The Tech Zone   Book 6

Tales, Lessons, and Insights from the Video Game Industry

By Richard Seaborne

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TECH ZONE + HELL DIFFICULTY SAGA – BOOK 6
MORE ADVENTURES + THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY
PART OF THE HELL DIFFICULTY SAGA
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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

THE TECH ZONE AND HELL DIFFICULTY

More Adventures
and
The Video Game Industry
COMPLETE BOOK-6

By Richard Seaborne

The Adventures of Rick Liberty, The Liberty Zone, The Hell Difficulty Saga, The Tech Zone, Tales and Lessons &

Insights from the Video Game Industry, AI Demystified, and related stories, characters, content, books, podcasts,

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Heaven. Hell, Limbo, Celestial Beings, Planes of Existence, Faith, and Spiritual Concepts
National + World Governments and Billionaire Elites Control and Corruption of Religion & Humanity
Violence, Gore, and Death Descriptions and Visual Representations, including Human Abuse and Tragedy
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Generated Art, Music, and Spoken Voice, and
My Real-World Experiences in Life from Childhood to Adult, including Work in the Video Game Industry

BOOK 6: THE TECH ZONE AND LIFE ADVENTURES

The Tech Zone   Book 6

Tales, Lessons, and Insights from the Video Game Industry

LOCAL FILE:

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YouTube Playlist:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Ov-xrXhB_GlwcNOGJgS5TMb2U8jAM6H

Rumble Playlist:

https://rumble.com/playlists/M1oZhnxax-E

Description:

Tales from the Video Game Industry is a collection of stories and insights from my real-world adventures and experiences working in the Video Game Industry for over thirty years. I tell stories and anecdotes. I provide concrete examples, techniques, and methods to successfully operate and deliver software and video games in corporations dedicated to entertainment and creativity (and profit). Learn deep, dark, hidden secrets and many sordid tales in the shadows of the Video Game Industry's brilliance, innovation, independence, and stardom.

Lessons and Insights from the Video Game Industry is a collection of real-world stories, concepts, techniques, and methods I used while working in the Video Game Industry over thirty years. I explain detailed techniques, and methods to successfully operate and deliver software and video games in corporations that are dedicated to entertainment and creativity (and profit).

AI Demystified explains Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) – from its origin to its world-changing state today. See how A.I. works – sees the world – and learns   and makes decisions. Understand how A.I. is trained and its 'values' shaped – with and without human supervision. Witness A.I.'s applications and real-world manifestations - and experience the cautionary tales of science fiction.

E212 COCAINE FUNDED GAME STUDIO

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E212 Cocaine Funded Game Studios and Video Game Developers, CoinOp Arcade Machines, and Smugglers.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55untp-e212-cocaine-funded-game-studios-and-video-game-developers-coinop-arcade-ma.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/clg9exPsXxw

Description:
Learn how discovering illegal activity by executives at Electronic Arts resulted in a funded Startup and handsome contracts. See how 'Dark Paths' often lead to reward and success.

In contrast – hear the story of an environmentally conscious young Richard in his childhood cleaning the environment literally one recyclable can at a time…

And – hear how his environmental actions were his inspiration for Atari Tengen's mascot and corresponding video game.

And finally – hear about lawsuits and litigation against Atari Games and Gawd:Seaborne…

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Coin-ops, Cocaine, and Console Wars

Electronic Arts Piloted Coin-Op While I Was at Atari:

Back…when I worked as an employee for Atari Games' consumer division – called Tengen…

Atari Games – in Milpitas, in Northern California – is where I met an engineer named Mark Phoenix. I would maintain contact sporadically with Mark for decades afterwards.

At one point – Mark and I were good friends and allies – when we worked together at Interplay.

We shared lunch together most days, and often worked long hours and weekends together. We even speculated on freelance projects together – we went on pitch tours together – to potential publishers.

Mark was a loyal and smart guy. And – he was scrappy, resourceful…and a little bit sly.

Ultimately – you knew that you could call on Mark, and he'd be there for you.

While I was working at Atari – Mark resigned, and took a job offer to join Electronic Arts (EA) in Redwood Shores, CA to work on their new pilot Coin-Operator Arcade game division. I learned through Mark that EA planned to develop coin-op expertise and compete in the market against Midway, Atari, Capcom, and more.

Although coin-op revenue was down, arcade games were virtual guarantees for home console versions selling huge numbers. Games without an arcade "parent game" sold fractions of the arcade associated games.

EA never materially succeeded in their strategy of making coin-op games that might result in huge downstream home video game sales. Despite hiring talented coin-op developers like Ed Logg and Mark Phoenix, EA's coin-op effort was largely a failed fiasco.

"Cocaine Smuggled Under Coin-Op Motherboards at EA:

Of course, there were potentially other motivations for EA to get into coin-op development which certainly hastened its demise.

Atari had partnered Bally-Midway in Chicago for coin-op physical hardware so EA could focus on game design and software. The idea was that EA game developers would create the software for these new hardware machines out of Bally.

One day I received a panicked phone call from Mark. He explained that he wanted to get a jumpstart on the latest and greatest coin-op hardware received late last night from Bally in Chicago. He apparently noticed some tape and plastic under the coin-op motherboard when he opened it up to check out the cabinet guts and electronics.

Mark's voice lowered as he whispered, "Cocaine. Cocaine, man. There was cocaine in a huge bag under the motherboard. I am going crazy. I do not know what to do. They might kill me."

It was surreal but given Atari's propensity for drugs and my having an EA Executive Producer offer me drugs and prostitutes it did not surprise me Mark would find a big bag of cocaine at work under a coin-op motherboard. Okay, that sounds nuts! But reality is nuts sometimes (and often in mine!).

Contracts for Silence:

Mark was worried sick. Anyone – may have seen him. And what would that mean? He was freaking out - and could not hide it. Anyone around – would easily see that Mark was spiraling out of control.

But - After a few days of finding the white powder - of his nightmare - Mark contemplated going to the police or calling the FBI. But - he thought in all cases - things might end badly for him. And so – he spiraled, and stalled.

After not finding any practical solution to finding a large amount of cocaine at work - Mark decided to mention his discovery to the VP managing his division. Apparently - the VP was shocked, and assured Mark that he would investigate the matter immediately.

Finally, the VP spoke with Mark about his findings... He explained the Coin-Op idea was just not taking off, the way they had hoped. But they really appreciated how great Mark's work ethic had been – and how productive he proved himself to be.

To keep such great people working with EA – the VP said EA would like to offer Mark an opportunity to build a new company – all around Mark as its founder and President – in its own remote studio… outside EA.

Mark immediately imagined - this could be a "payoff" bribe to keep his mouth shut about the cocaine 'discovery'… Or – it could be a totally, legitimate offer resulting from his great work and talent.

Pragmatically – Mark agreed to take the opportunity and embrace his self-imposed gagged "silence". The money was amazing, and EA paid for all equipment, software, building lease, and fronted startup seed cash on top of generous advances against royalty to pay Mark and any staff he hired.

As I recall his first game was either *Knockout Kings* or *Fight Night.* It was an existing solid EA intellectual property (IP) game they had so a sequel would be easy for Mark and guarantee his new venture to be successful and earn royalties beyond development advances.

Mark was set! All because one late night he found smuggled cocaine under a coin-op arcade machine motherboard in EA. Crazy world how companies can get funded and started.

Yea,

- Mark may have compromised his integrity to make a lot of money under the company name(s) PhoenixSoft and Phoenix Games and more over the years.

- Or – perhaps he was just a lucky talented go-getter that was in the right place at the right time – and he did a great job, and – so he could capitalize and create new opportunities.

I always respected Mark but when he sold out, I lost a little respect – just in willing to look the other way for potential gains – but otherwise I found many other ways to respect and appreciate Mark.

I did and still consider Mark Phoenix a friend.

Mark's "Dark Path" Led to Success:

Mark had attained substantial wealth and professional "power" following his "cocaine find" - that allegedly - 'may' have motivated - his cocaine smuggling corrupt executive management to fund a new video game development company

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startup with Mark as its founder and sole owner, and further to award his new company a guaranteed contract right off with an established successful intellectual property game title *Knockout Kings*.

Mark did well – as an engineer – for himself. His career progressed and he made good money – as the saying goes.

But he had not found huge success until he embraced being beneficiary of 'possible' corruption and tainted money.

Once Mark took the "deal" [with the devil]…

Once he made that deal, he had a long and very profitable career. …but Mark – worked long and hard. He never slouched - or rested on laurels.

Mark may have been boosted by his 'benefactor' – but he earned his success.

Dark Paths Often Lead to Success:

Over time - it became evident to me –

- that people that choose "dark paths" in life, more-often-than-not, attain more wealth, romantic relationships, and enjoy wide social & professional networks.

- Conversely – people that limit themselves - by holding true to high values and integrity - tend to struggle to achieve much at all. They *can* earn more - than 'the average' compensation – but only, for extraordinary hard work…
  - Even with the reward from incredible effort - the reward pales in comparison to the 'golden spoon', wealth, standing, and social life 'gifted' to the 'dark path' choosing 'compromised' souls.

In fact – people that discard moral shackles - and go after their desires - seem to have more fun - and attain 'more in and out of life' than people that do not shed their honor and integrity...

They shed their moral shackles – and move forward – just as a serpent loses its skin, and slithers onward.

Evil - tends to - pays off, for people.

Awesome Possum vs 3rd Grade School Teacher:

Moving on to another tale – while working at Atari…sort of. Well - I had recently left Atari Games - and was working for Mindscape, as an employee, on Chessmaster for Windows.

Well…I got a phone call one night.

It was nuts…

Atari Games informed me that Time Warner, Atari Games, and Tengen were all named as targets for a lawsuit against them – from a school teacher alleging my game Awesome Possum was inspired – if not stolen – from something he wrote himself.

Well - I received a summons - to be deposed for a lawsuit against Time Warner stating they stole this third-grade schoolteacher's idea of Awesome Possum.

Awesome Possum - was an idea that I had from my Speech and Debate class - AND it was inspired by my Grand Canyon can collection experience as a kid (more on these elsewhere).

The idea that I stole MY IDEA was preposterous, and crazy to me.

Thankfully, Time Warner was fed up with "nuisance" suits and said they wanted to fight it if I agreed to fight it with them. Not being an employee, I would not be compensated for my time beyond some apparent fixed court deposition rate. The deposition pay was symbolic as it was ridiculously small.

Awesome Possum Deposition – Kicked by Lawyer:

Months later after my and other team members depositions the Judge "summarily dismissed" the case as unfounded on all claims.

But let me tell you the story…

I spent three days in deposition and a week or more prior preparing with two attorneys Time Warner hired to represent Time Warner Interactive Atari Tengen. Corporate chains are a mouthful to string together…

During the deposition, the legal team was repeatedly frustrated with me because they said I apparently "liked to talk" and was "compelled to explain". The attorneys commanded that I should only answer questions asked of me and say the fewest words and detail to move on to the next questions or topics.

It felt impossible to "shut up" and suppress "the truth". It was not how I operated my entire life, and I was not about to compromise my integrity and compulsion to share and show the truth. Especially during a deposition where incomplete information can be misconstrued!

The lawyers insisted that more information can be misconstrued and used against me and the case. Obviously, I felt the opposite.

The consequence of my delving into explanations during the deposition were a series of kicks from the woman attorney sitting next to me – a lot!

Yep – she kicked and nudged and glared and dropped her pen – all to get my attention so she could remind me to "shush" and "STFU"!

I did not shut up or shush. I reined in some of my verbosity, but the truth had to be told.

Gawd-Seaborne, a God!?:

During my lawsuit defending Awesome Possum the opposing counsel attempted to say my hubris exemplified my attitude that I was above the law and could do no wrong. And thusly I was lying or ignorant of my own malfeasance.

They declared my email within Atari Games proved my bad attitude and conceit. They noted my email name was –

> Gawd:Seaborne

Yes – they presumed I called myself 'Gawd' but avoided the spelling of 'God' to evade corporate wrath.

It was laughable how ignorant the lawyers were!

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The central VAX mainframe computer that drove all things for Atari was housed in a huge 30' x 30' refrigerated room. Wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling were massive computers and racks and data storage cabinets and backup tape reels.

The Atari VAX managed email. It was called 'GAWD' because it controlled everything about Atari and had all game and tool source code and documents and emails. It was the heart of Atari's operation.

Everyone working within Atari under 'GAWD' was an extension of 'GAWD' and became 'GAWD:UserName'.

And therefore – I was 'GAWD:SEABORNE'.

Now that I 'schooled' the opposing lawyers - in mainframe computers and email naming and routing – they were embarrassed moved on from that topic.

Funny – The lawyers thought 'they had me' and instead 'I had them'. It made them look foolish and naïve, and willing to jump to silly conclusions… that it eroded other arguments in the future.

Awesome Possum vs 3rd Grade School Teacher – I Win, Summarily Dismissed:

Months later after my and other team members depositions the Judge "summarily dismissed" the case as unfounded on all claims.

Apparently, my speech and debate history were key to Atari's victory despite my mother and I being unable to find a copy of it. My recollection of detail was sufficient to convince the judge of my voracity.

Awesome Possum… was mine – as it was always, rightfully.

E213 Console Wars and Being a Producer at Sega
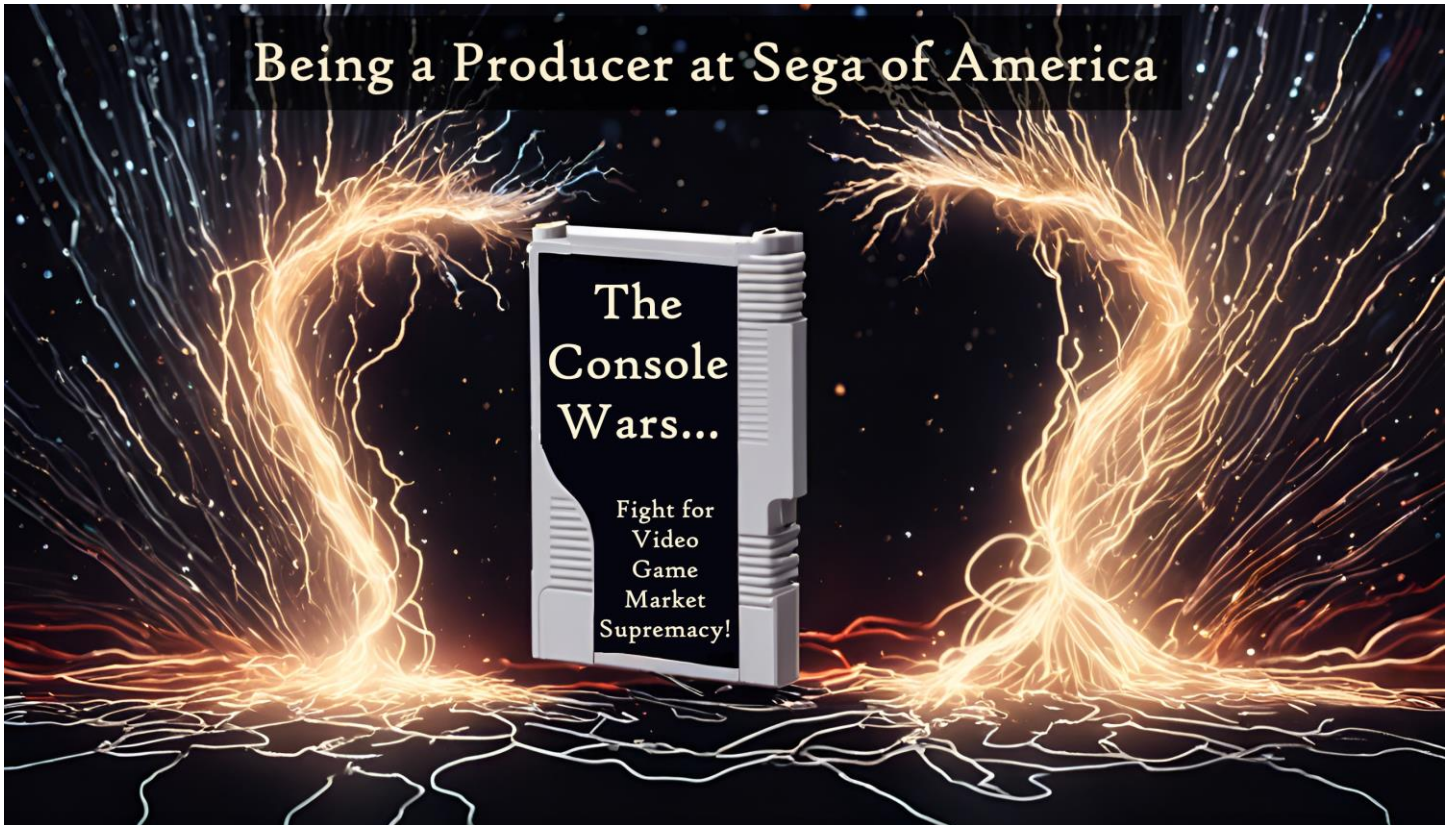
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.\LibertyBooksVideos\E213 Console Wars, Being a Producer at Sega, and Slavery Indentured Servitude in Video Game Development.mp4

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https://rumble.com/v55unxq-e213-console-wars-being-a-producer-at-sega-slavery-indentured-servitude-in-.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/6Rq85r9HR64

Description:

Hear tales of the early console wars for what video game platform would be 'the best' for consumers and profit.

Learn about the unethical leadership of early Sega of America as it was formed, and how they hired illegal Lithuanian 'indentured servant slaves' to develop video games for the Sega Genesis.

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Video Games were Hip, Cool, and Big Business:

There was huge money now - in the video game industry - video games 'had arrived!'

Coin-op arcade games - had paved the way making electronic gaming - not only acceptable, but outright cool and fun. It was 'cool' and "hip" - to play video games.

It is ironic - when I was playing games as a kid - they and I were uncool because of my playing games. And when I first created games – I was a geek or nerd…not positive, not flattering.   But now… the same thing… is Cool and Hip.

Oh well, I *made* the industry cool and hip. I forged it into what it has become. I was… a Founder.

HEH – and - I *NOW* was working in one of the "coolest industries" on the planet – regardless of being uncool then…

Newspapers and magazines referred to the video game industry as "Mini Hollywood" or the "New Hollywood" because of the increasing visibility and actor and movie tie-ins.

Not to mention that video games were grossing as much money as all movies combined! Games were big business! And the industry was only in its infancy…

And – of course – we all know how much bigger the computer & video game industry has become since those early times.

The "Console Wars" Begin – Games are Big Business:

Let's get back to the early years of home video consoles… a time when there were many consoles vying to rule them all…

In the end, there could only be one [console]… or so the Console Titans of Nintendo and Sega (and later Sony) would argue, and fight…

>   And fight they did, in the -

>   The Console Wars

Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) revolutionized the home video game market with its low-cost home console that delivered a good experience. The NES was so popular it was sold in supermarkets, clothing stores, liquor shops, toy stores, and computer and electronics shops. In other words – there was nowhere you could go without seeing the NES for sale. It was EVERYWHERE!

But, then - Sega jumped into the video game console fray with its Master System.

Although there were competitors the two console manufacturers Nintendo and Sega became the world leaders and gorillas all other aspirants would compete against. And Nintendo and Sega would fight for the crown for decades.

Handheld Video Game Devices Too:

Nintendo branched into and pioneered handheld gaming with the Game Boy which was effectively the NES miniaturized into a black & white handheld device. Sega countered with the Sega Game Gear handheld device. Atari Corp joined in with the Atari Lynx handheld device. But Nintendo once again rose to the top and crushed the handheld market to become the sole big on-the-go gaming platform.

The evolution of gaming consoles and handhelds took off right as the Genesis and Super Nintendo grew to dominance.

Much later in the console wars, Sony would introduce the Sony PlayStation Portable (PSP) which would raise the portable experience expectations substantially.

Sega Genesis:

Sega of Japan developed a new video game console called the Mega Drive. They wanted to sell the console internationally and felt their console was so revolutionary that it was the true "Genesis" of next generation gaming at home, and so they dubbed their new console in the U.S. the "Sega Genesis".

The Sega Genesis was a huge advancement in video game console capabilities and developer-friendly main microprocessor the Motorola 68000. It had a parallel Z80 microprocessor which was typically used for audio playback. It had a coprocessor to accelerate transforms, matrix operations, and non-integer math. And, of course, it had a dedicated graphics processing unit (GPU) that supported numerous graphic modes and character "tile" plus motion object "sprite" art formats.

The Genesis was to bring the full coin-op arcade game quality experiences to the living room.

Well, it did not deliver the coin-op experience, but it did deliver a significant improvement over the "current generation" of gaming consoles like the Sega Masters System and Nintendo Entertainment System. However, Nintendo introduced the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES) right as Sega introduced the Genesis.

Comparing Apples to Apples – the Super Nintendo was comparable to the Genesis in horsepower. The key differences to me were –
1) the Nintendo had gimmicky graphic tricks,
2) the Genesis was easier to program.
3) both could deliver great gaming experiences.

Bottom-line:
> The Sega Genesis was on par with the Super Nintendo with both having unique strengths but both also delivering great gaming experiences.

Sega of America Formed:

Sega of Japan (SOJ) decided to form a USA division called Sega of America (SOA) to operate within the U.S. trade laws as an unrestricted manufacturer, first-party publisher, and third-party licensor to develop games for its new video game console the Sega Genesis (AKA Sega Mega Drive in Japan). They similarly formed Sega of Europe (SOE) to manufacture and publish in Western Europe.

Each Sega division operated under the guidance of Sega of Japan. Nintendo and Sony used the same model to manage their global operations and businesses.

Sega of America 2-Week Job as Genesis Producer:

As happened so often… I was between contracts…and so needed to find work.

I was unsure where my next contract was coming from, and I was told of an opportunity at newly formed Sega of America. I had learned that Sega of America was hiring – they had a "producer" position open.

It turned out… Following the Sega Masters System – as its predecessor – Sega of America was formed to launch and make games for "Next Generation" Sega Home Console –called the Sega Genesis

The idea of being a producer piqued my interest and so I interviewed for the position.

They offered me the job the next day, expressing their main reservation was that I was extremely overqualified as a developer but that those skills would help me manage external developers as a producer.

Unethical Leadership in Sega:

The head of the division was named Ken Balthaser "senior" (as apparently his son was somewhere in the video game industry as "junior"). He was a large, thick headed, loud baffoon of a man. His ignorance and zero self-awareness emboldened him to strut about as if he was genuinely smart and capable. He was an idiot.

Ken hired legions of low integrity con artist developers within a week of my starting. I told him they were weak or incapable developers with specific reasons with evidence or supporting examples. But he seemed focused on "signing developers" instead of "signing good developers".

He was about numbers and quantity – not about quality.

I learned from another executive that they were all "bonused" according to hitting key performance indicators (KPIs) which included starting a specified number of game contracts within the initial console launch window.

It made sense sadly – the leadership wanted personal bonuses even if it hurt Sega's chances of making good games and succeeding, and so they signed developers regardless of their ability to succeed.

Once more I saw that self-serving evil pervaded everywhere.

Lithuanian Illegal Alien Developers:

I recall one time a developer visited us at Sega…

Two men visited us at Sega of America to pitch being the developer for Genesis Dick Tracy (or any game we wanted – they were desperate for work).

One of the men had a thick accent but spoke English well enough for me to understand him. He brought me aside and let me know that he was one of a dozen engineers and artists from Lithuania that were promised freedom and employment, but instead they are indentured servants working long hours with virtually no pay and only taken out once a week for a social event like a movie.

I could not believe my ears. This guy was telling me the company pitching was an illegal sweatshop for video game developers!? I had never imagined such a thing.

Despite calling out the situation to the head of development Ken Balthaser he signed the Developer sweatshop using illegal alien engineers and artists.

There was no way to describe my offense to the evil of enslaving people to make games…

In hindsight, maybe I should have called Immigration to have them shutdown? Or maybe I did the right thing by letting them remain in the U.S. and maybe find their way to legal residence or citizenship?

Choices…we cannot know what might have been, only know what has been.

And im E214 End Days at Sega

Local File:
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uo5p-e214-end-days-at-sega.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/bBk3_mHa1vo

Description:

Hear the tale of the hubris and conceit of Mark Cearney and his role with early Sega of America.

Listen to the downfall of Sega…

And – listen to the rise of Sony Computer Entertainment of America (SCEA) and the PlayStation.

Learn about the launch of Xbox – and of its Billion Dollar 'Red Ring of Death'…

Mark Cearney Sega of Europe Head Was a Jerk:
One day at Sega of America (SOA) VP Ken Balthaser had a meeting with all the producers and Sega of Europe (SOE) head Mark Cearney. I had met Mark Cearney here and there and can attest that he was what they call – a "royal prick" or an "a-hole".

Politely speaking – Mark Cearney was a jerk!

Mark Cearney looked as he acted – conceited choice of words, condescending tone and mannerisms, tight fitting "yuppie" (young upwardly mobile professional individual) fashionable clothing, and extolling his grandeur and important people he knew at every possible opportunity (and even when there was no sensible opportunity – he rudely declared how great he or his ideas were).

Mark really was a yuppie – obsessed with material things and financial success no matter what harm it had on others.

The meeting with Mark at Sega was arduous and painful, but it ended, and Mark returned to Sega of Europe (SOE).

Mark Cearney at Electronic Arts Years Later – Scumbag Succeeds:

As an aside - years later when I was Chief Technology Officer at Electronic Arts Canada, EA's Worldwide CTO Scott Cronce asked me to join him at an EA CTO Worldwide Conference he was hosting.

To my horror – Mark Cearney was attending as well.

Cearney was representing Sony!

He had weaseled himself into a senior executive position in Sony of Europe and was there at the CTO Conference to pitch how Sony could help Electronic Arts port its games to PlayStation more effectively and attain higher performance (AKA faster games with more special effects).

Mark pitched Sony would offer engineers to work side-by-side with EA developers to both code and show them how to maximize Sony hardware capabilities. He promised exclusive access to low-level hardware interfaces. He offered to have Sony engineers optimize games independent of EA engineers so as not to impact their work or schedules. And then they offered reduced manufacturing costs and cash incentives.

Mark offered everything that EA could want – engineers, money, and access to hidden hardware and programming interfaces. And all EA had to do was accept his offer.

Of course, Electronic Arts signed the deal with the devil – heh, I mean Mark Cearney. It made sense. They should have made the deal… for business reasons.

