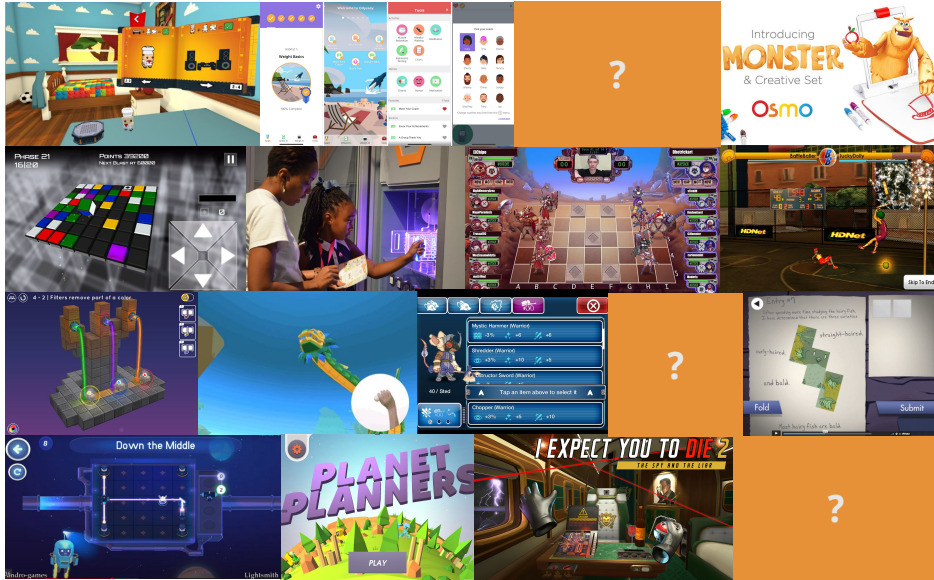# The Design Direction of
I Expect You To Die 2

Francisco Souki
Design Director, IEYTD2

Francisco Souki

Principal Designer @ Schell Games
Design Director, IEYTD2

I EXPECT YOU TO DIE 2

THE SPY AND THE LIAR

#3 Top Rated Quest game as of Feb 2022

About IEYTD2

- VR puzzle game

- 6 levels

- Design team:
  - Smallest: me + 1
  - Largest: me + 6
  - Production average: me + ~4

About this talk

- This is primarily a **Management Track** talk

- Through the lens of the **Design Director**

- Covers:
  - Creating the schedule
  - Game Design Process & Planning challenges encountered throughout development
  - The docs and processes that solved those problems
  - The mindset of the Design Director

A thing I believe about teams

Civility, tolerance and respect are non-negotiable

These are basic, required elements for a teammate. If you don't care about displaying and upholding these, anything else you bring to the table is irrelevant.

The IEYTD2 Game Design Team

Design Team

- Marlena Abraham
- Ryan Hall
- Chase Hardy
- Chance Lytle
- Apoorva Ramesh
- John Blau

Additional Design

- Ryan Brolley
- Mike Lew

Special Thanks

- Kat De Shields-Moon
- Charlie Amis
- John Joy
- Tera Nguyen

Pre-Production

Making the schedule

What we knew:

- Six levels
- The size of the box (approved schedule length)

GDC

Making the schedule

1. <u>Pre-production</u> When we actually made the schedule

Pre-production

Making the schedule

1. <u>Pre-production</u> When we actually made the schedule
2. <u>Make everything</u> Specifically the 6 levels

| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
| Pre-production | Level 4 | Level 5 | Level 6 |

Making the schedule

1. <u>Pre-production</u> When we actually made the schedule
2. <u>Make everything</u> Specifically the 6 levels. Also don't forget the meta features, intro, etc.

Pre-production	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	
	Meta features Core Team		Intro and Support	

Making the schedule

1. <u>Pre-production</u> When we actually made the schedule

2. <u>Make everything</u> Specifically the 6 levels. Also don't forget the meta features, intro, etc.

3. <u>Polish it</u> Time of protected polish. Not "buffer" time

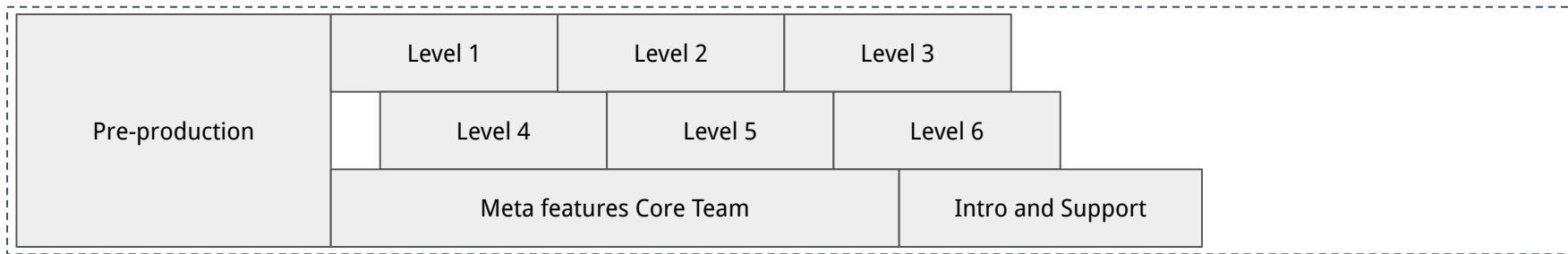| Pre-production	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Polish
		Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Polish
	Meta features Core Team		Intro and Support	

