**Career Model Thoughts**

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* What are your goals for an improved Career Model?

-To make it a more useful tool in assessing team members

-To give clarity to what team members need to advance their careers

-To remove the expectation that this document will lead to a ‘ranking’ of artists

-Example: Reg who scores well on soft skills but needs more tech knowledge vs. technically knowledgeable artist who keeps to himself and doesn’t contribute to team effort. Who ranks ‘higher’?

* What kind of weaknesses you see in the current Career Model

-It focuses too much on technical knowledge and not enough on soft skills.

-Expectation that this is a tool that leads to a ‘ranking’

* Does the current career model help you in your appraisals?

Star Levels don’t have any specific requirements attached to them and are therefore unevenly applied across the company. I’m not advocating that we add requirements to them… I don’t think we can achieve that sort of granularity.

Also, the current Star Levels that artists enjoy probably wouldn’t align with any ranking we would come up with. I’m just saying that the Star Levels are an inaccurate tool that may create frustration rather than clarity.

In the past I’ve tried to use the Career Model to give an artist some guidance on what they needed to do to be promoted. I found that the it focuses too much on technical knowledge and not enough on soft skills. I really needed to dig in it to find support for the qualities that I think are really valuable in an artist. I would recommend streamlining the technical topics in the Artist Career Model and provide more guidance on things like:

-Team commitment

-Looking for ways to help out other portions of the art team

-Contribution to ideas/concepting (not just for concept artists)

-Communication

-With team

-With manager

-With other teams and company as a whole

-Listening

-Mentoring

-Knowledge sharing

-Dedication to project

-Plays game

-Thinks beyond art topics… to game design, dev, production/schedules

These soft skills are harder to quantify, but in most cases are more important to an artist’s effectiveness than the depth of their technical prowess.

* What specific skills does the following artists need to become Regular, Senior and Expert in your perspective?

We should make it clear to all artists that to move from one level to the next means that they exhibit the qualities of the **next** level. For example, a Reg. needs to be acting like a Senior **before** they are able to move up to that level.

**Jr.-**

Should be new to the game industry. Should have some skills in their field and be able to perform rudimentary tasks of the job. Should be integrated into the team (a result of effort from both the Jr. and the Lead). There ought to be an expectation that a Jr. will be spending some time learning how to become a Reg. The company should expect that some of the Jr.’s time will be spent improving soft and tech skills and that Seniors and Experts will be spending some of their time preparing Jr. artists to become a Reg. Takes direction well.

**Reg-**

Should have at least 2 years under their belt. Should be able to perform all the routine functions of the job. Should not only be integrated into the team but also actively looking to help others when in need. Also, should be contributing to discussion of concept, game design, pipeline, etc. Should be able to work with a high level of independence and know when to consult others both inside and outside the art team for information/assistance. Reg. should be setting the example to Juniors for best practices. Should have more than a passing familiarity with competing games.

**Senior-**

Should have at least 3 years in the industry. Should perform routine functions and produce work of exceptional quality. Also, they possess a willingness to take ownership of large tasks. Should be able to work in an organized, methodical manner and be fully versed in the pipeline and practices of the team. Should be willing and able to provide mentoring/direction to others. Should be comfortable leading discussions both inside the art team and with other disciplines on a variety of game topics. Should be knowledgeable about competing games.

**Expert-**

Should have at least 6 years in the field. This should be the expected next level beyond Senior rather than a specific role to be created and filled by the company. An Expert is looked at in the company as an actual expert in the field, someone who’s knowledge base is the head of the class not only at the company but in the industry. This person needs to be looking for opportunities to share their knowledge across the company. This person should be a resource who is available to all teams at the company for advice and effort. It may make sense to make this person part of a core art team so that they are available for consultation with the entire company.

* + Concept Art

Jr.- Draws well and has a good imagination. Listens and takes instructions well.

Reg.- Is comfortable brainstorming with others and working with ideas from everyone on the team. Brings flare and inspiration to the project. Familiar with look and feel of competing games. Willingness to take on tasks outside of concept when needed (UI/icon creation, textures, marketing materials, etc.)