But it was a clever Mephistophelean deal that made sure EA games were on Sony's console.   And EA could learn all of EA's internal software tricks - and they would learn what tools EA made, licensed, and otherwise used.

And Once EA made a game on a platform, they would reliably publish sequels on them ongoing. Mark's getting a game on a Sony platform assured EA would publish on all future Sony consoles as well.

Reluctantly I must admit that Mark Cearney cleverly manipulated EA into investing in making all of their games on Sony platforms for far less money than they would have had to pay to directly entice EA to make the games without Sony's involvement.

But I did not like Mark Cearney and while I had to agree with the decision it felt wrong to empower his return to Sony of Europe as a success - locking Electronic Arts into making a series of PlayStation games for development support, discounted manufacturing fees, and a token cash incentive.

No matter how much of a scumbag someone is – they seem to succeed and flourish.

Sad. Wrong. Reality.

Sega Leadership was Bad:

Sega's worry that I was overqualified - turned out not to be the thing they should have worried about. They should have worried about my integrity.

Sega of America leadership was bad –
1) They funded development studios that employed illegal aliens as indentured servants.
2) They signed contracts with developers regardless of ability to deliver quality games just to fulfill a quota so they could earn a bonus.
3) They did not care about the quality of developer lives or game quality or hitting committed delivery dates.

It seemed to me that Sega of America leadership was solely about duping Sega of Japan out of money so they could incompetently play "publisher" while collecting big paychecks.

Resigned from Sega:

I was so disillusioned with Sega and the inner workings of a so-called world-class video game console manufacturer.

The head of development came to me and told me I needed to be on a flight to Georgia the next morning… to a developer. It was important.

Well, I was okay with dropping everything and getting on a plane. It was presumably my new job as a producer.

"Okay, how do I arrange flights and travel details?", I asked.

Easy enough – work with the admin and she will let me know what must be done to book tickets and get reimbursed for expenses, etc.

I learned that I had to travel "economy" coach across the country.

Did they not know who I was? I was not a lowly producer. I was a proven video game developer with a great resume and history. And – being disillusioned with the nasty executives…I was not pleased.

And besides – it was ME!

What did I expect? First Class for any flight over two hours. I would learn that my expectations were "inflated".

But that was how I felt then – entitled!

I could not let such low integrity business dealings and decisions on top of insufficient recognition of my grandeur stand!

I declared, "I quit!"

In some ways their original concern that I was overqualified may be the root of my resignation after all. Because of my success and expertise, I felt entitled to an opinion on what developers should be signed and to higher grade travel accommodations.

That opinion on appropriate travel accommodation and expectation of only signing legally staffed qualified developers was why I resigned.

It is remarkable that company leaders are often just as morally corrupt as laborers on the assembly line. It does not matter how high and mighty or how well paid someone is – they can be corrupt and evil like anyone else. Ken Balthasar and Mark Cearney proved that.

Enter Sony of America and the PlayStation:

And in came Sony…

Sony saw the video game market eating into its entertainment and film industries, and it needed to get in on the action of video games too.

Sony of Japan formed a U.S. based arm to operate as a manufacturer, licensor, and publisher of games for its new platform the Sony PlayStation. It was natively a 3D video game console but also had traditional 2D console capabilities. The PlayStation was genuinely the next generation of gaming consoles.

Nintendo countered Sony with its new Nintendo 64 console. Sega was slow to react and introduced a stopgap console called the Sega 32X and quickly followed up with its Sega Saturn.

As an aside – Sony's game divisions were extremely important to Sony's global operations. Its game divisions eventually became Sony's only profitable division and left Sony Pictures and other divisions groveling at their feet to make game versions of their movies.

"Console Wars" – Sega K.O.:

The three video game console superpowers waged the "console wars" for decades.

Sega, Nintendo, and Sony were the centerpieces of the console wars. There were many other smaller gaming consoles in the industry. There were numerous "alternative" flavors of gaming consoles and handheld devices, but none took off or gained much notoriety.

Eventually Sega lost its competitive edge and cool factor and would die. Much like Atari Games eventually sold off its assets and game intellectual property, so did Sega.

Sega Soft was formed as custodian and shepherd over Sega's assets and publish personal computer versions of its legacy games. Sega Soft languished and faded into oblivion as well.

All that people remember now (MAYBE) is Sonic the Hedgehog and perchance his sidekick Tails.

Sega was knocked out (K.O.)!

"Console Wars" – Rise of Xbox:

As the three superpowers seemed to have become two superpowers, a third superpower was rising – Microsoft Xbox.

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Microsoft was determined to put a cool and hip "face" on its corporate "evil empire" image. It would take stupid money over decades, but Microsoft would not only compete with the video game console superpowers but become the NUMBER ONE video game console for many years.

Sony and Microsoft Xbox vied for mark supremacy since the beginning and their war rages on to this day. They have and still fight tooth and nail for market dominance.

Having multiple huge competing consoles and publishers is great for developers and gamers because there will be more games, bigger budgets and teams, and therefore better games.

Everyone wins… in the console wars.

Shaky Start for Xbox – Billion Dollar Red Ring of Death:

Microsoft joined the fray with its new video game console the Xbox. Xbox started with problems including a billion dollar recall over a critical hardware failure known as the "red ring of death".

The LED green power lights would blink RED on specific system failures. Such a fatal system failure would happen randomly within many Xbox consoles resulting in mass returns and upset gamers.

Microsoft executives were furious! The Xbox console was created to engender goodwill and love of Microsoft, and specifically to overshadow its "evil empire" corporate enterprise image. And now it was doing the opposite – Xbox was making Microsoft look incompetent and bad to consumers.

Microsoft issued a Billion Dollar recall supporting any Xbox returned would receive a new one without any questions asked – shipping covered too.

It was an insane amount of money, but it was consistent with Microsoft's approach for Xbox – spend and lose money as a marketing campaign for Microsoft corporate goodwill.

Xbox Triumphs Over Time:

Microsoft was intent on buying their way to become the top video game console platform.

Xbox would triumph over time through sheer cash investment and determination. It developed games internally and contracted externally developed games as well. It purchased development studios outright. It signed long-term exclusive deals with game makers.

Video Games Triumphed – Foundation Paved by Underdogs, Grown by Mega Money:

It is remarkable – to look back and see how much of the video game industry - had its foundation formed and paved - by scrappy underdogs - but grown huge by mega corporate money and investors.

I am glad I was an early – Founder – when the industry was more 'real'.

E215 MINDSCAPE FAILED STRATEGIES, CHESSMASTER, MOVIES, LAYOFFS, FIREARMS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E215 Mindscape Failed Strategies, Chessmaster, Movies, Layoffs, and Firearms.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uo9p-e215-mindscape-failed-strategies-chessmaster-movies-layoffs-and-firearms.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/LjYvWO6fecM

Description:
Hear about the downfall of computer game maker Accolade, following non-game executives taking over.

Learn how unqualified people steal jobs from qualified people.

Listen to the tale of Mindscape and Chessmaster.

Situation Ethics are front and center – showcasing how people are mere 'tools' to some people.

See how Mindscape's 'low integrity' spineless layoff technique backfired with fear and danger.

Accolade Under New Management – Kraft, Good Year, and Time Magazine Execs:

Over the years - I had friends work at a software company called Accolade, at different times in their careers.

Accolade's major claims to fame was its Test Drive series and acquisition of Infocom which made classic text adventures "back in the day" [for that era – so way, way long ago].

At one point I did a "soft interview" at Accolade to learn more about their executive management. I was horrified to learn that Accolade had replaced its leadership team recently.

Accolade had determined they needed to become more efficient as a game developer and publisher. They decided to hire a new executive leadership team to improve the company. They dumped the game veteran leadership, and hired 'proper' corporate leaders.

Accolade replaced its marketing head with an executive from Time Magazine because he was an expert in advertising and demographic & psychographic targeting. They appointed a Good Year executive to oversee development because he was a production line guru. And they hired a Kraft executive to run the company.

There you had it – Accolade leadership had zero creativity, zero software engineering, zero game design, and zero cross-discipline development experience.

They treated Accolade like a commodities business with no consideration of "fun" or "immersion"… or innovation.

Accolade treated its developers like Atari Corp (not Atari Games, but its splintered sister company). Atari Corp's president Jack Tramiel labeled game developers as no more than "towel designers" and they were replaceable and a "dime a dozen".

Developers quit Atari Corp in droves over that "towel designer" label. Accolade would suffer a slow death as its developers abandoned them… in a similar way.

Atari Games and Interplay and many game companies I have worked at celebrated creativity and fun and "the experience". They extolled engineers that could lead and unite artists, sound designers, musicians, level and designers, interface architects, and 2D & 3D artists and animators.

Accolade HAD the culture of video game development before they hired their "efficiency" executive team.

The new executives envisioned they would make Accolade into the biggest shiniest star in game publishing ever. They were entirely wrong.

They had no idea what they were doing and drove Accolade into bankruptcy within a few years.

Unqualified People Steal Jobs from The Qualified:

Accolade taught some unfortunate lessons…

There have been countless times the wrong people are given jobs they are blatantly not qualified for. And yet, people keep getting jobs they do not know how to succeed at.

I think the worst thing about people "in over their heads" is not their inevitable failure or harm to the company or group they joined, but rather the worst thing is taking the opportunity from someone else that could do the job successfully.

Taking a job that you are unqualified for is selfish and, therefore, evil. You are taking the rightful livelihood from someone that trained and learned for the job.

Bottom-line - It is wrong for an unqualified loser that did not expend the effort to learn to become competently employable to take a job from someone else.

Accolade was the quintessential example of the wrong people given a job – that resulted in the destruction of many jobs and opportunities for others… not to mention taking the jobs they filled themselves…from a qualified people.

Saving ChessMaster and Mindscape's Fall:

Let's talk briefly about some stories when I worked for Mindscape, based in Novato, California.

From being an employee at Atari Games… I joined Mindscape as a senior software engineer to revive the flailing and dying *Chessmaster franchise.* My job offer was explicit – make Chessmaster profitable and be promoted to run the division as its Director of Software Development - overseeing the Intelligent Games division - or fail to make it profitable… and be fired. It was that simple…

I embraced challenges my entire life. This was no different. I took the challenge – because I believed in myself. And – I succeeded.

Though there are many details here…the outcome was - Chessmaster was 'saved' and a new version was made. And – great business success; Chessmaster earned $1 Million per person…PROFIT! And - rebooted the Chessmaster franchise, such that many more sequels could be made over the next decades.

Stories of Mindscape's Fall:

Stories while at Mindscape…

At Mindscape I partnered with two engineers that loved networking and dreamed of making a game work on the Local Area Network (LAN) and someday even play over the "new" Internet.

Well, we three made a Local Area Network (LAN) SDK and API so other games could use the tech once we proved it out and refined it. After a few months we had a LAN Chessmaster working well; a turn-based game was perfect for network gaming.

We translated the LAN IPX interface to use a Internet TCP interface with traditional browser ports so we could cleverly enter people's homes as if we were a web browser and bypass a lot of simple firewalls. Once we had Chessmaster brokering games and playing over the Internet we began compensating for latency and performance.

Although Chessmaster did not require high speed low latency communication some games did. UDP is a communication technique on the Internet that might not successfully deliver all the data it sent; it's unreliable but much faster because it does not have a lot of checks and handshakes. We made a thin "reliable" layer on top of the unreliable UDP to make a fast version of Internet TCP.

Once we had Chessmaster Online I wanted to have an awesome demo for Shows and Events. I managed to take an electronic chess board that had a serial and a parallel hardware interface to computers and make it talk to Chessmaster Online. The result was people could play on a real Chess board moving real wooden pieces and the computer mirrored everything they did so it always matched the physical board.

The computer would show on its screen what the AI move was and blinked LEDs on the Chess board showing where the person should move the AI's chess piece on the physical board. It was awesome – human, physical chess game, and AI played seamlessly over the network…and later over the Internet!

People did not know if they were playing against an AI or a human when they played online. One game early on surprised us – someone had Chessmaster Online using a Physical Tasc Smart Chessboard in Tehran, Iran and was playing against us in Novato, CA USA. Amazing in general! And INCREDIBLY AMAZING back then!

During my time at Mindscape - I worked on many versions of Chessmaster including Chessmaster 5000, 5500, 6000, Online, and Live. I forged partnerships with International Grandmaster Josh Waitzkin for expertise and tutorials, the San Francisco Chess Academy for grandmaster AI modeling, TASC for the Smart Chessboard, Johan De Koenig for the world's most advanced Chess AI and database of 450,000 annotated historical games, puzzles, tips, the United States Chess Federation for rated games, and more.

The two engineers and I delivered a Network middleware that would be used in all Mindscape games and Pearson Limited (a UK-based education and distance learning company that would later purchase Mindscape). I worked on several smaller games and demos at Mindscape but none of those work too important to me.

All that was not as complicated as it sounds. Or at least I do not think it was too complicated. It just had a lot of moving parts to juggle.

Like I said – Chessmaster was successful. Chessmaster not only was saved but it sold over ONE MILLION copies and well over $1 Million revenue per employee that worked on it! It blew the barn doors off with its success and everyone at Mindscape thought I walked on water. I was given the promised promotion. I was now – Director of Software Development for the Intelligent Games division.

After a year, the VP of Development Don Laabs saw the rest of Mindscape struggling to be profitable and muzzled back into the Intelligent Games division to justify his continued employment. He micromanaged me which was unacceptable to me.

I went to the executive vice president to make my case. She agreed that I was justified in my view, but she was not going to support a Director over a Vice President she has known for many years. Bottom-line: you may be right, but it does not matter to me. The Executive Vice President did not care… and so – I did not care, anymore…

Well, I resigned and formed Karma Entertainment which immediate got a contract from Mindscape (the company I just quit from) and Atari Games to make Personal Computer Windows DirectX and 3DFX/OpenGL versions of San Francisco Rush and The Rock.

Intelligent Games (Chessmaster) Only Profitable Division:

Let's continue with more tales of Mindscape… before I resigned.

Mindscape was not successful throughout all its divisions. In fact, Intelligent Games (the division I resurrected) was the only profitable group within Mindscape. And it was EXTREMELY PROFITABLE.

Intelligent Games was the envy of everyone in Mindscape. People were very… JEALOUS.

Mindscape Sold to Pearson Limited for Distance Learning (not games):

Mindscape could not survive on its struggling product sales. Chessmaster sales were not enough to carry the huge Mindscape corporation. Mindscape had to do something.

The company put itself up for sale and was eventually purchased by UK based Pearson Limited. Mindscape was to change its game and intellectual game experience into Distance Learning tech and applications.

Pearson was okay with games continuing but only so far as they were self-sufficient, which meant only Intelligent Games would survive the merger. …as it was the only profitable division.

The Mandated "Movie" Layoff and Firearms:

Mindscape had established a tradition of a few times a year having the entire company go to a local movie theater and watch a movie "on the company" as a bonding experience and reward for hard work and success.

"Movie Day" had come for Mindscape!

Everyone happily left the multi-story office building and walked across the parking lot to the movie theater (it literally was next door kitty-corner from Mindscape and a gas station).

A few stragglers that wanted to remain behind and skip the movie were directed to "go to the movie". It was confusing to them, but they were literally escorted out by security to "ensure they did not miss the movie start."

It was fishy, at best.

The "Movie" Layoff:

Staff naively praised the acquisition by Pearson Ltd., believing their jobs were safe once more and they could focus on making products and not worrying about livelihood or income.

But when the movie ended, so did most people's jobs end that day.

When people returned to the Mindscape - security guards directed each person to swipe their badge on the electronic key plate – in front of them.

GREEN LIGHT:
        If the lock blinked green and unlocked the door, you still had a job.

RED LIGHT:
        If the lock blinked red and the door remained locked, you were laid off (no job for you)

The experience felt incredibly cowardly and impersonal. People lined up like cattle – walking up to the door, and in front of everyone – went in with a job, or left without one.

Evil Includes "Situational Ethics" Low/No Integrity:

It seemed to me Mindscape adopted "situational ethics" so it could treat people like tools that were no longer needed and could be tossed outside in the "movie day layoff". It showcased how harsh world can be – and how it can be devoid of compassion and care.

Mindscape management proved itself to be cowardly and without integrity or honor.

My definition of "evil" expanded that day to include "situational ethics" low or no integrity behavior.

The "Movie" Firearms:

I was not alone in feeling Mindscape was not showing any value for its employees. Its "movie day layoff" wounded the staff's morale and they were not happy.

The day following "movie day" the lunchroom tables were found covered with newspapers with every newspaper opened to advertisements for firearms – rifles, shotguns, and pistols for hunting, sport, protection.

The local police were called but they said it could be coincidence that each newspaper happened to show a "gun ad" on their exposed pages. Of course, they admitted it could be a threat to the company and its management that staff fury is boiling up to weapon thoughts.

Nothing ever came of the firearm newspapers strewn about the lunchroom. It was merely… alarming.

People Are Quick to Saber Rattle but slow to Wield the Saber – Sheeples:

I observed people are quick to complain and rant but are terribly slow if not unlikely to take any real action.

People love to "saber rattle" but are "Slow to Wield the Saber". What a waste of time and thought in my opinion.

People on masse are "sheeple" – people who follow direction and though complain will not do anything about their lamentations.

Leaving Mindscape:

After my stint in Mindscape resurrecting the Chessmaster series to great success, delivering shared network technology across the company, and starting a new franchise – Pokermaster - Mindscape was in a transition.

With Pearson Limited's acquisition of Mindscape and shifted its corporate product line to Distance Learning in lieu of games, I did not see myself staying long with the company.

I had a great reputation as a technologist, designer, manager, and group director in Mindscape.

A recently promoted VP of Development Andrew during the transition to Distance Learning had no experience with games or their underpinning tech. He knew the technology was to be adapted for Distance Learning and had to honor existing Mindscape game commitments until they all played out.

Contracting with Mindscape, and Beyond:

Andrew was practical and while he did not understand the tech or process, he did recognize historical performance and delivery by individuals and groups.

He saw that my division Intelligent Games was small, highly efficient, insanely profitable, and was the only group to export shareable tools and technology for others to use.

Andrew offered a contract to work to me – to work on a Tom Clancy demo and finish an online proof-of-concept mass player game called Net War. I finished the contracts so quickly - that Mindscape ran out of "filler" contracts to keep me around. I wrote installers for applications and other boring "business" things… to make money, and maintain the working relationship.

I had been contracting under my name directly - with Mindscape - but decided that it was time I expand my search outside Mindscape for game contracts – and get away from this "job" work.

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Yea, I had been spoiled with working on things I loved – games! I had somehow fallen into "work" doing non-game things. It sucked.

I could not fathom how people could live their lives doing a job they did not like… and yet – such is the fate and circumstance for what appears to be – the majority of people.

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<u>E216 Karma Entertainment, Rush, Panzer General, Tom Clancy Video Games</u>

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E216 Life and Death of Karma Entertainment and San Francisco Rush, Panzer General, and Tom Clancy.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uo99-e216-life-and-death-of-karma-entertainment-and-san-francisco-rush-panzer-ge.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/SmOtiGsPHQo

<u>Description:</u>

Hear the story of forming contract company Karma Entertainment.

Learn about Alter Ego companies and how Incorporation cannot protect an them.

Listen to Karma's first games and how they used 3DFX Voodoo & Banshee and Direct3D 3D Rendering technologies, and how software was able to reliably fry and destroy 3D video cards.

Learn why its critically important to 'Master Your Boat Controls' before setting course, much less start a project or task.

See how Panzer General 3D struggled and failed.

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Forming Karma Entertainment to Engage New Era Development - Publishing:

To maximize my chances of securing a contract…I had to prepare pitch materials.

If I was going to pitch developing games to a publisher (once more), I felt it was necessary to be more than an individual contractor. Contracting was still viable in the Video Game industry… but it now required a team, just to compete.

And so – I concluded - I had to formally found a company - and no longer be an individual, with a few subcontractors (like I had always done, throughout my freelance career).

I formed Karma Entertainment - as legal fictious business name (FBN) - and obtained a federal employer identification number (EIN).

No Value in Incorporating:

I investigated incorporation as well - but learned that without more than three officers and additional staff - it is legally no more than what is known as "alter ego" company - whose precedent is weak…

It is easy to legally remove legal protections afforded to companies by Incorporation or Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs). Aggressive lawyers simply file an 'Alter Ego' petition – to revert all cases back to the individual founder(s).

Invariably – plaintiff lawyers succeeded - at establishing – that tiny companies with few people heading it – are typically formed – solely to avoid accountability by a few corrupt people, not about affording a large company protection from distributed decision-making leadership.

And so – becoming a formal corporation offered red tape, bureaucracy…but without benefits.

Therefore – I did not bother with going beyond a Fictitious Business Name.

Obviously - I abandoned any idea of incorporating given the expense, operating overhead - and liabilities, and getting no protection from it.

Karma Entertainment's First Big Gig – San Francisco Rush: The Rock:

And again - Looking for another opportunity… but this time for Karma Entertainment.

Steve Calfee and Bill Hindorff – Vice President and Director, respectively - from Atari Tengen - offered me a contract to port (AKA translate a game from one platform to another) San Francisco Rush: The Rock (Alcatraz edition) from Coin-Op Arcade and consumer Nintendo 64 versions – made to run on PC's running Windows supporting two major 3D interfaces – 3DFX and Direct3D.

Direct3D and 3DFX (not OpenGL):

I had not programmed the 3DFX chipset before. It was the foundation for 3D video cards known as Voodoo and Raven, and all sorts of cool sounding names.

Other 3D video card manufacturers deferred to Microsoft's Direct3D Application Programming Interface (API) to support "generic" 3D game development, something Microsoft was pushing in the era to elevate Windows into a relevant gaming platform.

Microsoft ultimately succeeded so well with Direct3D that no other 3D API exists in a meaningful way on PCs for game development. Some people will argue OpenGL is the standard but therein is an engineer's debate much like "tabs vs. spaces" (look that up on the web - it's a programmer "religious divisive hot button".

Working with 3DFX and Direct3D Chipset Manufacturers:

SF Rush had performance issues on some computers and some 3DFX video cards. I worked directly with manufacturers like S3 on their "Savage 3D" chipset. I met and worked with the 3DFX engineers to optimize the Raven 3DFX chipset over the Voodoo 3DFX chipset.

I hired a Direct3D expert to code the Windows API while I dealt with 3DFX. When 3DFX was making progress, I would switch over to help with the Windows Direct3D version.

No matter what I did the Raven 3DFX video card just did not compete with other cards. It was the latest and greatest from 3DFX but it was slower because it was adapted to support Direct3D (even slower than native Raven 3DFX). Candidly, I found the Raven 3DFX to be great in concept but failed in execution.

Fried Video Cards – Melted GPU "Chip Gates":

I eventually had an Epiphone – I could bypass the "write" verification step to the Graphics Processing Unit (GPU) First-In-First-Out (FIFO) register. That would let me "push more data" into the GPU than waiting for the GPU to acknowledge the "write". That would make the Raven 'slow card' competitive.

Experimentation proved it worked well – the game achieved a solid 30 Frames Per Second. I wanted 60 FPS but half at 30 FPS is not perceptible to most players. Of course, purists will notice just like audiophiles notice loss in CD music. Most of just do not notice the difference.

However, my brilliant idea - resulted in curious problems - during the final testing stages of SF Rush: The Rock.

The Test Manager asked me, "Do you have any idea why SF Rush fried video cards?"

What an odd question! "Of course, there is no reason for that," I insisted.

But the Test Manager pointed to a garbage can full of several dozen video cards – all were dead and fried. Something made them stop working, and every case occurred when SF Rush was running.

It made no sense, but I finally found the culprit – my "speed up" solution bypassing the "write" register acknowledgment result in some video cards running so fast (called overclocking) that they melted the "gates" inside the chip because they switched on / off too fast.

I learned that things that seem in the moment irrelevant may be critically important.

In the end, San Francisco Rush: The Rock shipped on time.

Master Your Boat Controls:

Later in life - I would take the idea of understanding things and the world before interacting and using them extensively was important. It was critical to learn controls, threats, and mitigation options before engaging with new things. I wanted immense detail before engaging outside a known, "safe space".

I coined the idea "Mastering Boat Controls" –
        Before using anything:

1) know how to propel,
2) steer,
3) dock/moor,
4) where all emergency equipment and gear is as well as how to use it.

The premise was simple.

You should know everything about your next steps and actions so you can plan correctly and mitigate issues as they come up without needing to figure out how things work in the heat of an emergency.

I coined the phrase "Boat Controls" because I formalized the name when renting an outboard powerboat that I had to captain out of a marina around a massive vehicle transport ferry and through reefs and rocky and wavy ocean waters. If something happened, I needed to know how to mitigate it.

Panzer General 3D PlayStation:

Back to Karma Entertainment…

I had to find another contract… And this time – I had to find more work (again…).

As SF Rush was wrapping up – Mindscape and Strategic Simulations Incorporated (SSI) were acquired by a United Kingdom company. They would now be owned, and operate under Pearson Limited; and they would make learning software… and still make games!

Mindscape/SSI gave me a contract to port Panzer General to the PlayStation but make it into a 3D game with 3D models and animations.

The PlayStation was the first video game console to have full native 3D accelerated hardware - other than Super Nintendo's Mode 7 which was a matrix transformed 2D bitmap (not 3D at all).

Previously –

- I wrote SNES Mode 7 features in games before so had intimate knowledge of it.

- I also wrote Dick Vitale Awesome Baby Basketball for the Sega Genesis which had to emulate the SNES Mode 7 capabilities. That was insanely hard to do on the Genesis - and garnered lots of press being shocked how a Sega Genesis could deliver 3D scaled rotating graphics where no other game ever had. Well, I could do it because I was a genius.

Bit Off More Than Could Chew:

On San Francisco Rush, for Atari Games…

I only had to fix bugs and polish SF Rush on Windows using 3DFX and Direct3D chipsets while I began the Panzer General 3D contract.

To scale, I hired a PlayStation and 3D experienced programmer named Franz to work on it in parallel to my finishing SF Rush.

This guy Franz sucked! He was secretive whenever I came around to his home where he worked; we all worked remotely in our homes as a virtual company with sync calls and meetings.

Franz failed to deliver a single milestone. He made no billable progress.

I ended up working 110-hour work weeks for nearly six weeks. It was killing me! …just to compensate for his failure.

