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Who is High Moon?

- Console developer
- Located in Carlsbad, California
- Recently acquired by Vivendi Games
- Winner of GameWeek Top 50 Technology Innovators for usage of Scrum
- Winner of Workplace Excellence award 2005

Rory McGuire

Senior Designer

High Moon Studios

San Diego Society For Human Resource Management
Workplace Excellence 2005

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Darkwatch

- First person shooter for Xbox and PS2
- Published by Capcom
- Vampire theme set in the Old West

What are we talking about?

- Agile Game Design At High Moon Studios
- Why bother?
- Structure
- Let’s build a game
- Benefits
- Challenges
- Conclusion

Why Bother with agile development for design?

- To reduce the impact of project “train wrecks”.
- Align development priorities with reality to focus on what *should* be done rather than on what *could* be done.
- Demonstrate the value of the product by what is on screen, not what is on paper.

Design Department At High Moon

- Define specific gameplay vision and participate in setting project goals.
- Own the creation of levels and mechanics.
- Contribute ideas and enhancements to the game backlog.
- Are advocates for the player, helping to assess and focus feedback from testers and publishing partners.

Designers at High Moon

- Focus on agile implementation of the vision, not on out-of-date design documentation
- Work with multi-disciplinary teams to achieve vertical slice goals, whether this is a level, a mechanic or an in-game cinematic.

What is a Customer?

- Projects are broken up into areas of activity with demonstratable goals.
- Every scrum team has a customer who is the keeper of the vision for a particular goal and establishes what “done” means.

Product Owners and Design Customers

- A Product Owner is the communicator of the vision for the entire project.
- Scrum answers the “How” question, but the “What” and “Why” needs to be answered by focused direction and vision.
- Design Customers carry the vision on specific scrum goals (levels, mechanics, etc)

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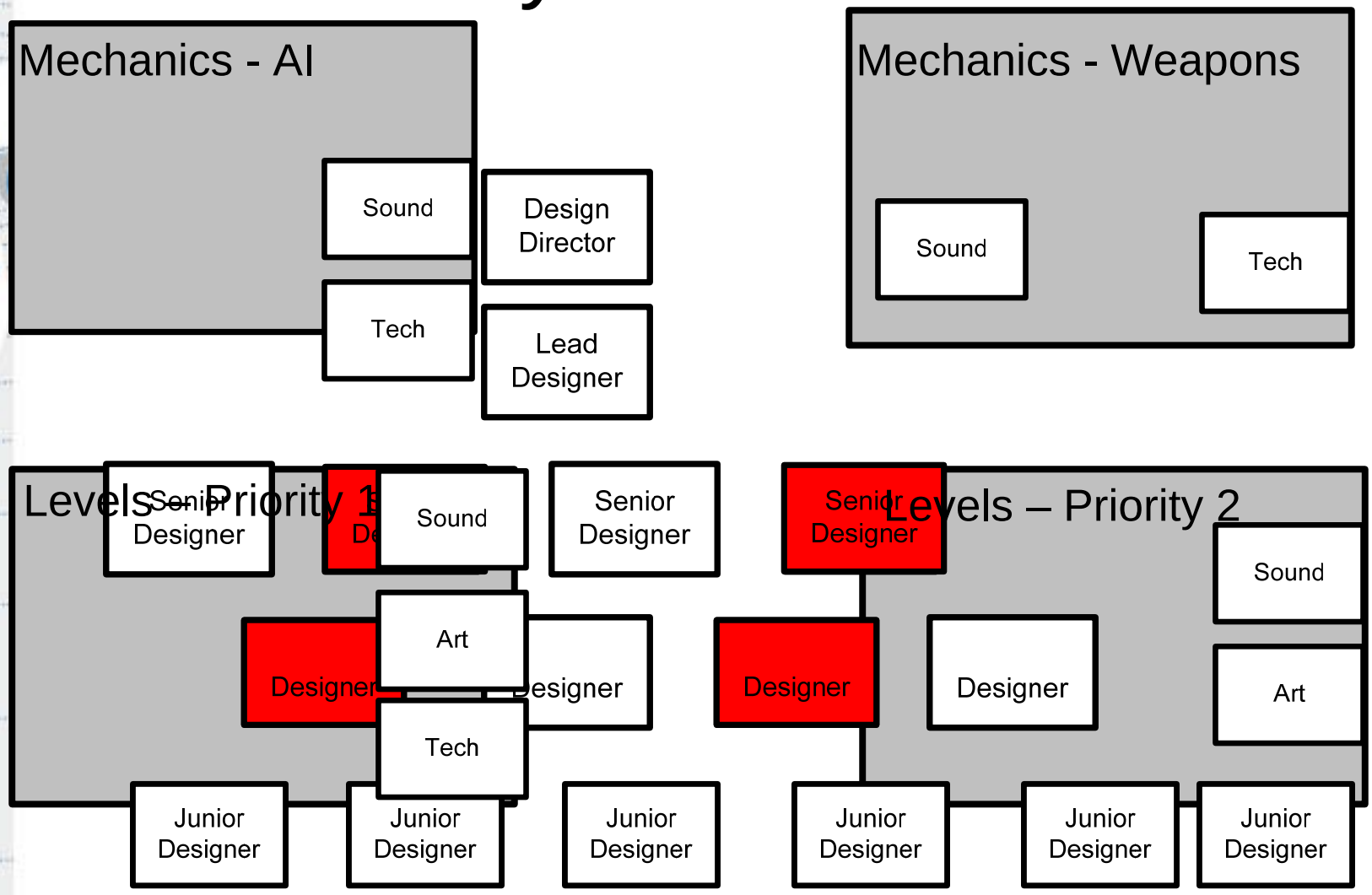
How are they structured?



