

Ensuring a Positive, Collaborative Team Culture

Richard Carrillo
Creative Director
Sledgehammer Games

15+ YEARS IN GAMES



TIBURON



CHICAGO



VISCERAL
GAMES



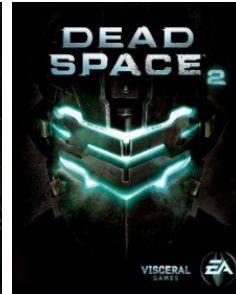
KAOS
STUDIOS



TORONTO



TORONTO



GDC¹⁵

“Designing Your Design Team”

GDC¹⁷

“Interviewing for Game Design”

GDC¹⁹

“Beyond Game Design”

WHY THIS TALK?

Team Culture: How team members engage with their work and each other.

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Negative Culture:

Outcomes

- Toxicity
- Infighting
- Poor Output/Quality
- Lack of Trust
- Complete Redesign
- Retention Issues



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Red Flags

- Poor Vision
- Lack of Direction
- Micro-Managing
- Firefighting
- Silos



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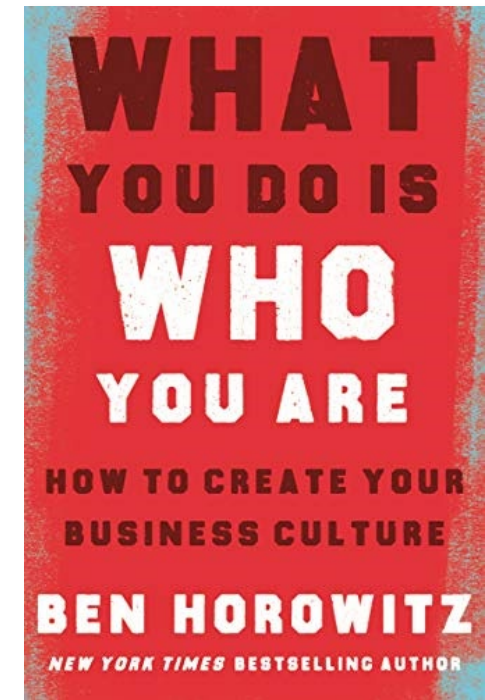
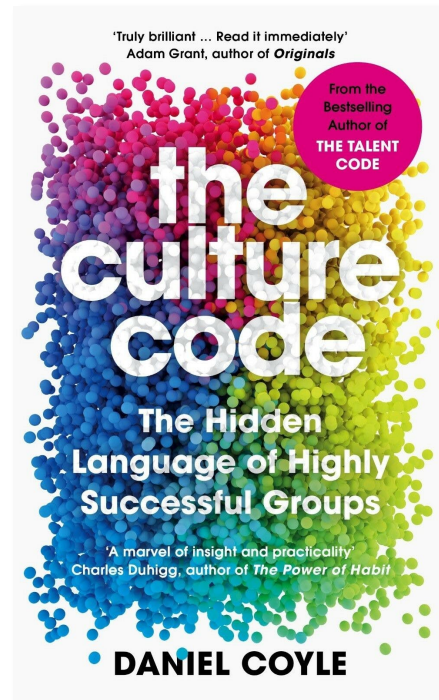
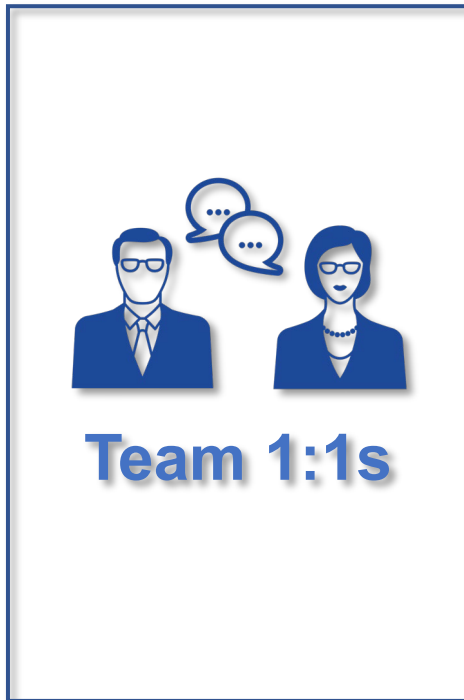
Problem: A Negative Team Culture can create major issues across development and rifts among the team. Even worse, the effects of this culture can be misattributed to the dev team's performance. This can cause teams to never resolve the true issues, double down, and spiral further.



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SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS...



SOLUTION: NEW PRIORITIES

1. The Team
2. The Player
3. Game/Vision
4. Your Craft
5. Ideas



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TEAM CULTURE PRIORITIES

1. The Team

2. The Player

3. Game/Vision

4. Your Craft

5. Ideas

- No Team, No Game

- Passion, Trust, & Ownership drive development



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TEAM CULTURE PRIORITIES

1. The Team
 2. The Player
 3. Game/Vision
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 5. Ideas
- Leads to Silos and Infighting
 - Leads to Idea Worship



