Year 3 Final Group Project

Group Reflection

BSc Virtual Reality and Games Design

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**Introduction**

Our goal for this project was to develop a 2D multiplayer party game infused with comical ragdoll physics, providing a light-hearted experience that friends can enjoy together. Now that we have finished the project and taken a moment to look back at the final outcome, we are confident that we have effectively captured the delightful mayhem and amusement we envisioned from the start. Notably, the combination of individual and group objectives introduces a captivating dynamic among players, amplifying the fun and engaging gameplay we aimed to achieve.

**Project Setup**

The project's development involved various elements implemented with varying degrees of success. An early crucial decision was adopting an agile Kanban approach for development. Ideas for characters, environments, and mechanics evolved continuously to align with the development flow. To facilitate the Kanban process, we used the website "ClickUp" as our platform. Tasks were added to different columns on the board to track progress and assign them to team members. This approach allowed for rapid changes and updates throughout development. It significantly improved our ability to oversee the project.

In addition to the agile methodology, we implemented individual role assignments for team members to clarify their responsibilities. This seamlessly integrated with the Kanban board, allowing tasks to be allocated based on roles. However, there were instances of uncertainty and communication issues within the team, impacting task management and immediate priorities. These challenges will be further explored in the reflection.

During the initial project week, our team engaged in collective ideation and utilized MS Whiteboard for efficient organization of concepts. We formulated an initial game design and made the decision to employ Ragdoll physics instead of Animated Sprite-based characters, which eased development and reduced workload. To facilitate smooth code development, we implemented best practices, including UML diagrams, coding guidelines, and well-documented code. We also scheduled regular coding review meetings and debug sessions to identify and resolve bugs early on, fostering a collaborative environment for problem-solving.

**Team Synergy**

Throughout the project our team has shown an effective level of teamwork. Our collaborative energy was excellent, and it allowed us to develop an effective game and site even during times that we became time crunched. That Being said, we did sometimes have flaws when it came to our communication which delayed the production of certain parts of the project such as social media posts and documentation early on. Despite this, at our most critical points such as programming, artwork implementation and our presentation, we showed a high level of synergy which made it possible to get the level of quality we have now.

**Technical Reflection**

The developers communicated regularly, allowing us to stay on top of tasks and project status. Our close collaboration facilitated the agile methodology and enabled rapid development and testing. This resulted in a high-quality, relatively bug-free product. Adhering to industry best practices, we created a well-documented code base and utilized UML diagrams to aid understanding. Although we sometimes spent unnecessary time on refactoring and seeking better solutions, we delivered the game on time.

One core section of the game was its artwork. The artwork pushed the game from good to great by having strong outlines and a distinctive art style and a 4-layer structure which consisted of background, midground, foreground and interactable assets. One small problem did occur with the artwork which was lack of manpower. There could have been more artwork made if there were more people working on it or a clearer definition of what artwork we wanted created at the start.

Our goal for the project was to have randomly selected levels, providing a fresh experience with each game. We were only able to complete 2 levels and an open lobby area but the levels created effectively showcase all the game has to offer. We have also created powerful tools that allow us to easily and quickly develop new levels. These tools include scripts for environment creation, adding items, and creating diverse objectives. The code is modular and loosely coupled, making it straightforward to create new variations.

The networking implementation in our game presented numerous challenges, but ultimately proved to be a highly rewarding process, leading to significant improvements to the overall result of the game. By adopting a true client-server networking architecture, our game enables players from around the world to connect and play together over the internet, eliminating the need for them to be on the same computer or local network.

However, it's important to acknowledge that developing networked games involves a distinct design approach compared to traditional games. This design approach was mainly in the form of network architecture diagrams to plan out the flow of information between the server and the clients. Of course, without client prediction, it is impossible to remove input lag, but we believe that we have created the best possible result with the least amount of compromise on the quality of the gameplay.

**Marketing Reflection**

Quite a bit of time was spent researching what goes into a Marketing Strategy. The results of said research provided a lot of valuable information around the advertising potential of different platforms, so this was worth-while, but somewhat confusing at times. A lot of the time consumed was sifting through data, checking its validity, and creating a comprehensive guide to demographics across the target platforms. Posting content to these platforms seemed to engage with our followers more on certain platforms over others. The Reddit page for example, saw little to no interest. The Instagram page, however, has gained a small following of people who are interested in the project and how it has progressed.

It may have been useful to have posted more on these platforms, however, the priority was always to post quality over quantity. There was always some kind of content to post weekly, but it was not always possible to request custom content from the team members to promote the game for each platform. This was due to the teams already high workload and that this didn’t seem as much of a priority as other tasks that were necessary to deliver the game. It was important to keep in mind that each platform has an ‘ideal’ sort of content and knowing this, content was picked carefully to upload on each platform individually, rather than posting the same content across all platforms. One thing that may have been useful was to specify the exact target demographic, rather than study the overlap of these groups, in order to maximise our reach.

Although we have identified these weaknesses, the game still achieved a fair number of views and downloads from the Itch.io site, with a number of players leaving some constructive and positive comments.

**Pitch Reflection**

The team worked well to prepare the slides for the pitch, and this was aided by the fact that we had spent some considerable time on keeping a comprehensive Concept Design document and had planned specifically to use this detail in creating the pitch deck. As most of the information was already available, time was well spent in creating a high-quality presentation template which closely matches the games aesthetic and art style. The overall look and feel of the presentation are very akin to the game and is something that the team is proud of. The attention to detail in matching the game art to the presentation appeared to also help in acclimatizing the audience to the game before the play session.

We opted to keep to Guy Kawasaki's 10/20/30 approach, although we consciously treated the 10 slides more like 10 sections to allow for the level of detail we wanted to present.

The team allocated the workload of the presentation preparation well and although it was not all completed by the planned date, due to required closing of other tasks, it was still in time to allow practice before the pitch event.

The team opted to have a live gameplay during the pitch, to allow the investors to get hands-on with the game. The setup for this was tested a few days ahead of the pitch event, and again directly before. This level of scrutiny led to a successful play test with no issues, with everyone appearing to enjoy playing.

Overall, the event was a success, with all team members presenting their slides confidently and synchronised with each other, resulting in an engaged, interested and participating audience.

**Summary**

This project has resulted in a high-quality product in which the team constantly challenged themselves and held themselves accountable to a high standard. As the team’s ambition was high, so was the workload, and this sometimes had a detrimental effect on the communication and prioritization of the marketing activities. Despite the challenges, the final project was completed timely and to a high level of quality - something that all the team members can be proud of.