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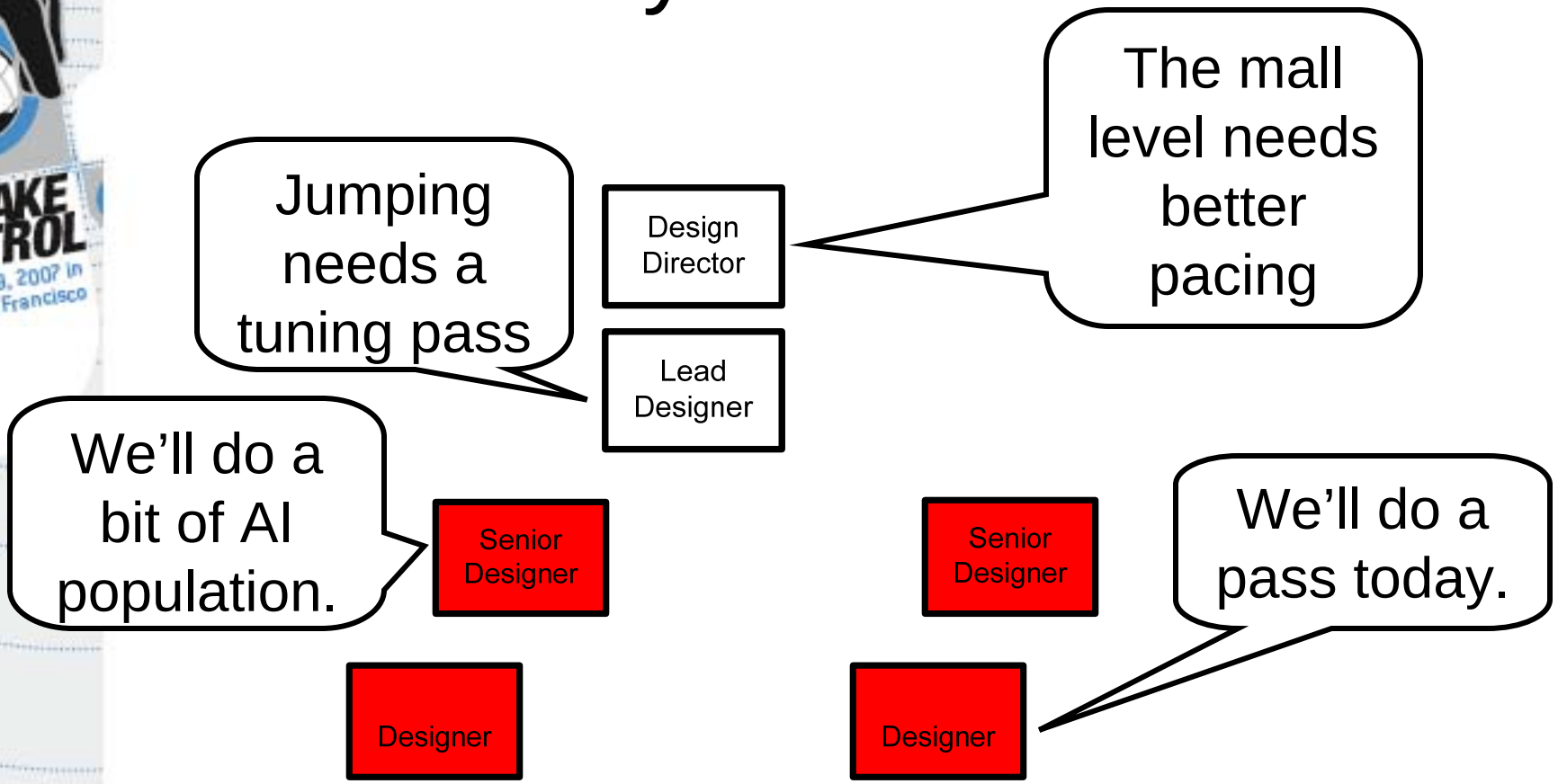
How are they structured



