team Sizes
- ❑ Increased Risk

A Variety of Solutions



- ❑ There is no silver bullet
 - ❑ Bungie - 11+ Producers
 - ❑ Naughty Dog - 0 Producers
 - ❑ Case studies this afternoon
- ❑ Every project, team and organization is unique
- ❑ Key is to have the base skills required to adapt

So You Want to be a Great Producer...

Rod Fergusson
Executive Producer
Epic Games, Inc.



About Me



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- 10 Years with Microsoft



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 - Microsoft Consulting Services teaching Microsoft Solutions Framework
 - Transferred to Redmond to produce the next version



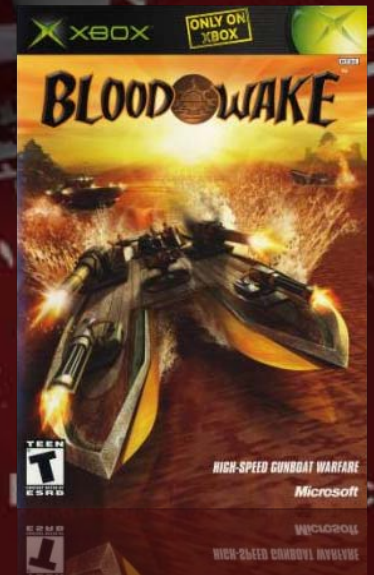
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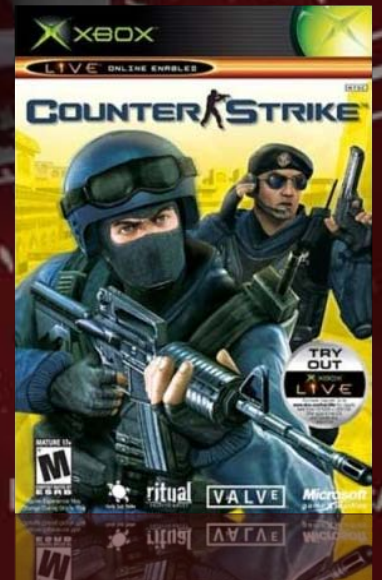
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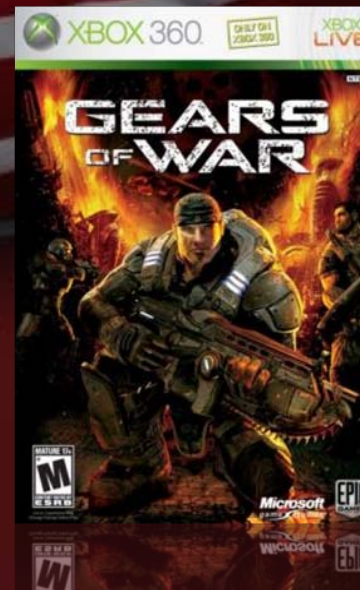
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 - Blood Wake
 - Counter-Strike Xbox
- 5 Years with Epic
 - Gears of War
 - Gears of War 2



Producer is like a Meteorologist?



