BAFTA Games Lecture: Jade Raymond
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Keith Stuart: Welcome to tonight's BAFTA Lecture, which is part of BAFTA's yearlong programme of learning events. My name's Keith Stuart, I am the Games Editor at the Guardian newspaper where I have spent most of today watching the news and crying. But before we start I'd just like to say, if you could, if you've got a mobile phone on you, if you could switch it off or put it to silent, that would be really good. After the lecture we're going to have like a Q&A session and it's all about you guys, so during the lecture if you could think of some questions, start planning those now so that you're all ready for your hands to kind of shoot up when we get onto it.

Tonight we're extremely fortunate to welcome a games industry veteran who has worked on some of the biggest titles of the last 20 years. After leaving McGill University in Montreal with a degree in computer science, our speaker secured her first industry role as a coder at Sony Online Entertainment, during the really, really early years of massively multiplayer online games. She then moved to Electronic Arts, working on *The Sims* franchise, before leaving to join an ambitious virtual world start-up with Silicon Valley entrepreneur Will Harvey.

In 2004 she joined Ubisoft, becoming producer on *Assassin's Creed*, one of the publisher's most ambitious and innovative titles. It would become a major hit of the modern era, selling over 75 million copies so far for the entire series. At the time she told Eurogamer something which I think kind of sums up her career so far, she said: "Whenever you see a big success it's because someone took a big risk. I'm pushing our creative teams to think about meaning and to say something deeper."

Six years later she was tasked with setting up the publisher's Toronto studio, hiring over 300 staff and taking on a range of projects including the latest *Splinter Cell* adventure. Our speaker left Ubisoft last October to embark on a mystery project, and I don't think she's allowed to talk about that today, but I have got my voice recorder with me just in case. So please will you give a warm welcome to Jade Raymond.

[Applause]

Jade Raymond: Wow, what a great audience, thank you for that welcome. I'm so thrilled to be here, to have been invited by BAFTA is a great honour to give this lecture. From what I understand I'm the first woman to give the annual lecture series, so that's also quite an honour.

[Cheers & Applause]

No pressure, no pressure. Thank you Keith for that fantastic intro, and I'm really happy to be here. I wanted to also share a little bit of info about myself that might not have already been shared. I might be one of your long lost cousins, potentially, of someone in here. My grandfather has a British passport, but he was born on a sheep farm in rural Australia, and somehow he does lay claim though to a castle somewhere up north in Norfolk. And how he went from a castle in England to a sheep farm in Australia is still somewhat of a mystery to me and it'll have to remain a story for another time.

Today, what I want to talk to you about is managing creativity, what the games industry can learn from the games industry. So as game developers we really are experts at engaging the players. We know how to peak a player's interest and keep them coming back for more as long as possible. We know how to tune the difficulty level just perfectly to keep challenge at the right spot. We know how to get players to collaborate by designing systems that encourage them to do so. We know how to balance classes so that people form collaborative teams with complementary skill sets, and we even know how to build communities that are passionate about our games. And the thing that I wonder is why we don't apply all of these tools that we use to engage players to better engage our own creative talent.

If you look at the most recent IGDA game developer survey you see some shocking facts that have surfaced. One of them is that in the last five years the average game developer has switched companies four times, so that means that people are switching jobs around,

or switching companies actually more importantly, about once every year. And then on top of this sort of movement from company to the next, we're also losing some of our best talent, and the reasons for people leaving the industry are quite shocking. You see that people are leaving for a better quality of life, a better work-life balance, they're leaving because they're burnt out, or they're just leaving because you can actually get better pay and hours in other industries. I think this is appalling, don't you?

So I want to use my time here with you today to talk a little bit about how I think we can address this and fix this, and I actually think that some of the best tools for addressing these issues are actually in our own tool box, and they're the things that we as game developers actually know best how to do. So this is a talk, even though the stats that I just showed you are from the most recent game developer survey, it's a talk that I've actually been wanting to give for many years now because this is an issue that we've had in the game industry for quite a while. And every year when it comes to be around evaluation time and I meet with many developers that I get the chance to work with, I always get the question of, you know, "Why am I still at this level?," or, "What can I do to progress in my career? How can I get to the next level? How can I get a promotion?," and this is a very common question.

But there's one developer in particular that really had me scratching my head. She is an incredibly talented woman who I was very happy to have on the team. She was a key person who had worked on several games, had a wealth of experience, and we absolutely could not lose her on the team. And she came to me and said that she was considering quitting the company and potentially the game industry in general. She'd received salary increases every year, but she had been stuck at the same seniority level for over ten years. And she, you know, rightly so wanted to have her seniority and level of experience reflected in her you know official seniority level in the company and title, rather than just in her pay increases. And you know basically what we had was, the

issue was the company only had a handful of seniority levels, and so in order to reach the top two you had to demonstrate an impact studio-wide, or demonstrate an impact company-wide.

But the truth is that you can be a key person and you can be progressing, and still really just have an impact on your project or on your own team or as a very, very talented individual contributor. So it just made me think, for game companies it's vital to keep this talent because it directly relates to the quality of the games we're able to make. And you know when you find those talented people you want to make sure they're happy and motivated and stay in your company for a lifetime. And if you were designing an MMO where your goal was to have people stay in the MMO and play it for a lifetime, would you ever make an MMO with five or six levels? I don't think so. So that's when I kind of realised that all of these things, that there are many parallels with things that we know as game developers and game creators that we just don't apply to motivating our own teams.

There's a book that I read recently called *Creativity, Inc.*, it's about the development process that's used at Pixar, and for those of you who are interested in management topics I really highly recommend this one. Even though there's quite a difference between developing an animated feature film and developing a video game, the iterative process they use at Pixar is quite relevant to the game industry, and I think you'll agree that the level of quality that they're able to reach time and time again on their productions is really quite inspiring. And if you read this book written by Ed Catmull who's one of the founders you'll see that a lot of it ties back to really having a good approach to management and motivating and managing creative teams.

So he has this quote here that I rather like, and it is, "If you give a good idea to a mediocre team they will screw it up. If you give a mediocre idea to a brilliant team, they will either fix it or throw it away and come up with something better." So this is a point that I really, really agree with, and it's interesting

because every time I come to make a talk like this or have a chance to meet new people, a question that comes up all the time, or people want to pitch their idea, and people want to know how they get their idea made into a game. And I guess I don't want to sort of disappoint people or crush their ambition or their dream idea that they want to turn into a game, but I've had the opportunity to work with you know thousands of very talented people in the game industry, and all of them have an idea that they want to make. And most of those ideas when I hear them, including the ones that are pitched are good ideas and could make a great game, and the reality is is that we're not lacking great ideas in the video game industry, what we're lacking is great talented teams that can have a shared vision and bring those ideas to life. Because the tough bit is all the hard work between the idea and the actual product.

And so in line with this there's kind of this quote from Stephen King which could look contradictory to the other one, but I actually think goes quite well with it. "Talent is cheaper than table salt, what separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work." So I think you get the truth when you…

[Puts up a slide of the 'success baby' meme]

Success baby is so awesome. So yeah, you get the truth I think when you combine these two quotes together. I mean a great idea is important and it can really launch a success. You also need the talented individuals to actually make that idea into a great product. And you know you need the motivation behind that because even a team that is talented and experienced and has a great idea; if they don't feel supported in their roles, if they don't feel challenged any more because they're doing something that they've already done, if they feel for some reason that they're not respected or you know they don't believe in the project that they're on, all of those things can mean that the best, most talented people can become disengaged and complacent.