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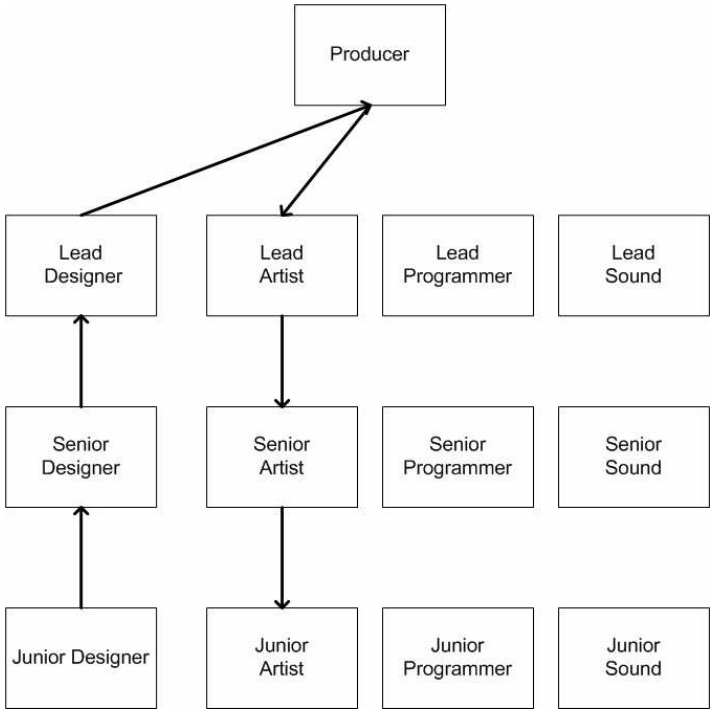
Traditional Structure



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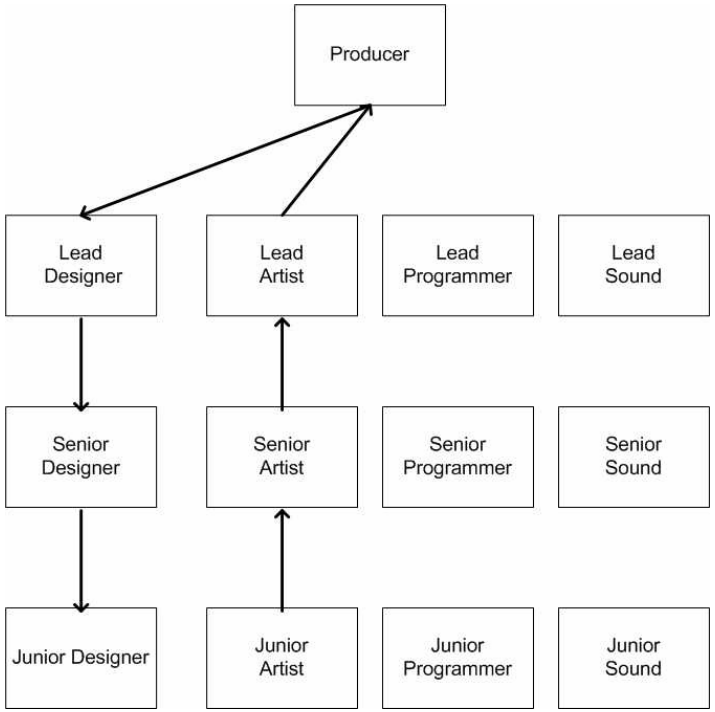
Traditional Structure



