

the Unfinished Swan™

From Student Prototype
to Commercial Game





I'm the Creative Director
at Giant Sparrow

The Unfinished Swan is a
first person painting game



Overview

1. History
2. What I learned in school (that was helpful)
3. What I learned on the job
4. What I wish I'd known

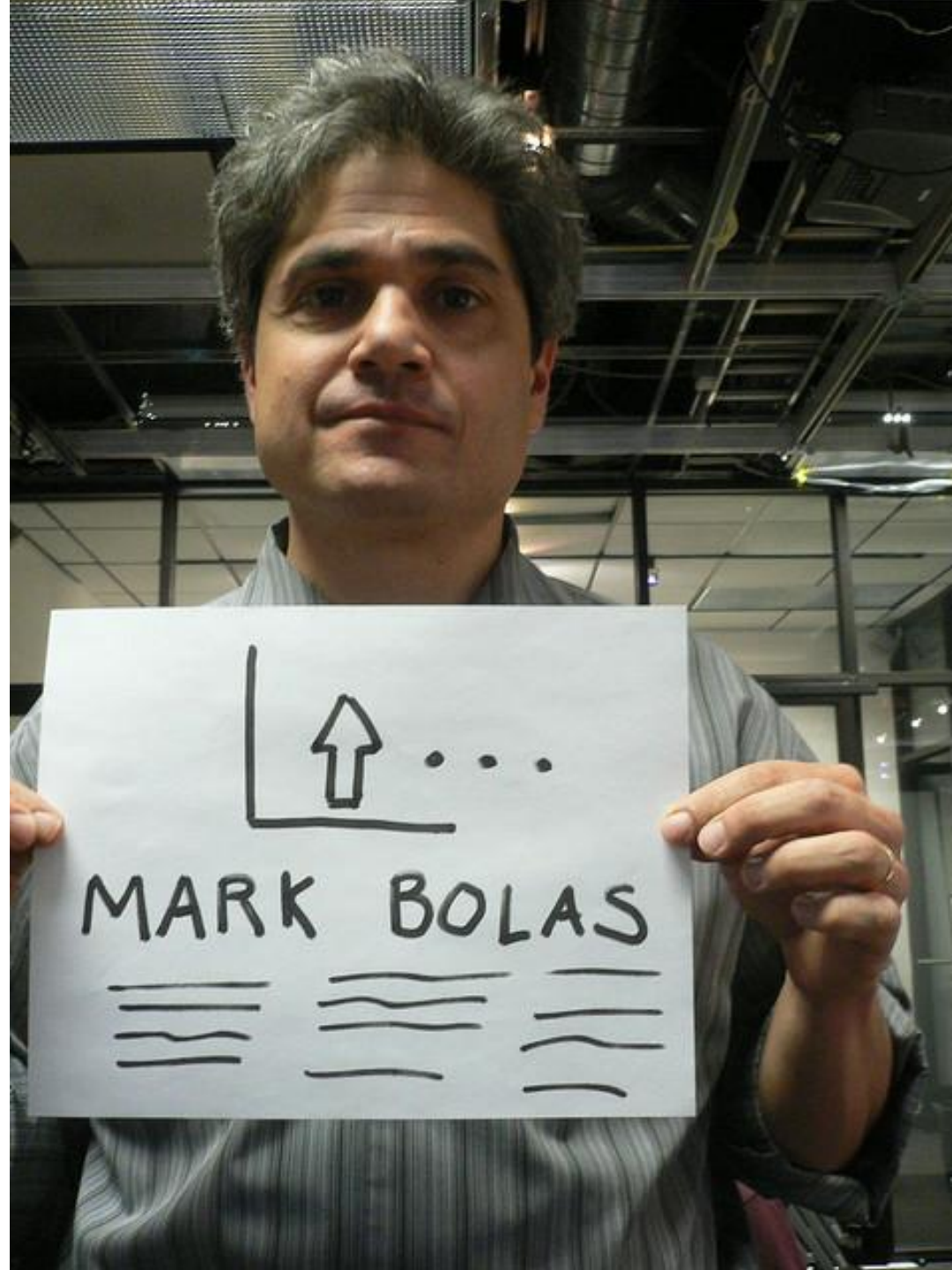


Part 1: History

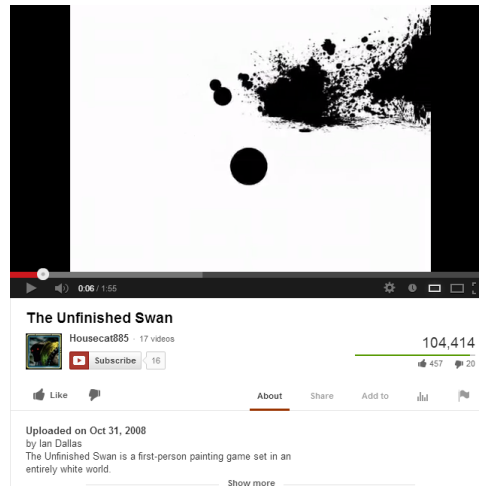
usc interactive media division



Every week I made
a new prototype
for this man.



my first publishing deal



Festival + YouTube + Coffee = Contract!