And so I want to talk about how we can make sure that not only are we stopping the sort of hemorrhaging that's happening in the game industry over the best talent or the burnouts, and all of the other basic things that we have to address, but that we're actually you know making sure that we're living by our own rules to make sure that our teams have the best conditions to thrive and create their best work. And I really do believe that you can't have an inspired game without an inspired team. A really great game happens when everyone is so motivated that they add their special touch. And kind of what I want to underline is that even the team with the flattest hierarchy, or even the smallest company that has you know no official HR rules or very little process, there's still a system at work that's creating a rule set that dictates how people behave and what the expected behaviour is, what gets rewarded. All of those things, even if they're not officially written anywhere do exist, and I think it's important for us to be conscious of them, pay attention to them, and make sure that the rules that exist in the workplace, or in the team environment do reflect the actual objectives that you have.

So I talked a little bit about seniority levels, another basic thing that exists in video games, or actually is at the core of game design, is reward systems at large. So rewards, you know assuming that you have a game that has activities that players enjoy and is fun to play, a lot of what dictates how long a player will stay in a game, how much fun they're having, when they decide to quit, has to do with a reward system and how it's set up. And I think that a lot of those, you know even though I guess monetary rewards have become sort of unpopular or are considered less important these days, the truth is that people are very good at optimising the best path to success and rewards, and so we do have to pay attention to how they're divided up in the real world and in games.

So for example, the most fun thing to do in *Destiny* is probably not to sit around and camp a loot cave, but because this is the easiest way to advance and get you know, get your XP and your points

and everything, that's what people do. And it's, for example in *Assassin's Creed*, we decided to put feathers all around the world and give an achievement for collecting the feathers, and our logic was that artists had spent many hours recreating these historical cities and we wanted people to see them. If you ask me, collecting feathers is actually quite boring, but you know we put a reward associated with it and people did do it.

And so the same is true in the workplace. So as I was saying, I think you know the monetary rewards and bonuses and things like that have fallen out of favour, and people say what people really care about is recognition these days, that's the most important reward. And I do agree with that, you know I think if someone is miserable in their job and you throw a bit more money at them, they're not going to stay in their miserable job, however, salary and benefits still does remain the number one reason why people select on job over another. And if you think of bonuses, it really is a combination of a monetary reward with recognition, as long as they're merit-based bonuses. So it really does have a powerful impact of combining the two.

So here's another instance where I was having some discussions with executives who were you know scratching their heads wondering, "Well, you know we've stated in the company values that collaboration is really important to us, and at our all hands yearly meeting we said, you know for us to succeed moving forward we need to combine efforts, we need to collaborate across game teams, and you know we've made this message clear. Why is it that we're not seeing more collaboration across the game teams? Why is it that all of these game teams are working in a silo, not sharing their technology, not exchanging their you know, lending their code or their best practices?" And it turns out that the bonuses were 100 percent based on the success of your game team, so ultimately as much as you wanted to say that collaboration is a goal and that we've said it many times, the reward system and the merit-based bonuses were not in line with that.

And if you look at video games, there are a lot of good examples of how we have lined up rewards with the objective. So for example is games like *Dota 2* there were incentives for veteran players to recruit new players by giving XP bonuses and things like that for playing with newbies. In games like *Quake Wars* for example, there are also XP bonuses that you get for doing things that help the team, which encourage teamwork. So I think it would be logical that if you want more collaboration across teams, some portion of the bonus should be dedicated to you know, tied to the studio for example across all game teams, or tied to the success of the company.

And similarly I think you know I've had discussions with other people that they were saying they're repositioning the company to focus more on creativity, and that they wanted the company to take more creative risks and innovate more. But if you looked at the bonus structure it was still 100 percent tied to the profitability of the games, so I think that's another case where you know if you truly want people to be optimising for innovation and talking risks, they won't necessarily make those decisions or optimise for that if their bonus is tied to purely the profitability of their game. They're probably also going to take the safer route and make sure that they do the tried and true things.

So another topic that is popular these days in management books is meaning, and the importance of having meaning for your company and a company purpose, and I think you know the same is true for video games. I have spoken about this before but I do really believe you know people are spending 60 hours or more in our games these days, it's really a large portion of their time in any one game and fans are spending a ton of time both playing the games, watching the games, involved in the games, and I think it's really a shame if we squander our opportunity to impact people with more meaningful message that we have.

So I worked on *The Sims*, and I don't think it was necessarily Will Wright's intention to make a statement about capitalism, but

I got this graph that was done by one of the game designers who worked on *The Sims* and many other projects there, and he made it to illustrate the core gameplay loop of *The Sims*. And it's basically you know, use objects to become more efficient and do well at your job to make more money to buy better objects and so forth. And I think it does make an interesting statement about the materialistic rat race that we're caught in. And I think you know what's interesting about that is there's no narrative about that you know capitalism or the rat race or you know what it does to someone, it's engrained in the game system.

And similarly there was a fantastic interview with Miyamoto in The Telegraph, if you haven't checked it out you definitely should, but he talks a bit about his intentions when he created *Pikmin*, and how he designed death in the game to kind of show that you know after death there's always more life afterwards that follows quickly after. And I think it's important to note that in video games we have the ability to lead people to an epiphany and come to conclusions in a way that other mediums don't, because on top of the narrative we also have the game systems that can reinforce meaning and value. Now whether it's the death system like this, whether it's the core gameplay loop, and we can really make a statement.

And I want to clarify in this talk, because you might see that I'm making parallels between game design and kind of structuring company best practices or corporate policy, and I really want to point out that I'm not advocating gamification or the workplace, I do think that would be a terrible idea. You know as game developers we do understand how to motivate players, and you know you don't necessarily want to use an understanding of behavioural psychology to get certain behaviour out of people that you work with, but I do want to point out that these systems whether we like them or not do exist at work, and we have an opportunity to just make sure that the ones that we have in place reflect what we actually want.

And in terms of this concept of meaning, I mean I'm not just talking about you know meaning being important in your company because it's trendy with millennials these days and they'll want to work for your company because you have you know some cause. But really because I believe when you have meaning in your game the player will take away more, you can actually enrich people's lives, not just entertain them. And similarly, in a company when you have a purpose and you stand for something, you actually will have people feeling more fulfilled and more engaged, and therefore you know your games will be better, and you know the profit gnomes will be happy as well.

So another aspect of game design that I want to talk about is tutorials, and also their workplace counterpart, which is onboarding and training. And this is something that I've thought quite a bit about in recent years because at Ubisoft Toronto we ramped up 300 people in under three years, so there were a lot of new people joining the team and the importance of this was huge, and it's something that I spent a lot of time thinking about. Now on *Assassin's Creed* we actually made a terrible tutorial. For those of you who played it and remember the first one we just pretty much did all of the things you're not supposed to do in a single tutorial. So we made a very long tutorial with all of the things you needed to know jam-packed, we taught the things out of context, and we also, since we put it in the Animus room, we postponed the promise of actually getting to feel like a badass assassin till quite a bit later.

And I think *Blood Dragon* did a good example of poking fun at the type of tutorial that we made. And you know, but there are quite a few games that have done tutorials well. *Call of Duty* I think consistently does you know very sort of seamless, contextual tutorials with you know without breaking the immersion. A recent example that was good, I thought the beginning of the game in *The Last of Us* was great, you didn't even really as if there was a tutorial, just hooked you right away emotionally. One of my favourite examples, though, is the approach that

they took in *City of Heroes* to the sidekick mechanic. So in this case there was, instead of you know a very, you know a tutorial at all, basically they incentivised people to recruit their buddies and teach them you know how to play the game and stuff like that.

And at Ubisoft Toronto actually we ended up in a situation after the first year where you know, you can imagine at the beginning, in the first year we recruited 120 people, and we were only 20, so you can imagine for those 20 people to kind of help get those 120 ramped up and understanding things, and you know we had one HR person, and we were all kind of failing miserably. And so we decided to take a little time out as a leadership team and figure out what we could do about this, and what we put in place was a very simple buddy system. Basically, you know we were looking at what people, what their feedback was and what they were having a hard time with. And actually over 65 percent of our new recruits were coming from other places, so in addition to you know how to use the tools and what does my job mean at Ubisoft and all those other things, they also had questions about you know where is the dentist and all those things.