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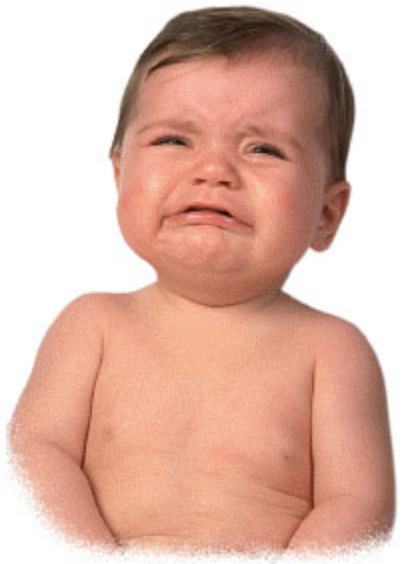
Traditional Structure



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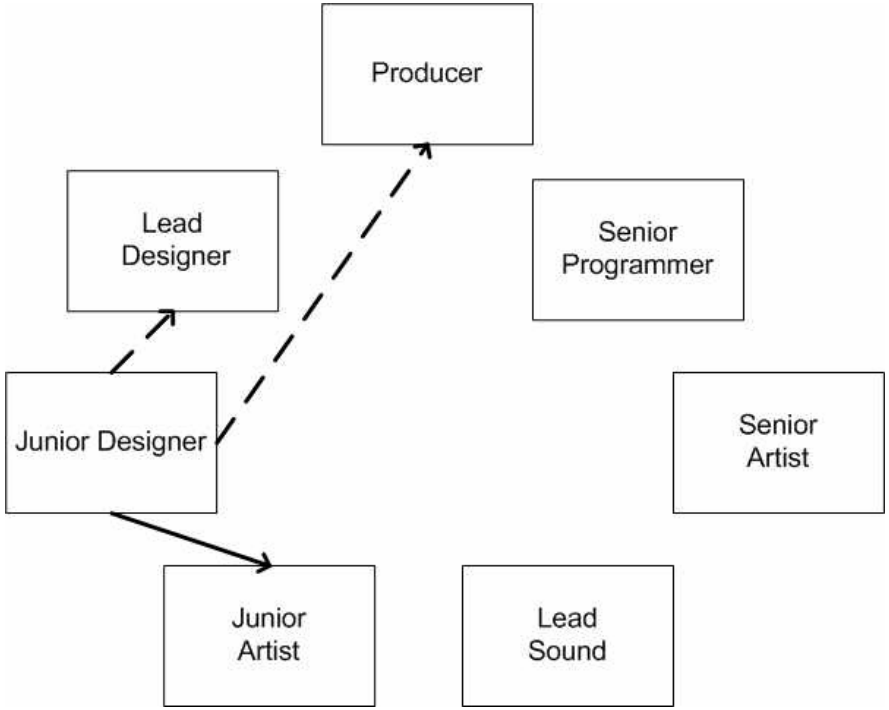
Agile Design Structure



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Viola!