Why sign a publishing deal?

- * Wanted to make a bigger, prettier game
- * Focus on making a game, not running a business
- * Publisher had goals that aligned with ours
- * Liked the people and their track record





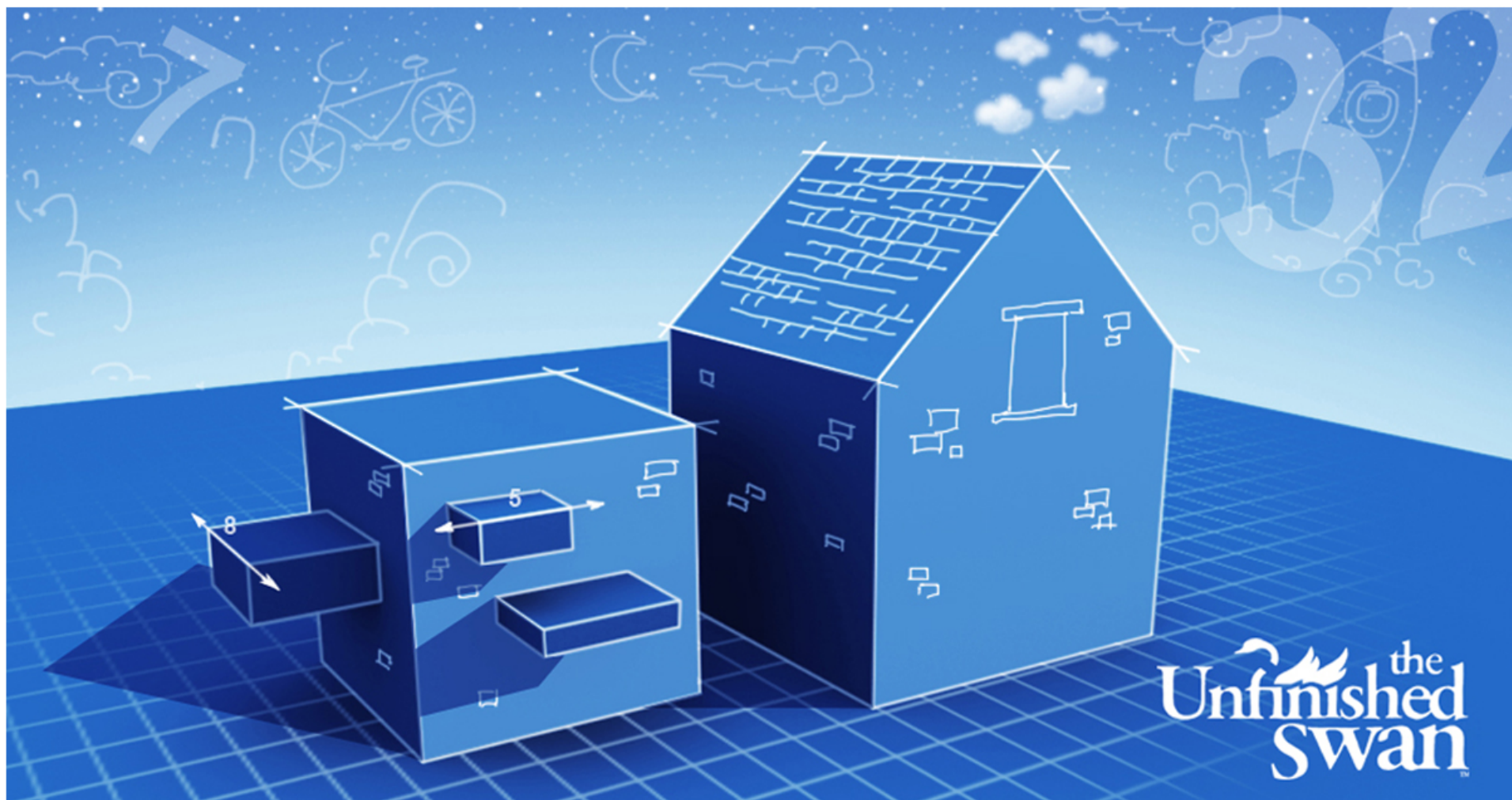
Worth noting:
Our schedule (and budget) ballooned

