Better Sound Through Collaboration

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Overview

- 33% Artistic, 33% Technical, 33% Social Interaction.
- Sound is naturally a collaborative and iterative process. The more we can involve others, earlier, the better. However… we have the ongoing challenge of **connectedness**…
- 3 simple methods to combat this…
- ***Relationship Building***
- ***Staying Connected***
- ***Breaking Down the Walls!***

Sound Challenges No Longer Technical & Artistic

- "Game Development is a Team Sport"
- Sound already has a handicap in that it can be considered a 'service' resource rather than a principle collaborator.
- The push is towards early involvement. Failing faster.
- Disciplinary Segregation doesn't help. Opportunities are being missed.
- Sound Studio Design and Placement is often Antithetical to Collaboration (closed box, isolated location… but…
- Connectedness is all about people. We have more in common than we have apart. (art, design, tech, sound)

I: Relationship Building

- ***"The relationship between Sound, Art and Design is only as strong as the relationship between the Sound Designer, Artist and Designer"***
- Regular cross-discipline activity / Review competitive games in a cross-discipline groups /
- Build allies *across disciplines* so someone other than 'audio', always has your back in a meeting
- Volunteer your help! Take on tasks outside of sound. Organize!
- Learn about other disciplines: Mentor. Learning more will deepen connections.
- ***Takeaway: Make it your responsibility to connect and... stay connected...***

II: Staying Connected

- ***"As soon as you drift out of sync with the latest team-thinking and developments, your disconnection increases exponentially."***
- Daily Interaction and Reaction (both professional and inter personal)
- Promote cross-discipline reviews of your game (make sure sound is at the table)
- Morning updates (sound team / entire team) – get team used to hearing about sound…
- Fight toxicity and negativity. Modify complaining behaviors. Don't tolerate it in others. Call it out!
- ***Takeaway: Maintaining and fostering your connections & interactions is ongoing everyday work!***

III: Break Down the Walls

- Hack Studio Space. Encourage meetings, visitors, tours, showcase!
- Build for collaboration! Sound studios with windows (line of sight to team), on the team space!
- Busy? Get out of the studio space. Hourly coffee breaks, team walk-arounds. Drink Water! Health benefits.
- Pre-production? Set up a 'pop-up' audio workstation at a desk on the team space in design or lead pit. Be visible!
- ***Takeaway. Less sound work than you think requires being in a studio, aim to make*** *at least* ***a third of your work in sound about human relations'.***

Taking it Further…

- Advocacy! (media materials and interviews get gamers on board!)

- Massive Opportunities in pre-production (scheduling, budget, resources, tone, values, pillars) – be proactive. Advocate Audio as "Another Art Department".

- Don't think exclusively about sound, think about designing an experience for the end-user: Solve Problems.

Summary

- Sitting in a sound studio, or being at arm's length from the team is an enemy of collaboration.

- Prolonged isolation is massively unhealthy!

- Look to other disciplines for answers!

- Attitude: See a problem, Solve a problem.

- Learn to receive and give feedback! Practice!

- Collaboration is not about pushing our vision or mandate, it is about enabling two-way communication that is maybe more about listening as talking. Listening is a core skill/ strength we already have!

- Try your own hacks that work in your culture! ('friend of sound' shirts, buy the design team headphones) – there are no rules, no right / wrong ways to work. Whatever works!

Questions…