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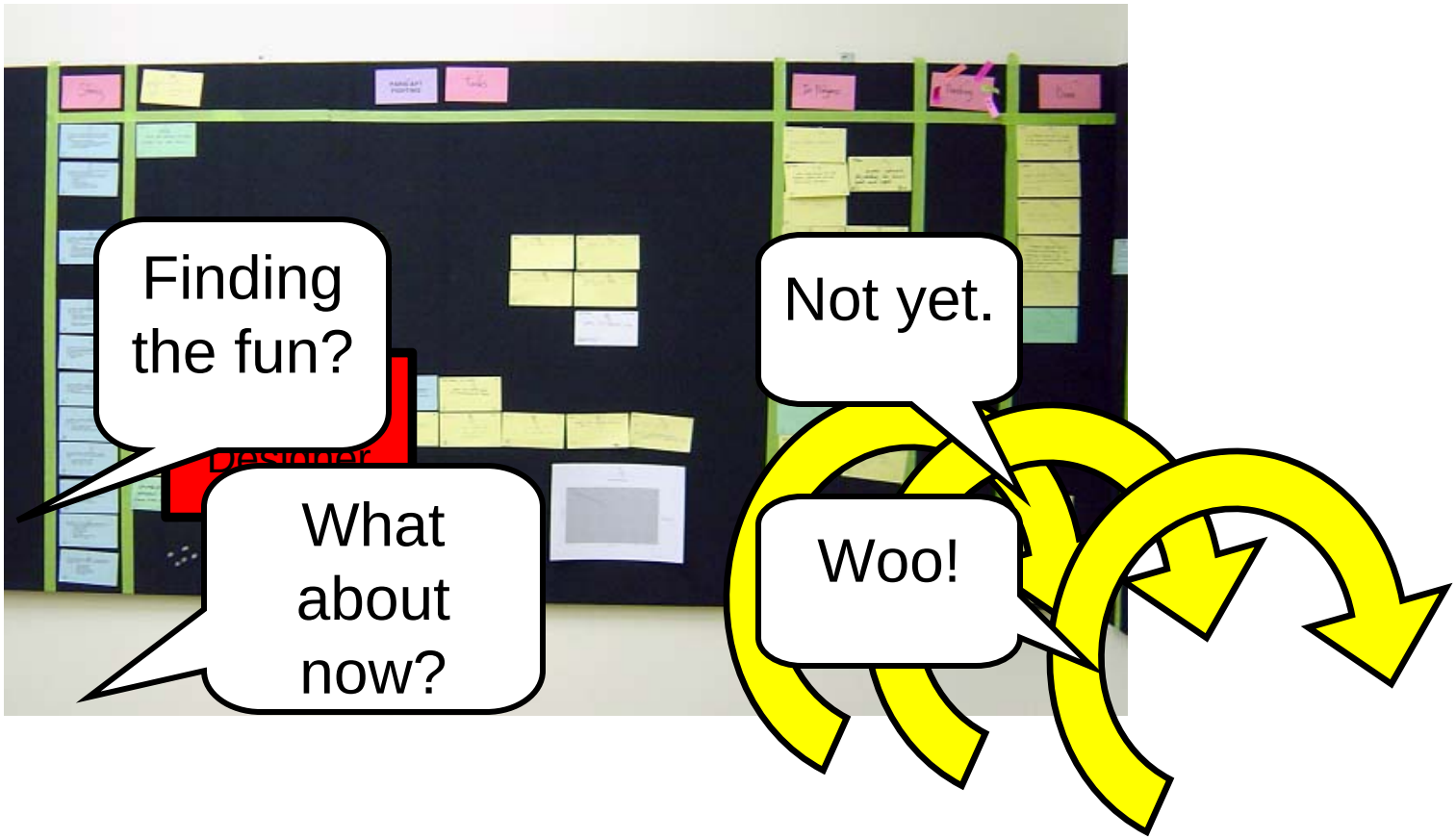
Benefits: Iteration Loop



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Iteration + Focus = Quality

Benefits: Project Stability

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Project Stability

- Time spent fighting the game is time where the product value decreases

Project Stability

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Additional Benefits

- Project visibility to design team
- Increased focus
- Identify problems and opportunities early

How do we plan via agile?

- Focused “stories” replace design documentation
- Focus Test

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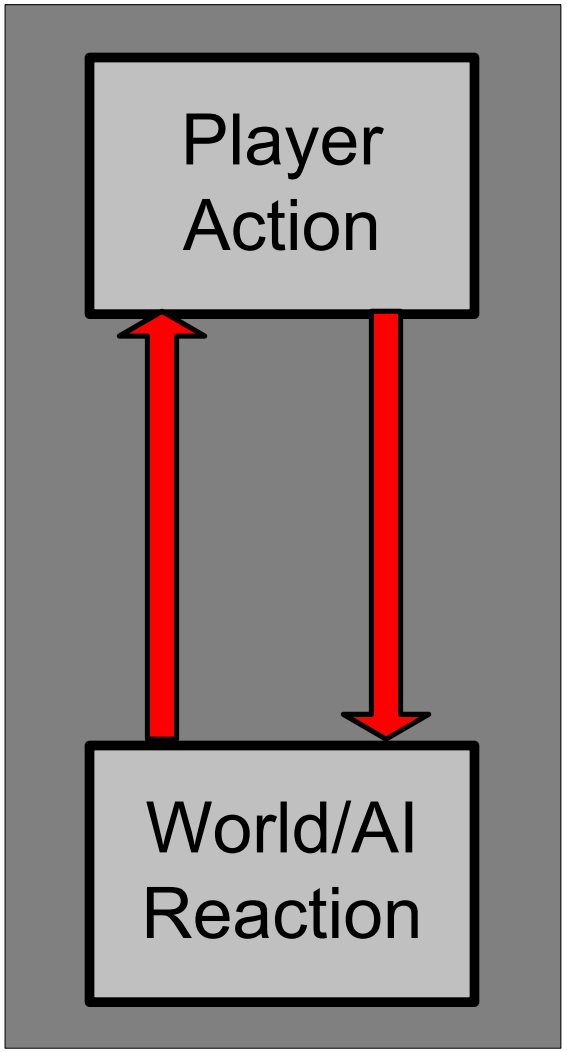
How do we plan?

