Comp230-1-Ethics Essay

1507680

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1   Introduction

"My belief is that crunch will always occur in our industry, but it's never something that should be relied on" said Obsidian Entertainment CEO[22] . Long hours is somewhat inevitable in the games industry, as a game draws to its final deadline it is a critical time for the employees to meet all their deadlines. This requires them to work longer hours and sometimes extra days, the term for this is crunch time.[12] [13] This overtime as such can last weeks and even months, meaning that some employees will be working up to 70 hours a week for this period.[14] In this report it will discuss not only how this crunch time period negatively affects work productivity and quality of the work, but also how crunch time can affect the mental state and well being of the employees with such problems as sickness, lack of sleep and personal relations.[10]

2   Seriousness of crunching

The reason that this case is important is that it affects so many in the games industry, in multiple sources you can see that many talented individuals are pushed away from this work due to the intensity of crunch time. "62 per cent of industry workers still consider crunch time to be an inescapable part of their careers." [20][14] a report released from international game developers association shows just how many people perceive this case as unacceptable in their careers. Kate Edwards, executive director, IGDA also feels that finding ways to counter the negative drawbacks of crunch time is key to improving conditions for overworked employees in the game industry.[2]

[8] A well known report written by Erin Hoffman who at the time had to keep anonymity, went by the name of Ea spouse. In this tragic story she talks about how her husband joined a AAA company known as Electronic arts, he was then quickly pushed into doing an extra work day a week known to him as a pre crunch so that the actual crunch wouldn't be so hard on the team. This rapidly changed into 9am to 10pm 7 days a week with no set deadline for it to stop, she goes on to tell us about how this affected the whole team "The team is rapidly beginning to introduce as many flaws as they are removing". The frightening thing about this case is that although everyone could see how these

long hours were negatively affecting not only the team but also the project, and all EA's response to this was if you don't like it then leave.

3 The effects of longer hours on health

Forcing employees to do horrendous hours with barely any personal time will ultimately cause them to perform worse physically and mentally. Researchers from RAND show that sleep is a driving factor in workplace productivity, employees who slept six hours or less were significantly less productive.[4]Crunching in the games industry would cause employees to edge to this number of hours of sleeps for weeks on end.

A popular study by urnal of Occupational Environmental Medicine called "Health and Productivity as a Business Strategy:A Multiemployer Study"[11][9] revealed that 70% of the costs of poor employee health can be related to health-related lost productivity, this means that the employee is losing productivity do to the fact of health problems and presenteeism. A women during crunch time lost 10% of her body weight,she was originally 99 lbs and 5 feet 4 inches already already classing her as underweight to then lose this much weight is dangerous short term but could have long term effects.[18]

4 The effects of longer hours on relations

[21] "This year is my first experience with long stretches of crunch, and my girlfriend, who I live with, feels like she hardly sees me," said one programmer at a leading games studio. Not only does crunching affect health it also can affect relations outside of work. Sam Watts at Tammeka Games also talks about how he lost a relationship at the start of his career because he was never out of the office.[3] [1] Work family balance is key to workplace and job satisfaction, there needs to be a line between the two.[19]

5 The effects of longer hours on productivity

Studies show that if employees work over 40 hours a week it takes as little as four days before work productivity starts to decline.[10] [16] In 1980 the business roundtable published Executive Summary of Scheduled Overtime Effect on Construction Projects, it explains how working over 60 a week for 2 months would cause the productivity to plummet and be detrimental to the project where as if they were to of stuck to 40 hours a week they would of progressed further within the same time frame.[17] [5]

Reducing workers hours by just 1 hour increases overall productivity [15] [17] . Work less institution of technology and the business round table both state this, simply working 8 hours instead of 9 improves productivity by 16% to 20%. Another point to add is the more hours one is given the more work the perceive they have to do so it acts as a vicious knock on effect.[7] "the balance

between work and personal life tends to be related to better physical and mental health."[6]

6 Conclusion

There is no doubt that crunch time can be effective, but this is all a matter of how many days/weeks it will be for. On multiple sources throughout you are able to see that the majority say and point to that more than 2 week of crunch will not only affect their ability to work productively, but also their error rates rise. In some cases people's bodies are unable to cope with the lack of sleep and increased stressed produced by the workload, that they become ill or in serious cases lose mass amounts of weight to a dangerous level. Will crunch time ever stop, probably not as it is an effective tool to hit deadlines but management will have to weigh out the consequences if it will become a long crunch time.

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