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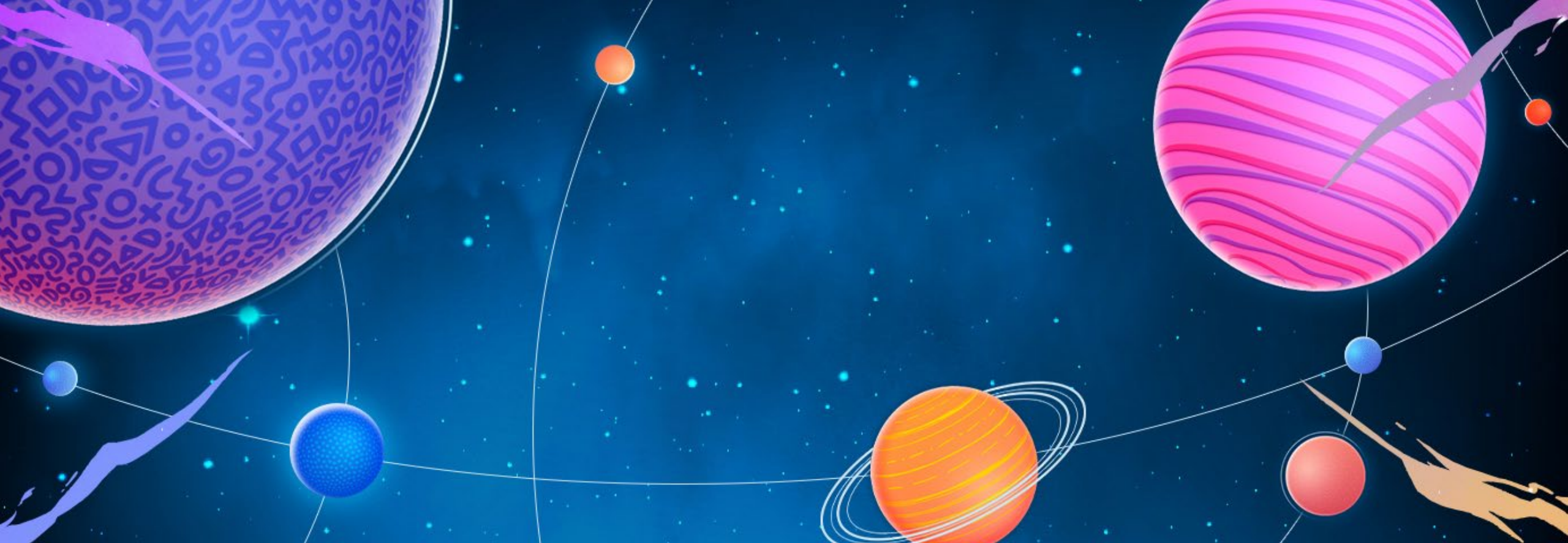
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1. The Team

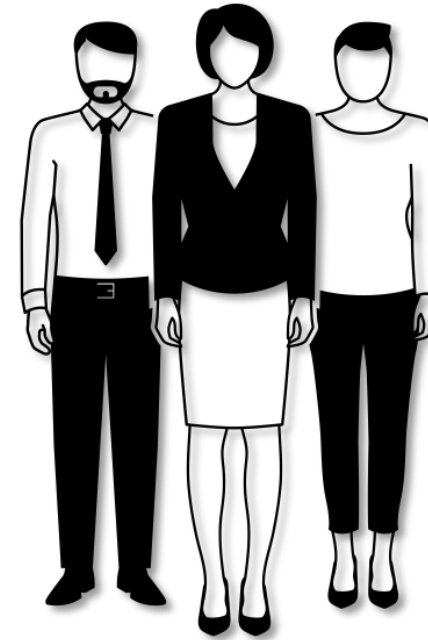
Goal

A passionate team that believes in the Vision, the Design, and the Product and feels ownership in them.