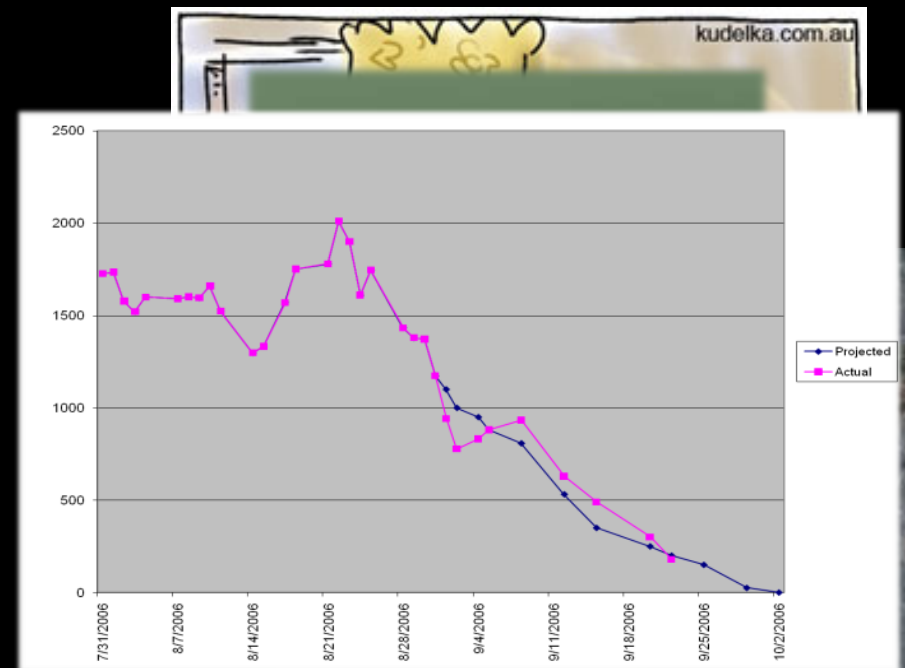
The Thermometer

- Indicator of current state



The Barometer

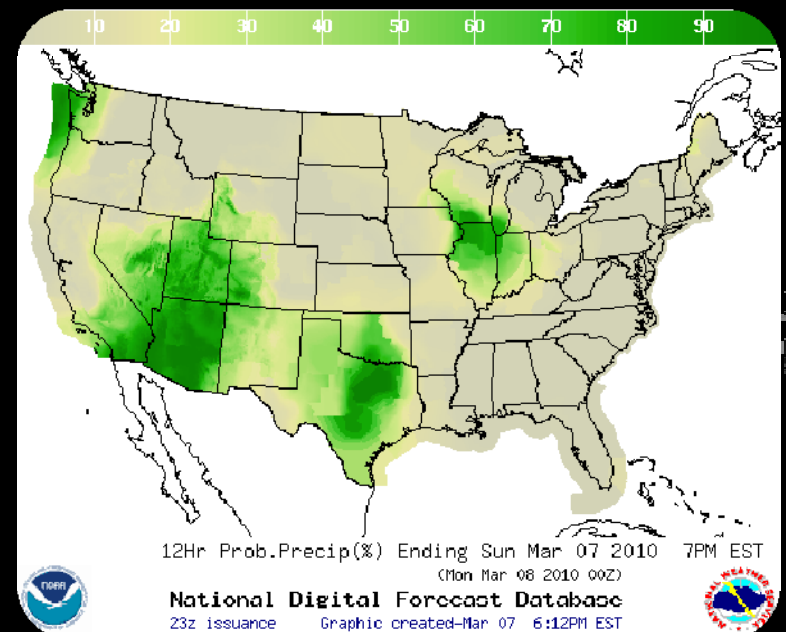
- Indicator of future state
- For us, it changes based on where you are in the project
 - Pre-production
 - Production
 - Endgame
- Need to avoid the “LA Story” effect



Resources











Probability of Precipitation

- Confidence that precipitation will occur and the percent of the area that will receive it
- Use the past to try and predict the future
- Evidence-based scheduling
- Probability of slipping



Long Range Forecast

- Current state of the art - 10 Days
- For us, 9 - 12 months
- The longer the duration, the greater the uncertainty
- Milestones shorten duration
- Buffer, buffer, buffer!
- Cut early, cut often

10-Day Forecast		NEW: Larger Radar Maps & No Ads		
			High / Low (°F)	Precip. %
Tonight Jul 07	 Clear		85°	0 %
Sun Jul 08	 Sunny		112°/84°	10 %
Mon Jul 09	 Sunny		110°/84°	10 %
Tue Jul 10	 AM Clouds / PM Sun		110°/85°	10 %
Wed Jul 11	 Partly Cloudy		108°/84°	10 %
Thu Jul 12	 Sunny		111°/84°	10 %
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Cut Early, Cut Often

- Due to unknowns, teams tend to underestimate effort
- Every feature takes polish time away from the other features
- Avoid the sunk cost fallacy by looking at opportunity cost
- Always keep test and support burden in mind



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Fixed Ship Date Mindset

- The belief that the ship date is both realistic and unchangeable
 - Date can change but must be justified
 - Date not actually fixed till very confident
- Provides a clear goal for the team
- Forces prioritization and creativity
- Provides a decision making constraint



Dead Horse has been Beaten...