And there's no way that we could create onboarding materials and you know an intranet site and everything to satisfy everyone's needs, and so what we did instead was we created a buddy system and basically we assigned based on profile and job type each person a buddy. And sometimes you know because of the number of people we were recruiting that buddy had only been there one month longer than you, but also that meant that they had a relevant experience of being a new person in the studio, and we gave the buddy a budget to take the new person out to lunch and also coffee a few times. What was great was instead of creating you know all of these documents, whether the new person had a question about where to get coffee or where to drop off their dry cleaning or what that weird button you know in the UI did, they had someone to go turn to. And the even better side effect of this is that you know the buddy initially was just

answering questions, but eventually this forms relationships. And the main reason I think people end up having fun at work and staying long term has a lot to do with the people they get to work with, so we were helping create that link for people.

And this leads me to my next point which was actually brought up by my friend Clint Hocking, which is that the best rules are the simplest rules, or even better, if you don't have to create rules, don't create rules at all, create systems. Because that's what's going to you know allow players to create their, have more agency and have their own experience. And I think you'll all agree that in recent years there's definitely been a shift towards more systemic gameplay and more emergent gameplay. So you know it's not such a new thing, I think if you look at the bomb jumps in *Metroid* or in *Deus Ex* when people discovered that you could climb walls on the mines, to you know really more recently the incredibly unexpected ways that people are playing *Minecraft*, or in *Far Cry* you know the amount of fun that you can have with the wildlife systems or the fire, and how that creates new surprising experiences.

I think the lesson here is that you know the most fun that people are having in your games these days is not necessarily the fun that the game designer had in mind, it's the fun that they create themselves. And I think the real world parallel in the workplace is that the best ideas can come from anywhere, they don't necessarily come from the people whose job or role dictate that they should be the ones having these ideas. So I think just as in games we need to think of systems that allow for players to have more agency, create their own fun and have their own experience, we also have to create systems in the workplace that allow people to express themselves, have an impact, raise a flag and impact what they're working on.

And I think a classic example of this approach, or an early example is when Deming had a big influence on the assembly line in Japan. Basically what he implemented was a cord at each station in the assembly line that anyone could

pull to stop the assembly line. Now this was a radically different approach to the assembly line because all the other assembly lines it was just at all costs just keep it running, keep it running, you know and we'll sort out and get rid of the stuff later. But his approach was anyone can stop the assembly line despite the cost associated with that, can say what's gone wrong and come up with an answer, a solution of how to fix it.

And this had a huge impact on Japanese production in general at the time. So at the time you know Japanese production was known to be really the worst on Earth, it really had a terrible reputation. It went from that to having you know the best reputation for quality and reliability, so this approach transformed things. And I think that if a bottom up approach to an assembly line can have an impact, think of what kind of impact you can have in taking that kind of approach in a creative field like game development.

Okay, so another topic is signs and feedback. So signs and feedback are incredibly important to a game. I mean I highly believe in the importance of play tests, and one thing that play tests show time and time again is that people enjoy your game a lot more if they understand the systems. It seems obvious, right? But the problem is we're always trying to jam-pack all of that knowledge into tutorials, and I think ideally if you have excellent signs and feedback, you don't even necessarily need tutorials in your game. People can understand the objective and the consequences of all of their actions of what things do by experimentation and observation. And a great example of you know a company that consistently does this well is Nintendo games, I mean you can see that they always have the visual cue and the animation and the sound effect and all of these things reinforcing each other to almost make it obvious what everything is going to do before you interact with it, and the feedback is excellent as well.

For a recent example of good signs and feedback actually, I was chatting with my friend Laurent Malville who's a designer I got a chance to work with of

several projects, and he was just saying how impressed he was with the signs and feedback on *Hearthstone*. You know his point here being a designer is I think you know they could have gone with a classic timer telling you your turn is running out and counting down, but instead they have this wick burning down across the screen. They also have you know kind of a thing that fits with the fantasy which is that your character says things like you know, "I wonder" and "time runs out on me." And so they're really reinforcing what's going on and making it really obvious on many different levels and also integrated.

If you look at you know most games, it's crucially important that not only do you understand the objective and the consequences, but that you understand immediately what you can do to avoid further damage or avoid things. And so you know in a shooter for example, you know where the damage is coming from, what to do to avoid it, how much longer you can keep on going, and I don't think you would ever design a game where you wait until the end of a level to find out what's been gaining you points or losing you points. And so it's surprising when a lot more is at stake than you know points and winning a game, for example, in the workplace when it's people's livelihood and security, that often the only time that people get feedback is once a year during the yearly evaluations.

So I don't want to bore you with too many examples, there's a lot more parallels in my head, but I do want to make one more point, and this is the importance and the power of peer-based systems and peer-based feedback. So Steam Workshop has done a great job of tapping into the community and peers in order to vote you know what hats get into the game. And this is great on many different levels because it puts Valve out of the hot seat, they don't have to be the ones deciding exactly what gets to go in and what doesn't and be the bad guys who rule out your you know unicorn hat or whatever it is that you submitted. It also creates more engagement in the community because they own you know

what gets in and they own the game more themselves.

For a more intrinsic example that's more integral to game design, actually the way MMOs typically do the distribution of loot for raids is also a peer-based system. And I found it interesting that you know the decision of how to distribute like this high-end sort of endgame reward to the most hardcore players was left up to the communities or the guilds themselves. And so I asked my friend Rob Pardo you know what the thinking was behind this, and he said that basically there are so many edge cases and why you might award someone something - you know what level they are, what class, is the item useful, how often have they played - that it would be impossible to come up with the perfect you know sort of rule set for how that loot is divided up.

And also there are many different profiles of people playing *WoW* and you know other MMOs, some hardcore, some less, and leaving that system up to the community means that they can decide on their own way that they want to manage things, and you can also decide which guild to join based on what rules they use for loot distribution, so it's actually a much better system. Another kind of recent example is you know the PvP sort of honour system that's used in *Dark Souls*. It's, yeah I mean it's not integral, it wasn't created by game designers, but it is something that players decided that they wanted to do that would make the PvP encounters fair, and so that's what's being used.

And I do want t point out that there are examples of how peer-based systems have been very successful in companies as well. So an example I heard of is there's a company that really wanted to cut costs, as many companies do these days actually, that's not so surprising. So they really wanted to cut costs and, one of the main areas where a lot of abuse was happening, where a lot of spending was happening was in expense reports. And you know they really found that people were really you know expensing whatever they could to the maximum. So if they were allowed to take you know a first class ticket because they're a VP, even if the first class ticket was being

bought last minute and was extremely expensive they would do it, and you know if they could stay at the $500 hotel they would do it.

And so you know what they could have done, and I guess the logical or the normal thing to do if that was the case would be to change the expense policy and say, okay, right, you know, only presidents can fly first class now, and you know your limit for hotels is $300. But what they decided to do instead was they just decided to publish the expense reports where everyone could see, and amazingly the abuse stopped immediately. Because you know what, like the VP felt really guilty that other people could see that their plane ticket was $5,000 and they were staying at you know a $600 hotel when their buddy you know who they work with every day could only share an $80 or whatever the policy was. And not only did it get rid, drastically cut the costs immediately, but actually there became this competition between people in the office on who could be more frugal, who could save the most on their expense reports.

