

GDC:06 Quality of Life Roundtable Summary Notes

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“What defines Quality of Life?”

The responses were divided into two basic groups, outside of work and within the context of work.

Outside Work

- Balance
- Time to have a life
- Pay

Within the Context of Work

- Reward
- Growth
- Contribution (input, influence)
- Job satisfaction
- Trust
- Confidence in Management
- Respect
- Ownership of work
- Culture

There was a distinct difference between the two groups. The first group emphasized that money is not a significant contributor to quality of life while the second group seemed to believe it critical, with a strong emphasis on getting paid according to hours worked.

“How can developers improve the quality of life within their own studios?”

The first group, which had less emphasis on money, also had a more positive view of how much influence each had to instigate change. Discussions included:

- Educate management
 - Development process (SCRUM, RAD, Iterative, etc.)
 - Hours vs productive hours
 - Critical stage analysis
- Keep open lines of communication
- Team building (fun) activities sponsored by the studio (management)
- Understand management’s viewpoint (make the business case)
- “Just do what you have to do”

- Feed management's ego (make management look good)
- Make sure we are on the same page as management
- Change colleagues attitudes toward the culture (water cooler talk)

The second group was far more pessimistic about the potential for change with some convinced only drastic measures will suffice. The focus of this group was more external, with changes management must make with developers forcing their hands rather than instigating the changes within the studios. There was a lot of discussion of ways management erodes trust, such as:

- Expecting people to work from home after they have worked full days at the studio
- Withholding information and disseminating false information
- Having developers redo other developer's work
- Not providing consequences for failure
- Not providing team accountability
- Refusing to build cushions into project schedules
- Requiring conformity
- Emphasizing how much worse off others are to somehow make unacceptable policies more palatable

Conclusions

The general consensus of the first group is that developers have the power to make cultural changes among their peers, educate management to create better processes, and instigate changes within their studios by presenting changes in business terms management can understand.

The general consensus of the second group is that instigating change from the bottom up is impossible. The only power developers have is to quit or sue.

Roundtable Abstract from GDC Program

Quality of Life Instigating Change from the Bottom Up

Speaker: Judy Tyrer (Networking Engineer, Red Storm Entertainment)

Track: IGDA

Format: 60-minute Roundtable

Experience Level: All

Session Description

Developers have a unique perspective on the causes of many of the issues that affect the quality of our daily lives. The Quality of Life in our industry has received ample publicity and there is a call for industry wide reform. However, industry wide reform starts one small change at a time. Developers are in the best position to instigate those necessary changes within our own studios. The Quality of Life Committee invites developers to discuss those first steps and how to instigate the necessary changes from the bottom up. Discuss how to open lines of communication with management, how to identify the paths

of least resistance, and what small changes result in big impacts.

Idea Takeaway

All developers and managers committed to making their studios more pleasant places to work.

Intended Audience

The participants will share their experiences, discuss ways to instigate changes within their own studios, and walk away with a plan for improving the quality of life of their own lives and those of their teams.