Lead from the Front

- To be a leader means to lead from the front and by example
- Never ask anyone to do something that you're unwilling to do
- Responsibility vs Authority
- Build respect and trust by adding value
- Moral support counts



Facilitate Communication

- “... a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus.”
 - Martin Luther King Junior
- Get a base knowledge of the other disciplines
- Listen more than you talk
- Represent what you know and what you don't
- Can be as simple as walking from one desk to another
- Adapt communication style accordingly
- Straw man FTW



Manage Expectations

- Set clear expectations
- Constant two-way communicate
- Empowers the team to make decisions
- Choose milestone “spirit” over “letter”
- Don’t exaggerate, stick to the facts
- Don’t overreact, always look for the compromise



Maintain Your Perspective

- One of your unique strengths is your ability to see the big picture
- Stay objective so you can moderate
- Use data to support decisions
 - Project & Excel are your friends
- As you gain experience, trust your gut

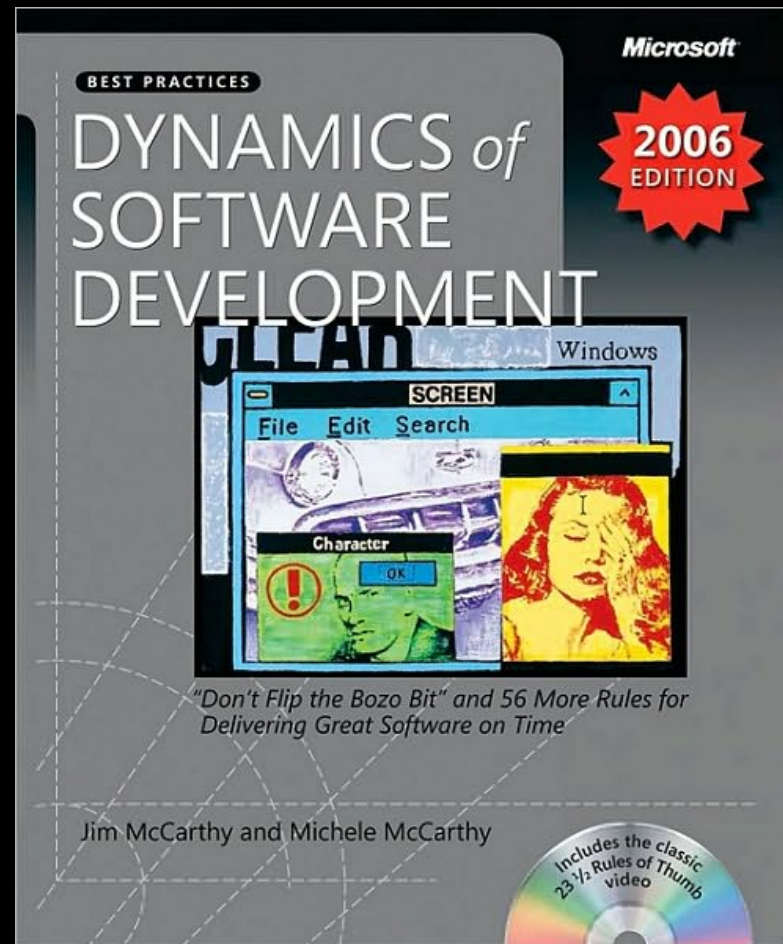


A Must Read and Watch

"Dynamics of Software Development"

By Jim McCarthy

ISBN: 0735623198



Questions?



Photo Credit: HHOF / IIHF/ IOC / Matthew Manor



p.s. Epic is hiring in North Carolina, Utah & Warsaw :-)

jobs@epicgames.com



- Great collaborative environment
- Ultra successful games
- Leading the way with game engine tech and next-generation gaming

