

Managing A medium Sized Team' By Richard Culver

OK so this is interesting. I find I am learning a lot by trial and error when it comes to managing a small growing studio. I was going to edit parts of this thread, but decided to leave it as a record.

I finally realized the importance of assigning leads. Sure, I got the concept and have "understood it" for years. But have never been faced with it personally. So as we have grown from a 6 person team to over double that, 14 now, and we start working together on things it becomes obvious how the slight differences in style can change from artist to artist.

With the small team, this was easy to manage. One concept artist and a few modelers, it was easy to assign tasks. And with paying work and in-house work it was fairly easy to manage. And then came the interns from the local college. Now things started getting more complex. And then I wound up hiring them. And then the next round of interns the next year, I took a few of those too.

So now, when we take on a fairly ambitious project like this one, Thirve, there is a tendency to want to put as many people on one thing. For example 3 or more on modeling. And getting help with concept art and so on. There is just so much to do.

But it was bothering me that there was no real consistency. And also that some of the artists were more or less "forced" to work outside of their comfort zone. And they were all too willing, of course, they want to help. But up to now I had been managing the studio very democratically. And trying to get artists working in the things they enjoyed most. Also having votes in the studio. "How should be proceed?" and getting agreements. This is all good. Up to a point. Every time I had a vote, the answer was "Yes, we all agree we should all pitch in and help!".

Finally I had to step in and be more of a decision maker. I did not like it. But it was what we had to do. And the decision was I would have to assign Leads. Starting with the obvious choice. And that was one of my artists was a great concept artist as well as modeler. And she has a great feel for this style of animation characters. In fact, she is perfect in this role. She is a recent hire that has worked out extremely well.

Now here is the catch. If I assign a lead, that means other artists have to work under the lead. And the lead has to really crack the whip to make sure there is a consistency in quality. And that means that the underlings would basically be artist/slaves to the style of the lead. Or you go out and hire people who fit in the style and sensibility of the lead or can fake it very well.

I did not see the practicality of either thing happening at my studio.

Fortunately the saving grace is that we had many things that we needed leads for. And the answer was staring me in the face. For this project only a certain number of them in the studio were working on Thirve. So the answer was to simply assign more leads.

Character Artist
Realistic Props
Space Age (robotic) props.
Environments

And then one artist really wanted to learn under my main concept artist. So he is more or less assigned to him as a protegee.

That left a few others already working on other projects to which they had already been assigned as leads.

Problem solved. Everyone was happy. A little uncomfortable for some of them to be taken off characters, but everyone understood and were happy to be a lead in another area.

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