- Design Documentation Light
- Focus Test
- Focus on Action/Reaction
  - Let team determine path



Player Experience

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How do we plan?

- Design Documentation Light
- Focus Test
- Focus on Action/Reaction
  - Let team determine path
- Come Prepared
  - But Respond to change

Lets Build A Game

- Small team
- Uses Scrum
- Iterate with designer centric goals in mind
- Must be playable pieces of the game

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Feature List

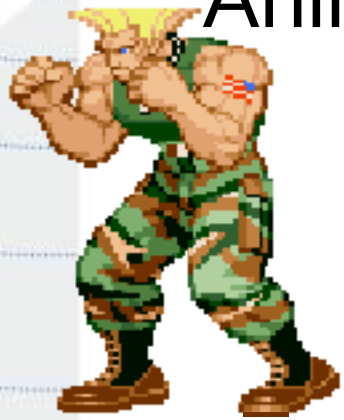
- Character must jump and fight
- Must feature hedgehog
- Must have Enemies (AI)

Meet the Team

Chun Li
Animator

Blanka
Junior
Designer

Ryu
Programmer



Guile
Artist

Street Fighter
Studios

Zangief
Sound

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Street Fighter Studios Begins Scrum

Daily Scrum

Iteration

(2-4 weeks)

Features broken into tasks

Features

Hedgehog

Jump

Enemies

Game

New Game Piece

Street Fighter Studios

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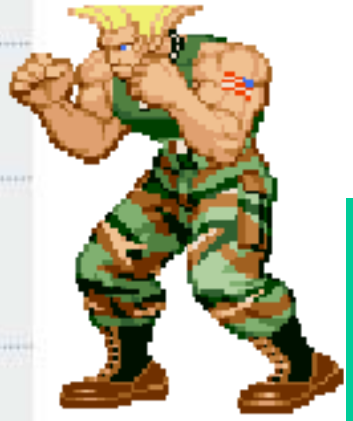
Prioritize

- 1) Must feature hedgehog
- 2) Character must jump
- 3) Must have enemies (AI)



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Iteration 1
Daily meeting

Capturing Hedgehog sounds

Beginning Hedgehog-esque animation

Hedgehog Tech pipeline

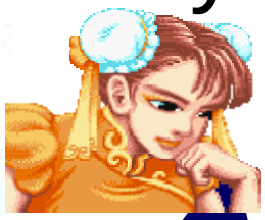
Tuning Hedgehoggery

ng for ction on Hedgehog

•Must feature Hedgehog

Street Fighter Studios

Iteration 1
Daily Meeting (later in iteration)



Impediment; Can't find any hedgehogs in California

Guile I can help you with Hedgehog direction

Zangief, lets go to the zoo I can help you.