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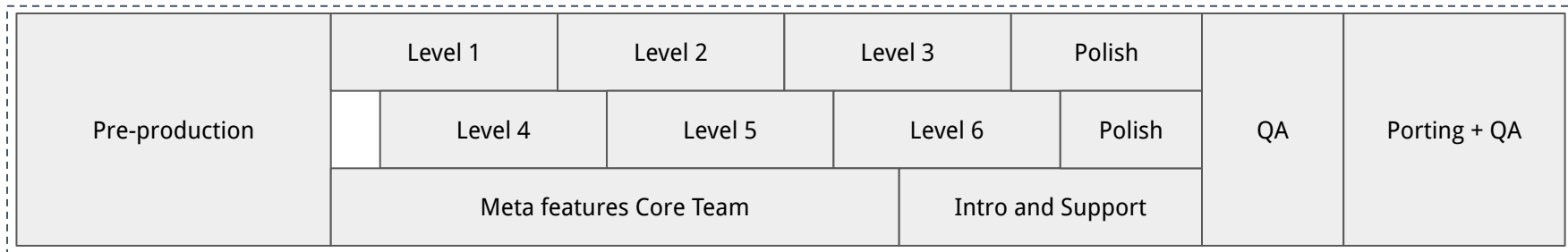
Making the schedule

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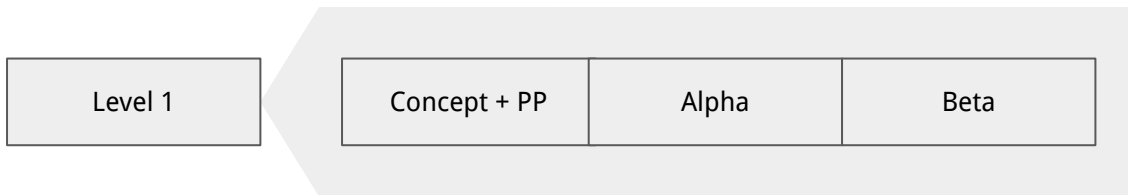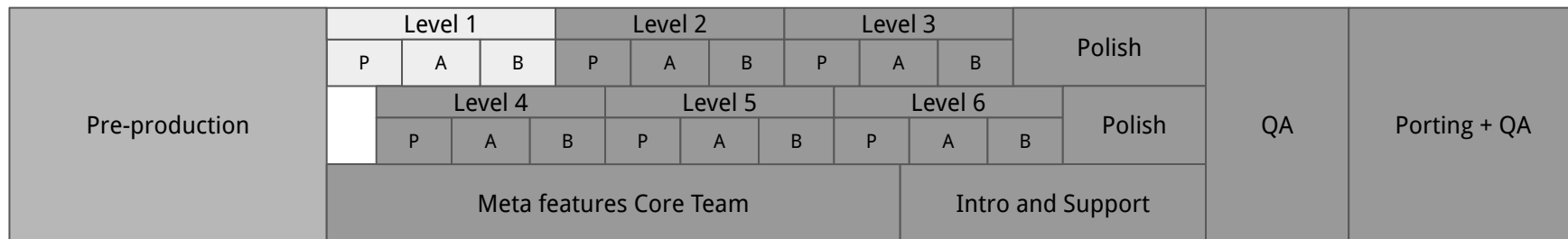4. <u>Test it and port it</u> Quality Assurance and porting

Pre-production	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Polish	QA	Porting + QA
		Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Polish	
	Meta features Core Team		Intro and Support			

How DO you make a level?

LEVEL DEVELOPMENT

- **End of PP** - skeleton of the level is in
- **End of Alpha** - all major and medium puzzles are in
- **End of Beta** - "Technically shippable"

Pre-production	Level 1			Level 2			Level 3			Polish	QA	Porting + QA
	P	A	B	P	A	B	P	A	B			
		Level 4			Level 5			Level 6		Polish		
		P	A	B	P	A	B	P	A	B		
	Meta features Core Team							Intro and Support				

Level 1	Concept + PP	Alpha	Beta

How DO you make a level?

LEVEL DEVELOPMENT

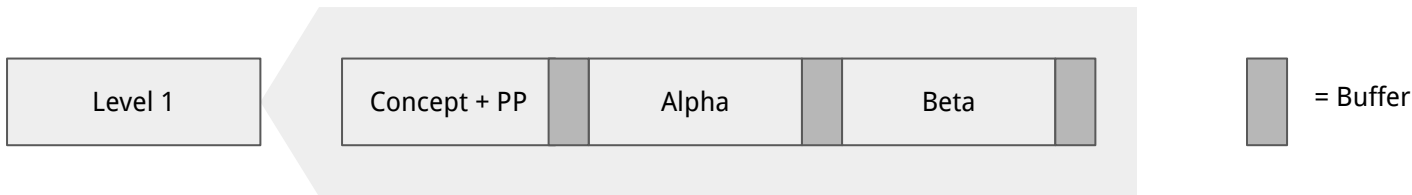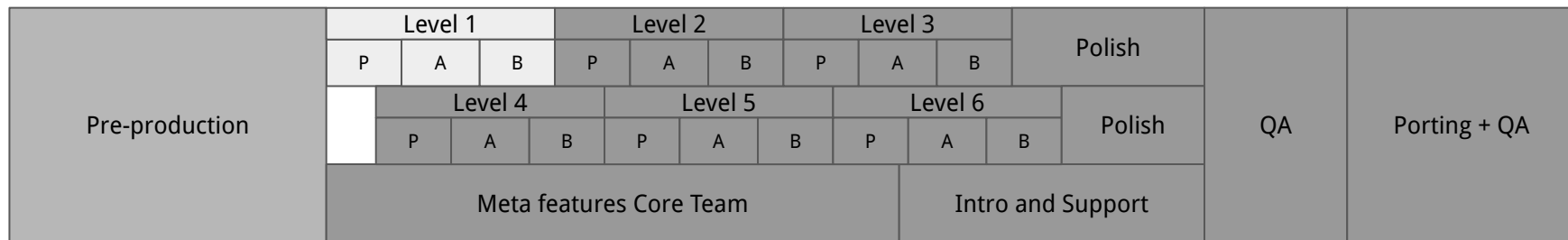- **End of PP** - skeleton of the level is in
- **End of Alpha** - all major and medium puzzles are in
- **End of Beta** - "ship with shame"

