Getting the Most Out of an Entry-Level Games Job

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My First Job in the Games Industry

- Creative Development Assistant (CDA)
    - The Walking Dead: A New Frontier (s3) eps 1&2
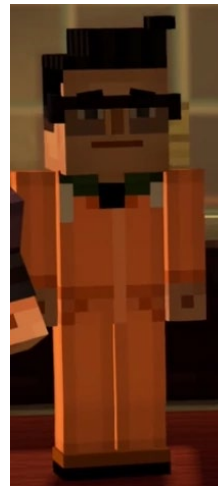   - Minecraft: Story Mode Season 2 (all)

The Job Description

- Take court-reporter style notes in meetings
- Export voiceover scripts
- "Other duties as needed"

The Reality

- No manager
- No promotion ladder
- No department
  - Production?
  - Creative?
  - Audio?
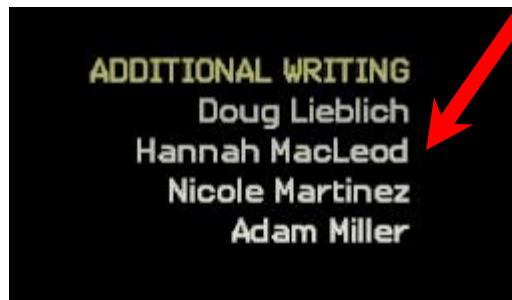- Very little training

Eventually...

That's me!

Telltale Games
1 yr 3 mos

Writer
Sep 2017 – Nov 2017 · 3 mos
San Rafael, CA

-Minecraft: Story Mode Season 2 Episode 3: "Jailhouse Block"
-Minecraft: Story Mode Season 2 Episode 4: "Below the Bedrock"
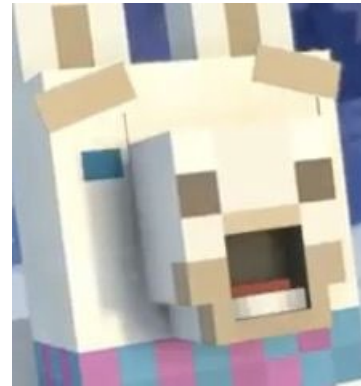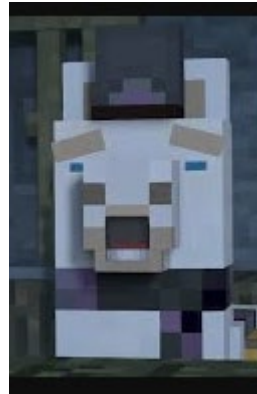-Minecraft: Story Mode Season 2 Episode 5: "Above and Beyond"

ADDITIONAL WRITING
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Turns out I'm not special.

- Entry-level positions are rare.

Caveats

- The studio where I had my first job no longer exists.
- I work in narrative.
- Remote vs In Person

Goal: Get noticed.

Super secret weapon

Listen.

Goal: Get noticed.
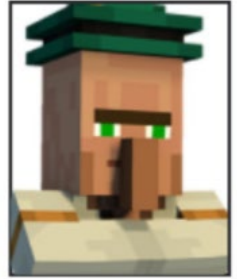
Manager

What does your manager do?

- Keeps track of how well you're doing at your job.
- Gives you performance reviews.
- Collects feedback from other teammates on your progress.
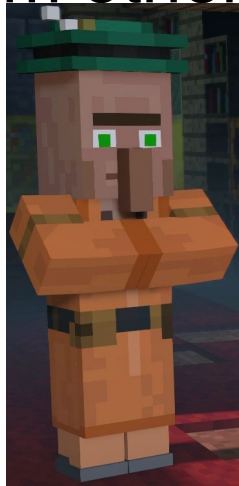
Your Manager

<u>Why do you want them to notice you?</u>

● It's their job to notice and advocate for you.

<u>How do you get them to notice you?</u>

● Tell them your career goals.
● One-on-One Meetings
    ● Even more if you're remote.

Goal: Get noticed.

Person You
Report To

Who do you report to?

"I wish I had a better/clearer understanding of how the studio is structured and who I'm reporting to. Maybe this is unusual for most studios but I felt like I didn't know who to show my work to when I had finished an assignment."

The Person You Report To

Who do you report to?

- Ask in your interview or during orientation.
- The person you receive your day-to-day tasks from.
- Who you receive feedback from for those tasks.
- Can change!

Why do you want them to notice you?

- If you don't have a manager.
- You spend the most time with them.
- They control what tasks you receive.

The Person (or People) You Report To

How do you get them to notice you?

- Tell them your career goals.
- One-on-One Meetings (if necessary)
- Report to them.
- **Listen** in on tasks they receive.

Take a breath.

What should I be doing right now?

What should I be doing right now?