And I think we're seeing a trend in the strength of peer-based systems across different industries. Like now for example instead of going to read a travel magazine to find out about a place you might want to visit, you know people are more interested in tapping their social networks and finding out where friends went and where they like to stay. Similarly you know people go to Twitter to see what their friends deem newsworthy instead of going to CNN to check out what the news stories are. And you know even let's say for running, for my motivation to run, I'm more interested in seeing you know being motivated by my friends and what they did in terms of running than getting a personal trainer.

And the same is true in video games, so you know what we're seeing is people don't care as much about the score that they got, or beating a game, or how well they played, or the result; they care more about doing the crazy thing in the game that they can post online and get you know feedback on and get crazy responses on. And so it's not necessarily

about playing your game at all, it's about doing the weird thing that is worthwhile sharing. And you know actually back to *Hearthstone*, I was watching Twitch, and there's this guy who just makes really ridiculous decks and plays those. So he's clearly not playing to win, he's playing to you know have something worthy of sharing.

And the interesting thing about these peer-based systems and peer-based recognition is that research has found that many rewards will actually reduce internal motivation over the long term. So that's to say that you know, if I'm internally motivated to exercise, if every time I exercise I get five dollars, actually over the long run that will reduce my internal motivation to do that thing. And the one type of reward that never, that actually amplifies internal motivation is peer recognition. And so you know I think that's why we're seeing that those types of peer-based systems have a much stronger impact in games these days than the traditional ones.

And I think when you look at, well Sir Ken Robinson who you guys probably have heard about is speaking a lot about how these days in our sort of post-industrial society, the thing that's most important is creative skills, and in the post-YouTube sort of socially networked world, not only are those creative skills important, but it's kind of what can get you the most recognition from your family, from your friends, from your community, and even from millions of complete strangers.

And so you know, in conclusion, the video game industry has changed quite a bit. What players are interested in is quite different than it was before, and these changes are actually reflected in changes in the work force, and how people want to be motivated and engaged at work as well. The old model for video games, or the more traditional one that we can think of, was that players were, you were kind of designing this rat maze for players right, and their job was to get through one challenge after another, figure out what the game designer had in mind, and eventually get to the cheese. And the new model is really that, I'm going to play with the systems, I'm going to create my own fun,

my own story, and I'm going to share that with people.

And I really think that we can create a workspace that's more like that type of creative sandbox for people as well, where people do have an impact and create, can be creatively impacting what the product is, and I don't think it has to be you know totally stifling at one end and total anarchy at the other. I think that just as in school there used to be a focus on you know having students repeat something over and over again until they got good at it, in the workplace it was a similar thing, keep on practicing the same thing until you become an expert. But really for companies to have a leading edge today it's about harnessing that creative energy and the ideas of everyone on the team and making sure there's a way for that to bubble up, that is really what's going to give companies a creative edge.

And so you know, with all this talk of the importance of the creative economy and the creative class and you know emphasis on creativity in school, I think it's not surprising that the games that are the most popular these days are the games that let people practice and express their creativity. And I think you know we can trust Albert Einstein for saying some intelligent things, and he says that play is the highest form of research, and I think that does explain a shift in the kind of practice and kind of thing that people want to do in games. And so I'll leave you with this one question which is: what is the workplace equivalent of live-streaming your *Minecraft* session? Thank you.

[Applause]

I also want to say thanks to some people who I've chatted with and who have helped inspire this talk, so I wanted to put their names up there.

[Slide reads "Thank you! Laurent Malville, Max Beland, Corey May, Rob Pardo, Lenny Raymond, Serge Hascoet, and Clint Hocking"].

And thank you very much for your attention, you've been a really great

audience and I'm looking forward to hearing your questions now.

[Applause]

KS: Okay so just to give you a bit of time to think of a question, I'm gonna sort of jump in and do one question myself, just to give you a few more minutes to think of what you'd like to ask Jade. So before that it would be really good to find out a little bit more about the creative approach at Ubisoft, because I've been to the studio in Montreal a few times and it seems to have quite a sort of unique approach to creativity. How does it, I just wondered how as a studio you manage to kind of foster these ideas that can sometimes lead to you know *Assassin's Creed*, but elsewhere at Ubisoft you'll get someone making a game like *Grow Home* or, I just wondered you know what the approach was at Ubisoft and what allows you to foster that creativity?

JR: Yeah, I mean Ubisoft does have a big focus on having a breakthrough in a game. So every team is challenged to come up with something that really is unique, that does something differently. And so a thing that's I guess special about the process at Ubisoft is that there's a period sort of before conception where you just think of gameplay mechanics, and what kind of new gameplay experience that you can offer that will add value to players, and I think that's interesting to have that as a first step.

KS: Yeah, okay. So, questions. Do we have a microphone? Great. Okay, so there's a question here at the front.

Q: Hey, yeah your talk was really…

KS: Oh sorry, if you could say who you are sorry, that would be great.

Q: Who I am, okay. Yeah, my name's Nick Wilby, I'm a programmer, I'm actually going to be going to Ubisoft Montreal in a month's time. So yeah, I found your talk really interesting…

JR: We'll just have missed each other.

Q: Yeah, it's really interesting, because obviously the talk was quite coming from

like a top-down kind of view that you know, what could we do as the company to kind of make things better for our employees. But as somebody who's kind of moving into that, is there things that I can do to kind of facilitate that, you know the things that you're talking about for myself, or you know get the best out of it in that way?

JR: I think, you know be vocal and care. I always appreciate it when people come, even if they have an opinion that things are not going well, you know as long as, actually I especially appreciate that because you need people to raise those issues. You can't you know, no matter how great a manager or a lead is, they cannot be aware of everything going on or what the best solution is. So I think if anyone, if you have a concern, you should try and raise it, and try and think of a solution as well, because there's nothing that people appreciate more than being made aware of a problem but also a suggestion of how to fix that problem. And I think that that's how you get the best games, and also it's going to be how you're going to be recognised as well as an individual for having you know solutions and you know adding more value.

Q: So kind of be quite fearless then?

JR: Be fearless? Yes, be fearless.

Q: Okay, sounds good.

KS: Okay, yes, over here.

Q: Hi, Tom Cole, PhD student at Goldsmiths. So going back to the beginning of the talk, you talked about the bonus structure and how the company was kind of rewarding profitability, and therefore that would come through in the bonuses, whereas kind of what they needed was some sort of system where they reward creativity. And the only thing that I thought about, I mean I totally agree with that, but how would you, or I don't know if they do that now at Ubisoft or if things changed, but how would you think about going about rewarding that, because of course creativity is subjective, and you know how would you judge that someone's been more creative than someone else

and not basing it on profitability? Because I suppose profitability is a nice objective measure, how would you kind of go about putting that system into place?

JR: That's an excellent question. No it's true, I mean it's something that I think companies are struggling with because the you know, if you want to let's say reward profitability of a game as you said, you can look at the numbers and you can reward that. If you want to reward the quality of the game, even the quality and not necessarily just the creativity, it already gets much more difficult because you have a Metacritic score, but is that really the right way to evaluate you know the quality of a game? That's tough to say, because often also the you know players have a different opinion than the Metacritic, but then also do you want to base it on the player feedback because the ones who vocalise their feedback are not necessarily representative of the larger number. So it does get to be quite difficult, but I think just the act of thinking that through and thinking about to your company how can you measure that and coming up with a system, is better than you know, it does no one any good to just sort of give up, right? And so I think it's very difficult to come up with something perfect, but as long as you come up with something that you can explain and that people understand is the best thing you can come up with, and you're open to iterating it as better suggestions come up, at least you're showing people in a concrete way that talking chances is valued. And I think it's very difficult because with, you know trying new things and being creative means that sometimes you fail, and failure is a hard thing to reward, right? And actually you know just not penalise either, so I think you really do have to ask that question and just come up with the best solution you can.

