

Game Design

11

Business and Management of Games

Game Design for Business

Game Team

- In the beginning
 - One person was enough to create and program a game
 - Games were very small (4 to 30 KB)
- As computers grew, so did the size of games
 - Teams of hundreds of designers, artists, programmers, QA analysts, etc.
- Team structure and responsibilities are very complex

Team Structure

- Publishers and Developers
 - Publishers usually finance, market and sell the game
 - Developers are responsible for delivering the game

Team Structure

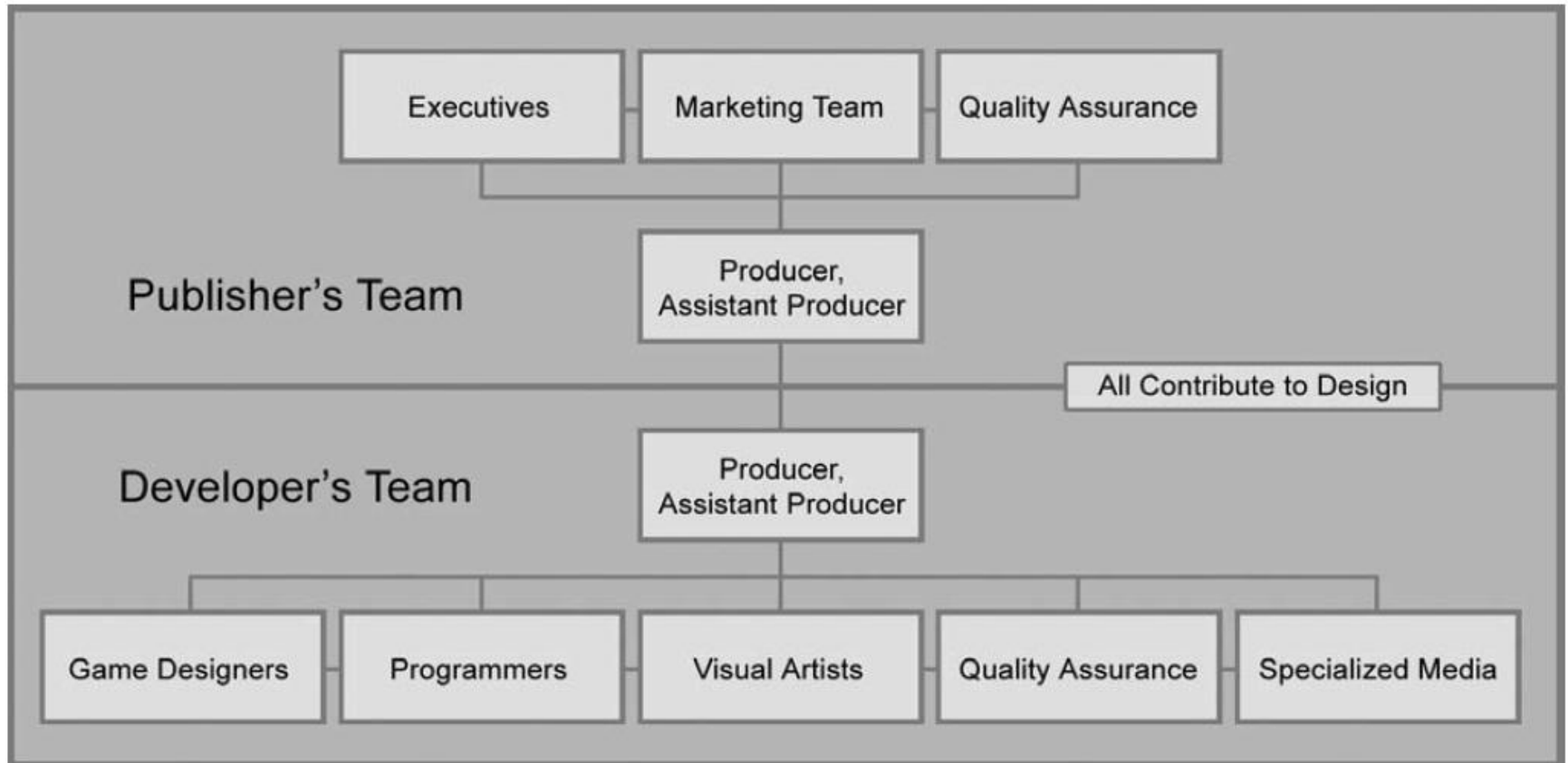


Image courtesy of [1]