- Play the game.
    - No game? Documents!
- Sequel/Prequel/Spinoff?
- **Listen** for what your game is being compared to.
- Existing IP?
- Take notes!
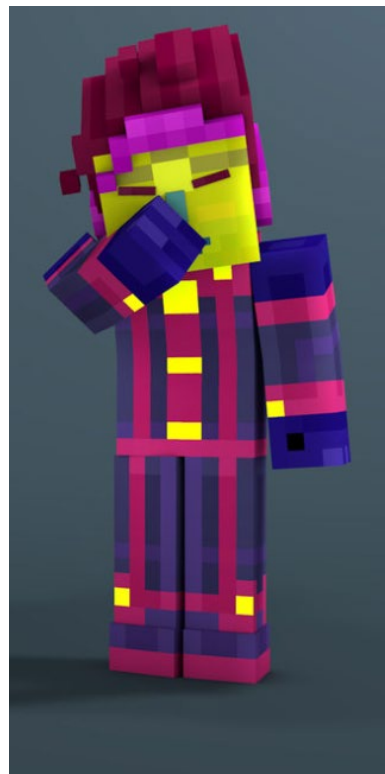
Goal: Get noticed.

Coworker

Co-Workers

Why do you want them to notice you?

- Game development is a team sport.
- The industry is tiny.
- You aren't in the department you eventually want to be in.

How do you get them to notice you?

- Volunteer to:
  - Take notes in meetings.
  - Playtesting.
  - Scratch VO.
  - Audit New Hire Training.

Taking Notes in Meetings

How to Take Notes

- During Meeting
  - Take attendance.
  - Style *during* doesn't matter.
- After Meeting
  - Organize
  - Internalize
  - Send out "messy" doc if asked.

Perks

- Getting into meetings above your paygrade.
- Getting into meetings for the department you want to be in.

Why Playtesting?

- Talk to people you normally wouldn't.
- Low skill level? Lowest common denominator player!
- "Player" in review meetings (if you dare).

Why Scratch VO?

- The audio team is the best.
- They're at the end of the pipeline, so people forget them a lot.
- They touch every part of the game.
- Helps you become a better collaborator.
- See the game's story from a different perspective.
- Get away from your desk (if in person).
- If your voice shows up in game - people will notice!

Why audit New Hire Training?

- Get to know people closer to your level.
- Learn what skills you need for your next position.
- Hit the ground running when you're promoted.

Goal: Get noticed.

Friend

Why should you make friends where you work?

"I wish I had known that when it comes to internal politics and office gossip, to listen and learn for a long, long time to really understand what I was stepping into. During my first couple jobs I didn't know the dynamics that existed between certain people or teams that would have really helped me to understand."

Friends

Why do you want them to notice you?

- Make you more comfortable at work.
- Help you learn company culture and internal office gossip.
- Dismantles hierarchies.
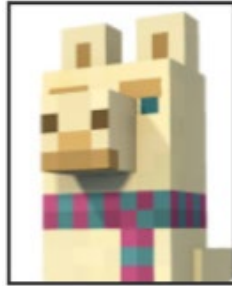

How do you get them to notice you?

- **Listen.**
- Board games!
- Dungeons & Dragons!
- Sports!
- Team Events!
- Internet friends!

Goal: Get noticed.

Mentor

Do you have a mentor?

"A mentor is extremely crucial for growth in the industry."

"Yeah, having a mentor has been super helpful - they taught me much of what I know, made me feel more confident in myself and my abilities, and have been the source of basically every opportunity I've gotten in game dev thus far."

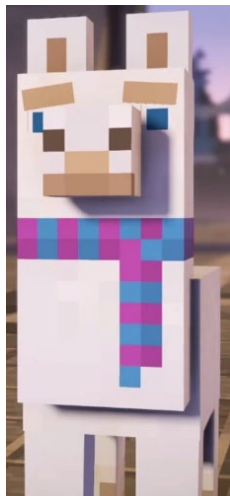"Yes, having a mentor has been incredible."

Mentors

How do you find mentors?

- Your manager
- The person you report to
- Co-workers
- Friends

Ask yourself

- Who is doing what I want to be doing?
- Who is one step up from where I am now?
- Has anyone made the move I want to make before?
- Who has time?

Go home on time.

How important is work-life balance for your job?

"It's pretty important."

"Very important."

"Huge. The most important thing."

In Summary

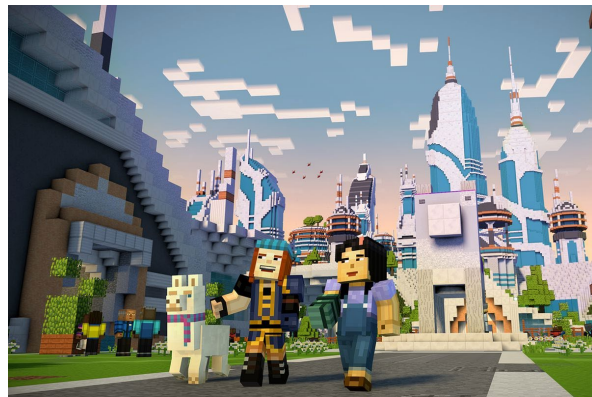- Your goal: get noticed.
  - By your manager, the person you report to, your co-workers, your friends, and potential mentors.
- Listen!
- Go home on time.

Thanks for listening!