+ BUFFER time you would be ok losing for any reason

Pre-production	Level 1			Level 2			Level 3			Polish	QA	Porting + QA
	P	A	B	P	A	B	P	A	B			
	Level 4			Level 5			Level 6			Polish		
	P	A	B	P	A	B	P	A	B			
	Meta features Core Team							Intro and Support				

Level 1

Concept + PP		Alpha		Beta	

= Buffer

Pre-production

Design goals

- Meta feature planning
- Temp tutorial
- Proving out level concepts
- Planning full experience
- Define game pillars

Master Design Guide

- **Problem:** I did not work on IEYTD1

Master Design Guide

- **Problem:** I did not work on IEYTD1

- **Solution:** talk to every human possible who was involved, and reverse engineer the "secret sauce"
  - Result: the Master Design Guide, A document with over 60 items that "make a level feel like a IEYTD level"

Master Design Guide - template

	End of Pre-pro	End of Alpha	End of Beta	Final Level
Category				
[item 1]	[response]	[response]		
[item 2]	==[response that needs attention]==	[response that no longer needs attention]		
[item 3]	==[response that needs attention]==	==[response that still needs attention]==		

Master Design Guide - examples

Puzzle considerations such as:

- *"Are players invited to look around by level elements?"*
- *"Are deaths getting players closer to the solution?"*
- *"What are the noticed behaviors that are currently not rewarded? Should they be? WIll they be?"*

Accessibility considerations such as:

- *"Can the level be completed one-handed?"*
- *"Can the level be completed without extreme movements?"*
- *"Are you aware of which are the critical audio cues required to complete the level?"*

	End of Alpha	End of Beta	
Are deaths getting players closer to the solution?	Slowly and frustratingly, yes. Because most of our opportunities for death are later in the level, players spend a lot of time dying and trying to get back to that	less frustrating than before, but the rest is the same.	we

Accessibility Matrix

- **Problem**: We haven't historically been great at planning for accessibility at SG - we end up trying to retrofit features

Accessibility Matrix

- **Problem**: We haven't historically been great at planning for accessibility at SG - we end up trying to retrofit features

- **Solution:** Process that results in a list of accessibility considerations and design decisions for the Master Guide

More info and template:
- *GDC 2022 talk: **Greater Accessibility With Fewer New Features and Less Scope***

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Accessibility Matrix - example

Accessibility Matrix Template				
Category	**#**	**Type**	**Goal**	**Ideas for Solutions**
Comfort	A1	Sensory overload	Players find the visual and sound effects to be enjoyable, including those with sensory sensitivity	
	A2	Motion sickness	Players do not feel motion sickness when playing	
	A3	Green room	Players have the time and space to learn and practice game play	
	A4	Content comfort	Players are warned about mature, graphic or disturbing content before being exposed directly to it	
Mobility & Body Mechanics	B1	Height	Players with varying heights and/or seated can comfortably play	
	B2	Tracking body	Players with varying body types can comfortably play with body tracking sensors	
	B3	Body position	Players can play seated and are comfortable with any physical stretching or body positions	
	B4	Handedness	Players who are right-handed and left-handed can comfortably play, and the game can be played with one hand	
	B5	VR locomotion	Players can play the game without being required to physically walk	
	B6	VR pickup	Players can comfortably carry and put down objects with one or two hands	
	B7	Menu access	Players can access and read menus easily	
	B8	Controls	Players can remap controllers, and controllers offer consistent input	
	B9	Dexterity	Players can comfortably play without repetitive, uncomfortable, sustained, or precise movements	
Cognitive	C1	Difficulty	Players feel comfortable with the difficulty of the game	
	C2	Complexity	Players can quickly and easily start the game and navigate the menus and user interface	
	C3	Memory	Players with varying levels of memory feel comfortable playing the game	

Accessibility Matrix - example

Accessibility		
Have you noticed guests experience any discomfort, for any reason whatsoever?	- Pulling the rope repeatedly is called out as a repetitive action that can get tiring - Some far-away objects are hard to hit/grab	Mostly bugs with colliders + TK at this point; we got rid of the rope, which was a big sticking point. There are other things to smooth out, but nothing huge.
Can the level be completed while sitting on the couch? (without turning around)	In theory	In theory!
Do the level's interactions and wearables account for all body types?	Mask needs some work; it's too tight to the head	Masks still need work, but it's on the docket for the next few sprints
Can the level be completed one-handed?	Yes	Yes

Game Pillars

- **Problem:** … ?
- IEYTD1 had great pillars that served them well
- Should we change them?
  - Nope

Game Pillars - IEYTD 1&2
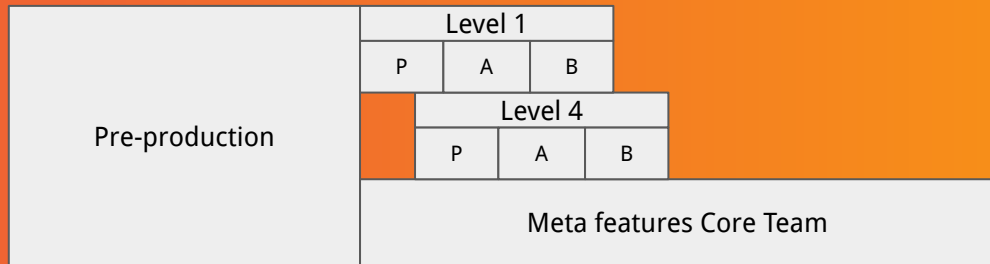
BELIEVE YOU ARE THERE

LAYERS OF DISCOVERY

LEAD THEM TO CLEVERNESS

Pre-Production

First Two Levels

Design goals

- Continue understanding what it is that we are making
- Make the levels!
- Grow the meta features