KS: Lots of companies kind of systemise creativity don't they? You see more and more development studios now doing things like game jams, which I guess you could reward people for participating in game jams couldn't you in some ways? I suppose they're rewarding themselves, but I suppose that's one way you can

sort of look at what people are kind of doing and judge creativity by are they getting involved in it, and are they coming up with lots of ideas? I don't know whether game jams is a kind of an interesting way?

JR: Yeah, game jams are great. And I mean, I think the, you know what's great is if you actually do have a process where the best ideas from game jams get to be turned into real games, or get, you know real games, games that get the marketing backing of the studio, that can sometimes be the most effective reward for the team, because often people just want to have their ideas be out there and become real products. And you know maybe that's what they really want but they still love working for a bigger company, so if you can give them both as a reward it's an excellent way to reward people.

KS: Okay. Let's have one nearer the back. Hang on. Okay, sorry right here in the upper middle.

Q: Hey there. So with the news about… Sorry, John Porter, freelance games journalist. With the news about Kojima's departure from Konami and the cancellation of *Silent Hills* and the news about Irrational Games last year, it kind of feels like we're reaching the end of an era for AAA game development, and increasingly AAA games are kind of annualised series like the *Far Cry*s and the *Assassin's Creed*s of the world. And so kind of tying into what you were saying about creativity, do you think the problem with these large annualised series, perhaps kind of playing it safer than maybe a smaller studio like Mojang or what have you or the squad behind the *Kerbal Space Program*, do you think in these bigger studios it's a business problem with not taking risk, or do you think there's more of a management problem with not managing a team such that they're prepared to be creative and make these big budget but risky games?

JR: There's a lot packed into that question. So I mean obviously this is all just my opinion, but I think fundamentally it comes down to money right, and profitability and the scale of things. I

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don't think it has to do with management you know being blindsided or you know people not believing in the importance of evolving the medium, or you know taking risks or bringing something new. I think the reality is, in any industry, and it's impacted the film industry too, you know when you're creating something that costs $100 million to make, you really want to make sure you don't lose $100 million, right? And I think you know if you have an indie studio, and on Kickstarter you've raised you know $200,000, and that's plenty for you and your buddies to take a couple of years off, you don't have so much to lose right, other than maybe your next Kickstarter you won't raise any money because people will think you guys are crap. Only your own reputation. But I do think you know if you shrink the scale of the investment you can take more risks. So on one side I think that not only indies should be taking that risk though, and I think a lot of you know bigger studios and bigger publishers are saying, alright, we're still gonna have these big monster games where we generate most of the revenue, but we will allow smaller teams to take risks, that's great. I do also think you know for those franchises to be exciting and stay interesting, they also have to take risks. And I think that the solution there, because you know the reality of the budgets, there are two ways to ensure profitability right, either you make a lot more money or you cut costs. And I think that we can invest in tools and become, you know take a smarter approach to create these games in a cheaper way, and that will allow us the ability to take more risks, but I think that requires pausing for a second and investing in those tools for people to do so. But I do think it's very very important because I think you know tied to what I was talking about in terms of the importance of the community and player agency, and you know I think somewhere along the line you want to eventually create tools that are so great that the community is helping impact your game on many different levels, and so I think the path to making the job easier for your professional game developers also leads to a longer term holy grail, if you will.

KS: Okay, another question. Yeah, sorry, down here at the front.

Q: Hi, I'm Jackson Barnes; I work in thin techs, so not the gaming industry. I was struck by the slide you presented where I guess, I don't know if I did the math right, but it was like 65ish percent of people left the gaming industry for three separate reasons that all sort of boil down, at least to me, as sort of I'm not being fairly compensated.

JR: It's not compensated; it's quality of life and compensation…

Q: Well but if you're working 100 hours a week for not a lot of money and wish that you could spend that time with your family or whatever, like as sort of digital products become I think more gamified, one because you sort of get that feedback loop as a producer of those digital products and you can analyse it, and the value of that data is exponentially more valuable than it was 10 or 15 years ago. Like do you see that trend continuing, or like is that a hard thing? Because when I look at like sort of the Googles or in banking, the value that we would ascribe to the people with those skills is sort of I think a lot more than what it would have been ten years ago, and you know sort of game companies are not nearly that, don't reach that level of consistent profitability. Like do you see that trend increasing, or is the sort of creative aspect of things going to continue to be a huge draw for folks?

KS: I guess I'm not entirely sure, could you try and, I'm not entirely sure.

Q: I can do a shorter version of that I guess. Is that 65 percent of people that I think I could poach, like do you think that will increase or…

JR: You're here to know how you can recruit our engineers from the game industry. [Laughs]

Q: Who feels poor and underpaid? Anyone, anyone?

KS: Shall we get security? [Laughs]

Q: I guess my question is more around like, how much of those people like love

making games and then are at their wits' end, versus not. And I'm a gamer, that's actually why I'm here, not to poach people, but like is it they, you know you told the story about the woman who worked for you for ten years or worked for the company for ten years, and then you know didn't feel like she was leveling up or getting the accolades, maybe a little bit more money. But like how do you manage that? Do you appeal to the sort of sense of like, of you're creating something that people really enjoy and is amazing or…

JR: No no, I think that's the danger is, you know the game, I mean to me the game industry is extremely exciting, and I think to a lot of people it's their passion right, so I think we have gotten away with having sub-par management practices because we can rely on the passion of people. But I think that that's, that is changing actually, and I do see it in terms of recruiting people out of university. I mean where it used to be, I remember when I was graduating and you know I was interviewing with game companies, all of my friends you know who were also graduating were like drooling, "Oh my God, you're gonna go work for Sony in games, oh my God," you know, people were so excited about it. And now when you go talk to some of the best grads they're like, "Yeah, you know games that's cool, but you know I could also work for Google and that would be pretty cool." So I do think we can't afford to rely on people's passion and I think that's, you know it's great that it's there, but for sure we have to, you know this is a call to change our management practices and make sure people have a great environment, and we compete with the best companies.

KS: And can the industry kind of do anything about crunch? Because obviously you know crunch has been a big thing in the industry for the last like 20 years, and I think in some ways that's kind of separated people who just want to make games because they love games away from the people that are talented and also great programmers who would work for other people. So I mean how have you in your career dealt with crunch, and how do you make sure that that doesn't become this kind of horrendous stretch of time that only kind of young people are willing to put into games?

JR: Yeah, I think crunch is a really bad crutch that the game industry has gotten into using, and it's, you know I think that we're kidding ourselves. Like there was this really bad time in the game industry that I remember where there was this attitude that you know, "Crunch is great because you know it separates the strong from the weak, and we all develop these bonds and we're here all night and you know we're smelly and we love it," and you know it was ridiculous because in reality people have to live a life, right? People have to sleep, they have to eat, they have to exercise, like they have to see their families, they have to have you know friends and stuff, and they have to pay their bills. And if they're at work all the time they're not taking care of those things, so they're partially taking care of those things, so people are sitting there and they're maybe you know, they're still at work but they're you know filling out their taxes and their you know mailing their electricity bill and they're trying to call their you know boyfriends so they don't get dumped or whatever. And it's like, it's not very productive for anyone. And I also think you know when you're overtired like that, you know how can you be creative when you're overtired? How can you write good code when you're overtired? So I think it's this false sense of like, right, we're crunching you know, we're gonna get this thing out, and really you know there's a certain amount of, okay, I can put in a little more, and often when you're passionate about your job it doesn't feel like a job, so people often are putting in as much as they feel they can because they do want to… You know they're proud of their game, they want their game to be as good as it can, so I think you know most of the time you don't want to be putting pressure on people to stay more, you actually want to be putting pressure on people to, despite your passion for this and I know you'll do whatever it takes to make it as good as possible, but go home. And see you know, you know don't get divorced, that'll cause a huge mess, and then you'll be gone from my project for months! So yeah I think we have a real

responsibility to shift that attitude towards crunch.