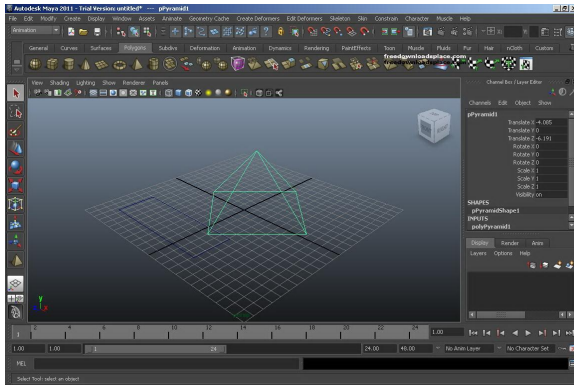


Also worth noting:
We're pretty happy with the game
and its reception

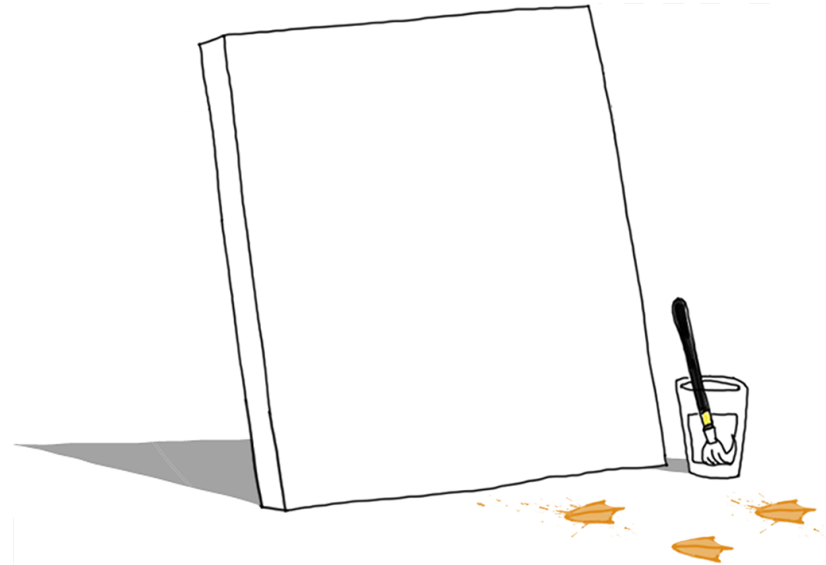
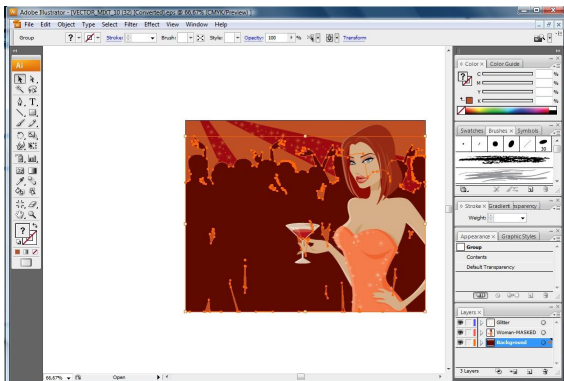
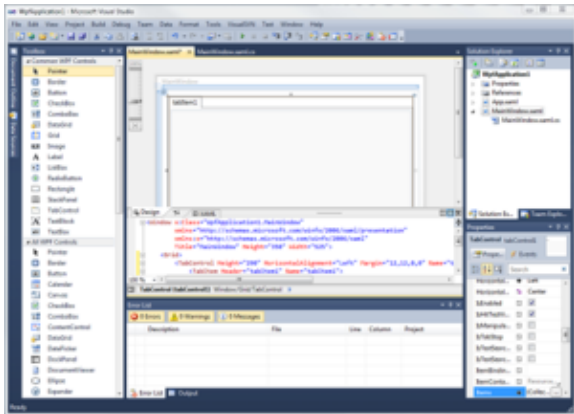


Part 2: What I learned in school (that was helpful)