THE TEAM MUST BELIEVE

Attaining Belief

1. The Problem Exists
2. It Needs to be Solved
3. This is the Optimal Solution



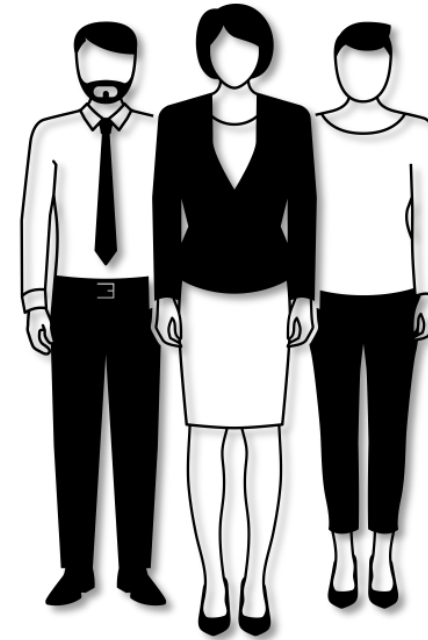
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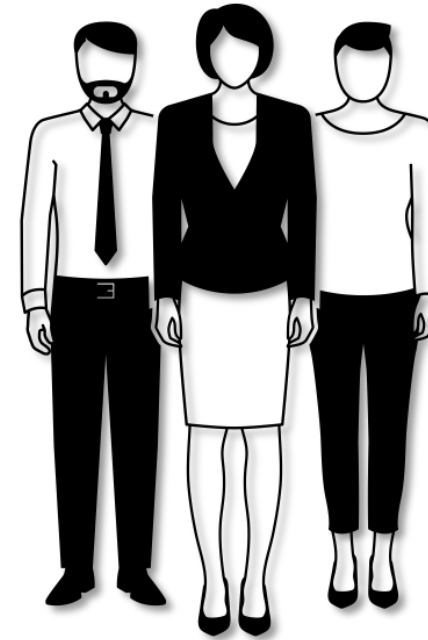
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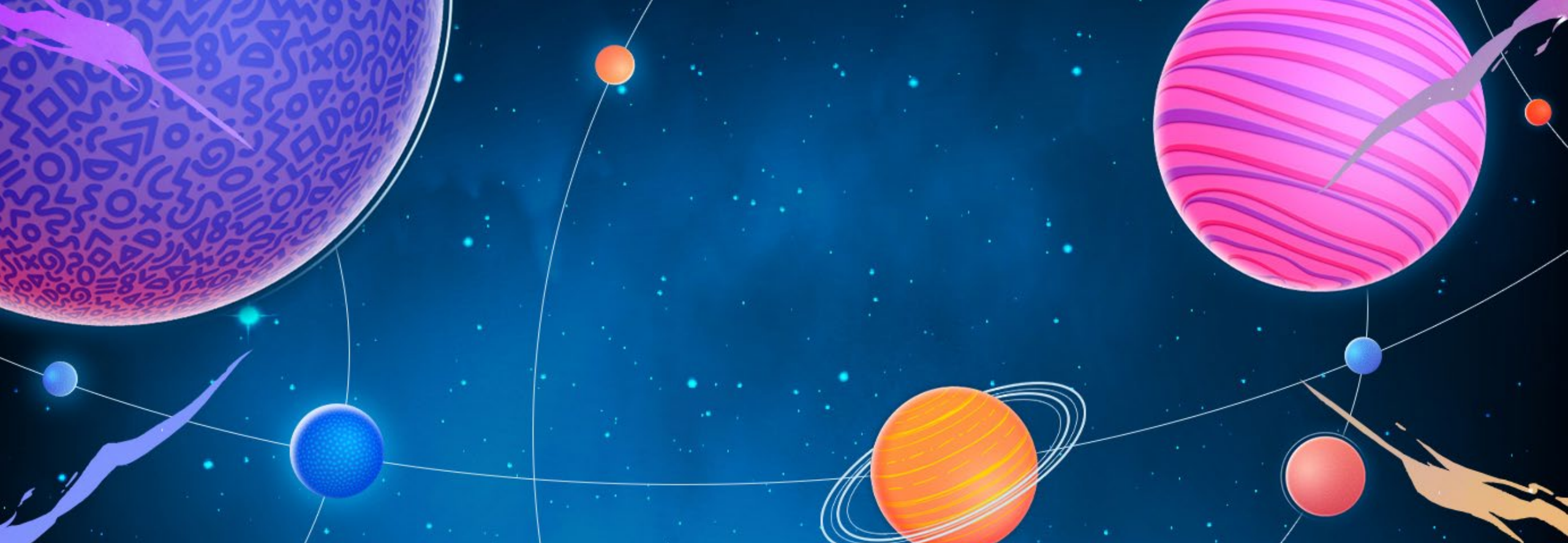
For Directors: It's your job to ensure belief in the vision, product, and tasks

For Individual Contributors: If you don't believe, it's your job to bring it up



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1. The Team
2. The Player

Goal

A strong understanding of who our market is, what experiences they enjoy, and how we can develop with them in mind.



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LEARN YOUR MARKET AS A TEAM



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List Your Reference Titles

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Play Competitors Together



LEARN YOUR MARKET AS A TEAM



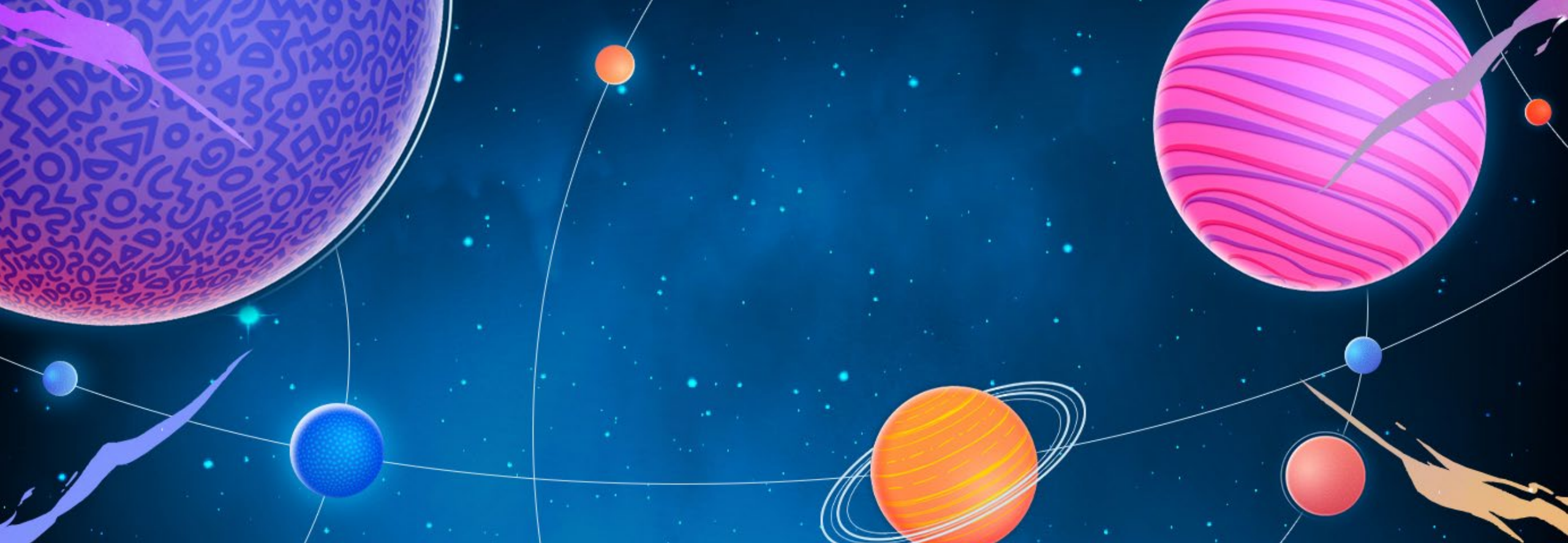
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Play Competitors Together



Watch Playtests Together



1. The Team
2. The Player
3. Game/Vision

Goal

A player-centric vision the team believes in that will also help developers make decisions without needing constant input from directors/design.