Level 1
P | A | B

Level 4
P | A | B

Meta features Core Team

Pre-production

March 2020 - (shift to WFH)
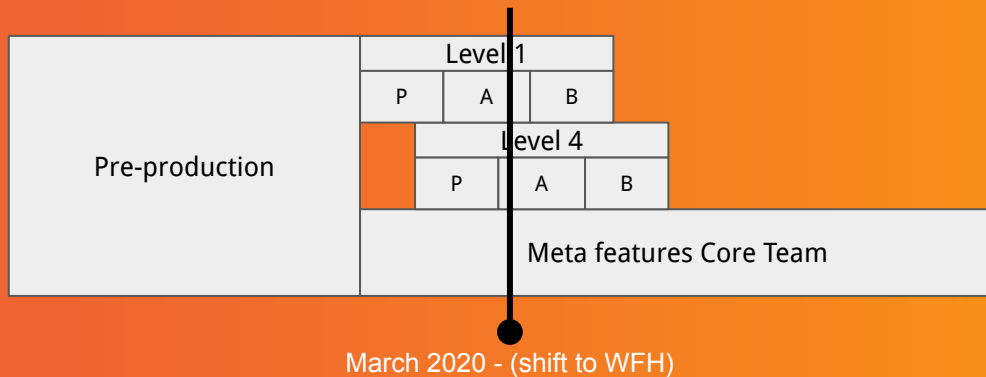
Design goals

- Continue understanding what it is that we are making
- Make the levels!
- Grow the meta features

Disaster strikes

- March 2020 - shift to WFH due to pandemic

WFH Adaptation Period

- It's hard

- **We spend an extra 4-6 weeks adjusting**

Level 1

| P | A | | B |

Level 4

Pre-production

| | P | A | | B |

Meta features Core Team

4-6 weeks
unexpected delay
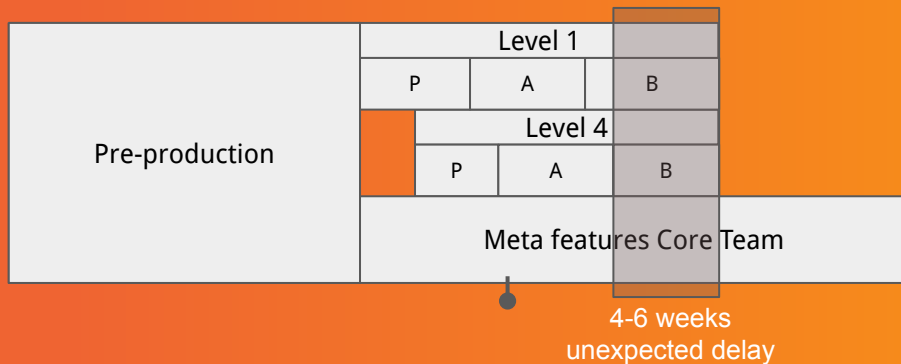
- 4-6 weeks of unexpected delay

- Level buffer disappears
  - At SG, the alternative is NOT crunch

| Concept + PP | | Alpha | | Beta | |

| Concept + PP | Alpha | Beta |
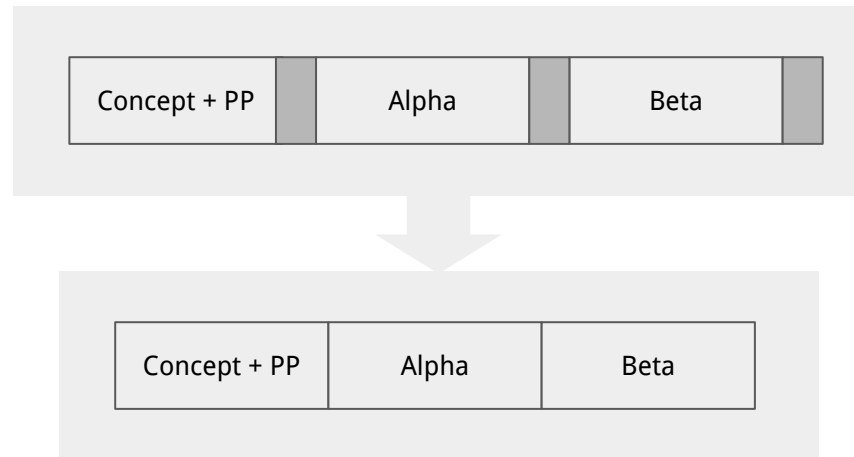
WFH Adaptation Period

- It's hard

- We spend an extra 4-6 weeks adjusting

- In adjusting, the team becomes a less-good fit for some devs

- Staffing shuffles

- **The need for stability of ANY kind is reflected in a desire for process adjustments**

2 takeaways about process

Processes impact people's lives

Processes are how developers interface with the product, and should be designed with respect. They impact people's day-to-day routines, and their emotions.

2 takeaways about process

Processes impact people's lives

Processes are how developers interface with the product, and should be designed with respect. They impact people's day-to-day routines, and their emotions.

Default to involving the team

People want to, and should, be involved in decisions and changes that impact them. When the change is announced, most people should already know it was coming and have had a chance to offer feedback.