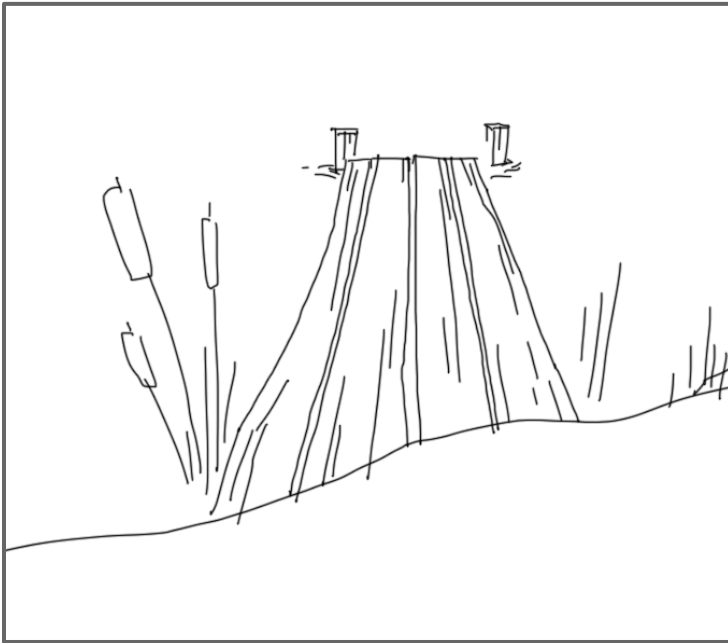




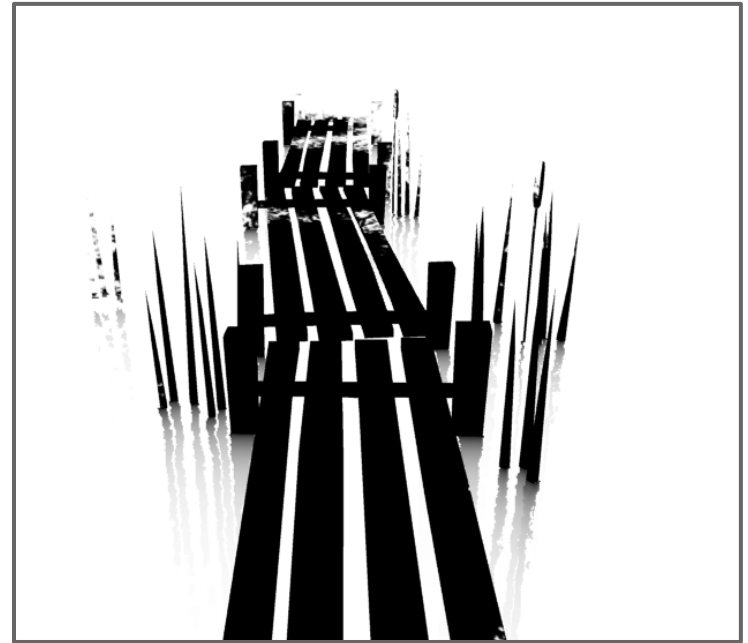
1. Fluency with core tools



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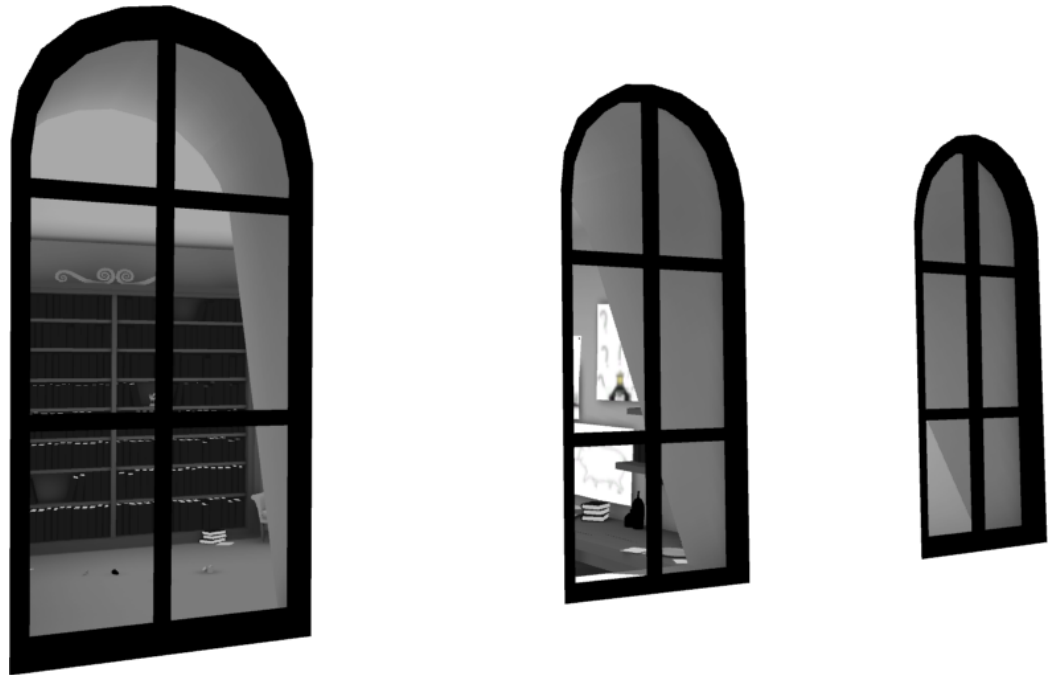
10 splats = prototype



1000 splats = game

1. Fluency with core tools

- * Helps you experiment and play with ideas
- * Helps you communicate your ideas
- * Builds empathy and understanding



1. Fluency with core tools

PS: most of your time is spent debugging
(looking for monsters)