'Bye Bye' Panzer General 3D for PlayStation:

Too much! It was the first and only time in my life that I let a contract get canceled.

I told SSI that I was sorry, but their expectations could not be achieved with the engineer I had hired and unless they were prepared to extend time the game had to die.

They agreed and said it was speculative anyway. Pearson is not excited about games, but smooth things could make it through and get published. Panzer 3D was not going smoothly.

They concluded – along with me – that Panzer General 3D should be canceled.

Hurt Trusting Others - Again:

It was a tragic reminder – once again – that whenever I truly relied on, and trusted, people on critically important things… they would hurt me. Panzer suffered because I trusted the '3D Engineer' to do the work promised and committed to in contract; however, he withdrew and became secretive, apparently using illicit drugs…

And for what and why? None of it mattered… People that 'interview' and 'present' well… can still be nasty, untrustworthy, losers… and – they may betray you, or at least let you down.

E217 Burned Out at the End of Karma_Daddy ATM

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E217 Burned Out at the End of Karma_Daddy ATM.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uokj-e217-burned-out-at-the-end-of-karma-daddy-atm.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/e-hqf_apjaM

Description:

Burned out from the relentless demands of Karme Entertainment and its difficulties, Richard had to seek a multitude of paths to income.

Despite his personal cash problems, he faithfully sent money for his children despite believing much it was not spent on them.

He found himself on formal unemployment for the first time in his life.

Richard had to juggle life and find work…

…all the while – Richard felt he had become "Daddy ATM" with his primary purpose being to dispense cash on demand.

Burned Out and Return to Employee (not Contractor) – End of Karma:

Moving forward…

I had finished my contracts with Atari and ended my contract with Pearson/Mindscape/Strategic Simulations Incorporated. I was so burned out from the crazy hours finishing Atari's San Francisco Rush: The Rock and bailing out Panzer General 3D that I wanted to leave contracting once more.

Karma Entertainment was too much for me to keep going. There were over a dozen people that depended on me for their income and livelihood. Without seeing a clear path to an immediate "next contract" these people would not earn money. I could not let them happen.

I used credit cards and went into huge debt to keep paying people while we looked for a new contract. But salaries consume money stupid fast, and we did not get a contract before my credit cards were max'ed out.

There was only one choice practically speaking – kill Karma Entertainment and inform everyone they need to find new work.

I ended Karma Entertainment but had over a hundred thousand dollars in revolving unsecured debt to show for my insane effort and work.

"Karma" was Bullshit. I wanted to believe in it. I really did. But how could all my hard work result in being burned out and buried in debt!?

Owning a Company is Hard:

Owning a company often means - scraping by, living, and paying staff with lines of credit, chasing every tip or opportunity as they avail themselves to keep cash flowing with new deals, never mind the actual work you must do to deliver "product".

And - did I mention relationships and networking? I never liked – and was not good at – networking… but it had to be done, it was part of my contractor lifestyle – part of my 'job'.

I *chose* my path, and destiny…so – I had to improve at everything, even 'networking'.

Owning and running a business is not easy; it is hard and extremely demanding.

People just never understood what it is to be an entrepreneur or business owner - until they did it themselves (if they ever dared to take the leap, and plunge in freelancing)… even just for a few years.

If they did freelance – they usually learned and became understanding of the many stages and cycles of business and video game development.

Otherwise – they complained ignorantly – as if they knew better… like Accolade 'bad' leadership…

Ex-Wife Cash Drain:

All the while being challenged to make Karma Entertainment successful…despite its numerous challenges…

My ex-wife seemed to be under the impression that I was rolling in cash - because I "owned my own company".

It was remarkable how ignorant people are about "owning a company". She just assumed I went to work - and earned a lot of money - as if every dollar I was paid was "mine" – and thusly, a sizable percentage should be handed over to her…

Well - Every dollar I was paid belonged to Karma Entertainment which had to pay a lot of people, overhead, buy equipment and software, and then pay me (if there was money left over).

There were a dozen people with spouses and children…all depending on my for their liveilhoods. And my ex-wife was demanding more money to pay her – despite my already paying TWICE what the courts expected me to pay… She wanted additional money paid as incremental spousal support.

I paid excessively more in child support - and in spousal support - than California or local laws required. I believed that my children deserved everything that I could do for them despite my soiled relationship with their mother. But all I paid - never seemed to find its way to my children.

Never would I know… where the money went. I imagined all sorts of horrible things, but I never knew what my ex did with all the money I gave her.

I *WISH* that California at least required recipients of child support to report what the money was spent on to the other parent… to ensure money was really spent on the children, it was supposed to be for… But no – blackholes cannot be probed…you might learn things you do not want to know… Yea – right…

My Special Purpose – Give Money as Daddy ATM:

In resentment - I eventually called myself "Daddy ATM" since that seemed to be my special purpose – give money.

Unemployed for First Time:

And again - It was unclear what my next contract would be.

I had been looking for a while and was losing hope. Nearly six weeks had passed and still no contract in sight. It was scary!

For the first time since I began my career making games, I was at risk for not having work! Not a job. Not a contract. Nothing.

Cirrus Logic Interim Contract:

To make interim cash I managed to get a few "business" enterprise company contracts like one with Cirrus Logic.

Cirrus Logic had Memory Cards (like predecessors to USB Flash Drives) that were faster than most others on the market. They wanted me to write a street racing car game that let the player drive down the road with joystick or keyboard.

The player could physically remove and insert memory cards into the computer's interface port. When the performance hit a high enough speed, the demo would issue sirens and send a police car to pull over the memory card that was "screaming too fast".

It was a silly but fun demo, and it paid me some money to help get through my downtime between game contracts.

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

E218 IT'S A GOLDEN GATE LIFE

Local File:
   .\LibertyBooksVideos\E218 It's a Golden Gate Life Motorcycle Crash in San Francisco California.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
   https://rumble.com/v55uomk-e219-diagnosed-to-die-from-swelling-brain.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
   https://youtu.be/79kloKibUIk

Description:
   Tragedy befalls Richard as he crashes riding his motorcycle on the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge.

   Orderly chaos follows as paramedics and emergency responders are on the scene promptly – shutting down the Golden Gate Bridge entirely.

   Hear the tale of Richard's tragic accident on Christmas Eve…

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Golden Gate and Major Accident

Motorcycle Accident on Golden Gate:

Let's flash back a bit…

When I was working for Mindscape – as Director of Software Development, overseeing Intelligent Games… on games like Chessmaster… and when my divorce was closing…

I was living alone in my 3,000 square foot house in Petaluma, CA. My office was downstairs and bedroom upstairs. That is important - because I had an accident – a big accident.

What accident? Well…

I was driving to the Bay Area from Petaluma, passing through the "Rainbow Tunnel" (named that because of an arc of rainbow colors painted around its entrances, when I saw the cars around the turn just outside the tunnel exit were all slowing. Their brake lights were intermittently red.

I was driving maybe 45 Miles Per Hour (MPH) in a 55 MPH zone. I slowed quickly to 35 MPH in preparation for what might be on the other side of the tunnel's curve.

As I rounded the turn, I could see the slowing cars were coming to a stop as they could be seen across the Golden Gate bridge and beyond.

I had a choice –
   1)   swerve left or right between cars and hope they do not hit me as they slow down,
   2)   or try and stop without hitting the car in front of me and the car behind me not running over me.

Neither option was good. I decided to brake and slow down.

The car behind me was not going to stop in time – he was going to hit me. The cars ahead on either side that I might swerve between were fishtailing with brakes locked in a turn.

I was in trouble!

Motorcycle Accident on Golden Gate – Leg & Arm broken, 14 Fractured Teeth:

The front of my Harley-clone look-alike Yamaha motorcycle hit the rear of the car in front of me at about 15 MPH but that was enough for it wedge its front wheel into and below the bumper which in turn threw me forward into the windshield faring, which knocked me back and off the bike to the ground.

The motorcycle raised on its front wheel, spun around in a pirolate, and crashed down on top of me.

I was wearing Kevlar laced leather jacket and gloves, steel toe boots, and full-face helmet. It was not enough.

The clutch lever sheered and became a harpoon that cut through my jacket. My left foot was wedged in the rear wheel sprocket and chain, dislocating toes through my boots. Doctors said I would have lost my toes if not foot were it not for those boots. They said it was a miracle the clutch lever did not pierce me.

My helmet was cracked in two places, my face shield broken, and thirteen teeth fractured with blood everywhere all over the ground, my visor, my face, and my jacket.

My left leg hurt and burned insanely as did my upper right arm and right hand. I had fractured my arm and leg. My hand was severely sprained but not broken – also a miracle the doctors declared.

Good or Bad Insurance?:

The paramedics when they cut off my jacket joked, "It must have been a nice jacket you had but jaws of life are nicer. Sorry for cutting up your jacket. Your life may depend on it."

They cut my jacket off. They cut most of my clothes off. They inserted me into a head and body-locking stretcher. They had no idea if I had internal or head injuries.

The lead paramedic leaned over to me as my blood flowed everywhere, "Hey buddy, do you have insurance? What kind is it? HMO? PPO? What?"

I could barely think straight. I muttered, "PPO".

"Awesome!", he exclaimed. "Good Insurance! We are going to Marin! We can skip SF General."

Apparently, San Francisco General is had an awful reputation as a low quality "meat" treatment facility. Whereas Marin Hospital was considered the high-quality well-to-do treatment center.

Good thing I was going to Marin.

Hospital Admission and Triage – Doctors Loonie, Payne, and Bones:

There is no way I could have imagined the insanity of my admission to Marin's hospital.

First, I was greeted by a hospital psychiatrist who asked if I wanted to crash my motorcycle. Of course not, it was an accident. No problem, the psychiatrist left.

Second, a lawyer came to me and decreed I had been abused by a faulty windshield faring and brakes could be faulty, and the tunnel signage should be better, and more he could identify if given the chance… I had a lot of money coming my way! I just had to let him represent me. I had integrity and was not going to employ an "ambulance chasing attorney". Amazing – the stereotypes were real with accident chasing lawyers.

As an aside – it was probably a mistake not to pursue the legal claims, but that's another story for the future…

Third, three doctors visited me – Doctors Loonie, Payne, and Bones. Crazy, their names were Loonie, Payne, and Bones! Only in my life could I get three doctors on my deathbed with those names. Insanity!

Ironically, Doctor Loonie (not Doctor Bones) told me about my fractured bones and teeth. They would treat my injuries, but I would need to see dentists for my fractured teeth.

Loonie told me that my upper-right arm was fractured just under my rotator and so it may not heal properly without a brace. But to surgically insert a brace would be, well, surgery. And it required they fully break the fractured bone.

I was not inclined to pursue Loonie's idea of breaking my arm further and cutting it open to bolt a metal plate inside it versus seeing it healed correctly on its own and doing the nightmare treatment if it did not heal right.

Doctor Payne wanted to take blood tests to see if I had internal injuries, but I was in too much pain to endure MORE SUFFERING. I said, "No. I don't want anything."

The doctors left accepting my decision. However, a parade of nurses and medical assistants flowed through asking me why I would not get blood tests and stressed if something was injured inside me, I could die.

"Fine!", I agreed. They did their blood tests and found no evidence of internal injuries.

Ice Spill During X-ray

In recognition of my "Hell Difficulty" life when they wheeled me into radiology to x-ray my injuries the radiology technician used bags of ice to prop up my swollen fractured limbs.

As he raised a bag to place near my neck the bag of ice broke, and ice fell all over my face, neck, and body. With my head clamped in a harness I could not move a millimeter. Ice cubes lay in my eye sockets, and I could not move them or dare open my eyes.

The technician was dismayed, "I have never seen that happen in my twenty-four years as a radiologist. I am so sorry." He picked the ice cubes from my eyes and neck and body. He cleaned them up from the harness, bed, and floor.

Even when I do nothing at all, bad things happen to me.

Christmas Day Amanda and Brooke in Hospital – "Are you going to die?":

Merry Christmas to me! Yes, I crashed on Christmas Eve and had spent the night in the hospital. I would spend the next week in the hospital before being released.

As I laid in the hospital on Christmas Day my ex-wife visited my two toddler daughters – Brooke at three and Amanda at five years old.

Amanda looked on with worry and tears. She had never seen her father incapacitated much less laid up in a hospital bed with arm and foot suspended and tubes running in my arm and up my nose. Machines beeped and blipped and pumped. She did not know what to say or do. She just watched with worry.

Brooke asked, "Are you going to die, daddy?" She did not seem particularly teary eyed or worried as Amanda did - but she was asking possibly the most prudent question.

I answered, "No, I am fine."

"What is Illness to the Body of a Knight-Errant?":

I thought of Don Quixote's deathbed moment, "Not well? What is illness to the body of a knight-errant? What wound matters? For each time he falls, he shall rise again, and woe to the wicked."

And therefore – no – I was fine…

Brooke Appeased:

Brooke took my words of comfort as "truth" and seemed okay with things. My ex-wife did not want to stay around and had fulfilled her "duty" of bringing my children to my potential deathbed.

I was glad to have seen my daughters. I did not know if I would die though I did not expect it would happen. You never know though, right?

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They left within an hour of visiting. I did not see them again for over a month, not until I could transport and care for them myself.

Daddy ATM and Parental No Rights:

Their mother focused on fulfilling her obligations to me regarding my children, but she never seemed to want me truly in their lives THOUGH SHE VERY MUCH WANTED MONEY!

I would eventually label myself "Daddy ATM" in response to the relentless need of money without apparent spend on my children.

California made mothers "gods of children" with all rights and fathers "payers for children" without any rights.

During a major conflict I pursued full legal custody of my children, but California refused to even entertain my arguments because I was living outside California where they asserted I had no "standing" or rights… over my own children.

Even worse, I was living in Canada working with Electronic Arts Canada at that time. International residence defines parental rights as NULL and VOID – ZERO RIGHTS!

That is right! I lived outside the USA and so had NO LEGAL RIGHTS over my own children… even though I was a U.S. Citizen.

"It's a Wonderful Life" in the Hospital:

With my children gone and being alone in my hospital room on Christmas Day I turned the little TV suspended high on the far wall on.

It's a Wonderful Life! was playing. It was a story of a man that questioned his worth and value in life and was made to by an angel what the world would have been had he never born into it.
The angel shows him how much of a difference he made on others and that his life was important.

It felt poetic for me to laying there in the hospital just shy of 4:30pm in the afternoon on Christmas Day in pain and wondering how someone who strove his entire life to be good and "righteous could be so beaten and injured for no reason at all – just random smite from god (or the devil).

Heart Stop "Seizure":

Just after 4:30pm a beep-beep-beep next to me began chirping, and it seemed to grow louder with longer tones – BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP!

I looked over and saw the heart monitor flat lined. Yea, it appeared my heart had stopped. Of course – the machine could have just disconnected.

Weird! I mean, I did not feel anything.

And then I was weak. I was lightheaded then dizzy. I could barely raise my arm.

Two nurses charged into the room. One inserted a syringe into my IV as the other was charging a defibrillator to presumably revive my heart.

Oh my god! Was I dying!? Would Brooke's question be proven, "Yes, I am dying!" after all? Was I mistaken – thinking it was not going to happen… that I would die!?

Thankfully, the injection kickstarted my heart. It resumed beep-beep-beep.

I asked, "What happened? Did my heart stop? Did I have a heart attack?"

"We cannot say anything, Mr. Seaborne. You are okay. The doctor will see you and explain things to you later," replied the IV nurse.

The doctor did not show up until the next day. I had to go the entire night wondering what happened and if it would happen again, and would it happen when I was asleep? Would I not wake up? It was inconsiderate if not cruel to leave me wondering all night.

When the doctor appeared, he explained that I did not have a heart attack but rather experience a heart seizure resulting from physical shock. He said it is common for "roadside injuries" to result in death from shock. Apparently, some people's brains decide the injuries are too great to survive so "checks out" to prevent unnecessary suffering… because – after all – you were going to die anyway…

The doctor alleged that I should not have any long-term effects from the "heart seizure" and that I would unlikely experience another incident now that I was "out of the woods".

God Sending a Message:

Perhaps God was trying to tell me something.

Maybe things were not as bleak or dire as they literally felt with my bruised, broken, bashed body. I was going through a lot of turmoil at that time – divorce, Mindscape going Distance Learning from games, Karma Entertainment fighting for survival with a flaky subcontractor, and the stress of knowing a dozen families depended on me for their livelihoods.

But I was "pulling it all off" and making it successful despite the toll it took me.

I reflected on the irony of my questioning my life's value as *It's a Wonderful Life* played on my hospital room's suspended TV, and then for my heart to stop. It made clear that I could have died. And my daughters showed me how much they needed me (at least my income no matter what). What would things be like without me – terrible I am confident.

Apostle Paul according to Doug:

Doug Brandon told me that I was a lot like Apostle Paul – I suffered an incurable chronic cough that made me a pariah (even with my ex-wife) and suffer constant abuse and suffering despite my faith. But Apostle Paul kept his faith no matter how hurt or beaten down he was. Doug said that I impressed him with my remarkable ability to snapback against insanely oppressive and destructive experiences. I was the modern day "Apostle Paul" to Doug.

As a point of insight – I have tried to research Paul the Apostle and have never found the narrative Doug told me of him. However, Paul's journeys would not preclude what Doug described of him either and since Doug grew up attending religious schools, I presumed he must know more than I could easily discover.

In any case – it was an empowering story from Doug that helped me get through some otherwise challenging and potential defeating times.

It's imperative to hold onto Faith, Spirit, and Ideas – when your body is beaten badly.

Empowering stories of overcoming challenges - and of helping others – like those of Apostle Paul… and my daughters… those things help us get through otherwise soul-crushing experiences and times.

E219 Diagnosed to Die from Swelling Brain

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E219 Diagnosed to Die from Swelling Brain.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uol0-e218-its-a-golden-gate-life-motorcycle-crash-in-san-francisco-california.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/16QJziNnYqY

Description:

Richard suffered dental damage from his recent motorcycle accident, requiring extensive time with dentists.

Still recovering from the motorcycle accident and dental work, Richard's brain swells inexplicably, and he is diagnosed to die.

Hear the story of how a tortilla chip reversed everything, and saved Richard's life…

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Dentist Solutions to Fractured Teeth:

Although I was released from the hospital – it would be a long time before I could be mobile. My arm was fractured in multiple places, and my leg was bruised and swollen…but not broken. And I had thirteen fractured teeth…

I was so bad off - I stayed with my parents for a few weeks (that is a nightmare, believe me…) just to survive…as there was no one else to care for me…at that time.

Once able to be semi-mobile… I had to consider the Doctor's parting advice about my fractured teeth.

They said I should go to a dentist – dental surgeon – as soon as I was able.

I went to a neighborhood dentist - to deal with my fractured teeth.

I had misgivings about the dentist. The office had two dentists, two assistants, and a receptionist. It was a small clinic.

The dentist detailed a lot of damage from the accident. He described fractures going deep under the gum line and some near the roots. He said that he could replace some teeth with implants, drill and fill wherever possible, or apply a coating that would seal the cracks. The latter was the least long-term solution but also the least invasive.

I chose the "easy" least invasive patchwork approach of sealing the fractures and cracks.

Dental Procedures Uneventful "Mostly":

My dental work required a few visits to complete despite the procedure being considered "easy". I had misgivings when I overheard the dentist discussion about the procedure with a dental assistant – but not as instruction or education - but for what seemed like consultation.

Yea – the dentist was talking to *his assistant* - apparently seeking advice on how to proceed with my dental work.

I was alarmed but I was also numb-mouthed and planted in the dental chair. It seemed like I had to just continue and bear it all.

Fireplace BBQ Lighter Sterilized Dental Equipment":

The dentist pulled out what appeared to be a fireplace long lighter to sterilize his drill and tools.

OH MY GAWD – I swear to this day the dentist sterilized his gear with a fireplace long-nosed lighter.

I heard the click as he ignited it and watched him move the open flame across the equipment. I imagined it must have some smoke decay or residue on it but he went straight to work using the lighter-sterilized dental gear.

Well – again, what was I supposed to do? My teeth were exposed and he was sealing thirteen of them. I could only assume that I was not seeing things clearly or it was 'safe' to sterilize dentist equipment with a lighter.

Terminal Diagnosis – I Was Going to Die!

It was not even a month after my motorcycle crash in the Golden Gate Bridge that I began developing insane migraines.

I went to doctors and eventually met with a neurologist who said my brain was swelling without a specified cause and I was going to die.

WHOA! I WAS GOING TO DIE!!!!!

He prescribed two bottles of Vicodin and directed, "Drink two bottles of wine and take all of the Vicodin, and you will die painlessly when your suffering has become too much."

You got that? The doctor gave me drugs to euthanize myself when I felt my suffering was too much to bear anymore.

Saved by Tortilla Chip (at Chevys restaurant)

I decided to go out and eat every night. I drank alcohol to excess. I had concluded that it was important to maximize what time I had left within the means I had.

When dining out one evening in Foster City, CA at a Tex-Mex restaurant called Chevys, I bit a tortilla chip and one of my "patched" sealed teeth broke in two.

It tasted nasty. My tooth tasted bad! I spit out the tooth fragments and black gunk stuff came out with it. I went to the restroom to rinse my mouth.

Within hours of breaking my tooth my migraine began to fade. I was feeling better. Why?

Tooth Infection of Doom (sealed staph infection within):

Upon returning to the dentist, I learned that the dentist sealed bacteria in my tooth that grew into a staph infection. The staph leaked out slowly through micro-cracks in the sealant and it went to my brain and caused swelling detailed the dentist.

Death was inevitable if the staph ever got loose fully and overwhelmed my body and brain.

But that tortilla chip saved my life!

Did the BBQ Fireplace Lighter Sterilization Fail and Cause my Staph Infection:

I had not considered until this recollection of memories that that dentist's poor sterilization could be precisely why a staph infection was not 'killed' and was sealed inside one of my teeth.

Who knows? It seems plausible but all it points to is – *HELL DIFFICULTY!*

Survived – Did God Save Me with a Miracle, 'Randamn' Fate, or Undead Lich:

They say that God works in mysterious ways. Did he save me with a miracle?

Survived – Did God of Fate Randamn Save Me:

Or did the God of Fate and Random events, the God Randamn, save me? The god of Fate Randamn I imagined was a divine being of gambling and unexpected events, adorned with a web of chains with jangling dice of all shapes clanging against each other.

And so – was it Randamn's hand of fate that plucked me from death's door with that tortilla chip? Randamn must work in mysterious ways, if so.

Survived – Was I Unkillable, an Undead Lich:

Or was I a mythical undead wizard known as a Lich, a genius being whose body decays and degenerates despite its inability to die? As my mind and body have deteriorated, I sometimes think perhaps I could be a Lich, if such existed.

And yes – I know Liches and fantasy creatures are not real.

Survived – How Survived Did Not Matter:

It did not matter. It was Hell Difficulty in any scenario.

But I survived – just thirteen slightly misaligned teeth forever more (because I did not want to undergo reconstructive oral surgery) and mended bone "knots" under my rotator and in my arm and leg.

Madness of it All – All Because of 'RanDamn' Nothing, No Cause or Reason At All:

The Madness of it all… I survived a near-death motorcycle accident, only to face a near-death 'dental accident' from a dentist sealing a timebomb Staph infection inside a 'filling' & beneath a sealant – to seep out through a nerve and eventually cause my brain to swell… again – to near death.

And… all because…of Randamn! Yea…'random damn' stuff… Things were random bad things – they were 'RanDamn' things… They happened…just because…their triggers had no cause or reason – at all.'

It was – RanDamn.

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E220 NEW WORLD_NEW JOB_NEW LIFE_LOOKING FOR WORK

Local File:

.\LibertyBooksVideos\E220 Interplay, Club Rubber, Star Trek New Worlds, New Job, and New Life.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:

https://rumble.com/v55up1u-e220-interplay-club-rubber-star-trek-new-worlds-new-job-and-new-life.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:

https://youtu.be/ou68Ssi7MMI

Description:

Rare times is it that a cliché 'casting couch' has been said to be used on men, but Richard was one of those 'lucky' men. Learn what happened with Richard and his Casting Couch interview.

Hear the tale of Richard joining Interplay in Southern California.

Richard shares stories of Brian Fargo, Fargo's Personal Trainers, Club Rubber, and quirky experiences at Interplay.

Learn about Richard's experience working with Music Producer Brian Christian.

See Richard stand up for his fellow employees against 'The Man' – Executive Management…

Looking for Work, Casting Couch at Crystal Dynamics – 'Who, Me!? Really!?!?':

Once more… I was looking for work - between contracts.

I was looking for work, or a job – contract or full-time employee.

I learned of an opportunity with a company named Crystal Dynamics - that was based in Palo Alto, California.

I interviewed with the company's Vice President who was also the hiring decision-maker – and who was a woman in the computer and video game industry which made her a rare breed.

She interviewed me in her office on a 2-Person Hollywood-style "Casting couch" love seat.

She leaned in often uncomfortably. And a few times brushed against my arm and leg, and finally it was explicitly clear that she was expressing her interest in me when she set her hand on my upper inner thigh and left it resting there.

There it was - Crystal Dynamics' Vice President of Development was clearly commitment sexual harassment during my interview by leaning in closely, brushing against my arms and legs, and resting her hand on my inner thigh.

I am confident that my experience is not appropriate in an interview. Had I ever done that in an interview – I would have gotten into great trouble.

I DEFINITELY KNOW –

> HAD I DID EVER DONE WHAT THE VP DID TO ME IN AN INTERVIEW WITH A FEMALE CANDIDATE, I WOULD BE FIRED AND MAYBE SUED IMMEDIATELY.

But apparently no one cared if a woman did that to a man.

I had thought this traditionally misogynistic interview power-play or outright sexual manipulation was long dead.   But there it was – and WITH ME!? Seriously!!? With me!!?

Wow!

Never had I ever imagined such a thing could happen to anyone I knew, much less to me. I never considered myself so attractive that a person would leverage their position of authority or power over me to encourage intimate or outright sexual engagement.

I refused and openly questioned what she was doing with her hands and getting so close to me. She was offput – of course.

Surprisingly (not!) – I was not offered a job.

It did not matter how qualified I was – from what I could tell based on how things went. It was all about – how I GOT ALONG WITH THAT VICE PRESIDENT…

A New Beginning at Interplay, Star Trek New Worlds – via Friend Charles Weitzer:

I kept looking…

A job recruiter friend of mine, Charles Weitzer - who I had met when recruiting staff at Atari Games - called me, and told me about a job opportunity in Southern California at Interplay if I was open to relocating and hiring as an employee.