Developer's Team

- Small teams
 - Everybody does everything
- Large teams and companies
 - Well defined positions ad responsibilities

Game Designer

- In charge of the play experience
 - Since play experience is linked to all aspects of the game (programming, art, etc), must collaborate with all other members

Game Designer

- Core tasks
 - Brainstorm concepts
 - Create prototypes
 - Playtest and revise prototypes
 - Write/ update concept and design documents
 - Communicate vision for the game to the team
 - Create levels for the game
 - Advocate for the player

Producer

- The project leader
 - Team leader for developer's team
 - Communication between developer and publisher
 - Schedule and budget for the production from the developer side
 - Track and allocate resources as well as forecast
 - Manage developer team to make sure deliverables are completed on time
 - Motivate team and solve production related problems

Producer

- Game designers need to negotiate the design and scheduling details
 - Realistic timetable
 - Realistic budget
 - Good designers need to understand schedules and budgets

Programmer

- High- and low-level coders, network and systems engineers, database programmers, computer hardware support, etc.
 - senior programmer, lead programmer, and technical director, all the way up to CTO

Programmer

- Write technical specifications
- Implement:
 - Software prototypes
 - Software tools
 - Game modules and engines
 - Data structures
 - Management of communications
- Document code
- Coordinate with QA engineers

Visual Artists

- Character designers, illustrators, animators, interface designers, 3D artists
 - Led by art director, senior art director, lead animator, etc.

Visual Artists

- Responsible for
 - Characters
 - Worlds and world objects
 - Interfaces
 - Animations
 - Cutscenes

QA Engineers

- Create a test plan for the project
- Execute the test plan
- Record all unexpected or undesirable behavior
- Categorize, prioritize, and report
- Retest and resolve issues

Specialized Media

- Many roles are too specialized to include in every team
 - Writers
 - Sound designers
 - Actors
 - Martial arts instructors
 - Etc.

Level Designer

- Work in tandem with the designer to make levels fit with the theme of the game
 - Implement level designs
 - Come up with level concepts
 - Test levels and work with the designer to improve overall gameplay

Publisher's Team

- Usually are large corporations
 - Thousands of employees

Producer

- Not directly involved in production, but has an interest in the success of the game
 - Team leader for the publisher's team
 - Main communication link between the publisher and developer
 - Schedule and budget for the production from the publisher's side

Producer

- Track and allocate resources as well as forecast
- Approve work accomplished by the developer so milestone payments can be made
- Coordinate with internal executive management, marketing, and QA personnel

Marketing Team

- Find ways to sell the game
 - A strong link to the demands of the customers
 - Focus groups
 - Common hardware of target audience

Other Roles from the Producer

- Upper management
- QA
- Usability team
 - Evaluation of interfaces, user scenarios, usability test sessions, etc.