KS: Yeah, yeah, okay. Yes, in the middle here. Sorry, I keep putting it right into the middle. One down, oh, that's it, yeah.

Q: Hello, I'm Jessica Saunders, I'm a sound designer at Rocksteady Studios. Coming off almost the back of that crunch question, we have a big problem in this industry with contractors. The stat that you gave earlier about changing studios every year, that's very much my case you know, this is my fifth AAA studio in as many years. And so the people that are leaving these companies seem to often from what I've seen are people who are very passionate, they desperately want to stay, but it's the companies that are not keeping them on, because of these crunch periods so they hire, over-hire so they can get that period done. Because they know if they can hire all those extra people who want to work on these projects, who are willing to put these hours in, they can't keep them, they can't go, so the company loses the talent and the talent is depressed because they have to move on when they've created bonds, they're working on projects they love etc. Is there any advice you can give to these people or these studios about what they can do to better these situations?

JR: Yeah, that's a tough question. I mean I really think though that there are, you know there are many ways that people can contribute to a game, and I think that when you look at the way you know indie projects and indie studios are doing it, people aren't so compartmentalised right, you have people doing all kinds of things on the project. And I think that you know in terms of people at these companies, people in those roles who they might not have a role that's being kept on permanently, I think you can also demonstrate that you have a real passion for games and can add value in different areas as well, and I think that companies have a responsibility to allow that kind of cross-training and mobility for the people who have that potential. And I certainly you know paid a lot of attention to that at Ubisoft Toronto, because we closely monitored people who were on contract, how we could

get them a role, and even how we could train people from one role into another role, if they had that passion they clearly were someone who wanted to contribute to the game. So for example, you know there's one woman who worked with us at the beginning as an intern doing social media, and you know she clearly just loved playing games, wanted to make games and it was her passion, and you know she had done a degree in animation, we didn't have a role as an animator to train her up into, but we did have some roles in level design. And she was a gamer and she had you know the right willingness to learn things, and she became right away one of our best level designers. And so I think you know giving people that ability to, as long as they're interested in it as well, to shine in different areas and develop their skills in different places, I think there's always place to place talented people.

Q: Thank you.

KS: Down here, yeah sorry.

Q: Hello, Rob. I spend most of my time working in the broadcasting industry, although I am developing a game but that's not the question. I see a lot of similarities between the broadcast industry and the games industry in terms of managing talent, retaining talent, etc., etc. But you know having worked at the BBC for a long time and you know lots of the BBC moved up to Salford and a lot of the talent left, I'm astounded that quite often you call people who you used to work with who are incredibly talented broadcasters, producers or whatever, presenters. And then you say, they've left the industry, and you ask them you know what are they doing now, and they're doing something where you know they might be working, and I kid you not, they might be working in Tesco's or something, you know doing something completely different to what their skill set is and what they're trained to do. So the question is, in the games industry, there's obviously a lot of people that leave the industry, what do you kind of find that they tend to do? Do they stay in it and develop games in their bedroom, or do they go and work in a bank or, you know there's no one

answer, but what have you found? And are they using the talents that they, you know they spent years developing?

JR: Good question. I don't know, have I taken enough stats of what people who have left end up doing? All kinds of things. You know sometimes I'm surprised like, some people will tell me that they're leaving and they're going to management school and they're going to you know like go to a bank or something, I guess it's surprising what people end up doing, and it's all kinds of different things from my experience, I can't say it's any, it's probably I guess similar to your experience.

KS: Okay, yes, here. Okay, go down afterwards, that's alright, no that's okay.

Q: Hi, Ben Nicholson. I recently left a AAA studio to work on my own on games, and I've gone from being a lead programmer and very much pigeonholed in that role to doing a bit of everything, and I find it's much easier to be creative in that kind of situation where if you don't do it it doesn't get done, or you really wanna own an area, that kind of thing. I was wondering if large studios could learn anything from that sort of indie mentality of encouraging people to work across disciplines, because generally from my experience in large studios you get pigeonholed pretty quickly into one role or another, like programmer, artist, designer, producer, whatever it might be, or even a specific type of programmer.

JR: Yeah, I think that that can help, but I don't think having a very specific expertise and being creative are mutually exclusive. I think in fact that when you are specialised at a thing, you're probably the best person to be creative in that area, and I think it's just a matter of making sure that those people do have an impact. So to give you a concrete example, you know you could have a game designer that's hired to do the three C's, so the camera controls and stuff. You know right, and so they're writing this document and they're making their specs clear and whatnot of how things should work, but you know potentially the best person to do the

design on the camera, to tune the design on the camera, is the person who programmed the camera for the last three games. Or similarly the best person to design you know the basic controls for movement is the animator that worked on those systems. And I think it's just a matter of recognising those experts and making sure that they have input on those things that they're expert at as well, right? And so it doesn't necessarily mean you need to take, I think because sometimes also you know that's great if it allows you to be more creative, but you can also end up maybe not getting the best of everything if people who are not you know the best at something end up doing things. And you can also on a larger team mix roles a little bit too much which ends up creating conflicts between people like, "What? I'm the art director, why is this person?" But as long as you take the thing that people are an expert at and recognise that and give them the outlet to have the impact on how that thing is going to work and be designed then I think that's the key. And then as well I think the thing that people can learn from the indie development scene is, even when you have very large teams, it's very important to subdivide them into smaller teams so that people, you create these cross-functional mini teams. And if you have a huge monster game that let's say it has stealth and it has fighting and it has shooting and it has you know car driving, you could treat them all like little mini games you know where each team has ownership over that and you can really feel like you're having an impact on a game system, and you know you're not just doing you know the animation across the board for all these little bits and pieces where you don't feel like you've really impacted things. So I think there are ways to divide things up on bigger projects to get that feeling which I think is very successful on smaller teams where you really understand what your contribution is.

KS: How do you deal with, just very quickly before we move on to the next question, I'm just interested in, you know you were talking about everybody being able to have ideas on teams and being able to stop the production line if they spot something. So how do you deal with

like big teams when there's a bit of a fight? Because that must happen at Ubisoft when you've got a team of like 200 people and they're all super creative, they're at the top of their games. Have you had any like massive fights that you've had to break up at Ubisoft? And how do you do that, because I've worked in development before I became a journalist and we were fighting all the time. That may just have been my studio, but how do you manage that, and how do you ensure that people's egos and creativity are kind of served while they're still you know, everybody has different ideas and sometimes that can go horribly wrong.

JR: Yeah, I think you've got to really check your ego at the door, right? I think people need to feel like they can be candid and they're giving their opinion about what's not working without having any negative side effects, and I think also everyone on the team, you know especially let's say the creative director whose job it is, needs to know when this person has feedback, it's not an attack against their idea right, it's that they're also passionate, and maybe it means they care more about the creative director's vision, so much so that they want to help them achieve it. And so I think it's a bit of you know training people to have the right approach to that feedback, and then ultimately I think also you have to make sure that who makes the final call is clear, right? So I think if you have you know this design by committee where everyone has an equal vote at the end of the day, you're going to end up with a big jumbled mess of a game right that has no sense anymore and no one's going to understand it. So I do think there needs to be you know a creative director and a decision-maker for each domain, and ultimately it has to be the creative director's vision. But I think equally, you know so it's their decision, you know ultimately what they're going to listen to when there is that sort of conflict, but I think that they need to pay attention and acknowledge all of that feedback and not have an ego about it, and not be you know, "I'm going to make this decision because it's my decision." So I think there's a bit of working with teams on that to develop the right approach.

KS: Okay, so do you wanna pass that, oh you've got the mic, oh great, excellent.