Charles arranged an interview since I expressed how great it was, he called when he did because I was afraid of ending up with no income and no money at the rate things were going.

I flew down to John Wayne Airport in Irvine, Orange County, CA. Interplay was a small company of a few hundred employees. They had a great history of making games for gamers. Its founder Brian Fargo was renowned for creating *Baldur's Gate* and *The Bard's Tale* series. I had played, and greatly enjoyed both of those games.

Interplay was a great gamer company. They hired me on the spot, and I moved swiftly to Irvine and began my full-time employment at Interplay as a Senior Software Engineer working on recovering a failed contract development game *Star Trek: New Worlds.*

The job was arduous, and the game was written in C++. I had previously programmed many computer languages including C, Assembly, RISC, Pascal, Basic, etc. But I had not programmed C++. As always, I learned as I went.

I have always been a highly proficient self-teacher. Consequently, no one ever knew that I did not know C++ before working on *Star Trek.*

New Worlds was finished and released as planned.

Once more - I saved the day!

Fargo's Fantasies:

Interplay celebrated its holiday parties in its late years in a "cost effective way".

Brian Fargo was said to be one-third stake owner in a local "club" called "The Galaxy Theater" in Orange County, CA and was likewise a one-third stake holder in a "service" called "Club Rubber". Club Rubber hosted alternative lifestyle kinky social events and parties… and was reputed to be a drug venue.

Brian combined Club Rubber with The Galaxy Theater to form rubber bashes and various kinky events for alternative lifestyle people to engage with each other.

There were more than a few days - when fellow developers and I - would be returning from lunch or crossing the parking lot - between Interplay's two buildings - and witness Brian Fargo's "personal trainers" arrive for his afternoon "workouts".

Brian's personal trainers appeared to be prostitutes. They wore excessive makeup and either work full body cat suits or miniskirts with nylons and tight tops. Neither their attire nor makeup were consistent fitness trainers. And people spoke of the "workout sounds" from Brian's office as sounding very rhythmic and sometimes moaned and groaned. It was theorized that Brian was working out to his sexual fantasies.

It was a good thing Brian Fargo had his own bathroom annexed to his office.

We all cringed at how emboldened Brian was to flagrantly use prostitutes at work, but that was an aspect of him we had to accept or look the other way so we could ignore it and carry on.

A Very Merry Public Christmas at Interplay:

Back to Interplay and its holiday parties…

Like I said – Interplay celebrated its holiday parties in its late years in a "cost effective way".

It leveraged Brian Fargo's stake in The Galaxy Theater to secure it to host company parties.

One year Interplay was so cost effective for its Christmas Party that it did not close the Galaxy Theater from the public and so staff were given admission and two drink tickets for "standard drinks" (AKA a beer or glass of house wine). Sad and pathetic, but a foreboding sign of what was to come.

Now that was "cheap" of Interplay to host its Christmas Party in an open public nightclub, but it was a herald of Interplay's forthcoming bankruptcy and fire-sale acquisition by Titus Interactive of France (more on that later).

None of us staff cared for the Theater's dark club venue because we could not talk with anyone or share ideas. The Galaxy Theater was by design a segmented dance floor with socializing booths for "people pods" to congregate and drink (and buy/sell/take illegal drugs).

Interplay extolled the Christmas Party as epic and legendary and all the propaganda they could muster to rationalize the inexpensive holiday party… that most no one liked.

No Game After Shipping *Star Trek*:

Interplay was struggling in other divisions and had the audacity to not give each of us developers a customary free copy of the game we just shipped.

It was insane! NEVER HAD I HEARD of a company not giving ONE COPY of the game people made to each team member. It could not stand!

Famous VP Brian Christian Unreceptive:

I went to the division Vice President Brian Christian and made my opinion extremely clear.

Prior to entering gaming, Brian had earned 15 platinum and 22 gold records for his work on various albums including Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. In gaming he has held several positions spanning Interplay to Konami Digital Entertainment to THQ to Take-Two Interactive, and more. Brian Christian was a highly creative, passionate, and emotional man.

Brian heard my demand and his "2-yeard old" reacted from being told what to do. His resume gave him a large ego, and he was having nothing of my commanding he give each team member a copy of *Star Trek* that we just finished and shipped to retail. He was angry and said, "NO! Get out! DO NOT TELL ME WHAT TO DO!"

Now, Brian was normally reasonable if not emotional. He did not handle his emotions well. I saw him once so high from self-medicating that he was dragging himself along a hallway to hide in his office… and slump into his chair.

Recognition Games or I Quit:

Well…about the recognition game for shipping Star Trek: New Worlds…

I demanded Brian give everyone on the team their promised copy of the game or I would resign. He was unmoved. I stomped out of the building - midafternoon and did not return.

Later I received a call from a colleague Doug Brandon who informed me that Brian went up to Brian Fargo (Interplay's founder and CEO) and told him my rant. Brian Fargo told Brian Christian to give everyone a game copy, and why the heck did it come to him to make that decision!?

Well, not only did everyone get their game copy but they gave me a box of copies to make a point. I went around and gave everyone extra copies and still had extras for myself to take.

It amazed me that Interplay lost more money from lost productivity and morale than just giving those copies at maybe $5 cost of goods (COGs) each to each developer.

Interplay did not have strategic thinking as it ruled itself with emotions.

Interplay's Demise:

Interplay had been struggling financially and everyone knew it. But we did not know how razor-thin Interplay's survival was.

Brian Fargo even took the company public in a open offering as Interplay Entertainment to generate cash to stay in business, but that resulted in loss of control by Interplay's management (which was not necessarily a bad thing seeing as they were why the company was in dire straits in the first place).

Tragically though, the board of Interplay Entertainment empowered Brian Fargo to continue running the company as he saw fit. He drove Interplay into the ground and never returned anything to the investors. The stock value plummeted into a penny stock.

Interplay desperately sought investors or even buyers to stay afloat.

Titus Interactive of France purchased controlling interest of Interplay and gutted the company for its assets and hired some of its staff – I was one of those people that was laid off from Interplay and hired by Titus the next week.

I became France-based Titus' U.S. Technical Director overseeing all tech and development for the U.S. and Canada (and Mexico if we had a developer there). And we also managed South Korean developers too over time because the game's primary market was in the States… and Titus had no one else to do it, either.

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E221 Titus Interactive
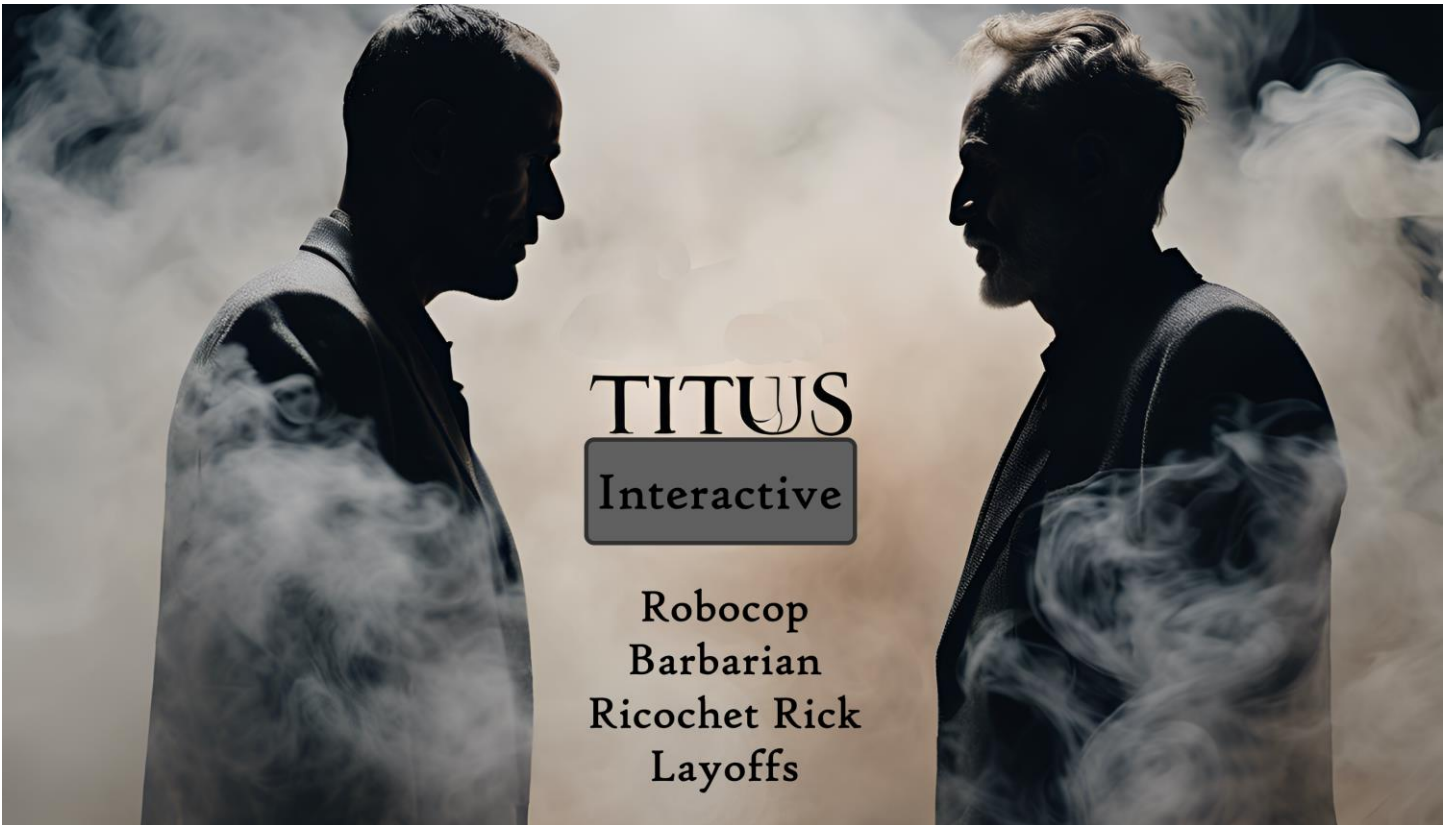
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55up3m-e221-titus-interactive.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/sWjm2u07f0U

Description:

Richard shares stories when he was the U.S. Technical Director for all Titus Interactive games in North America.

He recounts tales of Robocop, Barbarian, Ricochet Rick, and Titus Interactive shafting them and the staff including Richard.

Hear how a maverick California Labor Board deputy roped in international aloof Titus Interactive founders and owners – The Caen Brothers.

Richard concludes with his insight on the risks & rewards of contracting versus being an employee.

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Titus Interactive's 'US Technical Director' – 'Chuck Norris of Game Development':

Like I said – French Titus Interactive of France seized Interplay in a hostile takeover through majority stock acquisition and gutted the company for its games and a few of its employees. I joined Titus a week after Interplay laid off everyone in the company (including me) as it declared it was shutting down for good.

I was hired to oversee development and technology across North America which really represented the U.S. and Canada (and South Korea because their publishing market was the States).

As U.S. Technical Director I traveled to prospective and contracted game developers to hear their game pitches with Doug Brandon as Titus' Producer. I would assess their development plans in detail – engineering architecture and interface design, task fidelity and estimation and dependency process and forecast vs. actual schedule progress, and so on.

Any gap in a developer's capabilities had to be compensated for, designed around, or the contract canceled. Of course, canceling a contract reflected poorly on me as much as a developer so my mission was always to deliver great games on budget on time.

My reputation for delivering successful games on schedule within budget was well established, and I continued that tradition with Titus despite their terrible and outright evil business practices (that I would discover working for them).

I was like martial arts expert Chuck Norris as a Texas Ranger but for ensuring video game developers had a plan and tracked to it like a fire marshal prevents fire, or bailed them out from a failing project like a fire fighter. …My role was both proactive and reactive depending on the developer.

In all cases – I had to be prepared and able to figure out what was going on and kick butt ASAP.

Robocop:

The game Robocop was an "Unreal" engine first-person shooter game like every other "Wolfenstein" shooter clone. Robocop should have been called "Robocopy".

Robocop was an embarrassment to me as an engineer and developer. It used the licensed "Unreal" engine along with much of its reference sample art. The animation, art, sound effects, and music were serviceable but not polished.

Robocop was "a job" that I made sure shipped, but I was not happy about its lack of design innovation and first-pass unpolished art and audio.

I even had to negotiate with Nintendo to front Titus the money to manufacture the "first run" batch of games so Titus would have the cash flow to pay for subsequent manufacturing runs. The game did not sell enough to merit more manufacturing runs and so Nintendo was left holding the bag with Titus dragging its feet to pay the debt.

Barbarian:

Titus signed a contract to develop a new 'fighter genre' game called Barbarian, with a splinter develop from Sculptured Software called Saffire (which would further splinter off into a company calling itself Sensory Sweep which would go bankrupt in fraud and embezzlement charges against its founder Dave Rushton – more on that elsewhere).

Saffire had a decent development team, but they lacked experienced engineering or design oversight on their team, and they had no writer on staff or contract.

<u>Writing Barbarian's 10-Hour Dialog:</u>

Unable to find a competent author to write the extensive script in *Barbarian*, Titus turned to me; I wrote it all. My background writing adventure modules and role-playing games placed me at the top of candidates to write the over ten hours of spoken dialog in the game. Of course, they also needed better tech for compression which I helped write - as well.

But I had a full-time job as U.S. Technical Director. It was not like my other responsibilities went away at the time. Fortunately, since all developers I oversaw were contracted with external third-party developers I had windows of time during the week I had spare time (an unheard-of thing in the game industry).

<u>Late Night "Liquid Boosted" Creativity:</u>

The gaps in my primary responsibilities were not enough to finish the script. I decided to commit to working crazy hours like I did when I was a contract developer myself. I liked the game and wanted it to be good. I worked most nights until midnight or 2am, and then at work by 9am. It was not much sleep, but it was enough.

I found my creativity waned around 9pm, and so I boosted it with a glass of wine. Then another glass. Then the bottle was empty. I would head to bed around that time. This pattern of late-night work and drinking was unfortunately not uncommon for me throughout my career.

Interestingly - I both observed and had been told often that "drinking is part of game development, just like not getting enough sleep or having short or no vacations is part of development."

The harms of that much drinking have been evident to me over the decades of my career, including harms to me too. Were I not drinking all those decades I sincerely believe I would have failed and been unable to cope with so many challenges and especially the "harder times" in my 'Hell Difficulty' life.

<u>Hell Difficulty Life:</u>

Why do I describe my life as 'Hell Difficulty'?

The answer is simple – my life has been fraught with extremely challenging traumatic events that I believe would crush most any ordinary person. Only my extraordinary resilience and methods of insulation and isolation coupled with my "pull-up" positive "higher morale" enabled me to endure and overcome the many hardships.

But even the strongest of people with willpower of iron and steel trap mind needs help to separate from the fight to rest and recuperate, so that they can rise again to raise holy hell down upon their foes and triumph over projects and achieve goals… that were otherwise unsurmountable, and unachievable.

The strongest people can get help… Help comes in many forms – friends and family, faith and religion, alcohol and drugs, …

But I specifically and emphatically EXCLUDE 'HOPE' from the list of things that help people overcome hardships.

<u>Hope is not a Strategy:</u>

'Hope is not a Strategy' I have told people for as long as I can remember.

The dictionary defines 'hope' "to want something to happen or be true".

The definition of 'hope' is awfully broad and vague. It is so imprecise that it cannot be quantified or even attached to any action or other things or words or even ideas. 'Hope' exists entirely unto itself as its own idea and its own thing.

My goal in defaming 'hope' is not to minimize or discard it. I am a strong believer in the incredible importance of 'hope'.

But I cannot emphasize enough that 'hope' is a non-action thing. There is nothing anyone can do about 'hope'. It is just something inside people that makes them keep going forward despite things overwhelming them or preventing success.

And so, when people tell me to believe them "because" or that they "hope" things work out I recoil and condemn the willingness to march into Hell without a plan. The team and product will all fail – and it could all be avoided with due diligence and planning up front.

Therefore, 'hope' can kill a project or team (or both). 'hope' is something you bring with you from home and take it back home with you at the end of the day. 'hope' is something you keep to yourself. 'hope' can be an inner light that shines for you, but it is not going to help you actually "do or solve anything".

At best 'hope' gives another day to find a solution.

And 'hope is not a strategy'.

Titus 'Do Evil unto Others' – Covert Shift Risk to Developers and Con Manufacturers:

Back to Titus.

Although it was not Titus' formal motto to 'do evil until others' it was evident its founding brothers Herve and Eric Caen were very much content for evil to fall on anyone but themselves.

Let me share a perfect example -

They signed a contract with a developer where Titus was to pay half the development costs and the developer would likewise pay the other half. With the contract from Titus signed the developer was able to secure a business loan to cover their half of the costs. The developer would receive twice the normal royalty to offset their increased "skin in the game" risk.

Titus was unsure if the developer could make a high-quality game and so positioned the split cost model as a compromise, but their real reason was nefarious.

The Caen brothers knew Titus may not have enough money to cover their half of the development costs beyond the first few months due to their corporate cash flow. They did not have enough money to manufacture and publish the game and so would rely on credit from Nintendo, Microsoft, and Sony (gambling the game's quality would inspire them to front the cash to bring the game to market). And Titus had soured their Nintendo relationship over an unpaid *Robocop* manufacturing credit (further reducing success odds).

In other words – the Caen brothers knew Titus could not honor the contract they signed, and they knew if things did not work out the developer would default on their loan and lose everything including laying off their staff.

But the Caen brothers did not care about the potentially devastating impact on others. They gambled with people's livelihoods and happiness and trust in humanity. They gambled Titus would "find" more money to cover their half of development and get "credit" to manufacture and bring the game to market.

They were cons… not just the Caen brothers.

So, requirements were –
1) High quality fun game (which is unpredictable in the best of times)
2) "Find" cash to cover development costs (despite having exhausted all creditor lines of credit)
3) Secure "Credit" to manufacture and publish the game from Nintendo, Microsoft, Sony

It was a long shot and one that was not shared with the developer. It was kept secret. In fact, it was not shared with the me or the producer Doug Brandon (Titus hired Doug too but not as a composer but as a producer). We all operated under the "lie" that Titus was solvent and in good faith was intending to and was able to fund and publish the game. Afterall, THAT IS WHAT PUBLISHERS DID.

Ricochet Rick:

The game in question was Ricochet Rick. By the time we discovered what Titus had done it was too late. The developer had spent a lot of money and was "all in". Titus was not "all in" and bailed during development as they ran out of money.

Worse though of Titus was telling Doug and I that Ricochet Rick milestone quality was unacceptable and needed fixing. They did this repeatedly until it became apparent there was nothing that would ever be "approvable". Titus was exploiting the contract to push the developer to keep funding the game, while Titus shopped it around looking for investors or alternative publishers.

Titus set the developer up to fail, with only a long shot chance to succeed.

Things failed.

The developer went bankrupt and harbored resentment towards Doug and I though we had nothing to do with the "scam" Titus pulled on them.

Titus did the same thing with a South Korean developer, but Doug and I shared what Titus had done to the Ricochet Rick Santa Monica-based developer, and the South Korean developer found a way to sever their arrangement and minimize the damage and loss to their business.

Titus "did evil unto others".

Laid off from Titus Electronically:

With the collapse of the active Titus contracts the writing was on the walls. Doug and I concluded it was only a matter of time until Titus cut their U.S. offices entirely. They no longer had any North American development going on. They had no money to sign new contracts, and their developer-scam reputation was "out there". And they had no new games at retail or manufacture… to make more money.

Not long later… One day I received an email that informed my last day of employment at Titus was that day and that I should leave my badge and exit the building.

No formal letter of employment termination. No phone call. No one in person at all. It was surreal. Not even security or human resources. Nothing! Nobody!

I was "laid off" entirely electronically from my manager that worked in Paris, France. I may not have mentioned that – my boss lived and worked in France. I saw him two times a year and spoke on the phone once a month. Most everything was done through email.

In some ways being "fired" (albeit a layoff) by email was consistent with how we communicated. It was still weird.

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There was another curious thing about being laid off and told to just leave your badge and go home. What about my last paycheck? What about my unused vacation and sick time (AKA personal time off / PTO)? What about my medical insurance continuation options? Is anybody offering references or recommendations on places to interview?

Nothing! Doug and I were kicked to the curb by an email.

Titus Cheat and No Pay:

We were not paid our last paycheck. We were not reimbursed for outstanding travel or business expenses. Doug and I were promised bonuses that were also unpaid. We were ripped off by our employer.

My childhood employer rip-off at Klure Associate happened again – just to me as an adult. I work for someone in good faith that they will pay me upon completion of the work – but in these instances I was not paid for the work I completed as they promised.

Clearly and obviously – Employers cannot be trusted!

Doug embraced his fate saying, "We saw it coming. We had a good ride. Nothing lasts forever. We will land on our feet." Doug had the ability to believe things would work out even when things seemed dire.

I was not happy and not willing to "accept my fate". It could not stand!

California Labor Officer:

I researched my options and went to the California State Labor Board and met with a clerk who directed me to labor officer. The middle-aged man with combed but mildly scruffy hair and beard wore a worn brown sportscoat, slightly yellowed 'white' collared dress shirt, blue jeans with wear marks, and western "cowboy" boots. Hanging on a coat rack in his office was a big "cowboy hat" and black trench coat. He was a big 'character' of a man – right out of TV show.

The labor officer leaned back in his chair, "What can I do you for? And what is your name?"

I shared my personal information as he wrote it down on his notepad. I detailed that Titus emailed me that I was laid off but refuses to pay me my last check or reimburse incurred expenses on their behalf.

He told me the case was simple. If Titus had enough money, they must pay me. If they did not have enough money, they still must pay me, but I would be in line with everyone else demanding to be paid. And I would still need to wait for bankruptcy proceedings and liquidation of any still-owned assets. And since Titus was international, they would likely just vanish with any assets they desired to keep. I would be out the money unpaid to me anyway plus my time and stress and fees incurred trying to get paid.

The officer set a date for me to meet with him in a few weeks, where he would subpoena Titus to send a representative to likewise be present. He said we will work out what we can in person.

California Labor Officer – the Hearing:

When the day came to meet, Titus sent a French director that was currently in the U.S. to represent them.

The Titus director asserted neither Doug nor I deserved our last paychecks because we were not as effective as was expected… as employees.

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The labor officer cut him off abruptly, "The LAW STATES YOU WILL REMIT PAYMENT UPON SERVICES RENDERED ACCORDING TO AGREEMENT. It is that simple. Richard was at work, right? You agreed to pay him a fixed compensation as a salary based on a presumed hourly rate, right?"

The director paused. The Weasley Titus Director weakly answered, "Well, I guess… yea…"

The officer proclaimed, "Titus owes Richard Seaborne for his time worked. That amounts to two weeks of pay. The State mandates you provide two weeks' notice to an employee, and so you own an additional two weeks. Richard had unused vacation time, which Titus must pay for at the same salary rate. You have two weeks to provide either Richard with a cashier's check in the full amount, or you can provide it to this Labor Office, and we will remit it to Richard. Are we clear, Mr. Director?" The officer tone was condescending, authoritative, and damning.

The director asserted, "Titus cannot afford to pay Richard. We have no money."

The officer replied, "You have no assets like a delivery truck? You have no bank accounts at all? You have no untapped credit lines you plan to use on something else? If you have any of these things or anything of cash value that can be sold or liquidated, and you do not disclose them right now in good faith to compensate Richard you and your executives including Herve and Eric Caen will be banned from entering the United States and will have warrants for fraud issued against them. Now, am I clear?"

Titus Arrest Threat by Labor Officer (AKA Deputy of United States and California):

The labor officer was loud, firm, and outright condemning with a glare that would crush the strongest of people. He was obviously well-practiced in dominating deadbeat employers.

He whipped out a leather wallet and opened it up to a big silver badge on one side and a government seal with lots of text on the other. He declared, "I am a sworn deputy of the United States of America and of the State of California. I recognize you are unwilling to comply with the laws of this country and state. I am hereby placing you under arrest."

He opened his drawer and pulled out a pair of handcuffs. He stepped up and walked around the desk and asked the director to turn around so he could be cuffed. He began reciting the Miranda rights – "You have the right to …"

Freaked out and in disbelief the director exclaimed, "Okay, we can find the money. We can get the money. We will get Richard paid in two weeks." He called Eric Caen on the phone and ranted in French what I presume were obscenities laced with my name here and there.

Two weeks later – I was paid. And thus, ended Titus and its tales of sorrow and woe.

I was not paid my bonus. I was not reimbursed expenses. But I did get paid my salaried paycheck.

Being Employee Was Risky and Unstable – Just with a 'Probable Next Contract':

It was very apparent –

- Being an employee was no guarantee of employment…

    o you had little power over your job or life's situation

    o your employers holds all the power – making you always at the mercy of your their decisions and whims…

- Employers can pull the rug out from under you – at any time –

    o they can decline or cancel your vacations

    o they can you end your job

        ▪ fire you 'just for not being a fit', never mind your talents and contributions

        ▪ refuse to give expected raises, bonuses…

        ▪ and – though small – they can take way promised 'perks'

- BUT – As an employee –

    o you may get stock grants

    o you may even have a company that will match your 401K retirement contributions - up to a maximum amount, of course.

    o You will be granted formal vacation and sick time, though conversely you have a specified maximum number of days to be sick or vacationing…employers control both the amount of time, and when you can use it. So – it was a 'controlled perk' of being an employee…

    o And – importantly – you, effectively, get a 'next contract' automatically… at the end of your current project.

        ▪ Getting 'automatic work renewal', in my opinion, was the only REAL VALUE of being an employee. The rest – can be crafted as a contractor, into your working and personal lifestyle.

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E222 DVD Interactive

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E222 DVD Interactive DVDi Tech Theft by Disney, Hasbro, Mattel, and Leap Frog.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55up4j-e222-dvd-interactive-dvdi-tech-theft-by-disney-hasbro-mattel-and-leap-frog.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/-HK4MZpGzCI

Description:
Hear how Richard reverse engineered the DVD Video platform, and crafted a development tool suite for interactive DVD games supporting up to four players,

Richard shares how he and his wife developed prototype demos for trivia and educational games, and how Hasbro, Mattel, and Leap Frog all stole the concept and replicated the tech over time… stealing the idea, opportunity, and reward from Richard and his wife.