Communication

The lines in the image represent communication channels

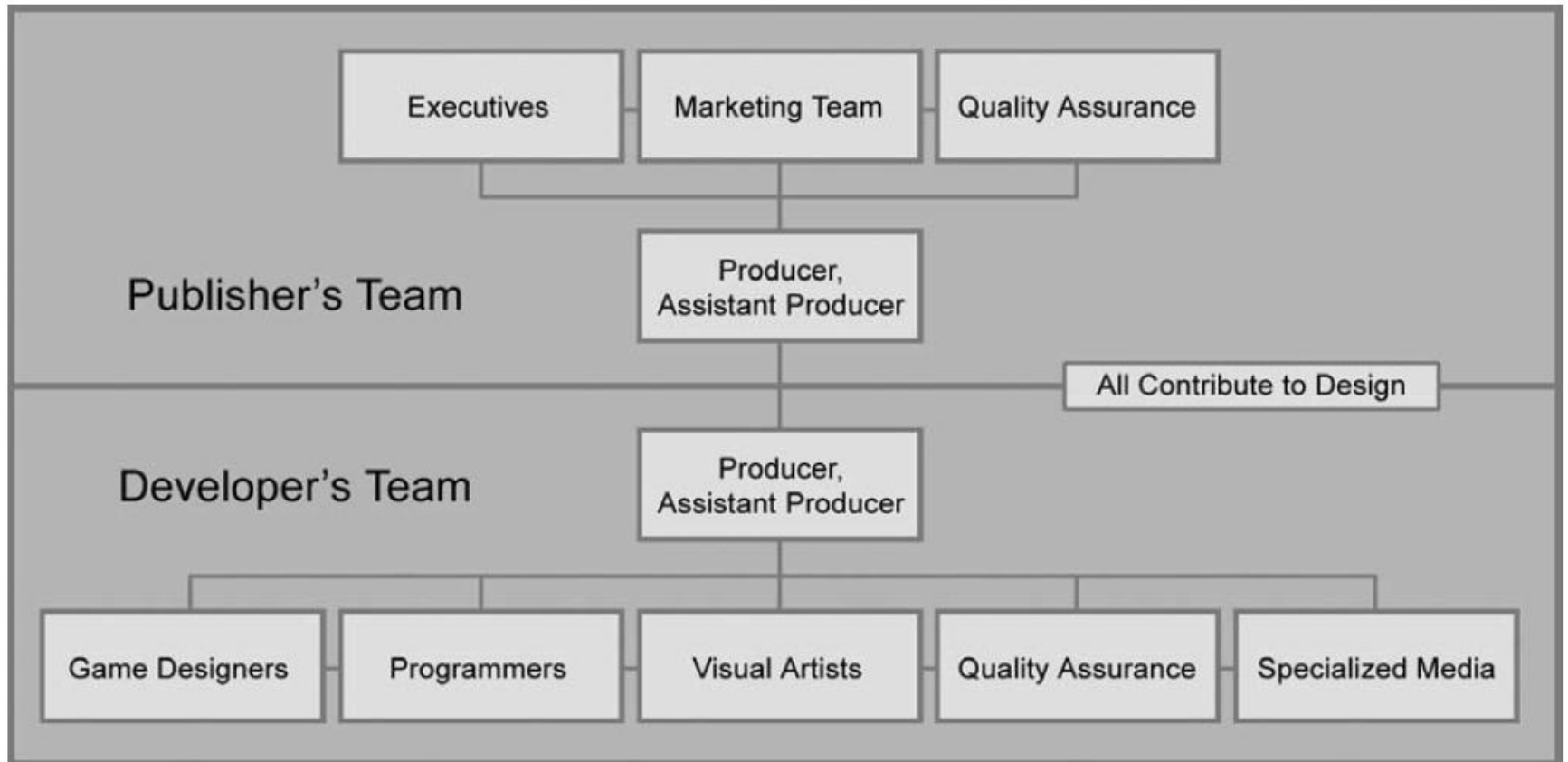


Image courtesy of [1]