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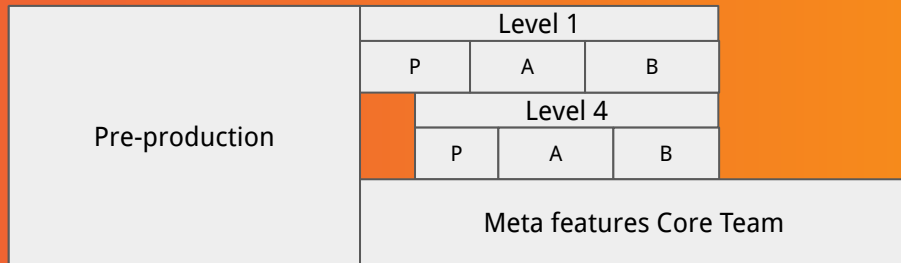
GDC

	Level 1		
	P	A	B

	Level 4		
Pre-production	P	A	B

Meta features Core Team

Time to take stock

- 2 levels in a stable state
  - "Technically shippable"?
    - VERY "technically"
- Team is calibrated to the rhythm, shape, feel and tone of the game
- **Success!** Our levels feel like IEYTD levels

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    ┌──────────────────────────────────┐  │
│                    │          Level 1                 │  │
│                    ├─────────┬──────────┬─────────────┤  │
│                    │    P    │    A     │      B      │  │
│                    ├──┬──────┴──────────┴─────────────┤  │
│                    │  │       Level 4                 │  │
│  Pre-production    ├──┴─────┬──────────┬─────────────┤  │
│                    │    P   │    A     │      B      │  │
│                    ├────────┴──────────┴─────────────┴──┐
│                    │                                     │
│                    │      Meta features Core Team        │
│                    └─────────────────────────────────────┘
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure out what we're making
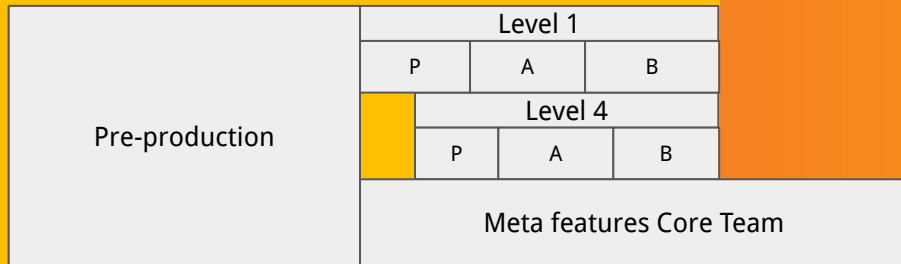
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- Team is calibrated to the rhythm, shape, feel and tone of the game

- **Success!** Our levels feel like IEYTD levels

Feels like the first big stage of the project is done:

- **"Figure out what we're making"**

Pre-Production

First Two Levels

Four More Levels

GDC

Pre-production	Level 1			Level 2		
	P	A	B	P	A	B
	Level 4			Level 5		
	P	A	B	P	A	B
	Meta features Core Team					

Figure out what we're making

Design Goal

Make four more levels, applying lessons learned

Design Process

- Weekly team-wide design meetings
- Design 1:1s every two weeks
- Get to playtest asap, aim for every Friday. Never skip 2 in a row
- Master Guide working well
- **The Great Adjustment**

A takeaway about problem-solving

Seek team alignment on the problem to solve

If the team is fully aligned on the definition of the problem, team members will learn to expect "a solution that addresses the agreed problems" as opposed to "a specific solution that addresses the part of the problem that affects me"

Pre-production	Level 1			Level 2		
	P	A	B	P	A	B
	Level 4			Level 5		
	P	A	B	P	A	B
	Meta features Core Team					

Figure out what we're making

Problems to solve

- **Design team hungry for more guidance**
  - I'm refining my direction style and adjusting it to the team & franchise

Creative freedom and design direction

Creative freedom and design direction

- Listen to your team, adapt

Creative freedom and design direction

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- Don't squander your gift / strengths
  - Puzzles are a passion of mine
  - Your team is expecting direction

Creative freedom and design direction

- Listen to your team, adapt

- Don't squander your gift / strengths
  - Puzzles are a passion of mine
  - Your team is expecting direction

- **Expose your decision making process**

A takeaway about thought processes

Expose your decision making process

There is a rubric somewhere in your brain that guides your decision making. Exposing it to your team reduces stress, helps them communicate with you and allows them to produce more consistently good work. If your rubric can't be well defined, your team is likely stressed about not knowing what you want.

Creative freedom and design direction

- Listen to your team, adapt

- Don't squander your gift / strengths
  - Puzzles are a passion of mine
  - Your team is expecting direction

- **Expose your decision making process**

- **Focus on describing the problems in detail**
  - Describe what success looks like
  - Request the implementation of a specific solution only sparingly and when you have full confidence of its value
  - Solutions as examples are okay

A tool for uncovering gameplay friction

Teach the team to walk in the player's shoes

At every step of level reviews ask - "what does the player know at this point?" and "What might they do next with that knowledge?"

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GDC

Creative freedom and design direction

- Listen to your team, adapt

- Don't squander your gift / strengths
  - Puzzles are a passion of mine
  - Your team is expecting direction

- **Expose your decision making process**

- **Focus on describing the problems in detail**
  - Describe what success looks like
  - Request the implementation of a specific solution only sparingly and when you have full confidence of its value
  - Solutions as examples are okay

- **Many paths to victory**

A takeaway about creative input

There are paths to victory beyond what you can see

Spend energy upfront clearly defining boundaries, expectations and parameters for success and the team will take you there through roads you never knew existed.

	Level 1			Level 2		
	P	A	B	P	A	B
Pre-production	Level 4			Level 5		
	P	A	B	P	A	B
	Meta features Core Team					

Figure out what we're making

Problems to solve

- Design team hungry for more guidance
  - I'm refining my direction style and adjusting it to the team & franchise
- **Need better avenues to channel a multitude of personal thoughts**

Living Agenda Docs

- **Problem:** A solution-oriented brain that generates thoughts that warrant follow-up all the time, at all times

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Living Agenda Docs

- **Problem:** A solution-oriented brain that generates thoughts that warrant follow-up all the time, at all times
- **Solution:** living agenda documents for all recurring meetings

Living Agenda Docs - template

Topics

- *[initial] - [anyone can add any topic at any time]*
- F - review haptics guidelines
- C - question about playtesting

Recurring topics

- *[topics that get covered every week if time allows]*
- Are you playtesting this week?