Hear how Richard came to terms with all that happened…

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DVD Interactive:

Let's look to a time before Titus Interactive collapsed, but when I was in Southern California – and yes, I was still working for Titus Interactive…

I met the woman that would become my wife Katherine – in Southern California. We quickly had stars in our eyes – of each other – and of a greater, better life…together.

We aspired to unite our passion to innovate new ideas and products. A friend of mine over the years – also worked for Interplay and then Titus – like me.

Doug Brandon had lost his job when Titus shut its doors for good…like me, as well.

And so - we three conceived to make common DVD Video movie players into interactive DVD "video game consoles".

Of course, DVD Video Players are not video game consoles. They have limited interactive capability – simple chapter and language selection and maybe subtitle and director's cut buttons. DVD Video Players were intended to let players select where on the video they wanted to start playing from and what audio tracks and subtitle text "art" should be overlaid atop the video. That was it – nothing special.

HOWEVER – DVD Video Players specifications include a few data registers and a primitive programmable script language and commands to control the low-level DVD capabilities like where on the DVD track:sector:byte should video be streamed from, to use video angles, subtitles, and more. Importantly – the script allowed direct manipulation of the registers and had simple Boolean operators like AND, OR, XOR, NOT. These may not seem like a lot but they unlocked the kingdom of games on DVD Video Players.

Katherine and I set out to create first the tech and then first interactive DVD game in the world!

DVD Interactive – The Tech:

It was surprisingly easy to reverse engineer and figure out how DVD Videos worked under the hood – once I accessed the detailed specifications from a Russian Dark Web source.

Okay – yea, I still knew how to get around as a Hacker. You do not forget that quicky… In candor, I also obtained [for review purposes only] I believe all the existing DVD Video authoring software on the market – basic bundle-ware and professional-grade DVD authoring and editing packages.

Seeing how existing DVD Video packages created and packaged program scripts and formatted and laid out the DVD Video discs it was apparent how to create my own authoring package. My package was crude – it comprised of an excel sheet with instructions pointing to art and video files and how they needed to be woven together for interactivity to create a game experience.

Doug took on the role of producer and sought out potential publishers for us to meet with.

Disney Sucked That Day – they did not "Save the Magic Kingdom", Stole Our Idea:

First, we made a test game using Disney movies – we called it "Saving the Magic Kingdom". It was cool, and we showed it to Disney.

Katherine created the visual effects and transitions using a "pro-sumer" editing package called Vegas Video and a pro-sumer audio package called Cool Edit. She made flashy screens that counted scores up and down. The host would exclaim right and wrong answers in hundreds of different ways. The game's host would cast praise or insults to reward

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and goad the players and compare players against each other according to their score. The DVD Video trivia game was smart!

I wrote and evolved the tech and authoring process and tools. I wrote trivia questions, converted art and audio and text assets to DVD Video formatted assets and program chain scripts. I like to say that I was both a cornerstone and air traffic controller making sure all the moving parts landed.

Never before – could everyday "dumb" video players offer an interactive talking host that independent tracked and talked to each player with unique dialog and tone according to their performance alone and compared to their competing fellow players.

That is right! We succeeded in creating a FOUR PLAYER Quiz Show game called *Saving the Magic Kingdom.* It would never see the light of day because Disney Interactive's greedy self-centered attitude.

Disney was so impressed they stole the idea and spent years creating their own tech to do their own interactive DVD Video games. They refused to license our tech or let us make the games out of blatant conceit and hubris.

Disney did not save the magic kingdom that day. They burned it to the ground.

Yea - Disney sucked that day! They stole our idea.

Reading Rabbit and Math Wizard – Leap Frog Rips Us Off:

Using the same tech we authored interactive DVD Video visual teaching tools for word-to-shape matching, basic math, and all sorts of education games like Sesame Street.

Much like we demonstrated the *Saving the Magic Kingdom* prototype to Disney, we presented our *Reading Rabbit and Math Wizard* interactive DVD Video game to Leapfrog. Afterall, they had made physical reading and spelling electronic toys and games we thought they would love to deliver the same experience but on DVD Video at a far lower cost of goods.

We recommended a custom DVD Video universal remote control with big simple buttons that incredibly young children could use without inadvertently pressing DVD remote buttons that might mess up the experience.

Leapfrog loved the idea so much that they, too, stole it from us and did it themselves. They even made custom DVD Video controllers for young kids and toddlers just like we suggested.

It was evident we were onto something.

But it was equally evident that we were great creators' innovators, but we did not have "Steve Jobs" to ink the big deal for us. And were constantly being ripped off because we were not lawyers… and most importantly, we allowed ourselves to be ripped off because we trusted people.

DVD Interactive – Hasbro Rips Us Off:

We did not want to make any more demos but managed to get a meeting with Hasbro on the east coast. We met with their Vice President of Research & Development and a team of producers, designs, and engineers.

They had a parade of people asking all sorts of questions. It seemed like they were more interested in "how" things worked than "what" we were presenting. We knew they wanted to understand the tech, but our goal was to pitch a product to be published and impress them with how much we could adapt the experience or make new experiences using the tech as we showed them.

Hasbro proved to be just like Disney and Leap Frog – they stole our idea and spent years creating their own tech variant and authored their own interactive DVD Video games.

DVD Interactive – Mattel Rips Us Off:

You are likely seeing a pattern now. Well, we presented to Mattel - as well. And like every other company we demo'ed to they stole the idea and made their own games years later after they could create their own tech to make interactive DVD Video games.

DVD Interactive – Trusted Too Much:

What all of this proved to my wife and I – EVERYONE WILL RIP YOU OFF!!!! …if given the chance.

There is no company that will not steal from you - if they can get away with it.

I learned that showing people how things are done…revealing tech secrets… just empowers them to clone, copy, or steal from you. It is a bad idea to share…anything…without a lot of legal frameworks protecting you. Tragically…

Trusting people … was and is a bad idea.

DVD Interactive – Are You All That!?:

Undaunted we persevered and designed our own original trivia game in the irreverent style of *You Don't Know Jack!* computer game series.

Dubbed '*Are You All That!?*' the interactive DVD Video was the flagship of quiz show on every DVD Video Player in the world. It had over 300 hours of original game play and the game would run on the sixty-two million household DVD Video players.

Katherine created the visual effects and transitions using a "pro-sumer" editing package called Vegas Video and a pro-sumer audio package called Cool Edit. She made flashy screens that counted scores up and down. The host would exclaim right and wrong answers in hundreds of different ways. The game's host would cast praise or insults to reward and goad the players and compare players against each other according to their score. The DVD Video trivia game was smart!

I wrote and evolved the tech and authoring process and tools. I wrote trivia questions, converted art and audio and text assets to DVD Video formatted assets and program chain scripts. I like to say that I was both a cornerstone and air traffic controller making sure all the moving parts landed.

And I was the voice of the zany and wacky quiz show host Doctor Know-it-All Browne!

We found a Canadian DVD Video Publisher Digital Leisure in Ontario, Canada that had published another DVDI Video innovation interactive products like Dragon's Lair from the coin-op arcade interactive movie game. Digital Leisure fancied itself as the underdog of DVD Video publishing, and so saw interactive DVD Video to stand out in their catalog.

They did not seem to care how well *Are You All That!?* (AKA *AYAT*) sold. It was a catalog differentiator – something for sales reps to talk about. *AYAT* sold but not well. It had no marketing or advertising. It was a line item in their catalog and talking point to kickoff negotiations.

We were duped into believing we had a genuine publishing deal for *AYAT*.

All our DVD Interactive work went for naught. It may have been shining star of technology and fun for the few that enjoyed it, but it cost us time and money to make.

DVD Interactive – Still A Great Experience with My Wife Katherine:

DVD Interactive and its demo games and published retail game of *Are You All That!?* -

- were not commercial successes…

- But they *did* pioneer an entirely new genre and tech for DVD Video players…

- And – they paved the way for Mattel, Hasbro, and others to make A LOT OF MONEY (from stealing our ideas and tech)

- But I reflect on the experience - and I am happy for the adventures I had with Katherine making and trying to sell it. We bonded and had high hopes and dreams together.

Katherine and I had a last chance - tilting at the freelance windmill of our dreams - with Doug Brandon at our side.

Are You All That! will always be a fond memory for the time I was able to work alongside my wife on a big dream.

There is magic in sharing dreams and aspirations with someone. That magic of dreams and aspirations is even greater when combined with the synergy of love and passion and creativity.

I 'had all that' and 'have all that' with the woman that "Is All That!" - with my wife - Katherine Seaborne.

And we – together – will have our memories of our misadventures creating and publishing DVD Interactive and our plethora of interactive DVD demos and game, *Are You All That!*

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E223 ELECTRONIC ARTS CANADA EA SPORTS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E223 EA Sports Electronic Arts Canada and Fusion.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55upkm-e223-ea-sports-electronic-arts-canada-and-fusion.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/Ks4JjIjEpXI

Description:
Hear Richard's meandering tale of personal hubris as he narrates his journey from unemployment to hiring into Electronic Arts in Canada – traditionally called EA Sports.

Listen to Richard's tangent flashforward to when he joined Xbox Microsoft Studios and his frustration with its culture of safety over innovation and politics over delivery.

Richard shares his extensive interview circuit tale with Distinctive Software (therefore EA Sports) co-founder Warren Wall, Dave McCarthy, Tony Lan, and Dan Kennett.

Chief Technology Officer and Chief Operating Officer

Creating EA Fusion

Unemployment and Hiring into Electronic Arts (Canada):

After Interplay, had long gone bankrupt, and its parent company, Titus, dissolved itself to avoid debt and paying its staff…

I spent a few scary months unemployed looking for work. I had only once before been between contracts and without a job as an adult; it was weird. And – this was the longest I had between jobs.

I applied for California Unemployment and was required to submit weekly all jobs I applied for and which ones I interviewed with, and a statement about the outcome. It seemed like a fair list of questions to be given a "survival" amount of money while I looked for a new job. Of course, I paid Unemployment Insurance for years just for this situation, so it was hardly a handout or charity; I paid for it. Then again – I did understand the importance of reporting, to avoid scammers.

Everyone I interviewed with - declared that I was overqualified and would not stay around once something better came along. They all expected low integrity in anyone they hired, and so wanted to hire people barely able to the job so they would stay the longest and be paid the least.

Things were especially worrisome, but I scored an interview with Electronic Arts – in Canada!

The idea of moving to another country was not desirable, but not having a job was worse.

Fortunately, I aced the interview at Electronic Arts (EA) in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and they offered me a job as a Technical Director for a new division they were forming called Fusion that would make handheld versions of all EA games. I was to be the fourth employee of the division and we would grow to whatever size made sense. I was on the ground-floor of a startup within a mega game publisher (the largest in the world at the time with 10,000+ employees).

Electronic Arts, Microsoft Xbox, and More:

By the time I was thirty-six I became Chief Technology Officer at Electronic Arts (EA), and six years after that joined Microsoft heading an Xbox Games Studio at the age of forty-two. Things were exciting and great then…

I joined Microsoft following my stint as Chief Technology Officer and Director of Product Development as a unique title within Microsoft – Director of Software Development. You would not think that would be a unique title, but Microsoft was extremely rigid in their titles, and I apparently was a hybrid "Program Manager" (often called just "PM", a more traditional project manager with some design responsibilities, and often an engineer background) and Software Developer (which was simply an engineer, often referred to as a Dev).

There were other titles for different disciplines, but the point is that the company was so rigid that I was challenged often with "who the heck are you to have a special and different job title? What the heck is it and should I take you seriously, or even take commands from you?"

Everyone was all about doing what the command hierarchy told them to do. Why you ask? Well, you might think people would want freedom in what they did and how did it. You would be wrong. People would rather let someone else make decisions to avoid accountability should anything go awry. Yep, progress and good work be damned! People just want to keep their jobs regardless of doing a worse job because of it.

Microsoft prioritized politics over delivery, and so I was forced into more and more of an environment of meetings of chatter over substance. People preferred safe non-risky ventures over high reward but high-risk initiatives. One person said to me that they need me on the wall, but they do not want me anywhere near the "White House" where people must schmooze, booze, and deceive to get along. I knew that I did not fit in the piranha-filled waters of political Microsoft, but I wanted to lead in Xbox games.

I delivered rock star performance year on year for six years at Microsoft and received corresponding top recognition and rewards. Not only had my team been transferred to this new highly political VP but he gave me a 0-Reward, alleging that although my team succeeded, I had nothing to do with it. I raised issue with Human Resources, the Board of Directors, and even Bill Gates himself but no one seemed to care about the not-quite-fifty-white-male executive. Indeed, the mindset seemed to be no tears for the successful old white male.

And so there I was, waking each day that would have once been full of excitement to go to work and do great things. I, instead, contemplated what there is to do that would be fun or at least not full of drama and unnecessary inter-personal stresses. I always held high work ethic and personal integrity, and yet my horrible job had me questioning if I should resign…but I was getting older and I had already encountered age discrimination at Microsoft with their calling me "Old School" as a nickname.

Wasted Genius:

A lot of people said I am a genius, and perhaps they were right. I do not know that I am still as smart as I once was, as my memory and cognition has deteriorated a bit over the last few years. But I acknowledge that my life's history is filled with people praising my intellectual horsepower, grounded emotional fortitude, and relentless focus and motivation.

Similarly, I cannot deny how much I have achieved far beyond most people. And yet I do not want to be so arrogant, full of hubris that I cannot appreciate the world and what people do.

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I just feel that my life has culminated in so much knowledge and expertise that it is tragic that my skills are being lost to politics and corporate bureaucracy.

Lack of Recognition Discourages Going to Work or Doing Anything for Anyone Else:

It makes me not want to get up and go into work - or do much of anything for anyone else today or any day.

But - When you do not receive recognition for your work, and are actively oppressed, and falsely judged… things need to change.

Electronic Arts (Canada), Inc.:

Well – let's jump back to the tale of my joining EA in Canada.

Electronic Arts Canada (hereafter referred to as EAC) was not always part of Electronic Arts at all. It was a company called Distinctive Software which was heavily contracted to develop sports games by Electronic Arts headquarters in California, U.S.A.

EA headquarters realized they had invested so much and had become reliant on Distinctive Software to develop many of their sports games over years such that no one else in EA knew how to build the game.

Distinctive had a lot of unique knowledge of EA's sports games and corresponding source code, assets, and tool chains and pipelines spanning computers and video game consoles. Of course, talented engineers could figure everything out, but they would be starting from handicapped blank slate knowledge of pre-existing insight on how the code and tools worked much less workflow and local area network assumptions and dependencies.

Bottom-line – EA painted themselves into a dependent corner and realized they could get in trouble if Distinctive Software leveraged their "opportunity".

EA decided they should buy Distinctive Software and make them a permanent development studio for EA based on Canada. Because they were so heavily sports game focused EAC became renowned for EA Sports.

And so, Electronic Arts Canada (EAC) was born.

EA Worldwide was EA Olympus of the EA God "Executives":

EA was growing with divisions operating in different countries throughout the world in addition to its divisions spread across the U.S. from California (EA Los Angeles, EA Redwood Shores) to Florida (EA Tiburon). And with EA Canada in Vancouver, BC Canada they further expanded to EA Montreal in (surprise!) Montreal, Canada.

EA had become huge with just over ten thousand employees and contracted developers throughout the world – from Russia to Ukraine to United Kingdom to Bosnia to Romania to Australia to India to Hong Kong to China to France and just about to any tech savvy country in the world.

Countries and their national and local governments have numerous laws and regulations that must be followed. EA had to make sure its corporate actions and employee behaviors complied with those rules.

Much like striving to standardize and improve quality assurance to make games quality fun stable experiences, EA decided to make a central governing body to standardize and improve international business and operations. The same governing body would determine which products should be made and which territories they should be localized (translated) for and released for retail sale in.

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Electronic Arts formed – "Electronic Arts Worldwide".

EA Worldwide was feared and spoken of in reverence as if it were Olympus where the EA gods resided and commanded the mortals beneath them within their studios or contracted groups.

The names of "Worldwide Executives" became spoke both in reverence but also fear.

Worldwide greenlit it and canceled products, features, and technologies across EA globally.

EA Worldwide was EA Olympus practically speaking.

Golden Handcuffs:

EA Worldwide had total authority over all EA operations and funding. It made sure studio executives were loyal to the company. They could advance their careers and grow their income through product success or through EA Worldwide approval to operate at a deficit to innovate new features, products, or technologies. Otherwise, their career would be stalled and likely ended quickly.

The company used "golden handcuffs" to keep executives, top talent, and staff with unique "key" knowledge in the company and engender loyalty. They offered handsome rewarding compensation in salaries and bonuses and stock grants. They offered reliable career progression for solid performers hitting their schedules and feature or tool goals. Executives further had studio profit-sharing to incentivize their loyalty.

EAC Interview – Executive Vice President Warren Wall:

My interview at Electronic Arts Canada began and ended with of one of the original founders of Electronic Arts Canada (EAC) when it was Distinctive Software – with Executive Vice President (EVP) Warren Wall.

Warren Wall had been an executive vice president in both EA Canada and EA Worldwide. But he was tired of the rat race of doing the same games or sequels to games on the same "game engines" they had either created or licensed. He was tired of the huge bureaucratic overhead of working with the huge and distributed EA organization across the globe. Warren was tired of making games the way they had been being made for decades.

The questions from Warren focused more on strategy and passion and specific questions how I might approach making upwards of two dozen handheld games simultaneously with small teams and budgets and ideally leveraging common code, tools, and/or assets.

Yea, Warren had done his homework and knew clearly what he wanted to know from me. It was not a "how skilled are you" or "what do you know" interview. It was a "how will you make my idea become reality" open-ended interview. I loved it!

I came to life over the prospect of being able to share my "ideas" on game development and what I believed were the "right" approaches to both create games but also leverage shared libraries and authoring tools and asset conversion and build pipelines.

Since I had been a game developer and development firefighter forever it felt like his questions were virtually "muscle memory" to me. There was no lag or need to "think of an answer". I just gave him my proven answer one after another.

He asked about what they should not do - in development of a lot of handheld games. Once more muscle memory – I gave a litany of examples I had seen external and internal developers fail, and emphasized examples showing how as a technical director I had saved many games from complex situations efficiently and quickly.

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EAC Interview – Director of Product Development Tony Lam:

Following my interview with Warren Wall - I met with Tony Lam.

Tony had "light programming" questions for me. He seemed intent on confirming I could program and understood video game console architecture from a hardware and firmware point of view not just from a software coding view.

He asked business strategy questions. He wanted to know how deep my contract and finance and legal background was. He appeared to be ferreting out if I was more than an engineer and what level of business acumen I might have.

Tony sought to understand how I functioned as a Technical Director. He wanted to know how much of an auditor I was as opposed to diving into foreign complex code bases and figuring out how they work and fix, improve, or even rewrite them.

EAC Interview – Move to Canada:

Finally, Tony wanted to know why I would want to move to Canada. And how long would I stay? And would I become a permanent resident, or even Canadian citizen?

I answered all of Tony's questions well. But I was surprisingly not prepared to answer the question of "how long" would we want to remain in Canada?

I had no answer since it seemed more like a job opportunity than moving to an entirely new country.

WOW! Moving to ANOTHER COUNTRY!!!

Although it took a bit to process the question I answered, "Yes, of course. I am here interviewing because I am interested in a long-term opportunity." The words just flowed out after a moment of thought.

I was there for the job. If the job was good, I would stay. If it was bad, I would leave. It was up to EA if it would be a good or bad experience, because I would certainly be awesome at my job.

It was not until that interview moment that I comprehended the idea that Katherine and I would be leaving the United States and moving to Canada to take this job, and the laws and culture were not the same.

We were both signed up for the opportunity if the interview went well, so the interview continued.

EAC Interview - Dan Kennett:

After meeting with Tony Lam…

I met with a senior software engineer Dan Kennett who was the "hardcore" interviewer. Dan delved into deeper coding questions than Tony did and evidently had a lot of tools and technology experience but extraordinarily little consumer experience or video game development experience.

Dan asked questions around shared technology and how I ensured game features and games leveraged tools and tech instead of writing their own.

I had extensive experience as a freelance developer making my own tools to create games not to mention my work overseeing tools and technology and firefighting at Atari Games and Mindscape. My answers flowed smoothly with explicit minute detail.

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Dan could see my expertise covered minutia and nuanced detail that he had not heard of or known himself. He could see that I was a video game console development guru (not just an expert). In fact – years later Dan would describe me as a Video Game Industry Luminary.

Dan's last question suggested to me his possible assessment of me from the interview. He asked how I would feel being his manager and what kind of flexibility should he expect?

I shared with Dan my empowering style of working with people, and that I see everyone as peers regardless of formal reporting lines and organization structure. Chains of command should only be invoked when there is a conflict, and that should be rare.

I am all about "showing" what I think and "explaining" why I think what I do. Dan could not have known how relentless I am at defending my point of view… but – he, surely, would learn over the years.

EA Fusion – Leaving EA Olympus to Form and Reign over 'Mini EA' [within EA]:

Further talks with Tony Lam…

Tony returned – and explained that Warren Wall was spearheading a new business division within Electronic Arts that would not be beholden to any other EA organization or division including EA Worldwide.

Warren had become disillusioned with how "EA Olympus" ran things and he wanted out so he could run things his own way without EA Olympus interfering. EA Worldwide hoped to accommodate Warren's wishes and let him create and run a "Mini EA" within EA.

The new group was to be exclusively directed by Warren as a "gift" to him from EA Worldwide to keep him employed at EA because he had informed EA he intended to resign unless he could "start over" and create a new group outside EA culture and directives.

But Warren's new group had some strings – he had to operate within an approved budget and generate a specific minimum revenue over a multi-year roadmap. Expectations were formalized in Key Success and Performance Indicators (KPIs/KSI's) for the business and for its operation and for its sharing tech and processes and assets with other EA studios or groups.

If Warren failed to hit the KPI's his "Mini EA experiment" would be over. But if hit the KPI's he could expand the group further to make more products and obtain bigger budgets to larger and "deeper" feature-rich games.

Tony detailed that the new group would be Warren Wall's exclusive group and division, outside the control and purview of 'main EA proper' –

- Tony said Warren was forming a new, "Mini EA", an experiment for total independent operation… within EA Worldwide

Dave McCarthy:

Next…

I met with Dave McCarthy - who was a marketer - turned game producer.

Well - Dave had never been a game producer, and this was his first shot at being a producer. In his marketing role he decided to put himself through additional university to obtain an additional business degree.

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Armed with his new business degree and his years of experience working in marketing at EA where he networked with people throughout EA globally and especially with EA Worldwide executives, Dave was ready to launch his new career.

Dave Attached Himself to Leaders on the Rise – and Drafted Behind Them:

As an aside - Dave was a strong proponent if identifying a leader that was 'on the rise' – and draft behind them, ensuring they succeeded…and promoted and took him along with their ascent. It worked well for Dave…

Dave McCarthy convinced Warren Wall that he (Dave) should lead Warren's producer ranks and manage all products – from their designs, experiences, features, quality… even their development schedules. He argued his marketing background coupled with his MBA would empower him to be a better product leader than anyone else at EA Canada.

Warren – eventually did appoint Dave to run Fusion. And EA Canada promoted him to Vice President over the division…. In the future, following our great success.

"Mini EA" Fusion 4-Person Startup in EA:

Back to interviewing at EA (Canada)… and EA Sports…

It was clear –

1) Dave was the head of production

2) Tony was the head project management

3) They wanted a head of engineering

   - Dan was a senior engineer but apparently too junior to be the engineering head

4) Warren was the Venture Capitalist (VC) that called the shots – and he was 'adult supervision' over the neophyte division heads (Tony, Dave, Dan, and me)

Dave wanted to know how well I took directions. And - if my game design background would be an asset or a problem.

Dave – clearly - intended to be in command. He was a cliché "control freak". But he also was aware of how much he did not know – dare I say he knew how immensely ignorant he was about video game design and development… and that he needed help.

Dave knew he needed a development ally to help him succeed. He was smart. He knew his gaps and weaknesses and strengths. Dave knew he needed me.

He explained that the new group was small – that I would be the fourth employee, excluding benefactor executive, Warren Wall.

Evidently - I had satisfied Dave's worries during the interview - since he asked me to wait to meet with Warren Wall again.

I thought that was a good sign.

Warren Offered Me A Technical Director Job:

Dave returned with Warren. Warren closed the door as Dave left the interview office.

Warren said right off, "Everyone was impressed with you, Richard. We would like to make you an offer to be a Technical Director.

The compensation will be determined by Electronic Arts in Redwood Shores California since you are a U.S. Citizen and would be working here in Canada. There are several ways they may want to structure things and that will affect the compensation. We will let you know in a few days if you are still interested in the role?"

I answered, "Yes, the position sounds great. Exciting portfolio of games and shared technology. I learned from Dan you already have a lot of shared tools and libraries on video game consoles, so maybe we can start from there for handhelds. Who knows?"

Warren smiled with obvious approval, "Great. You seem perfect for what we need. You round out our team. I will get Julia Knot who will call a taxi for you to return to your hotel. It has been great meeting you, Richard."

That was the end of my interview. Julia Knott retrieved me from the office and asked how it all went. She was super nice and cordial while I awaited my return ride to the hotel.

I called Katherine upon finishing the interview and excitely shared with her that EAC intended to make a job offer to me.

The next few days I received the job offer, and I accepted it.

I was an employee of Electronic Arts Canada – the fourth employee and tech cornerstone of the new "Mini EA" Fusion division.

As an aside – we eventually joked that the new group should have a name of extreme power without harm…

- we formally named our group - 'Fusion' – because we fancied ourselves as nuclear power without any byproduct or waste – pure, efficient power like the sun!

We were - Fusion.

EA Fusion – Rather Rule in Hell than Serve in Heaven:

As I reflected on Tony Lam's recount Warren's lost faith in EA Worldwide - and how he thought he knew better how to do things - if he had absolute authority, it sounded familiar.

Most people have heard at one point or another in their life that it is better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven.

The phrase is derived from Milton's *Paradise Lost* –

> *We shall be free; th' Almighty bath not built.*
>
> *Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:*
>
> *Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce.*
>
> *To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:*
>
> **Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n.**

When I heard the story of how Warren Wall came to command his own "Mini EA" within EA it sounded a lot like Milton's Paradise Lost where Lucifer declared he would rather reign in hell than serve heaven. Like Lucifer Warren sought to be free of the control of watch of EA while he reigned over his own division called Fusion.