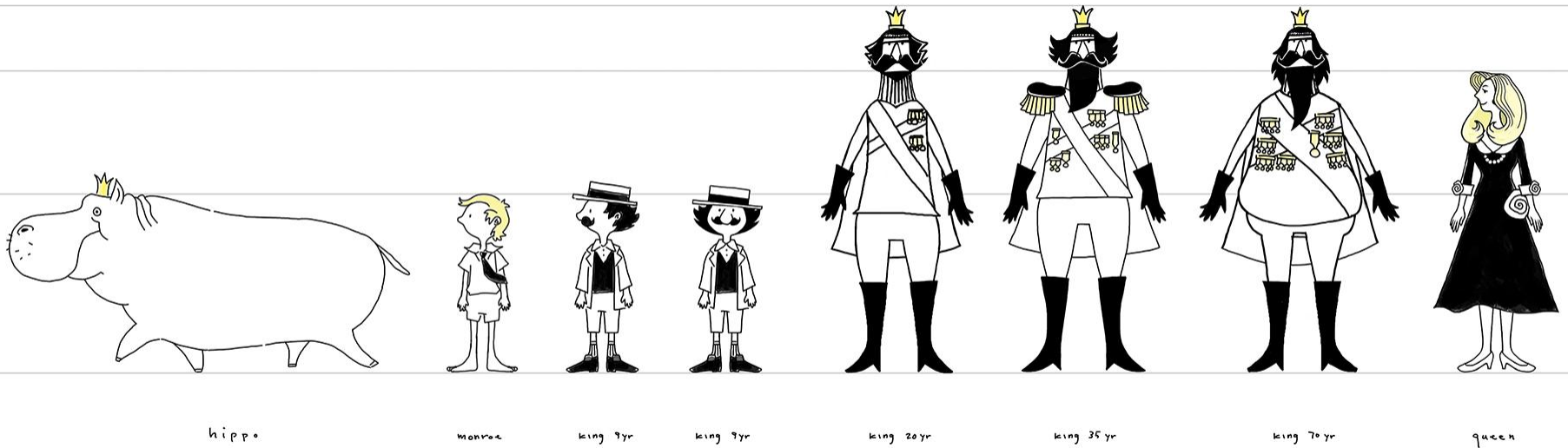


2. Exposure to misc tools

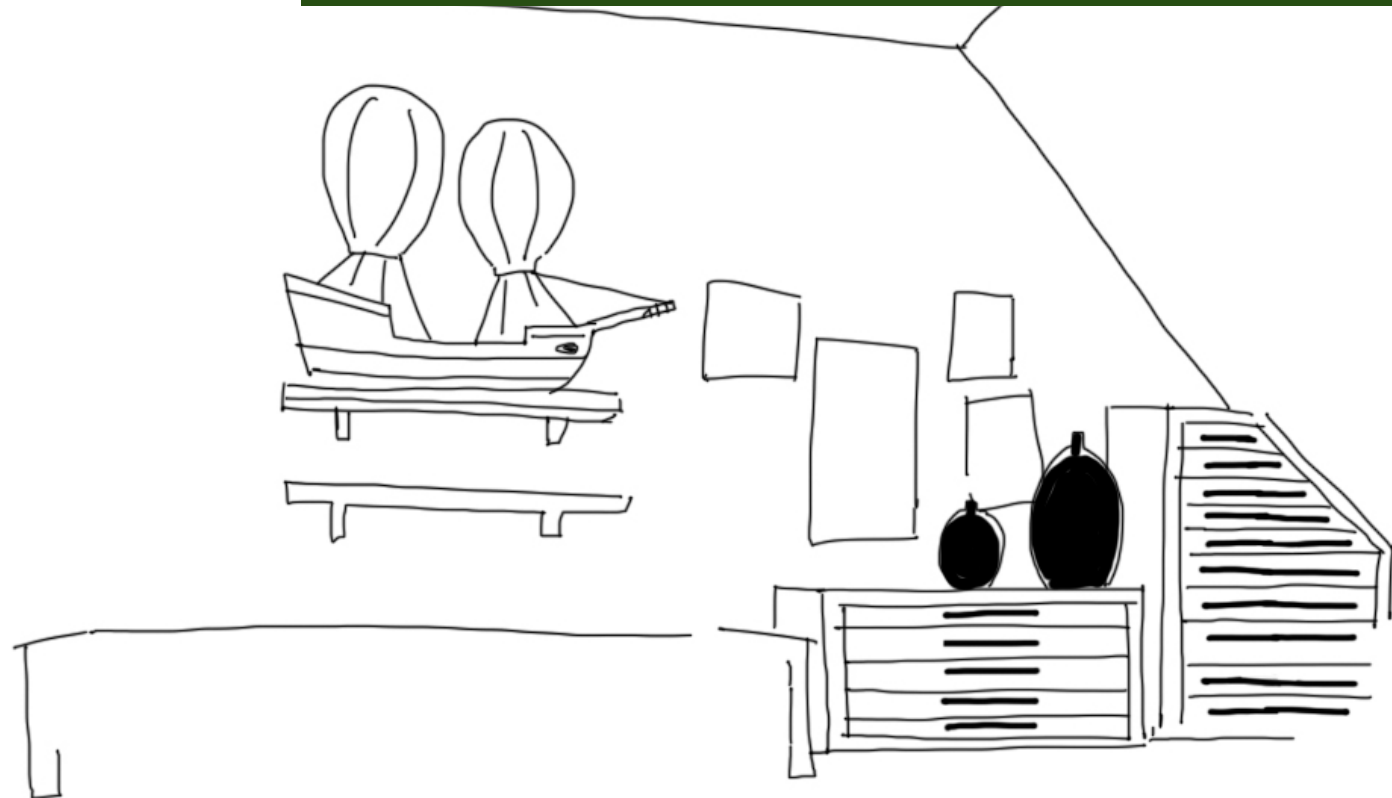
* After Effects 

* Pro Tools + recording techniques 

* Video editing 



3. Using prototypes as tools for thinking



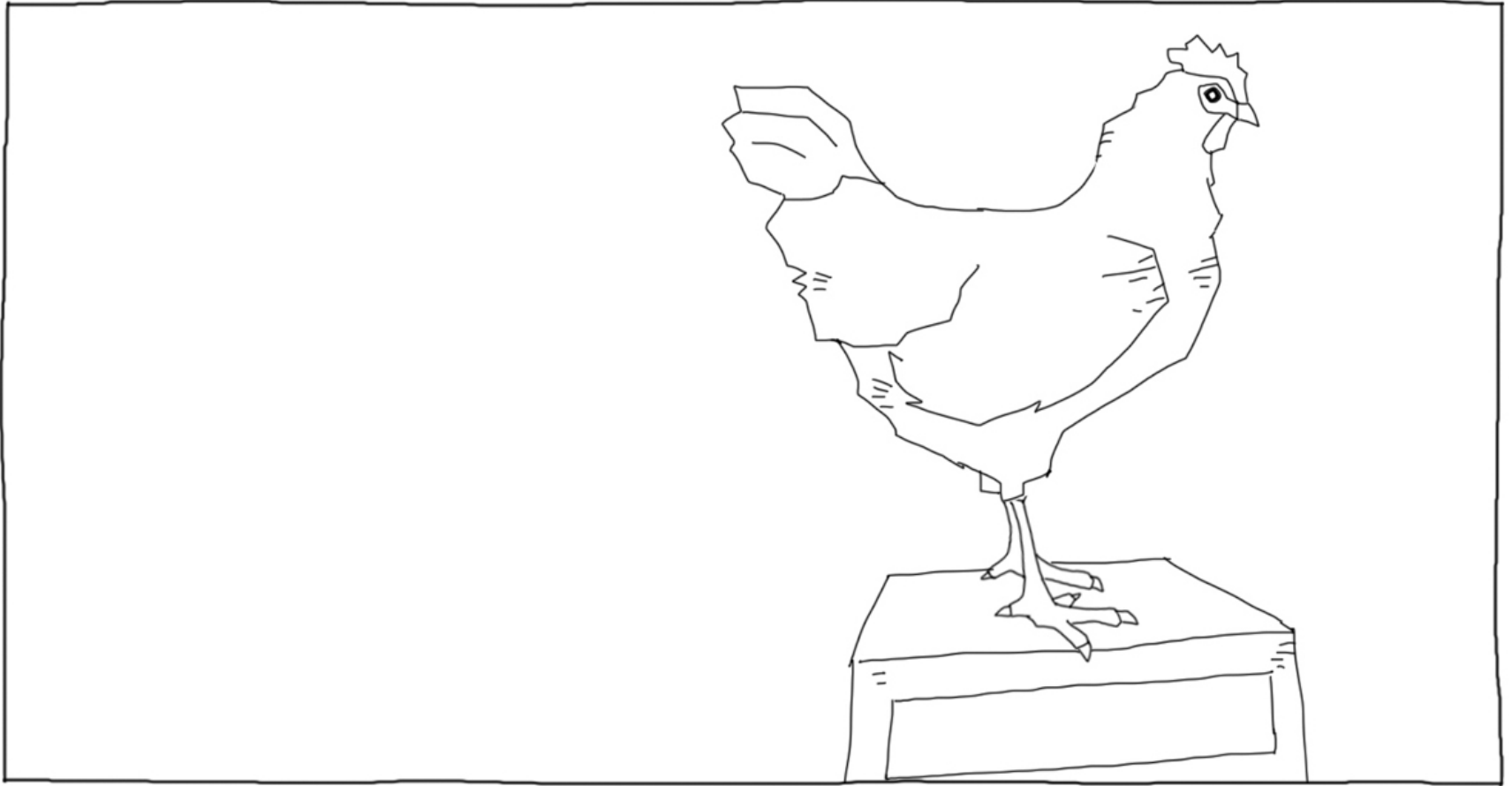