Senior- Leads brainstorming discussions. Willingness to contribute to ideas well beyond the confines of art without prompting (story, game design, implementation). Takes ownership of look and feel of the game. Documents ideas in Style Guide and other docs. Can work in a variety of styles and genres.

Expert- Consults on ideas and aesthetics on all games at the company. Deep knowledge of a variety of art, pop culture, graphic design, games, etc.

* + 3D

Jr.- Basic understanding on how to make 3D assets. Has skills and talent, but knowledge of how to make low poly game assets not necessary.

Reg- Good skills making quality assets that require little iteration because deviation from game style or concept art. Understands pipeline and works well with tech art to implement assets. Suggests modifications to art to improve quality or performance. Plays game regularly to check assets in-game.

Senior- Deep knowledge of pipeline and process. Works as a partner with tech art looking for ways to improve quality of game and performance. Integrated member of the team beyond art. Willing to track down others for information on characters and environments.

Expert- Deep and up-to-date knowledge of 3D tools and techniques beyond games. Shares discoveries and knowledge with other 3D artists. Looks at the work other teams are producing for feedback, both aesthetic and technical.

* + UI/UX

Jr.-Rudimentary knowledge of how to put design a UX wireframe. Some graphic design skill. Some Unity implementation ability.

Reg.- Can design a fully formed UX wireframe without a lot of instruction. Can produce all required UI assets… design elements like boxes and frames as well as icons, button interactions, etc. Some facility with typography. Can implement most any UI element in Unity.

Senior- Can create a smooth, robust UI/UX experience. Has a refined UX sensibility and is mindful of monetization concerns. Knowledgeable about typography. Creates movement from game to metagame and back again seamlessly.

Expert- Integrates graphic design, interactivity and responsiveness to create a rich, frictionless experience. Deep knowledge about the subject both inside and outside games, which a focus on mobile UX that they can call upon. Can play a game and quickly determine and articulate steps to improve navigation, arrangement of UI elements and add interactions/animations to make a more engaging experience. Someone of this level should have time carved out of their schedule to work with all teams at the company.

* + Animation

Jr.-Shows skill and promise but requires careful feedback.

Reg.- Produces lively animation that’s full of character and fits the timing requirements of the game. Works well with tech art to insure that rigs work well for animation and for the limitations of the game.

Senior- Works with game design to collaboratively create animation sets that are unique and are greater than if the animator just received a list from game design. Shares tools and tips with other animators at the company. Gives feedback on models and rigs to facilitate quality animation and good-looking deformation of meshes.

Expert- Film quality results. Provides critique to other animators to raise the level of animation at the company.

* + FX

Jr.- Has a basic understanding of how to produce FX in Unity.

Reg.- Can produce the standard sorts of FX needed for games, both for characters/vehicles and for UI.

Senior- Demonstrates a flare for creating colorful, engaging FX for a variety of situations: battle, environmental, UI, etc. Works closely with Devs to insure that FX will work well with the engine and the other limits of the game. Works closely with the animator to coordinate efforts.

Expert- Can write some shader code. Shares his tools and techniques with others at the company. Creates FX of exceptional quality that rivals the best FX of mobile games. If we don’t plan on getting more FX artists, it may be necessary to detach this person from a single team and share this resource across the company.

* + Tech Art

Jr.-

Reg.- Can provide all the support to the art team required to ship a game. This includes rigging/skinning, exporting assets, implementing existing shaders, coordinating efforts with Devs. Interfacing with artists to insure that models and other assets are being made to spec.

Senior- Applies personal aesthetic sensibilities to inspire ideas on how to enhance games then uses their technical acumen to generate the effect in-game. Goes beyond having the knowledge needed to ship a game

Expert- Possesses industry-level expertise in the field. This person should be generous with this knowledge and room should be made in their schedule to work with all teams at the company… or ideally be part of a core team that is providing skills and tools to the entire company.