<u>EA Fusion – Rather Rule in Hell than Serve in Heaven continued:</u>

Flashing forward for a moment at EA (Canada)…

Strangely – in retrospect Fusion was Warren's 'Hell'.

What became of me - I became the CTO and COO over Warren's 'Hell'. I think there is a poetic analog there…

And Warren – he chose to rule his own Division, rather than serve Olympus [in EA Worldwide].

E224 Creating Fusion Continued

Local File:
   .\LibertyBooksVideos\E224 Creating Fusion as Independent Company within Corporate EA Electronic Arts.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
   https://rumble.com/v55upl7-e224-creating-fusion-as-independent-company-within-corporate-ea-electronic-.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
   https://youtu.be/kRhchh5wDeo

Description:

   Hear how Richard was described as relentless, like a Terminator.

   Learn how Richard met John Schappert – and how John called Richard boisterously as "Mr. Seaborne" whenever they met.

   Richard shares his views on healthy iteration vs addiction to iteration.

   Listen to his views on being an empowering manager.

   Richard notes the value of formally defining What Good and Done Look Like, What Matters Most, and more.

I was Relentless Like a Terminator:

While working at Electronic Arts (Canada) – the home of EA Sports, and many other games…

Years later - Dan would describe me as "relentless like a Terminator" (from the Terminator movie and TV series – they hunt and chase and never stop never give up).

What Matters Most, What Good Looks Like, What Success Looks Like:

I have always been an empowering manager –
1) let people go so far as they can provided, they have a detailed plan before diving into execution.
2) use KPIs and/or metrics to measure progress against formalized definitions and targets for What Success Looks Like (WSLL) and What Good Looks Like (WGLL) and What Matters Most ((WMM).

1) What Success Looks Like (WSLL) – product and feature and tech success.

2) What Good Looks Like (WGLL) – individual performance and professional behavior.

3) What Matters Most (WMM) – product or tech features in stack ranked list with cutline.

WSLL, WGLL, WMM were simply ways to help people understand the cost and priority what they valued most with a cutline that could move up or down according to development schedule progress. They were methods to quantify and prioritize features even if they were emotional or subjective.

EAC Shared Office with Desmond Lee:

On my first day at EAC I was shown to my temporary desk where I shared an office with a newly hired junior software engineer Desmond Lee.

Desmond was an excitable talented engineer but super green inexperienced. He was new to EAC as well. It was nice having an equally "newbie" to explore and compare notes with.

John Schappert Recognizes "Mr. Seaborne!"

When walking down a hallway a short somewhat rotund man with wavy long'ish hair exclaimed loudly echoing through the corridor, "MR. SEABORNE!!!!!!!"

It was John Schappert. John had been in the computer and video game industry as long as I had – maybe a few years longer even. That was rare then! And even more rare now!

He was a programmer for Visual Concepts then. He made console games like *Desert Strike and Jungle Strike.* He would later be co-founder of EA Tiburon in Florida. He parlayed his success with EA Tiburon to become CEO over EA Canada and EA operations in Canada. Even Warren Wall's "Mini EA" Fusion "autonomy" still reported into John Schappert.

Eventually John became EA Worldwide President in EA Redwood Shores headquarters. And he would spin out from there to Join Microsoft Studios overseeing Xbox, and then would form a new company back in Florida returning to his founding roots.

I met John around 1987 when he was working for a contract company called Visual Concepts.

John loved to exclaim my name in every public venue you can think of,

In a meeting. In a hallway. On a field. Even in a cafeteria. And through people's closed office doors…

"MR. SEABORNE!!!!" John would exclaim! Once he even used a megaphone to yell my name through someone's office door.

John liked me and we shared an "old school" game developer history together.

Met John Schappert at Visual Concepts with its Founder Greg Thomas:

Back in the day – at Visual Concepts…

I had interviewed Greg Thomas of Visual Concepts as a possible subcontractor, but I opted against working for them when I observed they were "small time" and had no path to grow. Their leadership team operated as the designers and creators, and the rest of the staff were soldiers implementing their ideas.

If I worked for Visual Concepts, I would just be a programmer to them, not a developer or game creator (as I saw myself). That did not work for me. I declined to continue talks with Greg and Visual Concepts after my first round of interviews.

John Schappert – and Intolerance for Feigned Competence, and his Megaphone:

John Schappert and I enjoyed a lifelong mutual respect from our first meeting at Visual Concepts. John's meteoric success is largely the result of his passion and innate intelligence. He knew how to motivate and drive people – even if it was a "unique" style.

Schappert (often called by his last name alone in the hallways of Electronic Arts) had a reputation for walking throughout the company and on its fields with a megaphone. He would scream into the megaphone to have his shrill of a high-pitched voice goad or taunt staff, particularly management and senior management.

John's most shocking megaphone actions were his occasional office door megaphone announcements. He would put the megaphone against someone's closed office door and scream into it different things. Sometimes he would say something as simple as the person's name or "I am coming in, it's JOHN!". John was fun and playful and silly. Some people did not appreciate his sense of humor.

He had a passive aggressive disdain for executives or any staff for that matter that operated in the "fat folds" of corporations and did not contribute tangible "work value" to the business.

John and I shared an intolerance for the incompetent that feigned competence, and an abhorrence for those that held talented people back to hide their own inabilities.

Addiction to Iteration:

Tony Lam and Dave McCarthy were two of the original four founders of Fusion. Dave was head of production which meant he managed the portfolio plan, negotiations outside the group, and was responsible for game designs and ultimate quality. Tony was responsible for operations and schedules. I was responsible for technology and hitting our schedule dates and milestone deliverables. We were all responsible for quality.

Dave loved to iterate and iterate and iterate to achieve the highest quality possible he imagined. Tony and I argued there was a point of diminishing returns, and we need to "time box" iteration to protect other features from being starved by burning too much time on a feature. Dave accepted our arguments but forever we three would playout the development schedule vs feature vs quality dance.

I coined Dave's desire to tweak and tune games to the 11th hour at the risk of other features or the schedule as "Addiction to Iteration".

We would forever use What Matters Most (WMM) with a defined cutline along with feature & tech financial and time cost estimates, What Success Looks Like (WSLL) with defined KSI's, and What Good Looks Like (WGLL) with defined KPI's.

We all agreed to a high level of iteration because it was for quality. We just time boxed things and adapted as we saw progress (or lack of it).

Quality mattered – A LOT! And so, we were slightly "addicted to iteration".

E225 Mind Over Body at Fusion

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E225 Mind over Body and John Schappert in EA Electronic Arts Fusion.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55upln-e225-mind-over-body-and-john-schappert-in-ea-electronic-arts-fusion.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/j461HpyPm_4

Description:

Hear the legendary battle of Mind over Body (Tony Lam) versus Jock Body (Dave McCarthy) – a race with John Schappert presiding with a Megaphone.

Richard recalls 'old school' game design tenants and principles…

He talks of fundamental differing design strategies between Japanese and American-European design approaches.

Listen to Richard regret the power Publishers have over game design and quality…

Richard shares more stories working with Technical Directors, Art Directors, CG Supervisors (AKA CG Sups), and more.

Learn how deeply John Schappert loves 'old school' retro video games – and thusly – loves emulators.

TECH ZONE + HELL DIFFICULTY SAGA – BOOK 6   **AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE**
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"Mind over Body" vs Trained Athlete – Tony vs Dave on the Field Track:

Tony and Dave had a "fun" rivalry with Tony evangelizing tech and planning over Dave's addiction to iteration.

Dave was a jock and ran several miles every morning before work. He believed firmly that a healthy body led to a healthy mind. Tony believed a strong mind could overcome anything and make a body do anything. Dave chortled and laughed at Tony's naïve ignorance of mind and body. They were at odds for years.

One day they decided to have a spring event and race each other around a field track.

Dave told Tony that he needed to only run HALF the distance Dave would run and he would consider that a Win for Tony. But otherwise, Dave proclaimed he would win.

They raced and Dave finished first. But the "race" was about completion not speed for them. If Tony could finish half Dave would concede victory to him.

Tony ran and jogged and barely walked'ish stagger trotted. He collapsed and could not overcome his body with his mind. His body was spent two times over.

Tony lost "body over mind" that day against Dave's athletic "body" and mind.

Mind over Body is not necessarily true. There are…realities.

John Schappert – Race Competition and the Fire Truck and Megaphone:

During the race competition - by Tony and Dave - a big red fire engine blared its klaxon alarm as it pulled up to the field and onto the grass. It was an emergency!

But on top of the fire engine was John Schappert! EA Canada's CEO rode up on top of a big red fire truck with his megaphone and screamed, "Who is going to win? Mind over Body Tony? Or Athlete Dave? We are here to pick up anyone that dies on the field."

It was a grandiose way for John Schappert to both participate and genuinely provide emergency medical assistance should one of them (Tony) have a medical emergency.

Tony may have been close to an emergency, but he was okay after fifteen minutes of rest and recovery in the shade with hydration.

"Real Games" were John's Passion:

Possibly due to his "old school" video game background - or maybe because he loved games that overcame the dependence on Hollywood-style licenses & cinematics – that relied heavily on sizzling special effects to carry them. Games "back in the day" - had to be fun 'in the moment' and keep stimulating dopamine releases for accomplishment and achievement and discovery.

John grew up on a diet of "real games" that offered core play mechanics that were fun unto themselves – he loved games that were genuinely "fun" and addictive.

He liked games developed in the traditional "Japanese Video Game Design" approach.

Japanese game development had a reputation for being different than Western Culture game development. Western Europe and United Kingdom focused on the story and then visuals and sound and then the world and then characters and

then play mechanics and finally challenge-reward loop. Conversely, Japanese game development focused on the opposite order – play mechanics, challenge-reward loop, world level interaction, characters, story, visuals, and sound and music.

Japanese style development typically started with the core play mechanic; it had to be intuitive, quick to learn, initially punishing but highly rewarding on mastery, and not require any "opposing forces" or sound or music or fancy graphics. The core mechanic had to be a nugget of pure gameplay fun magic.

Once the game nucleus was fun, environment and interactive objects and opponents were layered in to give purpose to the core play mechanics. Once it was fun to move about and do things in a "world", characters (people, animals, critters that engage the player) were added to give larger quests and missions. Then add an overarching story arc to justify the game's setting and goals. Finally integrate sound and music and pretty graphics. And then tune and balance and refine the game to maximize addiction challenge-reward cycles and provide memorable "shareable" watercooler / playground bragging moments.

American and Western European game development seemed to believe people buy and play games based on the story and characters whereas Japanese game development seemed to believe people buy and play games for in-the-moment action play.

I always preferred the Japanese style of game development because I felt players spent 99%+ of their time executing the game mechanics and believed they should be the most refined and best experience ever.

People skip non interactive sequences – movies and the like… Game play, mechanics is everything…

Publisher's Limit Games - Escape from Hell reduced from Four Discs to Two Discs:

Now, I admit that I was not always the best at achieving the most balanced and immersive game designs. Usually that was the result of publishers limiting me.

As example – Escape from Hell was originally a four 5.25" floppy disc game – spanning four discs - but EA reduced it to two floppy discs when the new high density 3.5" floppy discs were rising in computer popularity. EA had to pack BOTH 3.5" and 5.25" discs on the retail box since both 3.5" and HD 5.25" drives were everywhere – you could not rely on which drive any computer had. And so EA managed costs and reduced my 4-disc game to a 2-disc 5.25" and 1-disc 3.5" pack-in game.

I had to introduce crazy compression and dramatically reduce *Hell's* scope. Hell fell from Nine Circles of Hell per Dante to Three Levels of Hell, and correspondingly huge legions of demons and hordes of the Damned were released from their torment. They no longer had to serve Hell.

Publishers approved games based on previous versions of the game (sequels were safer bets), but they invested in original games too. Publishers rarely approved games based on core mechanics or game play. They usually made decisions on what games they would fun based on the game's world setting and level vision, story, and characters. Graphics and Sound and Music were "assumed" to be good in the final game. And engineering was likewise presumed to "work out".

Technical Directors, Technical Art Directors, CG Supervisors, Art Directors, …:

Technical Directors (TD's), Technical Art Directors (TAD's), and Producers were Publisher staff to direct and help developers succeed. They were the insurance policy to "fix" ailing projects that went off the rails. Technical Directors and Technical Art Directors were the engineering fire marshals preventing fires, or firefighters putting them out. Producers were the game experience design marshals.

There were similar roles for art and audio creation and composition. Asset creation and quality was less "technical" and more "artistic" and so required different specialists – Computer Graphic Supervisors (AKA CG Sups) and Art and

Animation Directors. These people made sure the game looks and sounds great and matches with the action. Later in the industry, work included motion capture, lip syncing, and much more.

Most Technical Directors and "tech experts" regardless of professional discipline ended up reporting to me because they wanted to work for someone that "got it" and I was a rare leader that understood end-to-end everything about making games and the cultures around the world surrounding it.

John's Love of Old Consoles and Emulators – and his Friends vs Staff:

Decades later in EA John Schappert had heard of one of our Fusion engineers developing an "old school" Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES) emulator to run on the Sony PlayStation Portable (PSP). John decided EA should publish a collection of "classic" games on the PlayStation Portable.

He summoned the engineer with me to discuss our technical approach and what he might expect in the final emulator in terms of features, quality, and speed performance. How many games would be in the compilation?

John had developer friends that claimed they had a rockstar emulator that could be ported from other consoles or the personal computer to the PlayStation Portable. John's loyalty to his friends was nice but their tech was weak and would never run fast enough or within the memory constraints of the PSP. But John wanted his friends to do the work…

The engineer had prototyped the emulator on his own time and was offended John would take his idea and give it to an external contracting group that John liked. It almost felt corrupt. It was certainly wrong.

It took several meetings and technology proofs, but we made it undeniable that the Fusion emulator tech innovated by this lone engineer was lightyears ahead of John's friends' emulator tech. John agreed in the face of undeniable proof.

Fusion's emulator won the bake off!

Fully funded and approved the engineer was promoted and made product lead to create *EA Replay* which became successful portable experience bringing back to life old games including *Jungle* Strike and Desert *Strike: Return to the Gulf* (yes, it helped sell the idea to John Schappert since he worked on them early in his career), *Road Rash 1, 2, & 3*, *Syndicate*, *Ultima VII: The Black Gate, Wing Commander + Secret Missions, Virtual Pinball, Mutant League Football, Haunting Starring Polterguy, Budokan: The Martial Spirit, and B.O.B. EA Replay* had a log of "old school" games.

It was great to defend the underdog engineer from executive preference so his vision could become reality and our team could feel triumphant and motivated to "show how awesome it could be" because they won the bakeoff and felt they needed to prove themselves.

Risks and Rewards:

Reflecting on the wild ride of leaving the United States to work for a foreign company – albeit in Canada – was enlightening and terrifying.

But the reward of taking the leap - and plunging into the unknown…was great…even if the risk was likewise great – and intimidating.

I concluded - you had to take risks, to achieve great things… and my career in EA proves it was the right decision. I took the right risks.

E226 OH CANADA! LIVING IN CANADA

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E226 Oh Canada Living in Vancouver British Columbia Canada.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55upto-e226-oh-canada-living-in-vancouver-british-columbia-canada.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/LmnO7Q8GSo4

Description:
Hear the tales of moving to and living in Canada.

Learn why Vancouver fires a cannon every day.

Richard shares experiences with a vehicle break-in, horse-drawn carriage, and Snowmageddon.

Listen to the stories of Alban Wood and Gaz Iqbal – and the dynamic duo's Wireless Act.

Living in Canada

Moving to Canada:

To work for Electronic Arts in Canada…meant, well…moving to Canada.

And - Moving to Canada was no small feat…

Having our household packed and crated we drove to Vancouver, Canada from Huntington Beach, CA (where we had lived)… we had much more to do.

We had to have our cat Suniko further immunized - and obtain a certificate of health before she could immigrate to Canada with us. She hated the very long drive despite the vet prescribing some "kitty valium" to calm her nerves. Unfortunately, the "kitty valium" just freaked her out and made her more unhappy. We listened to her tormented meows and moans four hours and hours and hours…until we finally reached the Canadian-USA border.

Ironically, no one even asked about the cat. We just went on through with no cat drama or concerns by Canadian customs and immigration.

I have many random tales of events and experiences while living in British Columbia, in the Pacific Northwest of Canada.

Canada is Part of British Commonwealth:

I recall seeing a portrait of the Queen of England in the immigration office. I learned later that Canada sees itself as a "Crown" Country and operates many government businesses like auto insurance as "Crown Corporations". As I was informed - Canada is a part of the British Commonwealth and so recognize the Queen of England. And thus, her portrait was hung in the customs and immigration office at the Canadian-USA border entering Canada.

The immigration officer had very questions and seemed to rubber stamp us through along with our cat.

Condo in Vancouver, Canada:

After some quick searching (we had no home yet, no place to put all our crated things) we found an available brand-new condominium in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia Canada. It had a window view overlooking the Burrard Inlet with sea planes and ships passing often but out of sound range, so it was picturesque without disruption. We loved our condo in Vancouver.

Despite the little office and tiny kitchen (oh yea – only one person could be in the kitchen at any time given its immense tininess.

Its only drawback was it was just under 1,100 square feet. For two people that may not seem too small, but it was. I made my office in a narrow but deep closet; my little "table desk" touched three walls. I would "walk into my office tunnel" to play games or use my computer for email or work.

Common to living in a dense urban city and in skyrise we parked in an underground parkade (Canadians call parking structures 'parkades'). Therefore, we had to carry groceries and purchases from the garage into an elevator and up to the sixth floor we were on. I had used a computer cart for groceries, but we eventually purchased a collapsible wheeled "grocery cart" to facilitate transporting things between the condo and our car.

Americans Not Invading Cannon:

We heard a cannon fire everyday while living in downtown Vancouver. We were nearby Stanley Park which had a hiking paths, tennis courts, bike trails, and more. It was a great outdoor gathering place for the big urban dense city.

A cannon was inside Stanley Park, and it was fired everyday to signal that "the Americans had not invaded".

Canada feared Americans might invade and capture Vancouver and so conceived to fire a cannon everyday indicating they WERE NOT captured. After all, if they were captured, they would not be able to fire the cannon. It seemed backwards but it was what they did.

And they kept the tradition ongoing giving us a cannon shot every day.

As an aside – Canada when under British control invaded the United States and burned down the White House. Funny how few people know that bit of trivia.

Nova Scotia White Carriage:

I visited Nova Scotia in Canada to see a developer. There were a few interesting tales from that trip, I recall it was insanely humid and hot. An elderly man in a white horse drawn carriage rode back and forth maybe half a mile in the Lunenburg city downtown. No one rode with him that I ever saw.

He just rode back and forth like an unused empty taxi looking for a rider that would never come.

Car Break-in:

There is little to tell of this story, but our car was broken into while we were at home despite the car being locked behind a barred gates to its camera surveilled underground parking slot.
The thieves managed to follow a car opening and passing through the gate. They "tailgated" their way through the security gate. NOT MUCH SECURITY obviously.

The thieves went down and down to the bottom of the parkade to reduce odds of being seen. Apparently, they knew "blind" areas of the camera surveillance system and so were not monitored or recorded as they victimized a row of cars.

Our car was in the row of cars the thieves attacked. They inserted a tool into the driver's door lock and ripped the locked out entirely as they destroyed the door's lock frame and harness. They then opened glove compartments and popped the trunk to take anything remotely of value – even dimes and pennies. They took everything!

We learned that there is nothing to be done about car break-ins but accept them and move on. The government had given up on the crime – too petty, too insignificant compared to bigger issues like the Hell's Angels smuggling heroin via submarine!

Harmful Consequences from Selectively Enforcing Law:

Yea, Canada had weird and bazaar criminal problems that made them ignore petty crimes like car break-ins.

What are the consequences of such lax law enforcement?

Well, I saw it firsthand. And the statistics say it unequivocally – British Columbia had the highest auto break-in rate in North America much less Canada.

Obvious to me - there are harmful consequences from selectively enforcing laws.

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House in Port Moody, Canada:

After many years of success at Electronic Arts I had been promoted to Chief Technology Officer over the Fusion business unit. I would later become Chief Operating Officer and the replacement CTO reported to me thereafter.

With my success and corresponding stock grants at EA I was able to liquidate them, so Katherine and I had the down payment necessary to purchase a house in a nearby city called Port Moody.

It was a tri-level house with an additional "basement" grandmother's suite. The house was built on a hillside. Its staircase descended from the main floor down to a mid-hill large room we made into a "media room" and continued down to a "grandmother's suite" which was a complete apartment with bedroom, bath & shower, kitchen, etc. And the staircase ascended to a second floor overseeing the greenbelt behind the house and down three+ floors to the backyard.

Inside the house had huge 20' vaulted ceilings with walkways crossing the upper floor with views to the massive family and living room areas. The kitchen was huge like a ranch-style open kitchen with a center island to aid cooking and food preparation.

I believe the house remains one of the most impressive houses I have ever lived in. It was nice. It was posh. It was sophisticated.

As an aside - we had to sell it at a loss during the financial meltdown when moving back to the U.S. many years later.

Snowmageddon in British Columbia, Canada:

The first year we lived in Port Moody, BC we experienced what the local news declared an extreme snowstorm – it was Snowmageddon in British Columbia!

The snow came down and came down and seemed like it would never stop. I was a stalwart though and rose early morning as day broke and armed with a four-foot-wide snow shovel I shoveled for over an hour clearing the walkway from the street to the front door and the driveway from the garage to the street as well.

After a week of snowing off and on (mostly on) the sides of our driveway were piled six to eight feet tall of snow that I had been tossing up higher and higher on the driveway snowbanks on its sides.

There was nothing visible anymore but white everywhere – undisturbed pure snow fallen from the heavens - ABSOLUTELY EVERYWHERE!

While it was beautiful it was hazardous if not outright deadly. Despite it snowing at most two weeks a year in the greater Vancouver area its drivers seemed totally ignorant on how to drive in the snow.

Many people had studded snow tires to swap for snow months (they were illegal to use on non-snow months due to potential damage to the roads) but while that afforded more traction, people still drove like boneheads without respect for the skid and slide threats of snow and ice and black ice – and of OTHER people may not be safe and may slide right into you regardless of your own cautionary driving.

Driving in the snow is dangerous and British Columbian drivers were no better than anyone else. If anything, they THOUGHT they knew how to drive in the snow and let their confidence get them into trouble through driving too fast or taking a turn too sharp for the slippery road surface.

I drove to work every day in the snow no matter how insane people thought I was for doing so. My work ethic was unstoppable. One day there were only a handful of people in the studio of normally over a thousand people – it was Snowmageddon ghost town.

Although driving in the snow was scary I did it successfully without any major incidents. I even stopped to buy anniversary orchids during a sleet and snow downpour. It was important!

At home one morning we heard a huge sliding rumble and a crashing sound followed by a small explosion. Katherine and I rushed outside to see what had happened. A huge foot+ thick sheet of ice maybe ten feet by nine feet separated from the roof's icy layered sheets and it slid down like a HUGE GUILLATINE slicing down on the front porch and garage door. The roof was slanted to allow water to runoff and so the ice "ran off" too like an ice blade from Hell.

Had anyone been beneath that ice sheet I would be amazed if they did not die. It was incredibly huge and massive and heavy. And it came down within seconds once it dislodged.

Lesson learned – never stand outside a building near its sides or beneath its roof after a snow and especially if there is a visible snowpack collected on the roof.

Alban Wood – Olympic Fencer, and Event Clock Programmer in Switzerland:

Although I interviewed – literally – well over a thousand people over my time in Fusion… some people stood out – especially good, or especially bad.

At one point - We interviewed a native Montreal French-Canadian Alban Wood who had moved and had been working in Switzerland for a watch company to create software tracking timers and countdowns at Olympic events. I had no idea there was a dedicated job just for Olympic clocks and timers, but that was Alban's job.

Interestingly, Alban was also an Olympic fencing champion. He did not place high enough to earn a medal but his participation in the Olympics was a huge achievement for him as a young man. Realizing he was unlikely to become a world fencing champion after his Olympic defeat he decided to pursue engineering as his career.

Alban was a legitimate genius and employed his talent towards engineering. He began learning traditional programming languages and data structures and algorithms – as taught in schools. He then learned to program games on his own and managed to get a job working at Omega on software clocks and timers for Olympics games.

Alban was clearly a great talent, and even had greater potential. We hired Alban.

Alban Wood – Paid for Genius with Stress:

While I could tell numerous tales of Alban Wood's extraordinary talent and remarkable personal integrity and commitment to family and friends, perhaps one of his standout traits in addition to those really great and positive ones.

Alban suffered tremendous anxiety over his ability to succeed and his family's dependence on him as a cornerstone of their lives and as their sole source of money. His wife was native Switzerland and moving to Canada just as she became pregnant with their future firstborn daughter added more strain to Alban than perhaps he could handle.

Alas – Alban's stress manifested in his torment driving him to march around the office buildings to burn off stress. He developed rashes that doctors could not treat, and so he used salves and ointments to offset their agitation.

It was apparent to me that greatness comes at a price – Alban paid for his immense talent with his inner peace; I have often wondered if Alban's success in job and family will fully compensate him for the suffering - he endured to be the man he was.

Alban Wood – A True Friend:

In life there have been scant few people I would call a true friend. Alban was one of those people.

We battled so much together in terms of work challenges and missions – TECH and ENGINEERING AND NETWORKING AND OPTIMIZATION AND GAME DEFVELOMENT AND GAME DESIGN QUESTS!

I am proud to say that Alban would march into Hell to fight its hordes just as I would for him.

I think that is what a true friend would do. They would mark into Hell… for each other.

Alban Wood and Gaz Iqbal – The Dynamic Duo:

Later on, during my work with Alban we hired a man named Gaz Iqbal. Gaz struggled with the English language, to the point most people considered him intelligible and unworthy of their time to talk to.

That was a huge mistake by most people because Gaz was insanely intelligent and super motivated to succeed. Partnered with Alban as his sensai to teach and guide and shape Gaz's innate talents, Gaz soared in expertise and value to the company.

At one point behind closed doors executives in Electronic Arts made clear to me that Gaz was "my employee" and I had to make sure he got along with everyone and could communicate effectively.