Q: Hi, I'm George; I'm a developer at Failbetter Games. Actually, first to answer the gentleman from the broadcast industry, yoga instructor is a very popular second career, which is probably indicative of something. So in my experience when I think of people in leadership positions, people that I really admire, people that I've enjoyed working with, there seems to be a very broad range in how public they are. Some people are very comfortable being a figurehead for their studio, they kind of take on this auteur persona. Other people are more comfortable remaining relatively anonymous and sort of allowing the gestalt of the team to take credit for everything. Do you believe that there's a sweet spot along that spectrum that is best for the team, or is it completely situational?

JR: Well in my mind being public is not taking credit for the team's work; I think there's quite a big difference. So I think that you know even if someone in a leadership role is doing PR or talking on behalf of the team they might need to make it clear and give credit to the people on the team who've done the great work that's made it a success. And I think different people have different strengths, and I think that's why you've seen you know a, you've seen like a big spectrum, right? So if someone is very good at public speaking then why not let them do the public speaking right, because other people are not good at public speaking, and if they're good at something else, and I think that's what makes a good team is you know surrounding with yourself and building a team of people with complementary skills. I think if you have a lot of people who are great at public speaking and interested in it, then you need to get them out to the front right and let them be talking about their thing. But as you said, some people just would prefer not to, so I think you've got to go off of your team's interests and talents.

KS: Has it become, you know in the era of social media and 24-hour Twitter, focus on teams and very public

developers, has it become more scary to sort of put yourself out there, because nowadays people can get you so easily, you know everybody's available, and if you're well-known in the industry, you're available on Twitter, people can get to you. Has that kind of changed development for you do you think, and for everybody to be out there in front of this enormous, very passionate community, that you know sometimes that passion can spill out in quite scary ways. Has that changed the way you deal with your audience?

JR: The anonymity of the Internet definitely creates some scary situations, but I think you know the danker corners of the Internet aside, I think that having that closer connection to game fans and more direct channel of communication is actually fantastic. Because ultimately you know we're making these games for the people, and you know I love the more recent trend towards open development and you know getting your you know minimum viable product out and iterating it, you know like rest with the community. And I, early access and all those things I think are fantastic because you're always as a game developer, you know at a big company or you know in any case you're getting a lot of feedback from other people, whether it's play testers that you select or you know your executive team, you're always getting feedback on your game. But ultimately that feedback may or may not be in line with your fans, and you're trying to make the best decisions for your fans, so if you can get that info directly from your fans that's even, you know that's the best thing you could do. So I think I really believe that we should be leveraging those connections and all of that as much as possible.

KS: Okay. Okay, another question. Shall we go, oh you're heading in that direction, is there one? Yes.

Q: Hi, I'm Jon Weinbren, I run the Master's course in game design and development at the National Film & Television School, but more to the point I'm also a developer and researcher myself, and I'm working on a game at the moment which has the reverse

problem from your talk, so it really interests me. So I'm trying to do something which attempts to systematise interpersonal relationships, particularly management and leadership, and it's quite hard, you know very hard to figure it out. So my question is all about simplification and you know film, TV, games, it's all, you know a lot of people say in this environment that it's about life without the boring bits, life without the messy bits. So I'm wondering do you really, do you think that you know we can really systemise the interpersonal relationships that are core to management and core to running companies? Do you think that's possible, or do you think it's, because obviously game systems tend to simplify real life, life is not like *The Sims*, and I'm wondering you know at the heart of management, is interpersonal relationships, and how can you apply what you've just sort of explained, which is a great model, you think fantastic, but then you think down to the nitty gritty, and it involves like Keith's question about the fights and the fallouts and the love affairs, you know, that sort of thing. Not that I've got any sort of experience of any of those things, but anyway.

JR: So that's an interesting question. Are you saying like, could you create a perfect system, as in like a perfect game design for the workplace? Is that your question?

Q: Well no, I guess I'm asking, it's all about is it possible to systemise, as you're saying okay we've got game systems so we can systemise managed processes and incentives and all that sort of stuff. But can you systemise what's at the heart of everyone's daily lives, in work, at home, in life, which is you know creative collaboration, interpersonal relationships. I mean is there something there? I mean is there a sort of dynamic systems theory or is there anything that you've come across that kind of is the Lorentz equation or you know chaos theory? You know, is there anything like that really complicated stuff that you think could be done?

JR: Well I don't know, maybe, your question is a very good one and it might be beyond my capacity to answer it

properly, but I do want to say that I've always loved games that have a metagame layer, and that's where games to me become very interesting. So for example I love the board game *Settlers of Catan* because there's this rule set that you're playing, but the really interesting bit to me is the bit that's not written, it's the social rules of how you manipulate you know people or tell them, "Oh I'm so poor," you're like, "Won't you trade me this for this?," you know and then you get three sources you want. Or in poker for example the whole metagame of like, "Oh I'm dumb, I barely understand the rules and I don't know what I'm doing and I'm going to dupe you into…" So, and *Diplomacy*, those are all games that have these really interesting social rules. And I think what's really exciting in MMOs, you know if you look at the basic game system, the basic game design that it's quite repetitive and you know quite boring, and the thing that's interesting is that when you play with real humans they're unpredictable and you know they're going to be doing crazy things, and they're not going to always behave in the most logical way, and that means that every time you go out and do the same thing it's going to be different each time. And so I think in terms of, maybe I'm answering your question or maybe I'm not, I guess the answer would be that no, because people you know do not follow the same logic, even if they are following logic at all they have their own logic, and some are not following any logic, some people are just completely you know sporadic. And also even just a person who has a certain pattern may have a bad day and you know behave in an unpredictable way, but I think that that's what's exciting about working with real people, as opposed to AI and robots, not looking forward to working with them. And I also think that you know in terms of a company, your strategy is constantly changing, right? So I was talking a little bit about how the new importance of creativity in general in the world has impacted the types of games that people are enjoying playing and the type of workplace that people want, and the type of thing that motivates you. And the conditions for you know, you know if you just think of the conditions for

work and you're a tech company and your strategy it's just changed radically now since there's you know the whole social aspect and the link on Twitter to everyone, and all of these factors need to be considered and they need to be changing your strategy on a day to day basis, and it's only really humans with our crazy way of thinking and imagination that can adapt to that and change things. So I think that if you went by a system you would lose that ability. I don't know if that answers your question at all.

Q: So you're saying you catalyse the relationships by the system, but you don't systemise the human relationships. And that's a really good, that's really good, I'm going to write that one down.

JR: Yes!

KS: Phew, well done for answering that. I think we've got time for a few more. Yes, can we have, can we do this, there's one here, yes.

Q: Thank you. Hi, I'm Lucy, I'm a translator and a project manager. I wanted to ask, I guess it's more of a remark, but you were talking crunch time and to me, I mean I've been seeing a lot of studios in the world, and I've seen quite a few are really emphasising on the idea of not having crunch time any more or really emphasising on work-life balance, and I guess I do think that there is hope in a way, that people are trying to you know not get burnt out, or not burning out their teams and such. And yeah I guess I wanted to ask isn't there hope in that regard, in a way?

JR: I do think there's hope, I do think there's hope, I think it's quite doable. I think you know in any, and I think that there are many industries that have a type of crunch that you know is required by the job. You know for example, when you're a lawyer and you have a case you end up working crazy hours. When you're a doctor and you work an emergency you might work many hours in a row. But I think all of those industries have a responsibility to find ways that are you know, get the same result in a healthy way, and I absolutely think that you know the game industry is not the most crucial one where we absolutely

need… You know it's not people's lives on the line, sometimes it's a lot of money but you know it's not like you know emergency medicine where if we you know we only have one doctor in the town and we need that doctor to be working 24 hours a day. So I think that there are solutions for our industry for sure.