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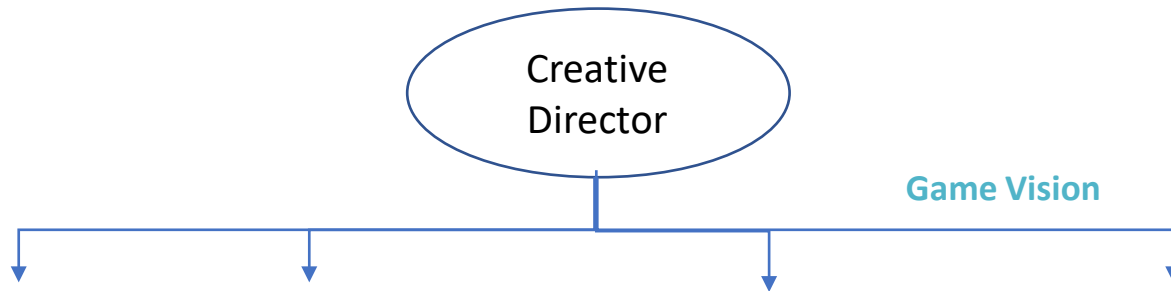
ENTIRE TEAM OWNS THE VISION

Vision: How all the pieces come together to make the experience



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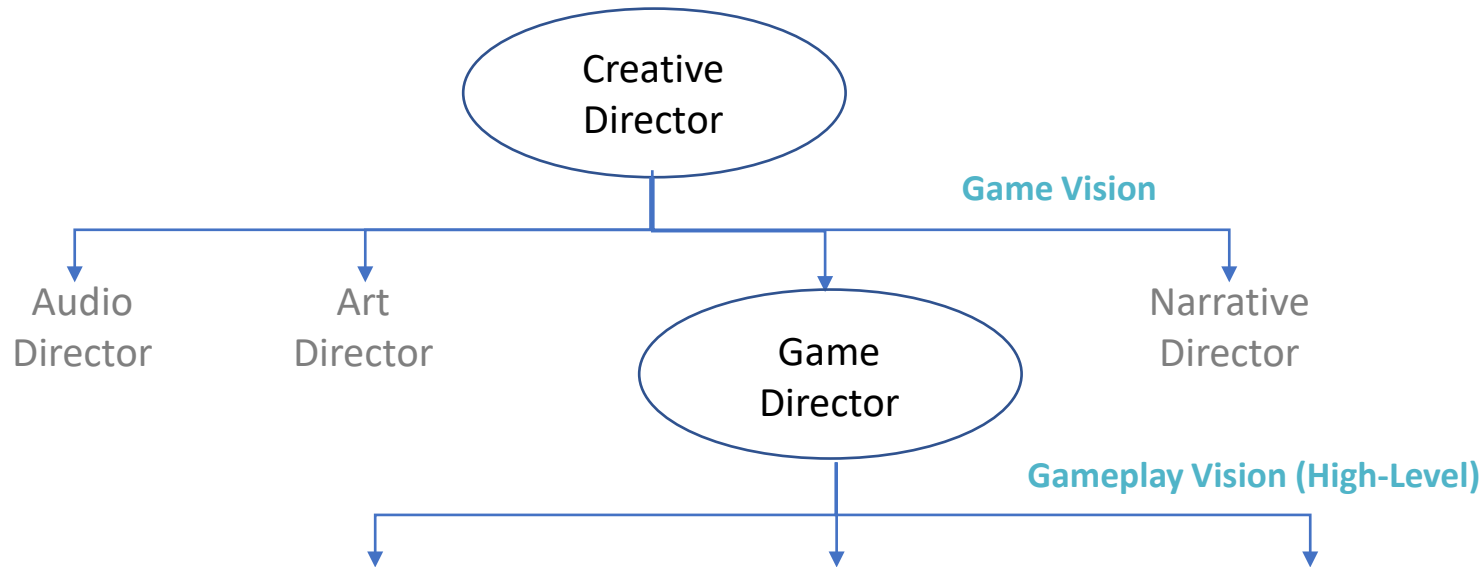
Vision: How all the pieces come together to make the experience