I was offended at the notion that someone with such remarkable talent would be even remotely questioned because of communication challenges and introvert personality (which was likely fanned by his spoken English difficulties).

Since I was subordinate in the organization I just answered that there have been no issues I knew of and Alban and I were fine being the 'lead' interfaces to any teams that may otherwise need to interact with Gaz.

It was dumb. Gaz proved to be one of the best engineers we had in the division.

Alban Wood and Gaz Iqbal – Wireless Networking on the Sony PlayStation Portable:

One of the most memorable moments for me of Alban and Gaz working together was early during experimenting with Sony PlayStation Portable (PSP) prototype hardware.

Alban and Gaz stood in front of our then about eighty-five person team and held up two physical wires – with each wire attached to a separate PSP prototype hardware device.

As they moved with two wire ends closer to each other they suddenly communicated invisibly without touching each other. They communicated wirelessly!!!

That may sound like nothing special since so many things even then operated wirelessly. However – this was a big deal because the PSP did not have wireless hardware yet!!!

Alban and Gaz discovered the PSP *DID* have the transceiver hardware but did not have anyway to amplify the signal or negotiate a connection with another device. Their solution was to physically move the wires so close they could 'talk to each other' without amplification, and ensure they had a common protocol to send messages back and forth.

Even Sony, the maker of the hardware, had not even achieved what Alban and Gaz had done.'

Again – they were geniuses! They were cornerstones to the connectivity across all games in our division – Fusion.

E227 Working in Canada

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E227 Working in Vancouver British Columbia Canada at EA Sports Electronic Arts.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55upwm-e227-working-in-vancouver-british-columbia-canada-at-ea-sports-electronic-a.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/meKfVvSVujE

Description:

Hear stories of Electronic Arts in Canada - , EA Worldwide, EAC EA Sports, EAX Blackbox, …

Learn about multi-story 'Tree of EA' in the center of the top floors of the Vancouver Downtown Price Water House skyscraper.

Listen to tales of Richard and Alban Wood, their 'Terrace Talks' high above Vancouver, and some of their misadventures.

Richard shares tales of moving teams to different buildings throughout his career, noting the importance of assigning space planning leaders – Space Captains and Space Cadets.

Richard shares tales of his commute through the down & out tenderloin of Vancouver – Hastings Street where legal Heroin Clinics operated…

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EA Worldwide and 'The Tree of EA' Downtown, Price Water House "EA Floors":

At one point our Fusion business unit was moved to a temporary office space downtown Vancouver on its landmark Price Water House building.

EA Worldwide was based on the twentieth floor, and it was posh! Spanning from the 20th floor down to 17th floor (where Fusion was) was a hollowed cutout vertical glass cylinder encasing its "eye of a storm". Growing from the 17th floor up to the 20th floor was a live tree.

That is right – EA had a huge living tree growing inside its offices that extended from the 17th floor up to the 20th floor where EA Worldwide executives worked.

We joked it was the tree of life for EA – 'The Tree of EA' life.

EAX Downtown, Price Water House "EA Floors:

As an aside – EA also had a division called EA Blackbox (or EAX) that reported into EA Canada but operated largely like its own business unit like Fusion did. EAX was housed in the same Price Water House downtown EA facilities.

EAX's founder and producer for Needs for Speed had a "deal" like Warren Wall had where he was allowed to run EAX as he saw fit if he achieved his assigned product and corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).

They worked on James Bond games and raft of other games in addition to Need for Speed.

Walked to Work in the Snow Uphill:

It sounds cliché and ridiculous, and it was by choice – but I walked to work when Fusion was based in the Vancouver downtown offices shared by EA Worldwide and EAX.

Uphill all the way to work for months on end with temperatures at or below freezing, and when it "rained" it either pelted me with hail or snowed and left me drenched with thawed ice as the morning unfolded at work.

Of course, heading home was easier being all downhill – need count your blessings.

Alban Wood – Friend and Colleague:

Alban was worried about moving to Canada from Switzerland because his wife was pregnant, and they feared too much upheaval too late in her pregnancy might introduce complications. Alban was a worry-wort EXTREME. He suffered extraordinary anxiety; he would break out in hives as schedule deadlines approached that he was unsure if he would deliver against on time.

Alban Wood was a perfectionist. He was driven almost obsessively to do great work and be the greatest engineer he could ever be – all the time. Alban did not give himself time to rest or recuperate. He did not give himself time to stop and breathe. He would run and run and run…until the job was done, or he collapsed.

I remember Alban walking laps around the company building to unwind and "find a zone" that he could return to less stress and be able to focus once more.

Alban and I forged a deep personal friendship and bond. We would march into Hell for each other – of course because we both would only ask the other to enter hell for a just heavenly cause.

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Alban's Success:

Alban joined Fusion while his pregnant wife remained in Switzerland. They coordinated carefully over six months her eventual arrival to Canada to join him.   There were a lot of details and worries for them to overcome, and thankfully they did so without incident.

Alban would have baby girl with his wife while at EA. And then a second daughter. And then a third daughter. He has a great story of overcoming his anxiety and rising within EA through sheer willpower and driven self-learning and sacrifice. He took an EA opportunity to return to Switzerland for several years to spearhead a technology turn-around for EA globally, and from there he was handsomely compensated such that he was able to buy a million-dollar house in North Shore, Vancouver.

Alban Wood and The Terrace – Trust and Friendship:

Although there are many tales, I have with my adventures with Alban Wood. We were allies and friends, and I deeply trusted and respected Alban. There are few people in the world I can say that I never once questioned their commitment or loyalty to me – Alban is one of those extremely rare people I could truly trust.

When Fusion was based in downtown Vancouver, we were on the 17th floor. On the 19th floor was an open terrace that was rarely used because it was so high up and had only a four-foot-tall wall with handrail – it scared people.

The building rocked at the height a little bit. Just enough to feel vertigo and wonder if the world was moving or if you were moving or if your perceptions were waning.

But you could look out over the Burrard Inlet and see far to Stanley Park and Lion's Gate Bridge and to North Shore. You could see the huge multi-peaked white tent of the Vancouver convention center. You could watch cruise ships come and go into port. You could see sea planes flying to and from the channel. And there were walk and bike paths along the shore for miles.

The terrace became a place of "refuge" for Alban and I to retreat and philosophize on where we were and where we were headed. We would muse about game design principles and engineering ideas and solutions. We were each other's thinktanks and EA and Fusion benefited from the synergy that formed between us.

I will always consider Alban a true friend and someone I can trust. And that is extremely rare.

Fusion Moves to Burnaby (Swing Temporary Space, then Phase II New Building):

Fusion eventually left EA's Vancouver downtown workspace and moved to Burnaby. At first Fusion was on two floors of a temporary "swing" space while EA finished building its huge new Phase II second five story building that included a motion capture studio and huge underground gym.

EA's Phase II new building was adjacent to EAC's main campus and connected via ground floor and skywalk corridors. Everything was glass or shiny bright metal. It was posh and made everyone feel fancy and incredibly special and important to be allowed to work in such impressive facilities.

Space Captains and Space Cadets:

To make moving offices 'fun' we assigned Space Captains with supporting Space Cadets to plan and execute their moves along with their team mates.

I continued the Space Captain and Cadet moving 'fun' form Electronic Arts when I joined Microsoft.

HoloLens in the Dungeon:

As an aside – when working on HoloLens at Microsoft my team and I were moved to a window-less underground 'lab' where we worked in secret on the under-development augmented reality hardware Microsoft was then covertly developing.

When they announced HoloLens to the world, they declared that beneath the announcement building were secret Research and Development labs where the magic was made.

My team and I were that magic!

Why do I say we moved into a dungeon?

It was not just the underground window-less chambers we were in. But every door was forced closed with hydraulics and required special badge access to enter as well as security guard approved passage from a list updated daily.

Although later we were allowed to enter via the upper building and descend locked away stairs, we at first were directed to use the freight elevator in the back of the building used for deliveries. We were to wait until no one was near or watching and go up and quickly swipe our badge which made the horizontal and vertical massive gates open and the elevator door likewise grant entry.

The freight elevator was dirty, loud, and slow. It felt like descending into the abyss every time I went into Microsoft to work on HoloLens.

I will discuss more on my HoloLens work later.

Drive to Work – Hastings Street, Throng Swarms Car in the Hastings Street 'Hood:

As I commuted to Fusion each day when it was in Burnaby traffic was bad. Although I only had to drive about eight miles it took forty-five minutes! Round-trip that was an hour and half DAILY!

My time was precious, and I did not want to waste time commuting if I could avoid it, and so I tried all sorts of different paths to work. I found the best path was so much faster than I could get to work in fifteen minutes on a good day – WAY FASTER!

I discovered "Hastings" which was an underbelly street that cut near the Burrard Inlet and a train station. It was a "dive" of an area where police left people to abuse drugs and do whatever they wanted with little intervention. Only violent crimes seemed to attract police involvement.

One morning heading to work I observed a throng of bums and addicts assault a car with someone inside unsure what to do. They attacked after the car bumped into a homeless person dashing across on a bike. Another homeless woman dashed to the fallen bicyclist. And then screaming and every bum and addict from all directions swarmed and began striking and kicking and shaking the offending car.

The car's driver was left with few options –
1) drive over the people.
2) wait for the throng to give up or break inside (as they were trying to do it seemed).
3) sob and plead for them to leave.
4) call for help (if they had a phone).

Practically speaking the driver had no option that was "good". I watched from behind the assaulted car in my silver convertible Mercedes SLK. Yea, I stood out like a sore thumb driving through Hastings.

The driver was paralyzed, presumably out of fear.

A siren blared and a squad car pulled up on the sidewalk bypassing the stuck line of cars. The officer blared through its car megaphone, "Stand clear! Stand clear of the car! Move IMMEDIATELY from the car."

The mob dispersed and an ambulance arrived shortly to assess the bicyclist for injuries. I was waved on with the rest of the traffic finally.

Hastings Street was usually a fast shortcut to work even if it was "through the valley of darkness" every morning and night. Yea, I worked until 8 to 10pm most night and so enjoyed the Hastings Street "evening show" as well.

Drive to Work – Mercedes in the 'Hood:

Once an addict exclaimed, "You, rich mother fucker American, get the hell out of here!" It was weird – how and why did he think I was American? The car was purchased in Canada and had a Canadian license plate. Oh well – some things are never known, and how a bum knew I was American remains such a mystery.

I was the "Mercedes in the 'Hood".

Hastings Street - Big Baggie, Cray-Shee, and Little Baggie Plus the Heroin Dancers:

The Hastings Street drive to work was often filled with colorful skits or "creative" activities by its residents and patrons.

There were three recurring "characters" I remember seeing on Hastings Street –
1) Big Baggie – a man that reliably leaned on a wall morning, day, and night with a big bag of "something". And when people walked up to him, he would pull smaller bags out of his big bag and hand them to his "clients". It appeared he was selling drugs of some kind though I cannot confirm what he was selling since I never even waved at him much less spoke with him. Regardless of what he was distribution, I labeled him "Big Baggie".

2) Cray-Shee – a woman that appeared to be a regular "street walker" drug-addled prostitute. She was not particularly attractive, but her continued presence suggested she must have a sufficient clientele to fund her life.

3) Little Baggie – there appeared to be another man selling dope, but he had a much smaller bag. I jokingly referred to him as a "Little Baggie".

4) Heroin Dancers – BC had installed a legal heroin injection clinic on Hastings Street, which could explain the prevalence of drug addicts and crime in its surrounding areas. Of course, BC chose Hastings Street because it was already down-and-out crime ridden.

   It was common to see people "wiggle dance" as they walked down the street. I learned that heroin can put people in a state where they wiggle and move their limbs like noodles with poor motor control. Sometimes their "reality" is so wacked that I have seen them dance with street poles and signs. One man had sex with a building corner.

   The "heroin dancers" were surprisingly able to stay off the road but once in a while someone danced there away in front of you and you just had to wait for them to meander dance to the other side of the street, or drift back where they came from.

   Honking your horn was a bad idea – the locals were not necessarily "friendly". And they were often outright hostile and jealous and envious and resentful. …especially against people in Mercedes, like me.

   Despite all that – I endured the horror show to improve my quality of life by saving time.

The Building Arm "Vehicle" Fiasco:

Katherine and I were going on a trip and Alban Wood needed a car. We thought he could borrow our car while house sitting and caring for our cat Suniko.

The plan was perfect except for one unexpected thing – a building gate security arm lowered and smashed the roof racks of our Honda Passport 4x4 Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV). When we returned and Alban explained what happened we could see little if any damage to the car, and so decided to ignore the incident.

Alban felt terrible about it but I could not see how it was his fault. The arm came down way too soon and fast. Alban said he swiped his badge on the card reader but assumed it must not have triggered the gate so when the person in front of him drove through and Alban followed the gate thought only one car should go through and closed on Alban in our car.

There was no way to know why the "arm" closed on our car and Alban inside it. But it happened. Oh well.

I received a letter in the mail from the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) which was the government run auto insurance corporation. The letter said that I was guilty of hit and run at the building's address and was ordered to remit payment for damages to the plaintiff.

WHAT!??????? How could Alban (or my car) be responsible for a gate hitting my car?

Well, Alban explained the "arm" broke off hitting my car's roof racks. He had carried up into the office building and left it in the back of a conference room. Apparently, facilities found it and tossed it as garbage. The evidence was gone.

It took months to fight ICBC over the issue. They insisted that buildings can be victims of motor vehicles too. Yea – cars can drive into buildings.

And they said it always the "moving party" that is guilty, and cars move and buildings do not move. Therefore, cars and drivers are always guilty.

I challenged the supposition profusely! UNTRUE! The building's security arm "MOVED" and struck my car!

The ICBC assessor was surprised how simple and valid my argument seemed. She agreed to go and investigate the "crime scene" to see what she could uncover or determine herself now that there were "two moving parties" involved in the incident.

Fast forward to the conclusion – the ICBC assessor woman determined there was a sign that warned drivers to wait until the gate closed before using their badge key to open the door and enter themselves. Simple – ONE SWIPE, ONE GATE OPEN & CLOSE, REPEAT.

HOWEVER – the warning sign was occluded by a big yellow bar suspended to stop "too tall" vehicles from entering the building. Their safety feature blocked the safety warning.

Alban and no one could have seen the sign, and so the ICBC assessor decreed the building was operating negligently as a moving party and so was guilty of hitting my car. She asked if I wanted to pursue damages from the building owner now that they are guilty, and not me?

Stupid! I told her that I had no interest in anything further and thanked her for helping close the silliness out.

Backing from Building Arm "Vehicle" Fiasco:

Maybe a year after Alban had the run-in with the building security gate arm in my SUV I had a similar thing happen to me – sort of.

I was waiting to go through a security gate in the EA Phase II building back entrance. There was worker's truck in front of me asking security through the entry microphone-speaker to let him in to ostensibly do work. Behind me were two other cars waiting, and more collecting as time ticked onward.

The utility truck's reverse lights came on and he started backing up with no regard to the train of cars behind him. I did not want him to hit me and so I reversed a bit but the car behind me moved forward at the same time – tiny crunch.

The damage was at most five hundred dollars but the "victim" behind me was determined to report it to ICBC since it was "the right and proper thing to do".

It turned out that ICBC has another hard rule – any moving party that is going backwards is guilty of a collision they are involved in.

And so, my avoiding the utility truck from colliding with me even though it had a knock-on ding was 100% my fault and responsibility to pay.

You are Victim to Laws – Within and Outside the USA:

There was nothing to do - but to embrace different country laws – knowing they are inconsistent with laws elsewhere… and there is nothing you can do about them.

I learned – you are a victim of laws, unjust or not – within and outside the USA.

E228 Fusion vs EA Canada and The World

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E228 EA Fusion vs EA Sports, EA Canada, and The World.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55upzx-e228-ea-fusion-vs-ea-sports-ea-canada-and-the-world.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/9JjWqAXLEgo

Description:

Richard recounts the ever-present conflict and jealousy Electronic Arts studios worldwide had with EA Fusion.

He shares how it felt often like it was "EA Fusion vs. EA World".

Richard details how Fusion was better at hiring, judicious at firing, very profitable, self-learning, and innovative.

See how EA Fusion growing and thriving…

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Fusion versus the [EA] World:

As Fusion grew within Electronic Arts (Canada)… it gained the attention of the numerous studios and divisions across EA globally, and especially from its immediate neighbors in Vancouver, Canada - AND - those that shared the building with Fusion were especially observant.

The competitive rivalry was palpable if not outright destructive. But the company fanned those fires of dog-eat-dog division versus division it seemed. I believe they wanted teams to fight for hiring the best staff from each other, and drive innovation to shine above others. We were all competing with one another.

Even though Fusion had its champions in the EA Worldwide executive leadership they were loath to engage with studio politics are product development details outside consumer game design experience and projected cost to develop and ultimate profitability.

EA Worldwide typically seem to care primarily about consumers and profitability - would the game attain consumer and reviewer praise to drive unit sales.

The only way Fusion defended itself year on and year was proving itself through incredible efficiency, shared innovative technologies and development best practices, development cost efficacy, utilization of contract developers and internal teams, and PROFITABILITY.

Fusion established itself as the second-most profitable division with Electronic Arts worldwide. We protected ourselves from incursions into our operations and business from other EA groups and divisions… which – in the future when Warren Wall left the group and we lost, and with him, our authority and influence and protection. Our work was our only real defense line…

We no longer had an executive champion that would step out of a comfort zone and get involved to resolve corporate politics and organization problems.

Anhd so - we exported innovated tech that divisions adopted but they would modify them slightly and re-brand them as their own. They would wait a year or more and eventually people forgot where the tech came from, and their sinister "theft" of our innovation was successful and garnered executive favor.

Fusion Better at Interviewing and Hiring:

Like I said – the rivalry against our extraordinary success and innovation was extreme. We attracted love and jealous hate from all over EA.

Some groups became so hateful and intent on tearing down Fusion that they sought to poach our staff to work for them with no regard to impact on our projects. They would plead "victim" to get the best "new hires" for the studio, alleging that "Fusion always hires the best people, and we get stuck with the dregs!"

The truth was Fusion interviewed better and by precisely targeting people with skills that aligned with the work we were doing, and we made sure new hires were passionate about the work and games and tech alike. And we made sure people with more interest in games or tech were assigned teams that prioritized their interest area so they could work on things they loved.

Fusion More Profitable and Better at Developing Games and Technology:

Persuasion and influence and leverage were not always enough to protect Fusion from "smaller" or "siege" assaults against us. Most studios saw how successful and profitable we were with making games like Madden football and the

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Sims and NBA Live and so many more. They concluded they could take the revenue for themselves by taking the games back into their studios to develop and release themselves instead of letting Fusion make them.

EA was structured such that specific studios "owned" specific games and technologies. Typically, the "ownership" goes back to when it was originally created but sometimes divisions or groups "inherited" a game or technology that they were lucky/unlucky to become the new "owners".

Because of the EA studio "ownership" model Fusion was at-risk of losing virtually of its portfolio going forward. Dave McCarthy, Tony Lam, and I went on an EA studio world tour "hat in hand" making our case as to why shifting development from Fusion would harm the consumer promise and experience, not to mention they would cost more than twice what Fusion would cost to make the games. We were high quality (proven by Metacritic), hit our scheduled dates reliably, and extremely profitable (proven by unit sales and revenue).

Fusion versus EA Studios (they wanted games and revenue from us):

But some studios were not having it – they were determined to make the revenue Fusion had generated even if it cost them (and EA) twice as much due to their inefficiency and ignorance of the platforms and source code and tools.

We made our case for Fusion retaining development authority over the games to EA Worldwide, who were reluctant to engage. But they got involved anyway because the situation for EA bottom-line was in the crosshairs.

Fusion was hands-down the most efficient studio in EA Worldwide and was the second most profitable. But it was the "youngest" EA studio and so did not have the "deep state" connections other studios had. Of course – it also meant Fusion was not shackled by "old ways of thinking" or antiquated tools, libraries, pipelines, frameworks, engines, or any related tech.

EA Worldwide awarded Fusion "ownership" of all EA handheld games going forward; Fusion could delegate them to other studios, but it was Fusion's decision.

Fusion was back in control of its destiny. We were product "owners".

Fusion was like Me – Self-learning, Innovating as Trailblazing Pioneer:

Fusion was a lot like me – self-learning, self-innovating - always a trailblazing pioneer!

But we were alarmed that corporate politics threated our existence and autonomy. We had to find a way to be less vulnerable should EA Worldwide change the mind in the future. Winning the battle did not mean the other studios were accept it and go away. They were "bonused" based on how well their studio performed and they coveted Fusion's profitability.

It was Fusion's success that catapulted Dave to run Fusion as its head "president" and EA corporate vice president. And promoted me to Chief Technology Officer and later Chief Operating Officer (overseeing the new CTO). And promoted Tony to COO and later to EA Canada Operations Officers for the country. Fusion was wildly successful, and we were recognized for our cornerstone roles in its creation and growth and success.

Fusion – I was Responsible for A LOT:

I was responsible for a lot in Fusion –
> People:
> 1) designed Fusions Central Team organization and directed game team staffing and training.
> 2) managed Technical Direction teams.
> 3) managed all central engineering and technology staff and resources.

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4) dotted-line-managed all Fusion Central Teams.
5) managed all external development strategies and plans - audit and provide mitigation.
6) managed and directed all technology development, licensing, and integration.
7) direct engineering performance reviews and training roadmaps
8) interfaced and drove quality with EA Canada central Quality Assurance (QA) group
9) interfaced with international localization and quality assurance partners.

Process:
10) created and drove EA Canada's Mentorship program.
11) created EA Canada's Interview Techniques and Standards.
12) directed all hiring for the division and negotiated hiring with other divisions.
13) create engineering job family matrix and What Good Looks Like career roadmaps with document leadership and skill requirements, which became the blueprint for EA creating Job Family Matrices for Producers, Designers, Managers, and Artists.
14) developed materials and presented them as "Ted Talks" to many groups of 175+ people at a time in EA's "Bigger Picture" theater; topics included –
   a. interview Training.
   b. mentorship Training.
   c. development Training and Insight for Video Game Consoles and handheld devices, including architecture and software design, data structures and algorithms and approaches specific to our games and potential new application ideation, debugging and optimizing in abstract and specific application to games and hardware.

Product:
15) audited and assessed development schedules and estimates, dependencies threat and risk assessment and mitigations, technologies existing and new, asset and localization plans. And provided staffing, resources, or alternative approaches or solutions for implementation big gaps or high risks.
16) drove game and tech feature prioritization and cost vs quality analysis using task breakdowns of ½ to 5 days maximum duration with associated dollar cost (to make "real" how expensive features are to the team) and quality estimation of 1-4 (avoided odd numbers so people must decide which side of "good enough" the quality was, and quality average in aggregate over art, audio, play control, story, and all features reflecting "total quality". There is a lot to the process and people joked I used the "Force" (from *Star Wars*) to grok it all and find "holes" in the incredibly huge and detailed plans.
17) supported innovation and creativity "free expression innovation development" project "Fusion Labs" and their demonstrations.

Technology:
18) innovated and created shared libraries through EA for game memory and file management, 2D & 3D graphics conversion formatting and rendering including pre-baking runtime address "fixups" for speed where possible, sound and music conversion mixing and playback, input control, local and Internet network libraries and standard matchmaking user interface and cross-game communication libraries and assets, and manufacturer technical requirement checklist (TRC) compliance libraries and guidelines, and per-game and aggregate analytics collection and reporting.
19) built standardized tools, libraries, and pipelines for PlayStation Portable (PSP), Game Cube, Xbox 360, and PlayStation 3.
20) oversaw, directed, and approved software design and architecture through all development stages.

Hardware:
21) directed design and development and manufacturing of EA Sports Active custom motion tracking game controller hardware.
22) innovated emulator hardware and software for yet-to-be-created gaming consoles and handhelds, including complete PlayStation Portable emulation on Xbox 360 consoles using Casio tiny TVs attached to Xbox game controllers – the result was a handheld gaming device projecting approximately the graphic resolution and

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runtime "speed" performance of a PSP but using an Xbox controller, Casio TV, and an Xbox running emulated source code.

23) Engaged directly with platform manufacturers to shape their Software Development Kits and even next generation hardware designs, e.g., convinced Sony to add more memory, a different memory BUS and Direct Memory Access (DMA) between its universal mini disc (UMD) "read buffer random access memory (RAM)" and the main central processing unit (CPU). Similarly, I pressed for DMA from CPU RAM to the graphics processing unit (GPU) Video RAM (VRAM).

The list of things I was responsible for and delivered is vast and impressive by anyone's standards. Combine that I did all of that while adapting to a foreign country and in only about seven years.

Honestly - I even impress myself.

My Assessment of EA Canada:

With success comes scrutiny. Within EA Canada there was a Chief Technology Officer Gaivan Chang that was allegedly the guru that was behind EA Sports.

After a few months at EA, Gaivan asked me what I thought of EA with my limited experience.

It was a loaded and dangerous question. I was new – what could I legitimately say with confidence that I "knew" about EA Canada (EAC)

Well, I guess I always had an opinion, and this was no exception.

I answered, "EAC is not what I expected. I imagined the pinnacle of development expertise. I envisioned the most laser thinking and crystal-clear strategies to channel creativity into innovative features and polished experiences. I thought I "had arrived" and was allowed to enter Olympus with the gods of game development."

"But what did I find? I found a bunch of super talented people that do whatever they feel like as long it somewhat relates to the intended experience design. They do not seem to 'own' features or delivery against defined expectations. I see they are scheduled but slipping just means moving the dates out – no consequence and no care," I furthered.

"And auditing and progress assessment? I see it done, but the same thing – move the dates out. And when the dates are coming too close, cut features," I said exacerbated.

"It feels like everyone 'does what they feel like, what they think is the right thing'… but they do not do anything about insight gleaned or things to improve, and I already see they repeat this behavior over and over," I lamented.

"The only reason this 'approach' works," I asserted, "is because EA Sports has been making sequels for so many years that the team's do not need to understand the code or tools or pipelines anymore. They hardly even need to understand the features from yesteryear's releases. In fact, they literally just bolt on 'changes' without seemingly knowing how it all works under the hood," I said.

"I think it is terrible, honestly. I wish I could fix it. But I am happy being in Fusion and seeing how I can help there."