4. John Hight's game about game publishing

- * Different valuations of the same thing



6. The value of peer support



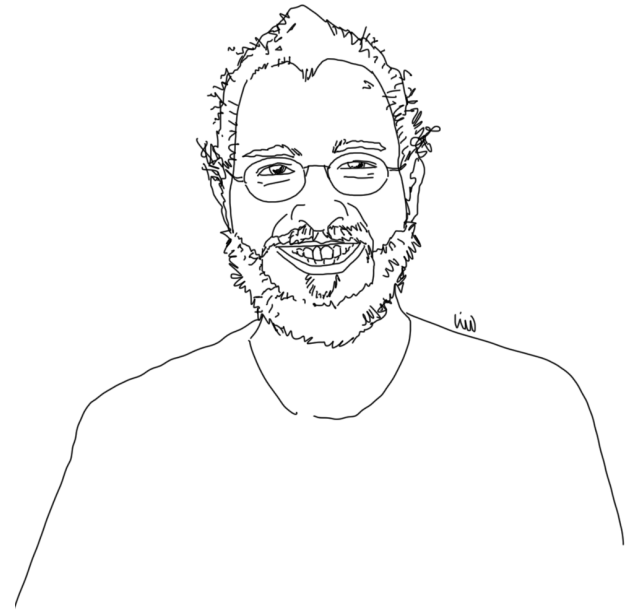
7. Showing at festivals

- * Fixable on the floor
- * Save your voice

Part 3: What I learned on the job



