**Thoughts on an Artist Pool**

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**Basic concept**

The Artist Pool idea is a small group of artists who wouldn’t be dedicated to a single project.  This team would be a resource that could drop in on projects as they require more people, either during the concept phase or during a big production push, and then move on to something else when that task has been completed.  They would also be available to jump in on a live project when they have a new/special feature and don’t have the extra resources to make it happen.  There could also be some company-wide tasks the team could take on like creating a single art pipeline for the company.

**Pros**

-Support projects when they need a larger team from Production Phase to finished game

-Be a landing place for artists if a game shuts down… or at least a holding place until a new project gears up and needs a full-time team

-A good place for resources that aren’t required full time on any one team (such as FX, Animation)

-Perhaps a home for a small concept team which could be loaned out to new projects before they hire their own staff (up to the Pre-Production phase of the Stage Gate Process)

-Lower need for Outsourcing

-Provide flexibility for teams to generate special features outside of the regular production manpower level

-Potential home for a tech artist(s) to standardize the art pipeline/tools for projects company-wide

-Greater sharing of tribal knowledge

-Provide some artists with a greater variety of tasks to avoid burn out

-Art resource for that may not be able to support a full time artist

-Could act as a resource for Marketing assets

**Cons**

-Potential time lost in training up Pool team members on each project they help because of frequent moves from one project to the next.

-Potential for the work needed from projects to be uneven… sometimes greater than what the Pool could accommodate, sometimes not enough work to keep the team occupied.

-Management challenge to keep the team’s effort orderly and meet the needs of all project requests

-Would require artists who are able/comfortable working on a variety of projects and in a variety of styles.

**Other thoughts**

To my mind, the floating FX part of this makes the most sense.  We only have one person at the company doing this now and I suspect that we won’t be hiring another any time soon.  Making that skill available to all teams is a big win.

Animation is a resource that is also needed in a lot of teams, but may not be required full time on every team.  Having a floating animator could be a more efficient way of using that resource.  I suspect the same may be true of Tech Art.

A floating concept team also makes a lot of sense to me… I think we will have new game ideas being worked on for the foreseeable future.  I don’t know that it makes sense for each of those projects to have a concept artist or two join their team for a couple of months and then potentially get a red light before going into Pre-Production.  A floating concept team would give us more flexibility to pursue a lot of different ideas in the concept phase in a short period of time and potentially make 'failing fast' less painful.

**First Steps**

First the Art Leads should discuss if this is a good idea:

-Would they be able to fit these floating resources into their work flow?

-We know that at least some of the projects who have taken on extra artists from cancelled projects have more people than they need on their art teams… do we think this would be a better way to use these extra resources?

-Do we think we could find artists who would like to work this way, to not have the comfort of being attached to a single project?

-Can we measure how likely it is that live projects would come up with new features for this team to work on?  Are there feature ideas on these projects that are blocked just because of a lack of artists to make it happen, or would they need designers and devs as well to make this a reality?

-It’s probably not reasonable to expect floating team members to be able to implement new art assets into games… would the existing game teams have the time and energy to integrate these new assets into their products?

An additional thought... the Floating Team idea could be helpful in giving artists a place to grow their skills outside of what they do on their regular project.  For example, if a Personal Development Plan is asking an artist who normally if focused on environments to practice creating characters, joining the Art Pool for a period of time could give that artist a temporary place to work on this skill and then rejoin their team when done.

This could also be a way for an artist who is getting burn out working on the same sorts of tasks for several years to get some variety in their routine.  Because our art teams tend to be pretty isolated from each other, this would have the additional benefit of sharing knowledge and skills with other art teams.