Pillars: Sam | Killing Ballet | SMI

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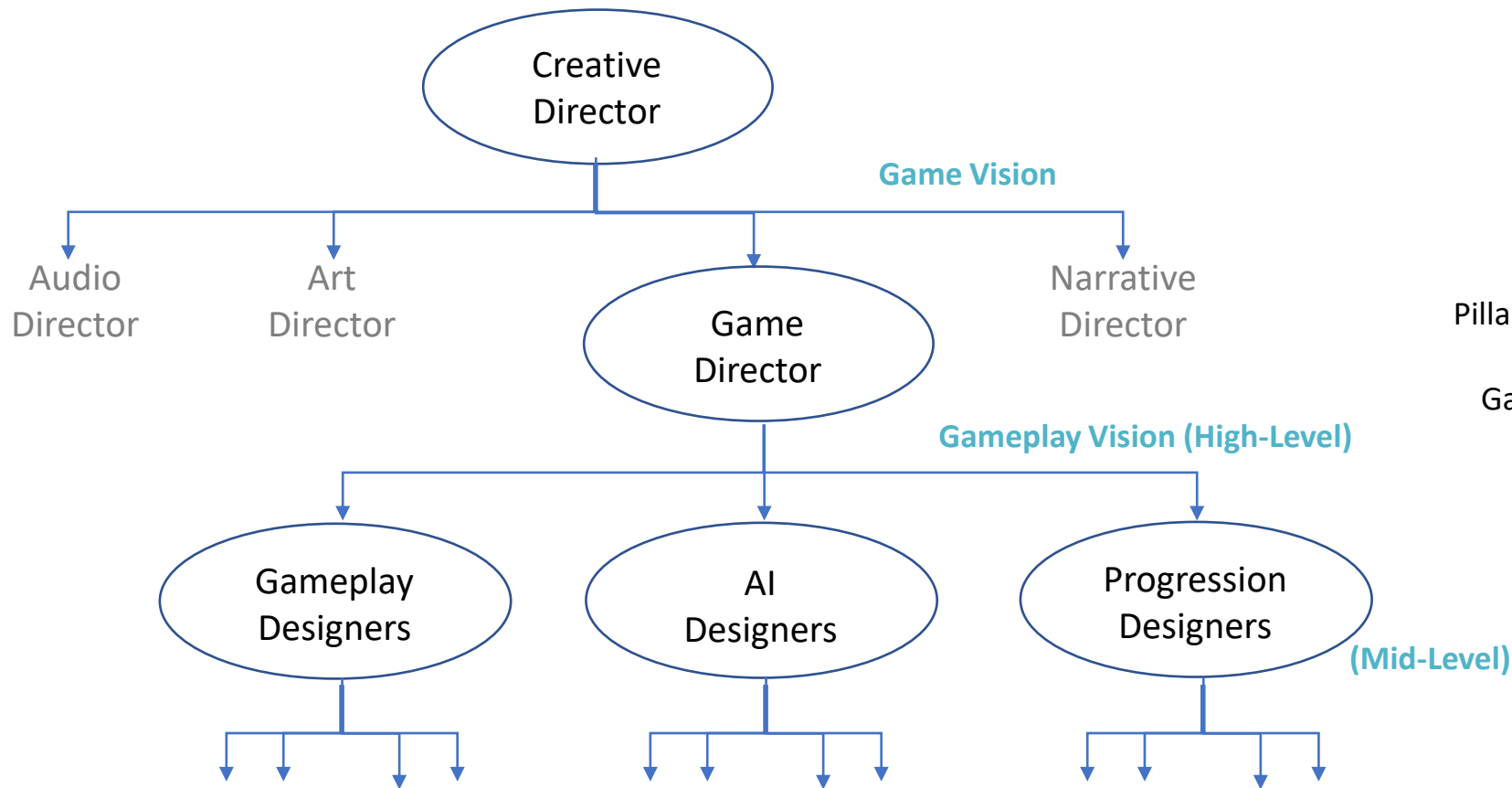
Pillars: Sam | Killing Ballet | SMI

Pillars Translation: Ultimate Spy | Fluid Nav + Combat | Economy

Gameplay Loop: Plan > Execute > Vanish

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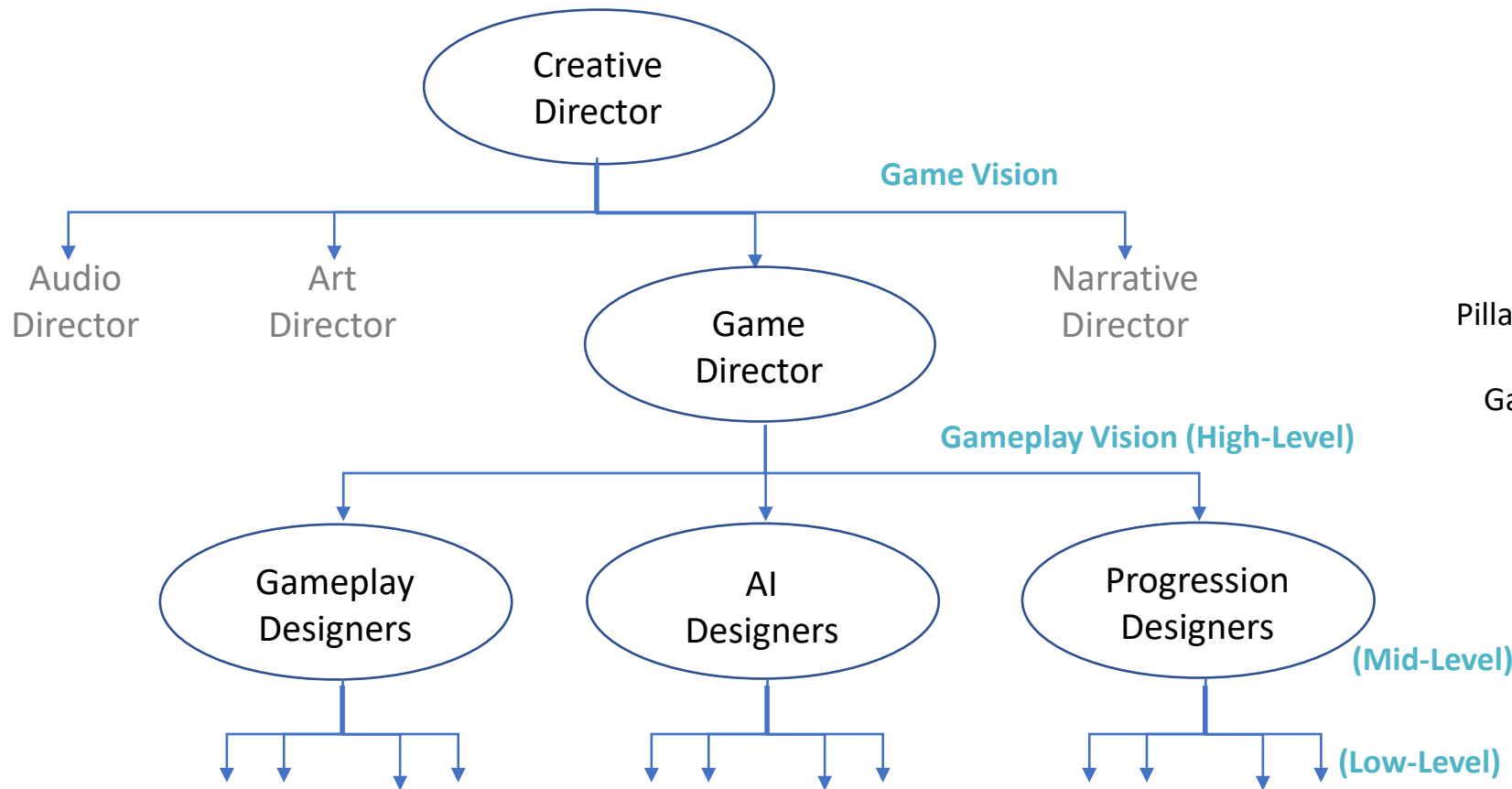
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Specialty Goals: AI Challenges each beat of the Gameplay Loop