ent: Big
ıs with
ıedgehog

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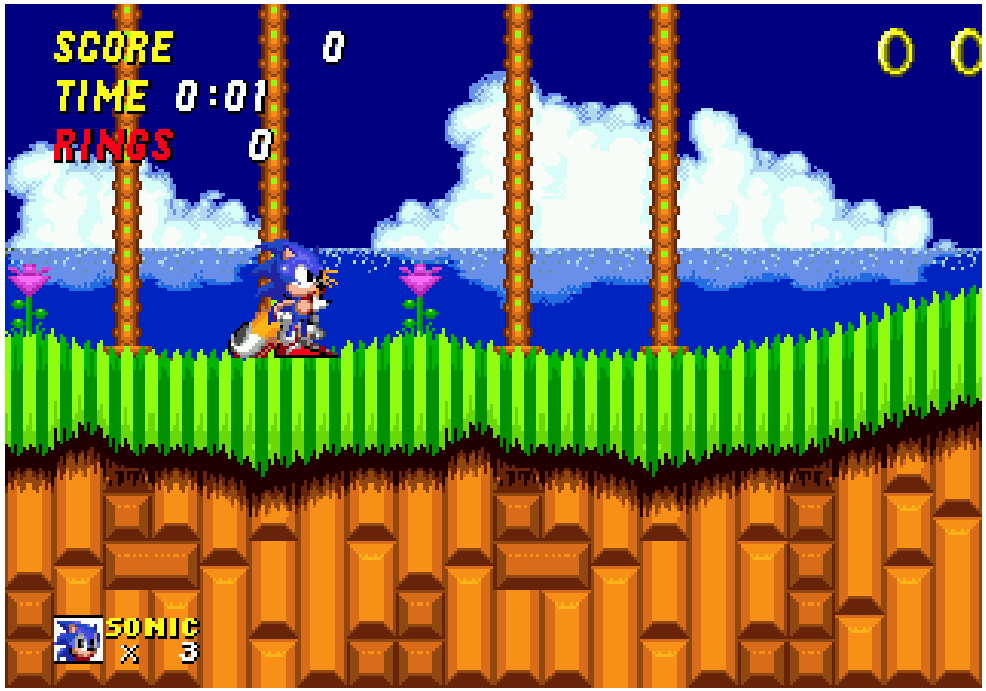
Iteration 1 Review



Street Fighter Studios

Street Fighter Studios Continues Scrum

Daily Scrum

Change

Iteration

(2-4 weeks)

Features broken into tasks

Features

Hedgehog

Jump

Enemies

Game

New Game Piece

Street Fighter Studios

Change!

We love everything but the art direction, we need to revisit the hedgehog.

Street Fighter Studios

Re-Prioritize

1) Must feature hedgehog
1) Must feature plumber
2) Character must jump
3) Must have enemies (AI)

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Iteration 2
Daily Meeting

Capturing Italian samples for voiceover

Tuning plumber waddle

Beginning to animate plumber waddle

Beg
rende
for plumber

g art
on on
Plumber

- Must feature plumber

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Iteration 2
Daily Meeting (Later in Iteration)

Guile I you t geom we car the pipeline

Need help with animation reference

Attaching voiceover sounds

Chun Li I will help you with the animation reference

ment: tune geometry

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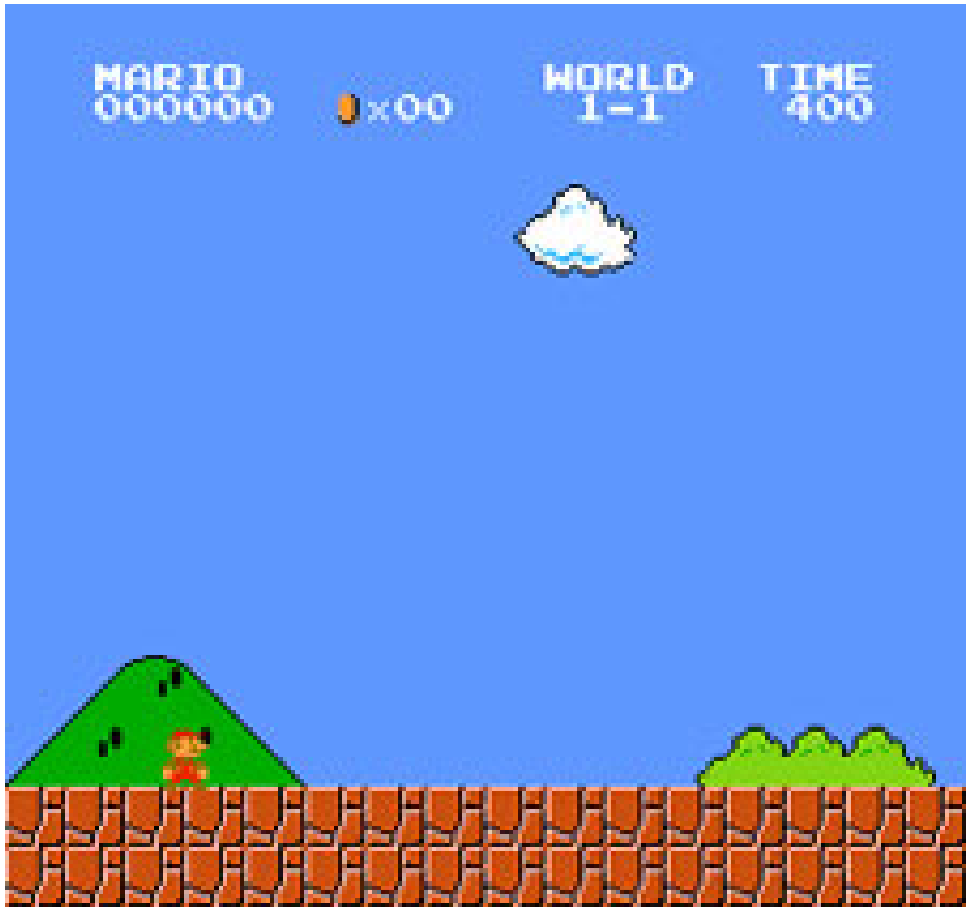
Iteration 2 Review