[dd/mm]

- *[copy the topics to here and take notes]*

Living Agenda Docs - template

Date	Owner	Priority	Topic	Outcome	Discussed?
[date]	[Person who added the topic]	[Low / Med / High]	[what you want to discuss]	[take notes here. Someone is in charge of turning these into actual tasks]	[Y / N]
5/10	Francisco	Med	We should buy commemorative mugs for the team!		N
6/10	Art Director	High	Too many artists are blocked	Francisco to talk to level designers about checking in with the art team - there may be some opportunities for unblocking	Y

	Level 1			Level 2		
Pre-production	P	A	B	P	A	B
		Level 4			Level 5	
		P	A	B	P	A	B
	Meta features Core Team					

Figure out what we're making

Problems to solve

- Design team hungry for more guidance
  - I'm refining my direction style and adjusting it to the team & franchise
- Need better avenues to channel a multitude of personal thoughts
- **Feedback process is stressful, lacking**

Feedback process full revamp

- **Problems:**
  - Stakeholder feedback coming too late and in a hard to parse format
  - Stakeholder feedback not getting proper follow-up
  - No avenue for off-the-cuff feedback
  - No clear owner of the feedback process
  - All of the above causing stress and hurting the game (great ideas going uncaptured)

Feedback process full revamp

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- **Solution:**
  - **Define feedback owner (me)**
  - **Clearly defined path for feedback once given**

Feedback process full revamp

Image source: National WWII Museum and Memorial

Feedback process full revamp

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  - No clear owner of the feedback process
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- **Solution:**
  - Define feedback owner (me)
  - Clearly defined path for feedback once given
  - **Clear cadence and avenue to collect, discuss and follow-up on stakeholder feedback**

Stakeholder feedback tracker

- New build and feedback request every two weeks

- All feedback goes to a spreadsheet

- I review all feedback and generate tasks, tags or agenda topics

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Stakeholder feedback tracker - template

Date	Build #	Setting	High Priority?	Owner	Level	Feedback	Team Response
[date]	[build#]	[where was the feedback given?]	[Y/N] [No = "It's ok if I never get followup]	[Person giving feedback]	[part of the game the feedback refers to]	[the feedback itself]	[the team reviews and replies here]
10/5	112211	*Individual playthrough*	*No*	*VP of Design*	*Level 4*	*It's not obvious that you can grab the blue handle. Other handles are well telegraphed but this one is hard to see*	*We haven't noticed an issue. We'll pay attention in playtests and consider doing something about it if it comes up.*
10/8	112211	*Weekly check-in*	*Yes*	*VP of Art*	*Level 3*	*Blue lasers don't look deadly. Consider making red.*	*Good catch, we'll make them red. Added an action item.*

Feedback process full revamp

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- **Solution:**
  - Define feedback owner (me)
  - Clearly defined path for feedback once given
  - Clear cadence and avenue to collect, discuss and follow-up on stakeholder feedback
  - **Place to collect team feedback asynchronously, at any time**

Team feedback tracker - Trello

- Anyone, at any time, can leave any feedback in a Trello board
- I review every single item of incoming feedback regularly, move to corresponding column

Team feedback tracker - Trello template

TEAM incoming - Must address	TEAM incoming - General feedback	Turn me into a task	Design Review	Art Review
	There are not enough things to eat in the elevator. We should add more bananas.			

Team feedback tracker - Trello template

TEAM incoming - Must address	TEAM incoming - General feedback	Turn me into a task	Design Review	Art Review
	There are not enough things to eat in the elevator. We should add more bananas.			

The team adds any feedback at any time to these two columns. I read everything twice a week and sort it to the right column.

Team feedback tracker - Trello template

TEAM incoming - Must address	TEAM incoming - General feedback	Turn me into a task	Design Review	Art Review
	There are not enough things to eat in the elevator. We should add more bananas.			

The team adds any feedback at any time to these two columns. I read everything twice a week and sort it to the right column.

Stuff in here gets turned into a task by JIRA owners

Team feedback tracker - Trello template

TEAM incoming - Must address	TEAM incoming - General feedback	Turn me into a task	Design Review	Art Review
	There are not enough things to eat in the elevator. We should add more bananas.		Directors are responsible for reviewing their columns regularly.	
The team adds any feedback at any time to these two columns. I read everything twice a week and sort it to the right column.		Stuff in here gets turned into a task by JIRA owners	If an item needs discussion, it gets added to the director meeting living agenda	

○○○

A tool to extract usable feedback

Look for the problem they're trying to solve

You may not agree with the feedback to "make the key harder to find", but you absolutely want to know why they think the current hiding place for the key is not working.

A takeaway about feedback

If it makes you uncomfortable, dig deeper

What does it say about **you** when you have a negative reaction to an idea, a co-worker, a decision, a piece of feedback? This is how I learn the most important lessons about myself.

Pre-production	Level 1			Level 2		
	P	A	B	P	A	B
		Level 4			Level 5	
		P	A	B	P	A	B
	Meta features Core Team					

Figure out what we're making

Problems to solve

- Design team hungry for more guidance
  - I'm refining my direction style and adjusting it to the team & franchise
- Need better avenues to channel a multitude of personal thoughts
- Feedback process is stressful, lacking
- **Too many moving parts to commit to Betas**

Pre-production	Level 1			Level 2		
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		Level 4			Level 5	
		P	A	B	P	A	B
	Meta features Core Team					