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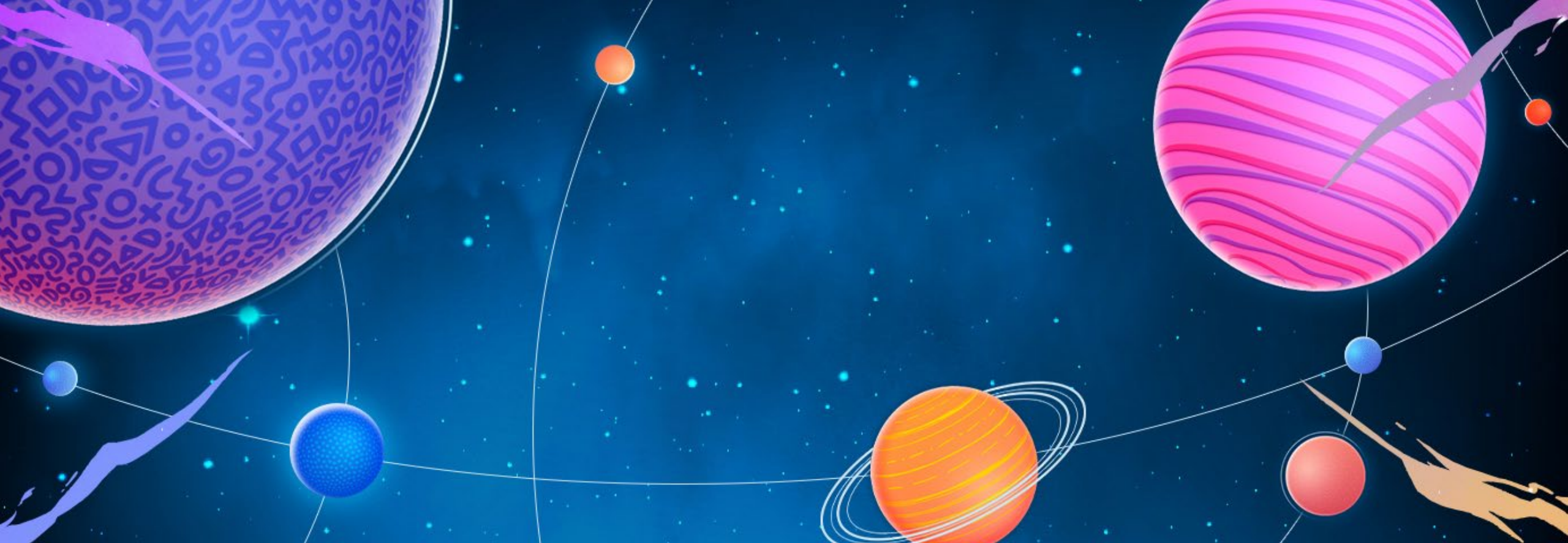
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Specialty Goals: AI Challenges each beat of the Gameplay Loop

Feature Goals: NPC that challenges Plan beat

New NPC: TECH ARCHETYPE



1. The Team
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Goal

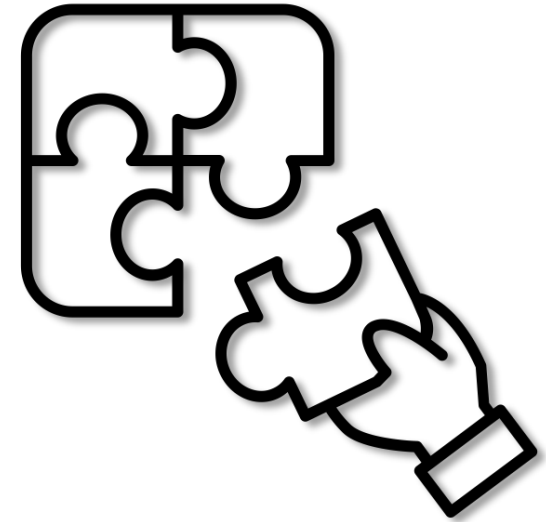
Craft that drive towards the Vision and gets better with every iteration by solving problems with surgical precision.