Street Fighter Studios

Iteration 2 Review

1) Must feature plumber

2) Character must jump

3) Must have enemies (AI)

Street Fighter Studios

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The Plot Thickens

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Street Fighter Studios Expands

Ken
Programmer

E Honda
Artist

Street Fighter Studios

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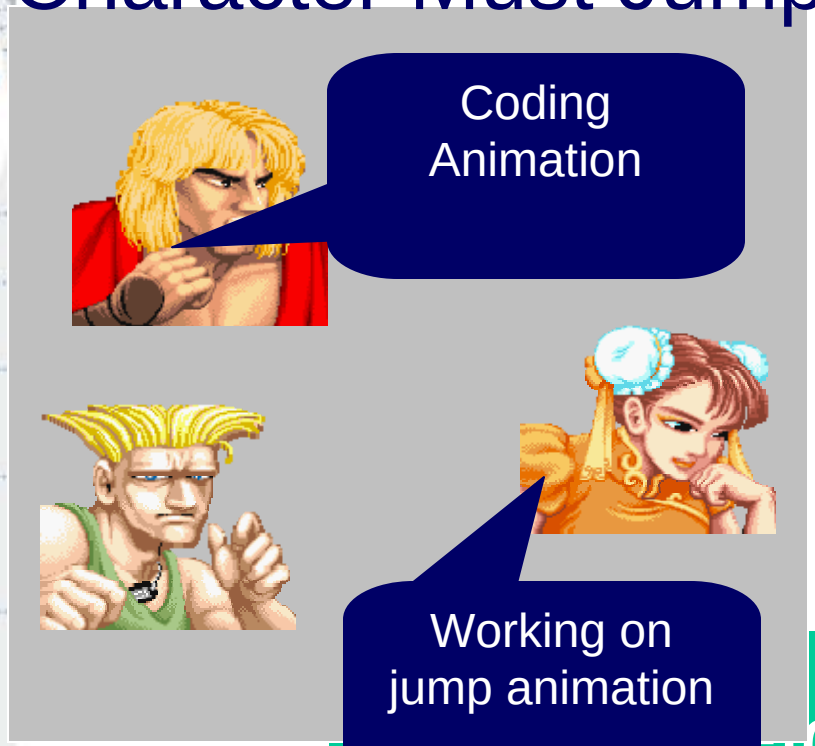
Two Teams Tackle Separate Features

Team 1
Character Must Jump



Team 2
Must Have Enemies

Studios

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Iteration 3 Review

Street Fighter Studios

Iteration 3 Results

Street Fighter Studios

Challenges and Problems

- Designers must cope with high rates of change.

Change

- How do we determine scope for a product which can change month to month?
- How do you respond to change via publisher direction?
- How do you respond to change as contributed by the team?

Challenges

- Designers must cope with high rates of change.
- Short and long-term

Short and Long Term

- How do you deliver a product every two weeks?
- If you are delivering a product every two weeks, how do you avoid tunnel vision?
- How do you separate a submission disk from a prototype? Where do you draw the line?

Challenges

- Designers must cope with high rates of change.
- Short and long-term
- Responsibility increases
  - Members of the team
  - Management

Conclusion

- Product Value
- Stability
- Transparency
- Iteration
- Focused Goals
- Find the fun as early as possible

Special Thanks

- Chris Ulm and Paul O’Connor
- Clinton Keith
- Mike Cohn
- Sonic the Hedgehog, Super Mario Bros and Street Fighter are copyright Sega, Nintendo and Capcom, respectively.

Additional Materials

- Web Resources
  - ScrumAlliance.Org
  - AgileGameDevelopment.Com
  - GamesFromWithin.Com