

Continuing Personal Development

COMP230 - CPD Report

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Introduction

In the past my career goal was to go into indie development, or create my own games company. Since applying for the game tech software engineering position at Rare, I have been more open to the idea of working for a larger games company in a field such as this one. Because of this, it is important that I engage in CPD in order to keep my skills up to date and competitive. The five key goals I have identified since September are as follows:

- Formalise programmer and designer intercommunication
- Avoid focusing on single modules
- Get the main gameplay elements into prototypes
- Expand my knowledge of the Unity game engine
- Diagnose and address the reason behind productivity slumps

1 Interpersonal - Formalise communication between programmers and designers

Over the course of the game project there has been miscommunication between programmers and designers. This resulted in a lack of clarity as to what needed to be done for the game. In order to solve this, I have already started implementing a system of written Google documents which can be commented on by both parties in order to request more information, or provide it. So far, I have only done this process with 2 out of 3 of the designers on the team. Taking this forward, during the first month of the game project next year I will work with the final designer within this system. After this, I will aid another programmer each week for the next 2 weeks with using the written document process. If this is successful, the team will have a document for all features explaining editable variables and additional information when the game is submitted.

2 Dispositional - Avoid focusing purely on a single module

I have noticed that I have a tendency to shift my focus to one module too much when the workload increases for it. This means that I have less variety when I am working, as well as less time to think about a task when I am not actively working on it. In order to mitigate this, every Sunday, I will write down a minimum of 2 hours worth of tasks to complete for each module so I can't spend all my time on just one of them. At the end of the week, I will be able to see if I have split my time appropriately to complete these tasks. This will also highlight other tasks that are required for every module, meaning that I won't be blindsided by working on a single task during the week.

3 Procedural - Get the main gameplay elements into prototypes

For the prototyping phase of my game project, it was unclear what the gameplay felt like, resulting in a overhaul of the game this year. Fortunately, this does also mean that I have a second chance to improve how I work during a prototyping phase. For these new prototypes I will write down 1 or 2 main player focused user stories which will reflect the most important gameplay aspects. The tasks will then be based around these user stories, so that my focus stays on programming the core of the game. My success will be determined by whether the user stories are fulfilled by the prototype. By doing this, it should be possible to prove that the final game will be fun to play.

4 Cognitive - Expand my knowledge of the Unity game engine

Before now, my prior experience with Unity was minimal. By using prior programming knowledge, and documentation, I was able to quickly complete tasks without spending a lot of time watching Unity specific tutorials. The downside to this is that I am restriction to learn new features of the engine, and missing out of more efficient methods in the long run. Once a week, when programming a new feature into a game, I will watch at least one tutorial on how I could implement it. I will make a note of any new functions or features of the game engine that are used in the tutorial, and read up on the documentation for them for at least 10 minutes afterwards. I aim to have 10 features or functions that I can use noted down by the end of the game project.

5 Affective - Diagnose and address the reason behind productivity slumps

I have noticed 2 main productivity slumps since September, without knowing the reason behind them. This is causing an inconsistency in my work without an obvious solution. Each Sunday, alongside my review of each module's work, I will reflect on whether or not I am satisfied with the amount of work I am doing. This will help identify when a slump occurs while it is happening. When I next find myself in a dip in productivity, I will write down at least 3 factors which I feel could be contributing to this decrease in work. I will then research how to alleviate, in the long run, one of the contributing factors each week, whilst noting down further possible reasons if it occurs again.

Conclusion

At the start of the game overhaul, during prototyping, I will write down 2 player focused user stories to ensure a valuable prototype which encapsulates the gameplay. Every Sunday I will write down 2 hours worth of tasks for each module which I need to complete, as well as reflecting on the previous week's tasks. Using this reflection, I will be able to figure out where I should be spending my time for the following week, and whether or not I am in a productivity slump. During the week, I will work on formalising designer and programmer intercommunication by introducing a new team member to my Google document process. Whilst working on the game, I will watch at least a tutorial per week for new game features, and make a note of new game engine features contained within the tutorial. These activities will help me achieve my career goal because it will keep me up to date with Unity features, improve how I work in a team, and help me keep motivated.