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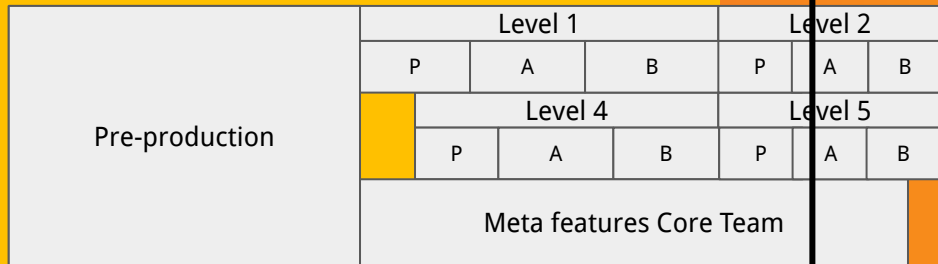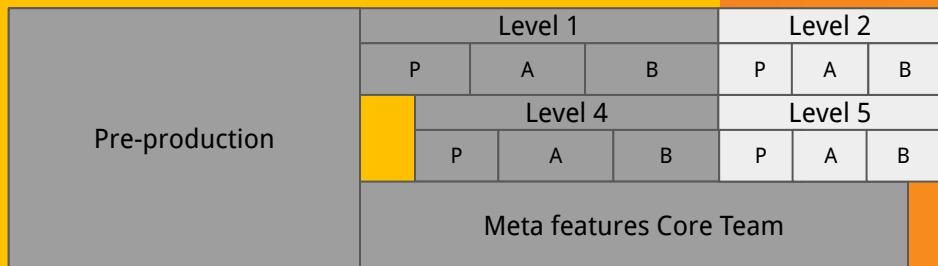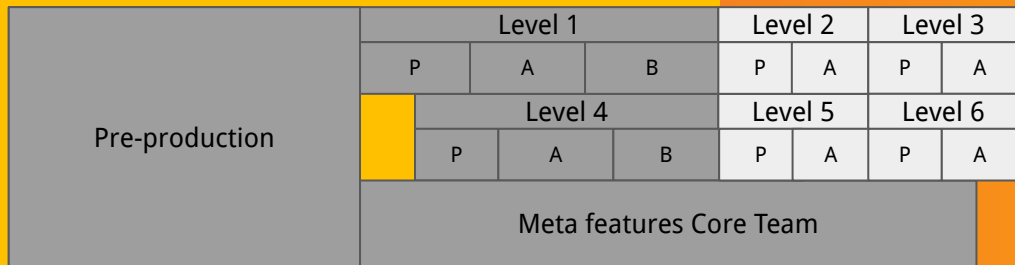- **Too many moving parts to commit to Betas**

Pre-production

	Level 1			Level 2		
	P	A	B	P	A	B
		Level 4			Level 5	
	P	A	B	P	A	B
	Meta features Core Team					

Figure out what we're making

Pre-production

	Level 1			Level 2		Level 3	
	P	A	B	P	A	P	A
		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6
	P	A	B	P	A	P	A
	Meta features Core Team						

Figure out what we're making

	Level 1			Level 2		Level 3	
Pre-production	P	A	B	P	A	P	A
		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6	
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A
	Meta features Core Team						Intro and Support

Figure out what we're making

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- Design team hungry for more guidance
  - I'm refining my direction style and adjusting it to the team & franchise
- Need better avenues to channel a multitude of personal thoughts
- Feedback process is stressful, lacking
- Too many moving parts to commit to Betas
- **Beta time is short and we lost our buffer**

Beta planning documents

- Generally in the shape of "Design adjustments for levels"
- A time for me to sit with the levels in solitude

Art by Piotr Dura

Beta planning documents

- Generally in the shape of "Design adjustments for levels"
- A time for me to sit with the levels in solitude

Problems to solve

- A list of problems to solve extracted from the extensive feedback from team, stakeholders and playtesters

Tasks proposal

- A list of concrete tasks to address the problems stated above
- To be taken to the team for conversation and alignment
- These tasks go straight into the beta task backlog to clearly define beta work

---

A takeaway about the malleability of design

Design the nail to the hammer you wield

There are countless solutions to every problem. Since you know the parameters for success, you can recontextualize the problem to fit the team's skill set.

Wield the hammer, design the nail.

	Level 1			Level 2		Level 3	
Pre-production	P	A	B	P	A	P	A
	Level 4			Level 5		Level 6	
	P	A	B	P	A	P	A
	Meta features Core Team					Intro and Support	

Figure out what we're making   **Feedback Avalanche**

Time to take stock

- All alphas are done
- Meta features (including tutorial) are complete
- The full skeleton of the game takes shape, well-informed by feedback
- **In retrospect - this stage had the toughest-to-solve process/team challenges**

Feels like the second big stage of the project is done:

- ~~"Figure out what we're making"~~
- **"The Feedback Avalanche"**

Pre-Production

First Two Levels

~~Four More Levels...~~ All Levels to Alpha

All Levels to Beta

	Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2	
	P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B	
	Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4	
Pre-production	P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B	
	Meta features Core Team							Intro and Support			

Figure out what we're making   **Feedback Avalanche**

Design Goal

- Complete a fully playable, "technically shippable" version of the game
  - With the understanding that there is still reserved polish time

	Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2	
Pre-production	P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B	
		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B
	Meta features Core Team							Intro and Support			

Figure out what we're making   **Feedback Avalanche**

Full Beta Pass

- **Problem to Solve:**
  - Our work is well defined
  - **We're now the best we'll ever be at making levels**

	Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2
	P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B

		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4
Pre-production		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B

Meta features Core Team / Intro and Support

Figure out what we're making   **Feedback Avalanche**

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	Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2
	P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B
Pre-production		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B
	Meta features Core Team						Intro and Support				

Figure out what we're making   **Feedback Avalanche**

We're operating at our best…
Our work is well defined…

Hold on to your pants!

Full Beta Pa

- **Problem**

  - Our work is well defined

- **We're now the best we'll ever be at making levels**

Game Changer: Daily Playthroughs

- **"Problem"(?):**
  - The team is moving very fast
  - We have clarity on what we want to accomplish
  - It will be hard to keep up with director reviews and we don't want anyone blocked by waiting for director reviews

Game Changer: Daily Playthroughs

- **"Problem"(?):**
  - The team is moving very fast
  - We have clarity on what we want to accomplish
  - It will be hard to keep up with director reviews and we don't want anyone blocked by waiting for director reviews.