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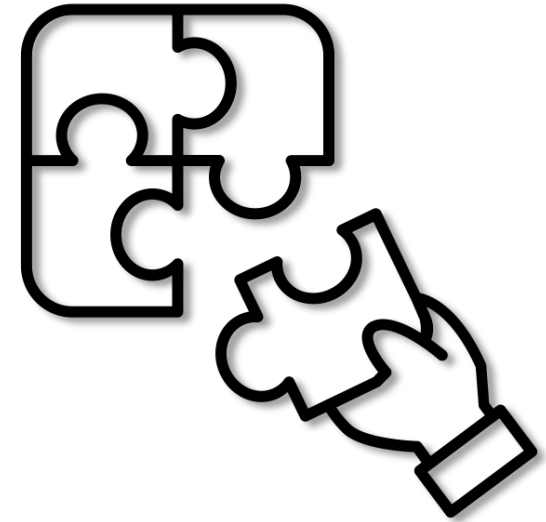
PROBLEM SOLVE TOWARDS THE VISION



PROBLEM SOLVE TOWARDS THE VISION

Ask Yourself:

1. How does this task serve the vision?
2. What's the problem you're trying to solve?
3. What issues would arise if this task wasn't completed?



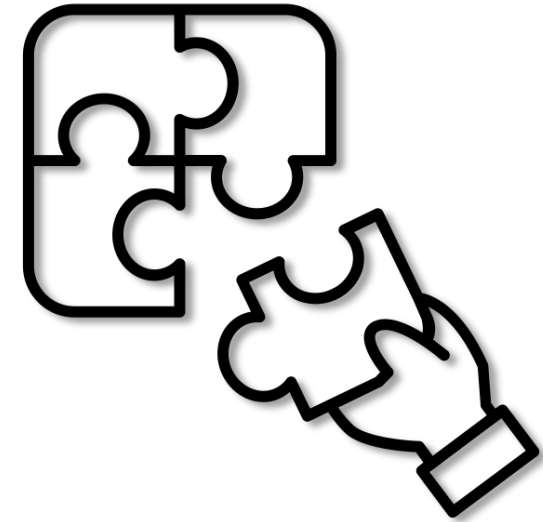
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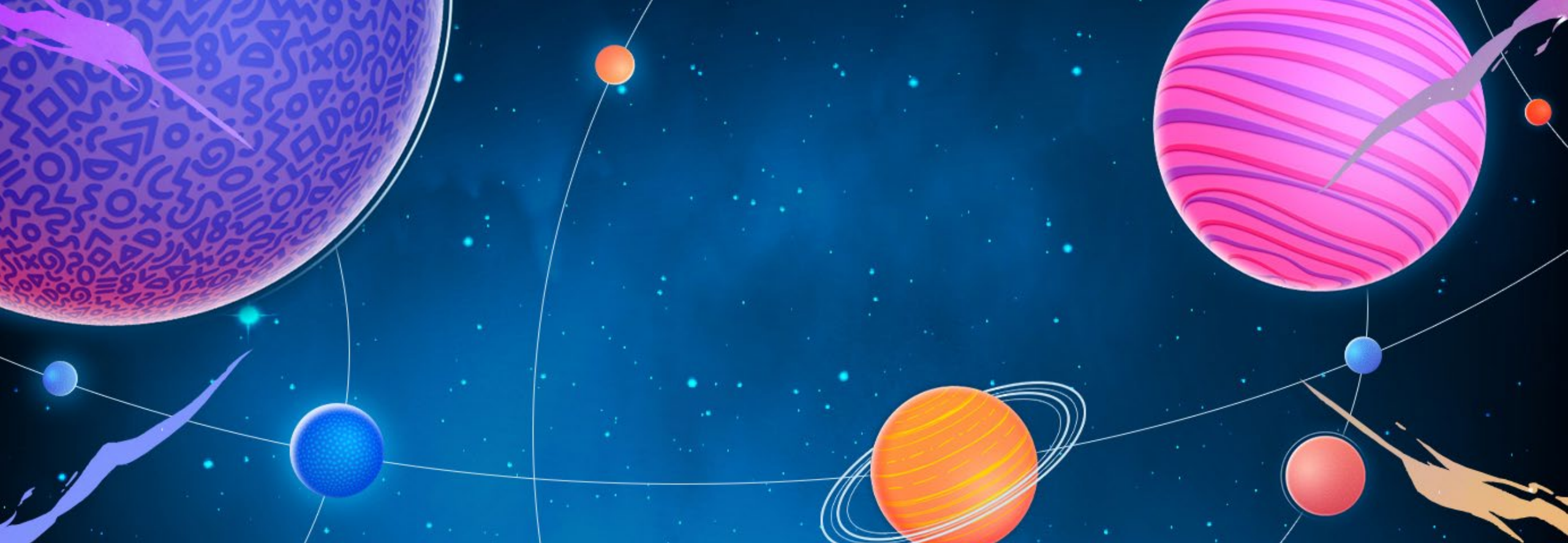
Task Creators: Make sure these questions are answered in each Task

Individual Contributors: If you don't know these answers, don't start the Task



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1. The Team
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Goal

Developers that source ideas from the industry and across the team while being able to pick the right ideas to craft towards the vision.