KS: Do you think there's more things the industry should be doing to sort of diversify the workplace as well. I mean I think, you know we talked earlier about how crunch kind of, it burns people out, you get lots of young people in studios, and I think that kind of crunch culture kind of burns them out. But also I think you know the culture of game development at the moment, you know just look at the statistics, like less than 10 percent of development staff are women, for example. You know there must be something, or do you think the industry should do something about that, or do you think we just have to accept that that's the way it is. You know I feel like we need more diversity.

JR: We absolutely need more diversity, yeah.

KS: Is it something we can…

JR: Impact diversity? Absolutely, and it takes work to do so. I mean I think that you know we need to proactively be, first of all you don't think of going after a career in the game industry unless you played games when you were younger, and I think that you know so it's sort of a chicken or egg situation, but thankfully there are a lot more young girls and people you know, young women and people all over the world that aren't the traditional gamer who are playing games now, because games truly have become mass market. You know it's not just the 14 year-old geek in his basement that's playing games any more, it's just, you know it's part of culture, and it's something that people do, and it's something that you do to be relevant, and everyone plays games so that's great. We have kind of the basis there is starting where there's more people playing games so they'll consider a role in the game industry, and then I think you know we have to make sure that

we're going after candidates who wouldn't necessarily be the traditional pick, and that we're willing to cross-train people that were willing to you know help people develop their careers. And at Ubisoft Toronto half of my management staff was women, and that's pretty rare for the game industry. But I have to say, it wasn't really because I was just hiring women at all costs, it actually happened that you know 50 percent of the best candidates who applied for the roles were women. So I think that you know it's very possible these days to create more diverse teams and I think the success of our games rely on them because really if you have a team made up of you know all you know 20 year-old dudes wearing the same T-shirt, you know you're probably not going to create a game that appeals to a very broad demographic, like you're gonna create a game that appeals to a bunch of dudes wearing the same T-shirt. So yeah, it's crucial to the game industry.

KS: Okay, shall we come up this end this time? Yes, just there. Gentleman in the black top.

Q: Hello. Thank you for *Assassin's Creed*, by the way, that was awesome.

JR: There's a lot of people but…

Q: I work for Creative Assembly. As a guy in his 20s wore a t-shirt pretty much the same as someone else at work today, how can I be more diverse without being more diverse as a person?

JR: I'm not sure how to answer that. I can't offer any tips there. We'll have to have a shared drink later and maybe I can offer some advice.

KS: Okay, shall we come down this end? This side, just looking around, yeah, right down here, it'll be easier for you.

Q: Hello there, hello. Arash Jamali, Sony Playstation. I wanted to ask, a lot of games that you think about are, someone's already thought about and already made it, so how do you inspire your team, or what have you learned from the games industry that inspires your team or your creative team?

JR: Well I want to make a comment on that, you know I had that slide up of Tesla where he says you know, "What bothers me is not that you stole my idea but that you don't have any ideas of your own," and I didn't put that up necessarily in the sense that he meant it, it was more that I don't necessarily believe that you have to be the first person to have thought about the implications of you know the environmental impact that humans are having or whatever to make a statement about it. I think what's more important is that you actually stand for something, right, you don't have to be the first person on Earth to have thought of it. And then in terms of inspiring a team, I really like the story of rock soup, I don't know how many of you have heard of the story of rock soup, but actually my daughter is learning French and I just got her the book in French. But basically the French book, it's you know this wolf who's starving and he's walking through the forest with this giant rock and he knocks on this chicken's door and convinces the chicken to let him in to create this rock soup, the rock soup. And she's quite curious, she's a bit scared of the wolf but she's quite curious about this rock soup because she's never had rock soup before and she wants to try it. So then she asks, "Well, you know is rock soup good with chives in it?" And he goes, "Yeah, you can put chives in rock soup." You know and then one animal after another comes and wants to try this rock soup and asks if their favourite vegetable, you know carrots whatever, would be good in rock soup. And each time the wolf is like, "Yeah, you can put that in rock soup." And at the end they have this soup which is fantastic you know, and they all share it together, and you know it has nothing, no one eats the rock, he leaves with his rock. But the you know, why I'm talking about this is I think you know it's a combination of having a compelling vision that people can believe in, you know even when you are in a leadership position you have to you know first convince your team, and then you know convince the management or your investors, and then you have to convince the world to care about your thing. So it's both having this vision that can be inspiring, but also being open to turning that vision into something else

and making sure that it, in the end it doesn't really matter that it wasn't rock soup, and that wasn't the point anyways, right? In the end it's this great soup that has everyone else's stuff in it and so it's a combination of having that flexible vision, and it becomes everybody else's vision, that's where it becomes great. And so I do believe in that approach to things.

KS: Phew, I thought he was going to hit the chicken with the rock.

JR: It doesn't look good when a chicken's letting a wolf into her house, yeah.

KS: I think we've for time for one more question, so yeah, just here, thanks. Sorry.

Q: Hi, my name's Kelly, I just recently left New Zealand, well the Ubisoft distribution unit in New Zealand. So my question I guess revolves a bit more around the wider team working on games, because obviously when it comes to the production side we don't really have any say in that part, if you're working on marketing or PR, but you definitely go through the whole process where you're absolutely killing yourself to get everything kind of ready to go, and then everyone's sort of fried out by the time November comes round. So from your perspective, like what advice would you give to people who are sort of you know, you're in the industry but you don't really have a hand in the creative process side, in terms of not burning out?

JR: I think a lot of the responsibility of that falls on the game teams actually. And you know I think, I really don't like the fact that in the games industry there's kind of the people who work on the games who are the developers, and then there are the people who are in support roles, and whether they're in HR or they're the IT people who aren't directly working on the games but they're keeping the PCs and the network up and running, or there's the marketing people who aren't considered part of the team. And I really think that is something we need to work on in general, and it needs to come from the game teams and you know management as well. I think everyone

has to be part of the team and treated as part of the team and a valuable part of the team, because the truth is is that you know PR is a crucial part, the HR people are a crucial part, and they all do contribute to making sure that the game is great. I think that you know, I think that everyone needs to be under also the same rules. So when we talk about the rules system I think one of the things that creates that divide is even if you look at the way companies are structured, often they're treated as two teams, that's not only in terms of reporting structure but even maybe bonus structure. You know so maybe the team gets a bonus based on the success of their game, but the support teams including let's say PR and marketing get bonuses based on the general profitability of things or you know whatever. And all of those, to the point about these structures, all of those do impact the divide, and what I tried to do at Ubisoft Toronto was make sure that everyone was part of the same team, and so you know everyone was having you know, people from finance for example are usually excellent at analysing stats and you know figuring out how to optimise you know business models and things like that. And it turns out that with free to play things and with all the stats and you know all of the input that we're getting and all the tracking that we have now in our games, that's an important role also for the game team. And clearly, often I think if you are a finance person and you've joined the game industry it's probably because you're a finance person who cares about games. And so I think you know making sure that that divide is gone, and if you can contribute and you're interested and that you're involved in the game, the rules for those teams are also the same as the ones for the game team. And I think that you know it has to do with breaking down all of these old ways of doing things.

KS: Okay, well I'm so sorry for anyone who put their hands up tonight and didn't get a chance to ask Jade a question, it's just there's so many of you. But thank you so much to people who did ask questions, it was a really interesting variety of questions there. So thank you all for coming this evening. If you go to the BAFTA website, BAFTA does lots of events throughout the year so go to the BAFTA website and have a look at that because there's a lot of games stuff going on. But finally obviously I would like to say thank you so much Jade for coming over to London from Montreal to see us and to speak about your career and give us your wisdom, it's been fantastic. Thank you so much, Jade Raymond.

[Applause]

JR: Thank you, it's really been a pleasure and really fantastic questions, and it's really just as much fun for me to be here as hopefully it was for you, but I really feel honoured and I've really enjoyed the questions, so thank you for coming and thank you for your time as well.

[Applause]