1. Why we have producers (to jump on grenades)



2. Weekly playtests are good rallying points + gut check



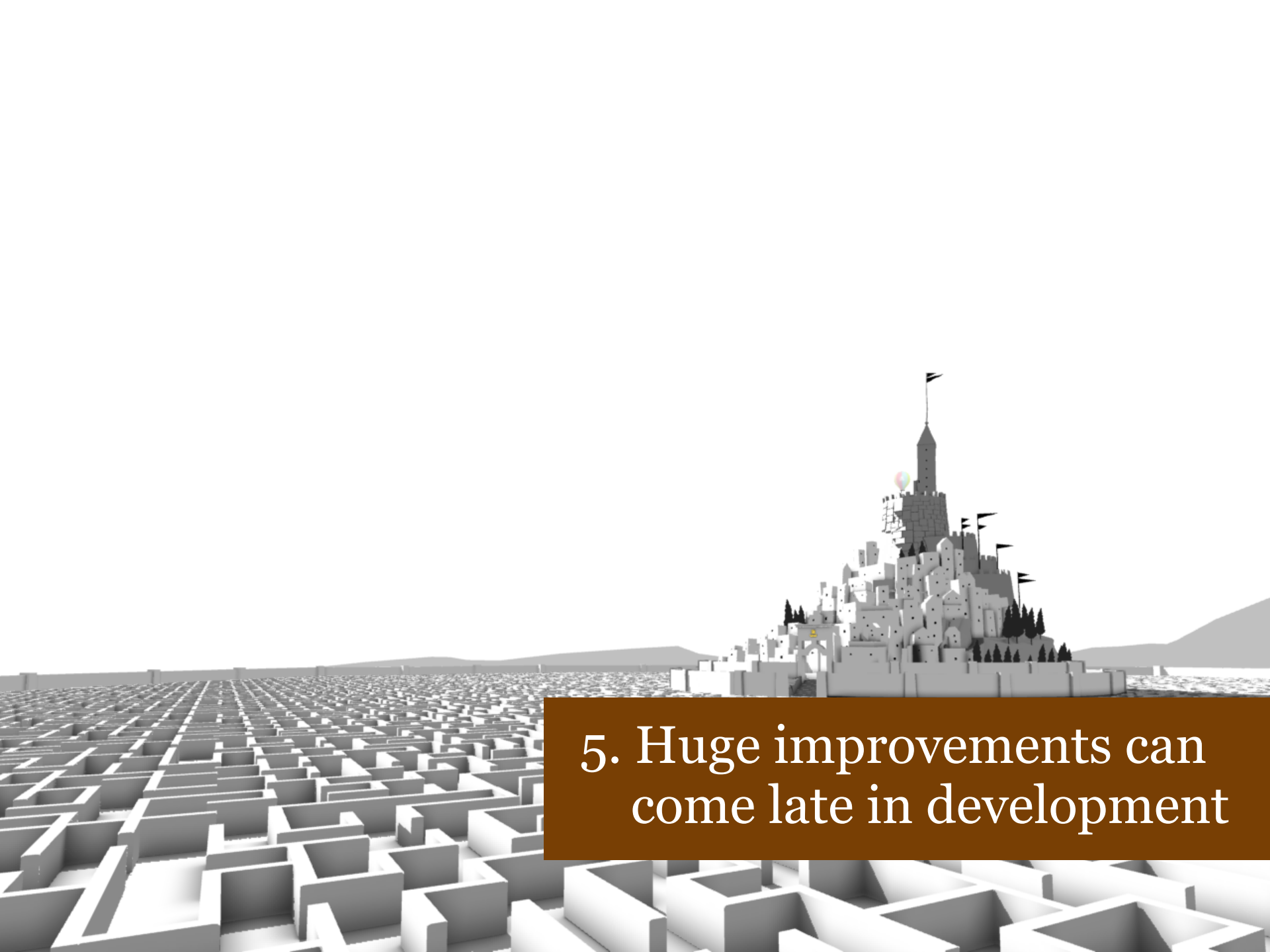


3. Simple processes are great

- * Google Docs for tasks
- * Daily standup meetings
- * Weekly team lunch



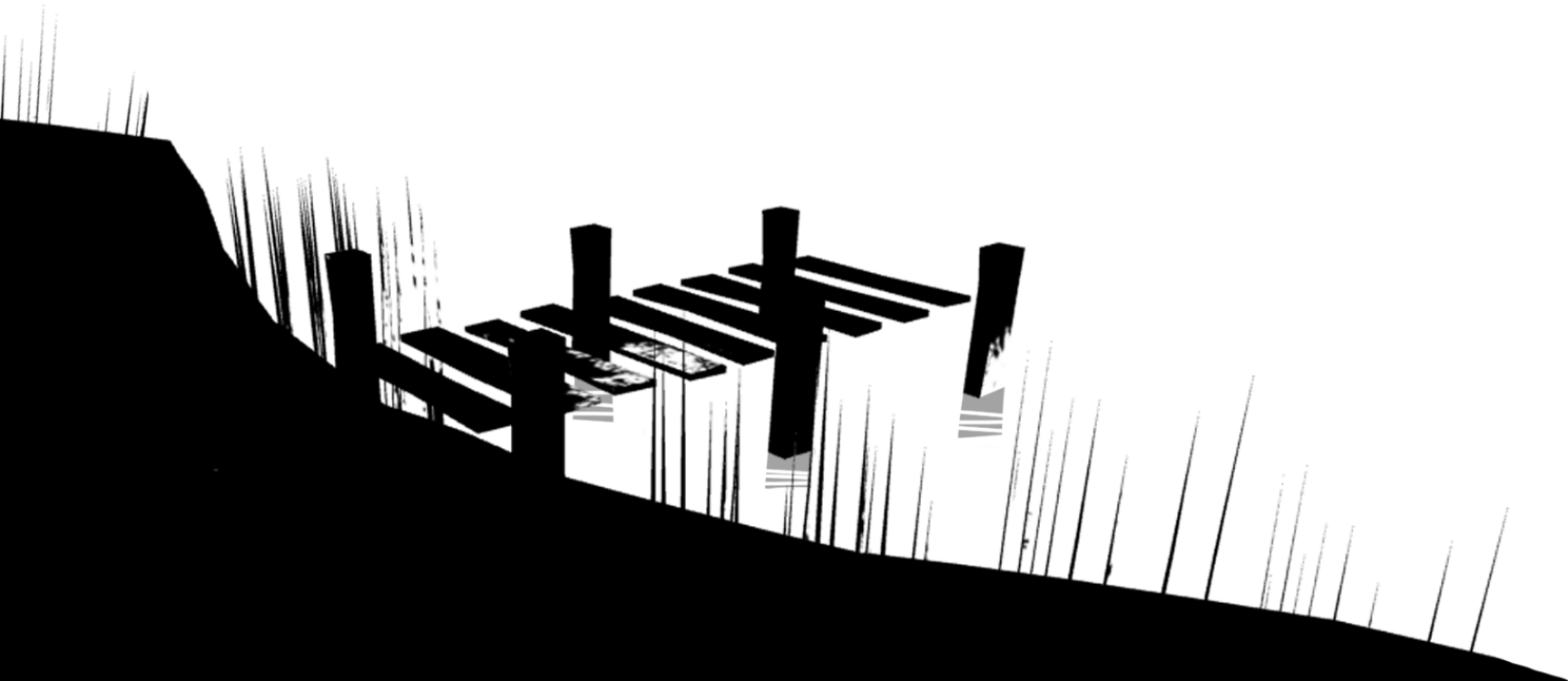
4. Team dynamics change
after ~7 people



5. Huge improvements can come late in development

Part 4: What I wish I'd known

- * Hiring is hard + important
- * Fire people early
- * Some people LIKE being told what to do
- * Communicating changes is hard + important



Questions?