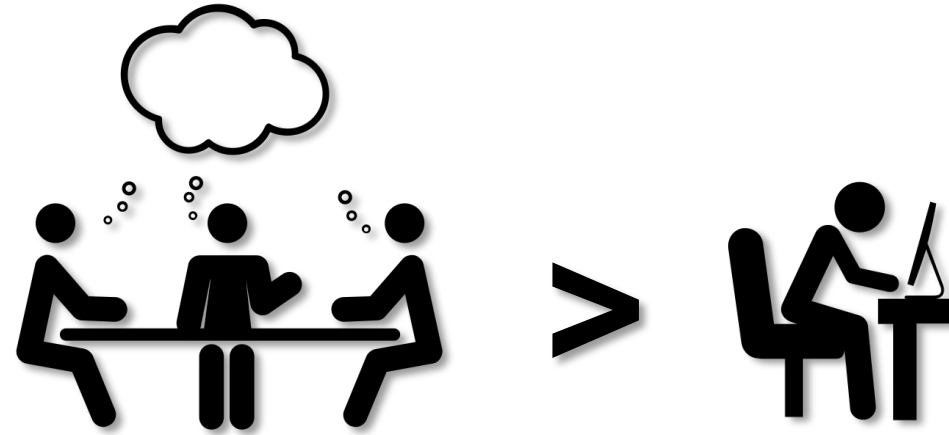
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MAXIMIZE IDEAS, MINIMIZE SILOS



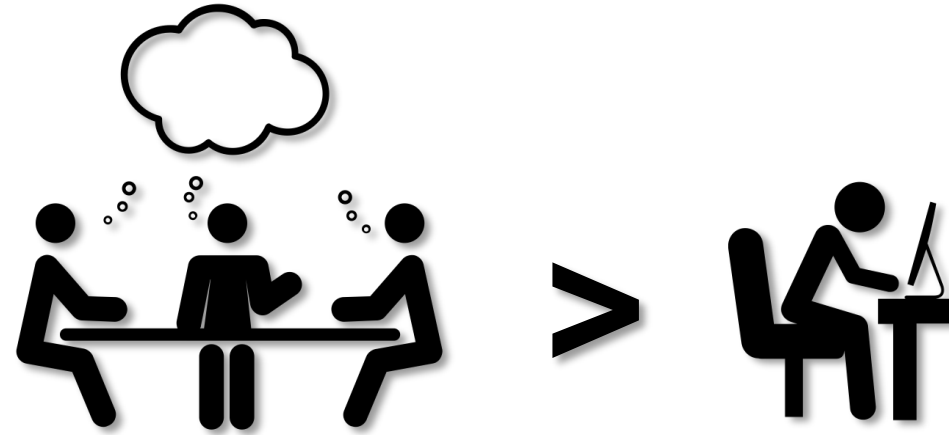
MAXIMIZE IDEAS, MINIMIZE SILOS



- Always be open to ideas and feedback, no matter the form



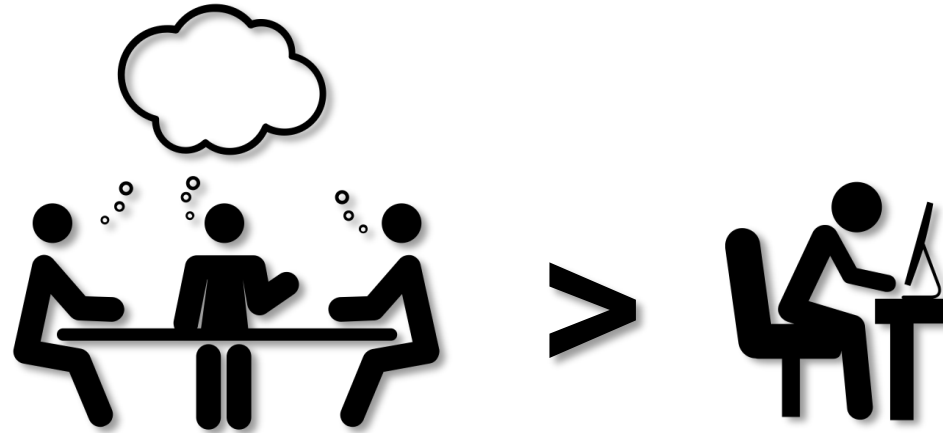
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- Search out ideas and change up who you go to



MAXIMIZE IDEAS, MINIMIZE SILOS



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- Search out ideas and change up who you go to
- Don't wait until it's perfect, share your ideas ASAP



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MAXIMIZE IDEAS, MINIMIZE SILOS



- Always be open to ideas and feedback, no matter the form
- Search out ideas and change up who you go to
- Don't wait until it's perfect, share your ideas ASAP
- Find ways to source the team as a whole



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A POSITIVE, COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

Priorities

Virtues

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. The Team..... | The Team Must Believe |
| 2. The Player..... | Learn Your Market as a Team |
| 3. Game/Vision..... | Entire Team Owns the Game/Vision |
| 4. Your Craft..... | Problem Solve Towards the Vision |
| 5. Ideas..... | Maximize Ideas, Minimize Silos |



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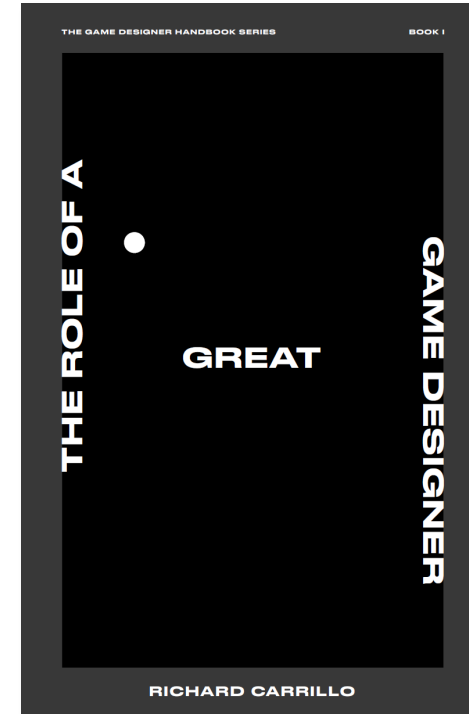
JUST THE START OF THE CONVERSATION



Richard Carrillo



@Carrillo_GD



COMING SOON



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