

Project Planning

If you fail to plan, you're planning to fail

Game Development Foundations

Last modified 11/12/15 by Sam Cartwright

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What is Scope?

- ‘Scope’ is the part of project planning that involves determining and documenting a list of specific project goals, tasks, and deadlines
 - What do you want to make?
 - What are the features/levels/characters/etc you want?
 - How long do you have to make all of this?

Scoping Your Project

- At this stage you need to very clearly define:
 - The features and functions that characterize your game
 - The work that needs to be accomplished to deliver your game
- Scoping involves getting the information required to start your project
 - Who will make what? How long will it take?
- Most students underestimate the amount of work required to complete their game

Project Milestones

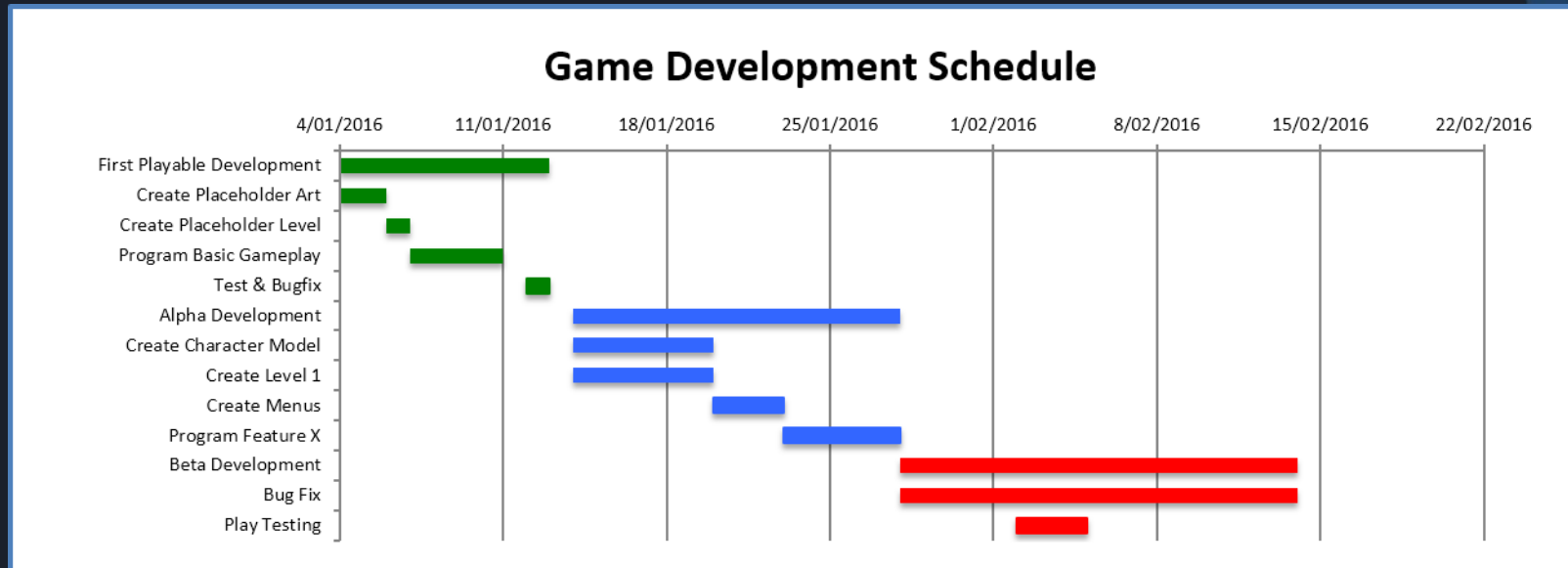
- Traditionally a milestone was “a stone marker set up on a roadside to indicate the distance from a given point”
- In game development milestones are specific (pre-negotiated) dates that tell us things should be done

Project Milestones

- First Playable Build
 - The least amount of work to get the major representative gameplay and assets *functional*
 - Often looks nothing like the final game
- Alpha Build
 - Key gameplay functionality implemented and assets partially finished
 - The Alpha build should be *feature complete* (that is, this build will contain all the major features of the final game)
- Beta Build
 - Feature and asset complete
 - The only thing left to do is fix all the bugs
- Gold Build
 - The final build of the game

Creating a Timeline

- A Gantt chart is useful for plotting tasks and durations



Creating a Timeline

- Your timeline should include the dates of all milestones
- It should show when major pieces of work will be started and finished
 - This is essential to track if you are on schedule
- It should show tasks for your whole team (not just your tasks)
- Some software will also let you show dependencies (tasks that can't be started until others are finished)

Working in Teams

- Working by yourself is easy... but:
 - There are limits to what you can achieve by yourself
 - You'll have no one to bounce ideas off
 - You might not plan your project because 'its all in your head'
 - Features might be implemented at random
 - It will be difficult to remain objective about your project

Working in Teams

- Working in teams is difficult... but:
 - Everyone can combine their skills
 - More can be developed in less time
 - Projects may actually get finished (...sometimes)
 - Projects require more planning and time management

Working in Teams

- Communication is **ESSENTIAL**
- Conflict does happen, but its important to remain professional (both when giving feedback, and receiving it)
- Missed deadlines will require others to wait until work is finished
 - Its important to take ownership of your tasks and ensure you don't let the group down
- Assigning responsibility is important

Owning and Assigning Responsibility

- It is important that group members assign responsibility for particular portions of the game.
- For example:
 - Bob is responsible for the Player code
 - Fred is responsible for the Enemy code
 - Ann will design the level

Owning and Assigning Responsibility

- Respect others' ownership of their tasks
 - If you need changes made that someone else is responsible for, don't take it upon yourself to take over
 - Check in or offer help
 - Their task should have a deadline (that everyone agreed on). Make sure they have the time they need to complete the task
- Be responsible for your tasks
 - Ensure you let the team know if you will be late delivering (they might be waiting on your component)
 - Ask for help if you are struggling to complete a task

Summary

- Summarise key points of the topic
 - Not a conclusion!
 - We haven't "concluded" the topic
 - If we had then we wouldn't ever discuss it again...

Further Reading

- Milestones and Glass Houses:
http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/131599/milestones_and_glass_houses.php