- **Solution:**
  - Daily builds and daily reviews - scrums are now in-game
  - Daily director meetings to talk about what we reviewed + next steps

A takeaway about velocity

Velocity often comes at the cost of developer agency

Moving fast requires leadership to make quick decisions. Quick decisions tend to take agency away from the developers, leading to loss of motivation. Know when to take the reins to achieve velocity and when to pause and let the team drive.

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NO DOCUMENT CAN KEEP UP WITH THE SPEEDING TRAIN THAT IS OUR TEAM

		Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2	
Pre-production		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B	
			Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B	
	Meta features Core Team								Intro and Support			

Figure out what we're making   **Feedback Avalanche**   **Get it done**

Time to take stock

- We have clarity on what's left to be done, it's all tracked, the team is firing on all cylinders

- Feedback slows down, review time ramps up

- Levels 1 and 4 get an extra mini-beta period

The next stage of the project:
- ~~"Figure out what we're making"~~
- ~~"The Feedback Avalanche"~~
- **"Get it done"**

Pre-Production

First Two Levels

~~Four More Levels...~~ All Levels to Alpha

All Levels to Beta

Polish, Test and Port

Pre-production		Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2		Polish	QA
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B			
		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4			
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B			
	Meta features Core Team							Intro and Support						

Figure out what we're making · **Feedback Avalanche** · **Get it done**

Design Goals

- Make it consistent
- Make it shine

	Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2	Polish	QA
Pre-production	P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B		
		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4		
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B		B	B		
	Meta features Core Team							Intro and Support				

Figure out what we're making   **Feedback Avalanche**   **Get it done**

Problems to solve

- **Prioritizing polish work**

Top 10 Moments

- **Problem to solve:** How do we prioritize polish tasks?

Top 10 Moments

- **Problem to solve:** How do we prioritize polish tasks?

- **Solution:** Polled the entire team, stakeholders and playtesters
  - *"What moments in the game are, or have the potential to be, the most memorable moments?"*
  - Informs the priorities for polish

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Pre-production		Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2	Polish	QA
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B		
		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4		
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B		
	Meta features Core Team							Intro and Support					

Figure out what we're making | Feedback Avalanche | Get it done

Problems to solve

- Prioritizing polish work
- **Risky last minute changes**

Playtest Hit List

- **Problem to solve:** Seeking confidence on a few somewhat risky, late-breaking design changes

Playtest Hit List

- **Problem to solve:** Seeking confidence on a few somewhat risky, late-breaking design changes

Thing to look for	Why are we asking?	Priority	Tester 1	Tester 2	Tester 3
[the thing you're testing for]	[why are you looking for this data?]	[High / Med / Low]	[observations from playtest]	[observations from playtest]	[observations from playtest]
Do players know what to do with the key that is sent?	*We recently switched it from a disk to a key*	*High*	*Immediately used the key on keyhole*	*Looked for keyhole for a while, eventually saw it*	*Waved the key frantically everywhere*

Pre-production		Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2		Polish	QA
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B			
		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4			
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B			
		Meta features Core Team							Intro and Support					

Figure out what we're making   **Feedback Avalanche**   **Get it done**

Problems to solve

- Prioritizing polish work
- Risky last minute changes
- **Infinite clarity on how to improve the game, no time to do it**

Pre-production		Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2		Polish	QA
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B			
		Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4			
		P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B			
		Meta features Core Team							Intro and Support					

Figure out what we're making **Feedback Avalanche** **Get it done**

Problems to solve

- Prioritizing polish work
- Risky last minute changes
- **Infinite clarity on how to improve the game, no time to do it**
  - 2 week extension
  - Generates immense value
  - Even just 2 more weeks is exhausting

Level 1			Level 2		Level 3			1	2		
P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B		
Level 4			Level 5		Level 6			5	4		
P	A	B	P	A	P	A	B	B	B		

Pre-production

Meta features Core Team — Intro and Support

Polish — QA

Figure out what we're making — **Feedback Avalanche** — **Get it done** — **Make it great**

Time to take stock

- The game is almost done
- Remaining design work is around porting and stability

We're almost there:

- ~~"Figure out what we're making"~~
- ~~"The Feedback Avalanche"~~
- ~~"Get it done"~~
- **"Make it great"**

IEYTD2 Document All-Stars

- **Accessibility Matrix**. To plan early for accessibility support
- **Master Design Guide**. Taste test your "secret sauce"
- **Game Pillars**. To guide reviews and brainstorms
- **Living Agendas**. To give thoughts a natural outlet
- **Feedback tracker**. To listen to and follow up with stakeholders
- **Team Trello Board**. For anyone to give any feedback, any time
- **Beta Planning Documents.** To clearly define tasks for a focused beta period
- **Top 10 game moments**. To prioritize polish
- **Playtest hit list**. To confirm late changes

Design Direction Takeaways

- TEAMS - **Civility, tolerance and respect are non-negotiable**
- PROCESS - **Processes impact people's lives**
- PROCESS - **Default to involving the team**
- CREATIVE DIRECTION - **Expose your decision making process**
- CREATIVE DIRECTION - **Teach the team to walk in the player's shoes**
- CREATIVE DIRECTION - **There are paths to victory beyond what you can see**
- FEEDBACK - **Look for the problem they're trying to solve**
- FEEDBACK - **If it makes you uncomfortable, dig deeper**
- LEADERSHIP - **Seek team alignment on the problems to solve**
- LEADERSHIP - **Velocity often comes at the cost of developer agency**
- LEADERSHIP - **Design the nail to the hammer you wield**

THANK YOU!

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