Stages of Development

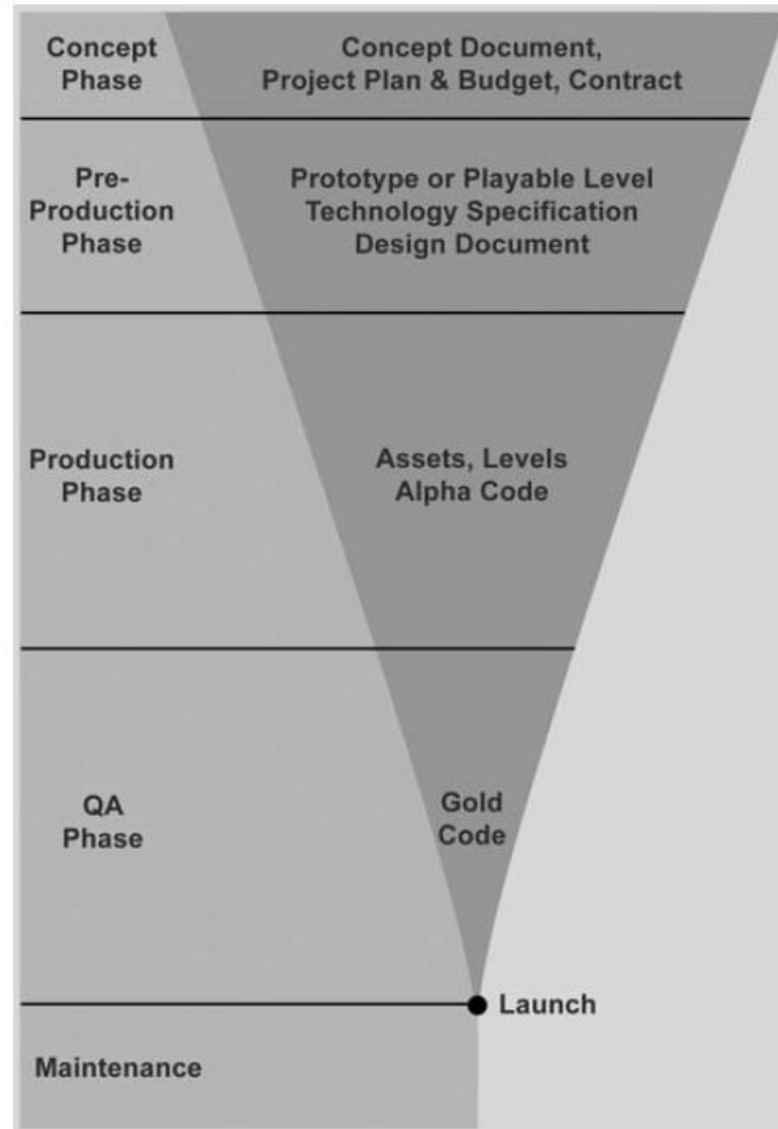


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Stages of Development

- Concept/Contract
 - Team, project plan, idea
- Preproduction
 - Small team to test feasibility
 - Will implement one level/ environment, with a focus on the differentiating risky features
 - The most critical part of a project's life

Stages of Development

- Production
 - The longest and most expensive stage
 - The purpose is to get the Alpha code
 - No more features will be added
- QA
 - Make sure that what features you have implemented are well polished
 - “70% of the quality of a game comes during this last 10% of development”, Steve Ackrich, Activision

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Project Plan

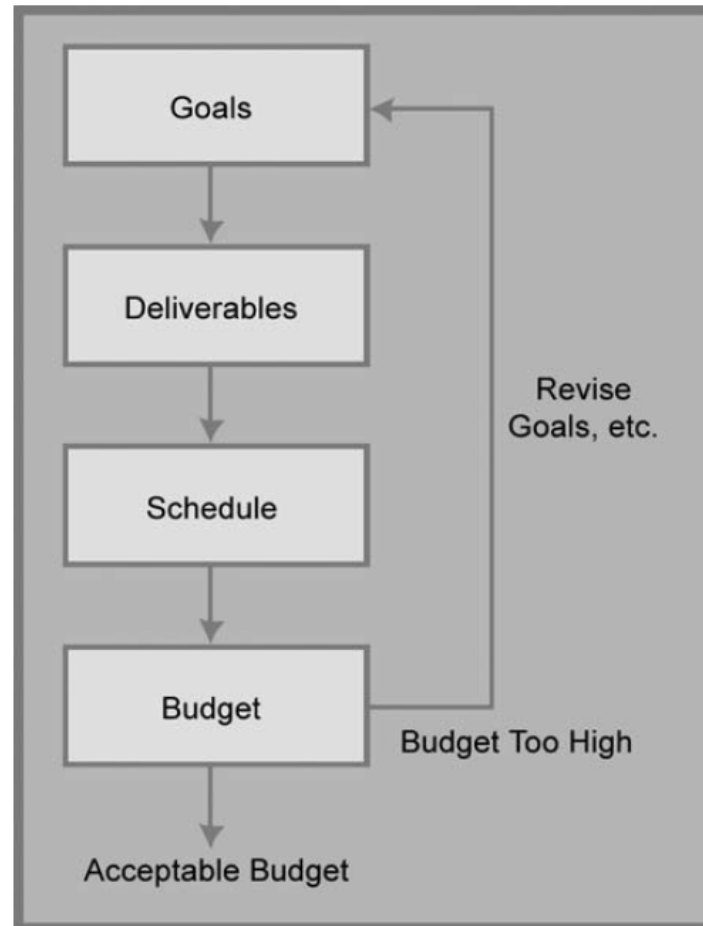


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Bibliography

1. Fullerton, T., Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games, CRC Press, 2014