

CPD

COMP 240

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Introduction

In this paper I will discuss five key skills, taken from my continuing professional development weekly report that I need to improve on to succeed on my course. Also by using SMART targets as a guide, I will first state the skill, and why it is important to increase my ability, not just for my course, but in terms of my future career as well. Secondly how I plan to improve that skill and how long I expect it to take me to reach my goals.

Stop Stressing over Uncontrollable Situations

During the autumn term I was getting incredibly frustrated about the lack of work and attendance from the non - programmers in my group game team. After numerous failed attempts at getting them into the studio to work, it only resulted in increasing my frustration. I think the best way to proceed is to just concentrate on the games programming, make sure it's the best it can be and just keep telling them to come it more at PO meetings. I will start this at the beginning of the spring term. I will measure the success of the games programming by being able to build a bug free game every Friday. This will be good for my future as we cannot pick our co - workers and in the future I may come across similar people and I just have to concentrate on my own work. Hopefully I bring up attendance in the PO meetings often enough my team mates will take notice of my comments and change as well. If this is achieved my stress levels should go down making the coming into the studio a more enjoyable place. Which in return should boost my concentration and therefore my grades as well.

Communication with the Group Game Team

As a programmer I play the group game five out of seven days a week. Therefore I always know what state the game is in. Where as other members of my group especially those that don't work in engine rarely play the game. My idea is to make every Friday in the studio play testing day. This will be for people in the team and for others in the

studio as well. Even if they don't play the game themselves they will see others play and hear their feedback. The feedback can then be put onto slack and put on the physical board for everyone to read. I can start this on the first Friday of the spring term. The success of this will be measured by how many game ideas of solutions are put forward by the team members, which at the moment is one a fortnight. If game ideas/ solutions by group members shows any increase the quality of the game. It is important to have good quality games that I can show on my portfolio to potential employers which could help me stand out from other applicants.

Assignment Prioritizing

During the autumn term I would concentrate on the first assignment due in. This method becomes a problem when there is an assignment due in a week after another. This means the first assignment will be worked on for a month or more but the second would only get a week of work. If the first assignment is worth less marks than the second it could mean that I lose out on easy marks. My plan for future assignments is to first look on the learning space at the percentage it is worth in the module and decide how much time to spend on it. Especially if there are two assignment due around the same time. I will start prioritizing assignments based on their percentage of module grade at the start of the spring term for the three new modules. I think this will help with my time management skills during the course and professionally it will help me learn to prioritize the more important programming tasks over the order in which they are received. This would be especially useful for choosing which debugging task to concentrate on.

Learning Behaviour Trees

I have been programming the AI NPC enemies in my group games for the past three years but I've never used a behaviour tree to do so. I know that some professional AAA studios still use them even though they are a bit outdated. I have one AI NPC enemy still left to programme for my group game. It has incredibly simple behaviour which would make it easier for me to learn how to use behaviour trees. This task will be easy to measure as I will know if I have completed it if the AI behaves correctly. Learning behaviour trees through the group game means I don't have to set aside time away from my usual everyday work and I can begin this task as soon as I get back into the studio and shouldn't take longer than a day to complete. As many studios still use behaviour trees to programme AI NPC behaviour this will look good on my portfolio. I'm also planning to do a masters degree in AI for NPCs so this should hopefully put me ahead for the course and give me more on the time on the difficult tasks if I already have this knowledge.

Cleaning Code/ Blueprints

I found myself at the end of the autumn term spending a whole day getting rid of magic numbers, creating variables and commenting code. Even after the day was over I hadn't made much of a dent in the cleaning that could have been done. I couldn't have spent much longer on it as I had so much other work to do before handing in a build of the game. If I had cleaned the code as I was creating it I wouldn't have to waste so much time at the end rushing through the code. When I get back to the studio after the Christmas break I will spend a week going through the games blueprints cleaning them, and from then on clean as I go along. I will know if I have achieved this at the end of the spring term if I don't have to go through and clean blueprints I made more than a few days ago. I will apply this to every bit of coding I have created even if it isn't in the group game. This is important for my educational career as I could lose out on easy marks. Also in a professional setting working in a team it's important to make my programming as readable as possible.

Conclusion

All the targets I have mentioned above are easily achieved and can be started either straight away as the spring term begins. If I complete the tasks involving learning behaviour trees and cleaning code/ blueprints I will become a more competent programmer. Assignment prioritization and cleaning code will raise the grades I achieve in each module. Increased communication and reducing unnecessary stress will raise my overall mood and health which should have a positive effect on my work flow.