Chief Non-Technology Officer (CNTO) Gaivan Chang:

Gaivan Chang was formally the "Chief Technology Officer" of Electronic Arts Canada's country-wide operations including EA Vancouver Burnaby (EAC), EA Vancouver Blackbox (EAX), Montreal (EAM), and their respective contracted development studios.

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He had grown up through the ranks of EA Canada from its origination of Distinctive Software before it was purchased by Electronic Arts headquarters in California, U.S. He rose with the water level being promoted as people were hired out of respect for his early role in Distinctive Software.

There were a few of the original Distinctive Software people like Gaivan that were still in EA Canada. They were held in a venerable status by most people and, importantly, by EA Worldwide executives. EA Canada founders were "made men" like the mafia and were protected.

Gaivan had the nickname of "Chief NON-Technology Officer" or CNTO. Gaivan's engineering skills were on part with a recently graduated computer science major hired as a junior engineer. His technical skills were not up to the job of leading a two-thousand-person organization's technology choices and engineering designs and plans.

It was evident that Gaivan was "emeritus" and had no genuine clout or authority within EA anymore, if he ever had authority, I never knew.

Scott Cronce – EA Worldwide Chief Technology Officer:

With Gaivan Chang being the Chief NON-Technology Officer, it fell upon me to "own" all tech for Fusion. That was fine for me because I "knew what had to be done" and it was obvious that Gaivan had no idea what had to be done.

I met and became allied with EA Worldwide's Chief Technology Officer Scott Cronce.

Scott was a seasoned engineer but had not done "hands-on" significant coding in years, if ever had I do not know. But Scott knew enough to understand software designs to "call bull" on people. His tech experience was "sufficient" for a super senior director, but he would fail if he had to get into the code and find and fix something.

Scott's superpower was his political prowess and network across the globe. He was a sommelier and owned several high-end restaurants. He used his restaurants to host "power" executive and developer meetings to unite and focus leaders and creators. He hosted developer conferences and made sure new technologies made within EA or available outside EA were communicated to studios to assess. Scott was an excellent interface and broker across EA for technology.

The key take-away for me was – Scott Cronce is an ally that can help me navigate and negotiate across EA, but he is not a source for solving technical or engineering problems or architecture or designs.

Scott proved to be an excellent ally within Electronic Arts.

EA Fusion's Success Grew Portfolio and Budgets, and Needed More Developers:

As EA Fusion grew, we created more and more games which generated more and more revenue. Fusion was wildly successful.

Our portfolio of games had grown to include handheld gaming and console video games. We proved handheld gaming could be a major income stream and was valued by consumers as much as gaming at home on their TVs. And we established standardized tools and techniques to leverage and share art and audio and tools and game source code between handheld and console gaming devices.

With our triumph in the handheld market and early success in the console market, EA Worldwide decided to "go big" with Fusion and invest even more money so we could advertise our product line with much larger budgets.

Comparatively speaking from our humble beginning – WE HAD HUGE MARKETING BUDGETS!

We also had increased development budgets to hire internal and external teams.

Fusion was on a tear with hitting homerun after homerun.

Reverse Takeover from Within (EA Fusion vs EA Canada):

Tony and I joked sometimes that we should "take over the world" [of EA] via a Reverse Takeover. He imagined we would be so successful that EA Worldwide would appoint us in command of EA Canada, not just our business unit EA Fusion. That never happened but it was one of motivators to get through the more difficult times.

Fusion was always competing with EA Canada and EA Blackbox (EAX). Everyone was jealous and envious of Fusion. We "walked on water" and "parted seas" with our constant stratospheric successes, and unheard-of rate of growth.

Sixty Hires in Sixty Days, and Ongoing Hiring and Training:

Over two months we hired sixty employees during one of our growth bursts – one person every single day. Well, some days were multiple hires and some days no hires. But it averaged out to hiring someone every single day for two months.

Although hiring 60 people in 60 days was our all-time high for hiring, we interviewed so many people that we would joke more than half our job was interviewing and hiring and onboarding and training.

We developed lots of "new hire" documents and samples to ramp people up as quickly as possible. We assigned a mentor to each new hire to be their shepherd and guide within EA for their first ninety days.

Yep – it was a major part of my role, hiring the best people for the right roles. And exiting people that did not "pull their weight" by failing to do their assignments to quality or at all. Fortunately, we had remarkably few "bad hires" and so this was a rare situation for us.

Fusion was kicking butt and taking names!

<u>E229 IT IS A BIG GRAY WORLD!</u>

It's a Big Gray World...

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E229 It's a Big Gray World of Mobocracies, Syndicates, Mobs, and Lone Wolfs.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uq9f-e229-its-a-big-gray-world-of-mobocracies-syndicates-mobs-and-lone-wolfs.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/hgunmMN8VOk

Description:
Hear dark tales of international 'slush funds' and 'regional liaisons' that dealt with local even illicit – illegal matters.

Listen to an extreme example story of international marketing gone awry… in Russia.

Richard enumerates what he looks for during an international tour where visited many potential contract game development and art & animation companies

He notes how he'd traveled over a million miles in support of his job…

And - he shares how he encountered vastly diverse and different laws and cultures…

International Business "Dealings"

Not All Stories are Glowing Times Full of Glory:

Not every story is full of glowing times, full of glory… or of internal development or politics… but rather – abroad, internationally… throughout the darkest corners of the world and its mobocracies…

Here are some such tales…

International Slush Funds:

As EA Fusion expanded - so did my connections throughout EA globally including EA Worldwide and its leadership team. The Worldwide CTO Scott Cronce sought to prepare me for international travel and development.

He explained how countries and provinces and states all have different laws, rules, and customs. Of course – that was obvious. But he said the subtlety of the differences can be far more impactful and even risky than you might imagine.

Scott shared a tale of "International Slush Funds" as an example of how companies navigate "complex" foreign backdrops and theater.

Development and Marketing are allocated budgets to advertise, host events, hire employees and contractors, and purchase materials and rent venues. All straight forward standard stuff.

And then was "the slush fund" which Scott said was like a mega-petty-cash piggy bank that no one pays attention to. Money was deposited in these foreign accounts under the sole control (and visibility) of the regional studio management.

The regional leadership would sit on the slush fund until something needed to be paid for that was "gray". "Gray" things were bribes and kickbacks and payoffs. The international slush fund was there to ensure less-than-honest unsavory people were "covered" so the company could continue to do business without trouble.

Regional Leaders Borderline "Illegal" Using Slush Funds:

Surprised? Did you think companies all operate above board and completely within the rule of law? I have observed most companies are the opposite and operate virtually criminally whenever they can get away with it. Companies have no ethics or integrity. Corporations are not moral or immoral. Companies do what their leaders make them do – pure and simple.

Therefore, regional leaders that used slush funds to clear the path for business or events bypassed proper channels and visible spending. It was in contradiction to Sarbanes-Oxley laws that demanded spending be reported so audits can confirm legality protecting the company and its board of directors.

It seemed to me that the regional leaders were borderline criminal in their use of slush funds. Sometimes it was just a quick way to pay someone or buy something. Other times it was a payoff to a mobster or syndicate.

A LOT of Untracked money did not seem like something the public investors would want to happen. And yet Scott Cronce told me that they "did want the slush fund" because it empowered regions to succeed where they otherwise would be stalled by local crime lords or government control – all of which could be "greased" with slush cash to get out of the way.

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Russian Marketing Event – Tanks, Bunkers, and Buses:

One big example if the international slush fund was a marketing product launch event hosted in Moscow, Russia.

Game reviewers and journalists from all over the world were invited to attend the Launch event that was hosted in a Moscow Russian bomb shelter, made up into a rave-like party scene with colorful flood lamps and strobe lights, performers, food, drinks, and music.

EA rented buses to transport attendees to and from the airport to a "reserved" hotel. Likewise, they rented buses to transit them between the hotel and event sites.

The bomb shelter was the centerpiece for daily meeting and presentations. But there were special activities planned for the reviewers and journalists so they would return home in total awe of Electronic Arts.

There were sightseeing and shopping tours. But there was a mega event planned.

TANKS!!! RUSSIAN TANKS!!!

EA rented Russian military tanks manned by Russian soldiers. The reviewers piled into the bus caravan to head to the "military tank event".

Russian Marketing Event – Stopped by 'Police' (despite having paid 'protection fee'):

Halfway to the tank activity the bus caravan was pulled over by local police. They spoke angrily in Russian and pointed at the passengers. They ranted and yelled and were saying words in broken English at times like "Arrest! Not Paid!"

Scott explained the Russian police were not paid the "protection fee" so, as foreigners, they would escort and protect the journalists from Russian dangers. The "dangers" were mobsters and corrupt police or officials. And the police that offered protection were offering to protect the bus caravan from them (the police!). They were crooked and wanted money!

A regional EA organizer disembarked the bus and went with one of the officers. They spoke outside in Russian. The officer went to his car and called someone. He returned and all the police laughed and left.

Scott told me that EA had, in fact, paid the "protection fee" and many other "fees" to ensure the event was safe and fun and successful. The officers were apparently not informed, and so their "apology" were jovial laughs and leaving.

Russian Marketing Event – Slush Funds Made Problems Go Away:

Russia, Ukraine, China, Romania, and many countries require "slush funds" to open doors and keep things moving. And most of the time it is for "dark" illegal or "gray" things at best.

"Slush Funds" may seem wrong, but it turned out they are "normal" for businesses.

"Evil" corruption was accepted as "normal" and expected, and so was planned for.

Bottom-line: Slush Funds made problems go away.

Russian Marketing Event – Riding Tanks and Barrels (BOOM Unmentionables):

One standout crazy element of the Russian Marketing event was one journalist accepting a joked challenge that 'Real Russian Men' can sit on a tank cannon when it fires.

Well – the Russians were dismayed the journalist wanted to sit on a cannon barrel and feel it blast. They warned him it is much more painful and dangerous than he imagined.

But he pressed for his 'experience'.

And he got ONE HELL OF AN EXPERIENCE!

His genetalia felt the most profound 'kick' that may have left him infertile for the rest of his life. He moaned and screamed and went to the hospital.

I was told he suffered horribly with icepacks in his nether regions for the rest of the trip, and tried to conceal packs on his return flight to the States.

Some people are truly stupidly 'brave'.

Managed External Contract Game and Tool and Asset Development Globally:

While working for Electronic Arts (EA) in Vancouver, Canada our business unit named Fusion had expanded so quickly that finding quality engineering and art resources not to mention end-to-end full-service video game developers became a significant challenge.

We worked with contract companies throughout the world – China, India, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Scotland, Canada, and the USA. I engaged remotely with Dubai, Australia, Brazil, Russia.

It is worth noting that I continued to operate with half development and asset creation using external developers thereafter with EA and Microsoft.

We were hiring internal staff at gangbuster speed, but it was not enough. We had to go external for not only video game development but for art, animation, sound effects, music, and engineering for game features and tools if the group was unable to develop a complete game on their own with EA Fusion's support and oversight.

We hired staff and contractors as fast we could –
1. we hired over sixty people in sixty days with great success rate for quality capable staff.
2. we grew from four (4) employees to a three hundred and twenty-five (325) employees.
3. we sought to likewise double our effective team size by using external contractors – 650 people worked for Fusion collectively throughout the world.

I managed contract development of games and tools and assets like art, animation, sound effects, music, user interface, level/world layout, play balance tuning, and everything involved in making a game within a specified budget on time.

Responsible for Everything – Success Was on my 'Atlas' Shouders:

Yea, bottom line – I was responsible for "EVERYTHING!"

My manager Tony Lam used to say, "if something falls through the cracks, it is your fault. Because it is your job to prevent anything from falling through the cracks."

He even emphasized. "If a game is not fun or does not play well it is ALSO YOUR FAULT unless you warn ahead of time that quality is too low to release to the public".

Tony was smart and had solid advice for me throughout my years working with him. He was explicit in his requirements and made clear to me –

Success was on my shoulders – PERIOD.

Sure – I was EA's 'Atlas' holding the world and its burdens on my shoulders.

That may sound awful and overwhelming, but I LOVED IT! With the opportunity to be blamed came the opportunity to shine. And I SHINED!!! I ROSE AND ROSE AND ROSE – from Technical Director (TD) to Chief Technology Officer (CTO) to Chief Operations Officer (COO) managing my replacement CTO.

Traveling Internationally to Find Game Development and Asset Contract Companies:

We were hiring internal staff at gangbuster speed, but it was not enough.

We had to go external.

International Contract Companies Became Half EA Fusion People and Resources:

Once we opened the door to external development it became a staple of how EA Fusion operated.

About half of our development and content and asset creation shifted to contracted external companies to support peak-valley people and resource demand while expanding our division's options and portfolio.

Our development model shifted to manage and support external companies… in addition to our internal development.

External Contract Company Due Diligence and 'Shop Stewards':

In working with external groups, We performed due diligence to assess –

1. capabilities and gaps in expert domains or critical knowledge or staffing holes.

2. decision-making process and project development tracking methods.

3. threats to their company, staff, or development of games, tools, and features.

4. areas that needed mitigation or extra attention.

5. Key employees with unique knowledge or formal leaders, organic team stewards.

    It may be worth noting here that it is common for teams to have a 'local' in-the-trenches defacto leader that represents the team and often speaks for them.

    It is imperative to identify organic 'shop stewards' early on because they often reflect the 'true culture' of a company. And they can 'tank' or 'make successful' most projects.

    WIN OVER THE SHOP STEWARD! If you win over the shop steward… you will be rewarded. Gain trust and respect from the steward and give the same back. Be honest and genuine.

    As you can tell – I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to engage with the formal company executive and team management but also to engage with the team directly and gain influence with the steward.

6. overall probable success for the company.

Traveled the World in Support of Job and Career – So Many Experiences and Tales:

Indeed – I traveled throughout the world in waypoints and final destinations and leveraged my corporate trips to do a little sightseeing in each location, and to venture out to shops, restaurants, neighborhoods, and traditional 'site' attractions.

Admittedly – I tended to avoid anything 'tourist' focused because it has always felt dishonest and, bluntly, not real.

I wanted to see 'the real world' and all its warts and underbelly, not just the pretty maintained facades for visiting tourists.

Instead – I went wherever I was interested in. And I had more interest in run-down vehicles, construction equipment, and 'real lived-in neighborhoods' with all their trash and filth and potentially desperate people.

The result of my adventures are a vast array of experiences and stories, and a tremendous amount of knowledge and I hope wisdom too.

I garnered a huge repertoire of tales to tell of my adventures and experiences across the globe and interacting with so many different people and cultures and laws.

Of course – my adventures made me increasingly more interesting to developers and publishers that my value rose and rose.

Some people even referred to me as an industry luminary and founder.

Being a Luminary was a nice compliment – regardless of true or not. I will let the world decide my 'historical relevance'.

More than Million Mile Frequent Flyer – Not an Easy or Fun Achievement:

To support external contract partners while working at Electronic Arts and later at Microsoft a large aspect of my job had become working with external companies. Consequently – I traveled A LOT!

I traveled across the United States and Canada, and often to the United Kingdom. In some instances, I traveled to more distant locations like India and China and Ukraine.

Over One Million Miles in Frequent Flyer Bonus points I had racked up, earning my wife and I (and her friends once) First Class tickets to the Caribbean as well as free hotel stays and other flights.

Some friends admired or were envious of the free travel. However, they did not realize the hardship and physical and emotional abuse that travel inflicts upon you.

There was a lot of rushing and waiting, and sitting and standing, and rushed low quality meals and exposure to all variants of viruses and bacteria along the way. And the literal threats from people that sought to steal from you or even harm you if it benefited them - ESPECIALLY in China and the Ukraine where mobocracies and corruption reigned.

In the end – I do not believe my travel benefit my health or happiness at all. It did, however, grant me greater understanding of culture and governments and laws – and how random and inconsistent they are, and yet each locality's denizens believed their 'way' was the 'right way'.

Indeed, I did learn a lot from my travels abroad. I just did not particularly enjoy my adventures internationally, as apparently many people imagine they would.

Mike Crump:

I worked with a project manager named Mike Crump while at Electronic Arts (EA) in Canada.

Mike was tall at nearly six and three-quarters feet tall. Yea – he towered above most people. He was a thin build and demeaner was that of a 'highly proper' man. He was the most 'clean cut' person I may have ever met in my life. Always shaven and hair trimmed and quaffed perfectly. He wore polo shirts and ALWAYS a sweater – no matter how hot it was. Mike had a signature 'look' and he was proud of his 'brand'.

Mike was smart and pragmatic. He had earned his MBA prior to joining Electronic Arts (EA) and saw our EA Fusion division as an opportunity to build an organization from the ground up with the immense funding and stability of a major video game publisher Electronic Arts.

Mike garnered the respect of most everyone with EA and Fusion. He rose from a Development Manager to a Development Director and then to a Senior Development Director in only a few years.

And Mike had honor and integrity. He refused to take 'bad orders' or 'shut up' when he knew something had to be said or done for the sake of the team or products.

Mike reported to me while I worked at EA. He was a great employee – you could rely on Mike and trust him implicitly to do the right thing and watch your back.

I was always impressed with Mike Crump's professionalism and personal integrity.

World Tour with Mike Crump:

Mike and I decided we needed to find a lot of developers quickly to address immediate appetite by Electronic Arts to publish even more games than we had to date – and we had delivered and published A LOT OF GAMES.

We were being asked to nearly double our output capability while maintaining high innovation and quality.

The only chance we had to succeed was to hire full organizations to expand our team because even at our breakneck speed hiring employees we could not deliver what was being asked of us.

Due Diligence – Finding Quality Contract Partner Companies:

Objectively – Mike Crump and I had no idea if we could even find quality developers, and if we could - find and hire - such developers - we could not be sure, that we could manage them effectively remotely. But we had to try… it was our big shot to greater glory!

Mike and I hit the pavement and the phones and the Internet to –
1. identify potential developers and then confirm their availability within our timelines.

2. secure company background and product and asset pitches.

3. perform remote due diligence with the company.

4. schedule an in-person due diligence with companies that passed the first steps.

5. travel to and complete assessment of capabilities and risks and mitigations.

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6. recommend 'hire'/'no hire' with instruction on how to make the company successful, shoring up resource or expertise gaps.

The World Tour in Search of Developers:

Mike Crump and I found a series of developers internationally that 'fit the bill' on paper for having the right expert staff and work capacity to deliver the engineering and art and audio and level layout and tuning that we were looking for.

We had several trips but the biggest trek we referred to as 'The World Tour' in search of developers.

Virtuos Art Studio (China), Nikitova Dev Studio (Ukraine), India & UK Developers:

Our world tour in search of game and asset contract developers included distant locales like Hyderabad India for engineering and assets, Shanghai China where an art & animation studio called Virtuos was based, Kiev Ukraine where an engineering studio called Nikitova operated, Quantic Dream in Paris France, and a multitude of game makers in the United Kingdom from London, Sheffield to Brighton Beach to Scotland and more.

And the developers we hired had offices in many countries and cities, and some further subcontracted themselves to accommodate peak-valley staff demand spikes.

Culture and Expectations Vary Widely According to Country and Region:

It was apparent – culture and people's expectations from the world around them… varied widely according to the country and region, even according to the caste they were born into.

The world was not fair. It was a set of rules… that people had to live within, and comply…
But - there are gray and black 'backdoor' deals… to bypass otherwise 'limiting rules'. There were always… alternatives.

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E230 Virtuos Art Studio Shanghai China

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E230 Art Studio Virtuos Shanghai China, Quality of Life Disparity, Underground Gray and Black Markets.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uqge-e230-art-studio-virtuos-shanghai-china-quality-of-life-disparity-gray-and-b.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/zQeCIHslcEg

Description:

Richard tells the story of he and his colleague Mike Crump visiting an art studio called Virtuos, based in Shanghai China.

He shares his Shanghai adventure - from the smiley face buttons at the airport, after automated 'health fever detectors'…

…and - on to his hotel with warnings of oppressive Big Brother watching whatever he does in person or on the Internet…. so behave!

Hear Richard's delve into the dark underbelly of China's knockoff shops and underworld black market.

Listen to tourist tales of Silk Factories and Capitalist Wealthy Shops.

There is so much to hear in this episode…

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Virtuos Art Studio (Shanghai, China):

I oversaw a vast amount of external contract development.

One company I visited was called Virtuos, located in Shanghai, China. I was in search of an art and animation studio that could take on work from our internal development teams because we were short on art resources and work capacity. And Virtuos was such a company.

Yea – they spelled their name incorrectly to get noticed…for being bad at spelling!? I always thought that was weird of them. Anyway – they were spelled V I R T U O S… vs V I R T U O U S. Yea – literally just one extra 'U' at the end of the word… Seemed silly…

Virtuous' origin? Virtuos was a spinoff by an ex-Ubisoft executive from France that operated in Ubisoft's Canadian French-Quebec province office. Although there was no correlation between Ubisoft and Virtuos the founder held Ubisoft philosophies close and strove to run Virtuos similarly.

Of course – Virtuos was not the same as Ubisoft. It could not be. It was based in Shanghai, China. My adventures in China were 'wild' and 'scary' a times (more on that later).

Shanghai International Airport – Temperature Scanners, Happy Spectrum Buttons:

Headed to China…

I was traveling with Mike Crump, a senior Development Director, that would be the day-to-day supervisor over any contractors we might sign to do work for us.

Mike and I finally arrived at the Shanghai International Airport.

Aside from the insanity of people everywhere – it was like a zoo or an ant hole or a beehive.

There were few notable things about the airport – and of going through Chinese immigration and customs.

Two things stood out –

1. Temperature scanners – there were automated temperature scanners looking for people with elevated body temperatures which may indicate they were sick and need to be triaged and potentially detained.

2. 'Happy Spectrum' Buttons – upon exiting the immigration interview area there was a kiosk with five big buttons.

   Each button had a progressively smiling happy to a frowning unhappy face. Atop the kiosk was a sign in many languages simply asking for each person to press the button that reflects their experience in the airport.

Chinese Hotel and Restrictions – Internet Site Limit Rules:

The journey to the hotel for Mike and me was uneventful. We had taken a taxi with our address pre-printed on a sheet of paper which we had shown him. He read it and knew precisely where to take us. Easy!

As we checked into the hotel the clerk informed us that although we had Internet in our room that we should be careful not to go to any 'inappropriate' sites – places we might have gone to outside of China.

He stressed to us that it was illegal to go to any anti-China or pornographic sites specifically.

It seemed odd that our checking introduction included a warning about Chinese threat to our Internet usage.

The clerk noted that he could call taxis or provide any general service we required – we just had to ask him.

Again – other than the threat of 'bad Internet usage' everything was easy and straight forward.

Adventures in Shanghai, China:

Mike and I had a few days without schedule company visits with Virtuos. We had planned to wander the local streets around our hotel and see the 'real world' of China –

1. Eat at local restaurants.

2. Shop at local retailers (funny – Shanghai was as capitalist as Beverly Hills, CA USA).

3. Walk neighborhoods to see how people lived.

4. Visit gas stations and service outlets to see how they operated (e.g., gas stations were all underground with just pump handles retractable from the ground).

5. Go to a supermarket or grocery store to see how things are arranged and presented.

6. See a Mall to observe how different they were from the USA or Canada.

7. Buy souvenirs – the more authentic and less tourist-like the better.

Adventures in the Tenderloin – Hotel Desk Clerk Discouraged Us:

The hotel desk clerk looked horrified when I asked him if there was a store or outlet somewhere that sold 'knockoffs.

The desk clerk asserted that we should not go to such a place. There can be dangerous people there, and they can take advantage of ignorant Americans (or Canadians like Mike was). He advised strongly against going anywhere but to the retailers immediately around the 'safe' hotel area.

Well – I was determined to see 'the real China' and I had heard that Shanghai had a huge 'underground' illegal tenderloin district that 'sold everything you could want' at pennies on the dollar because the goods were –

1. Defective from manufacturing, so sold cheap through 'gray' channels.

2. Stolen or 'excess' manufacturing that found its way into 'gray' markets.

3. Knockoff that looks identical to the official item but is made from substandard materials and will very likely degrade or break quickly and may well not operate at all if it was mechanical or electronic.

Undaunted – we ignored the hotel desk clerk's advice and asked him to write down the address of the 'Tenderloin' Knockoff district and entrance.

The clerk explained that there was a mall where things were 'inexpensive' and that was where we wanted to go. He emphasized again – it is dangerous. Few police there!

Adventures in the Tenderloin – Taxi Driver Discouraged and Refused Us:

Mike and I took our slip of paper with the Tenderloin Knockoff District address and proceeded to the taxi that promptly pulled up outside. There were so many taxies that we never had to wait but a few minutes at the hotel for one to arrive.

The taxi looked at our paper and upon reading the address looked horrified and exclaimed "No! No Go!" and drove off.

Wow – Mike and I were dismayed that both the desk clerk and the taxi driver were so concerned about our destination that they GREATLY DID NOT WANT US TO GO THERE.

Adventures in the Tenderloin – Second Taxi Ferries us to Retail Badlands:

Being warned by a taxi driver and hotel clerk not to go to the Tenderloin Knockoff District was not enough to thwart Mike and my intention to obtain knockoff souvenirs.

We hailed another taxi, and this driver was fine with taking us to the so-called 'badlands' of retail.

Adventures in the Tenderloin – Second Taxi Ferries us to Retail Badlands:

The 'more adventurous' taxi drove us perhaps fifteen minutes through a wide range of sceneries – dense commercial and retail areas, desperate to medium 'scale' residential areas, and through a few stretches of open land or trees.

We eventually pulled into a crowded outdoor mall area with buildings and alleyways everywhere.

Mike and I had narrowly stepped out of the taxi and were rushed by throngs of people with brochures of things for sale. Others bellowed, "Girls! Coke! Anything!"

We were in the wild west of Chinese retail.

Mike and I chose one of the 'barkers' and told him we wanted to buy knockoffs.

Into the Shadowy Alley – Mike was Scared (maybe legitimately):

The street barker showed no fear of engaging with us – instead he grinned ear-to-ear and exclaimed "follow me!"

He led us away from the outdoor mall and into a very narrow alleyway – it could not have been four or five feet wide, and the building was many stories tall. Although it was daytime the lighting was twilight with shadows all about.

Mike looked worried and said he was scared that we were alone in an area we were warned repeatedly about, and now we were willfully entering a dark alley with a total stranger in search of potentially illegal knockoff merchandise.

Yea – Mike may have been smart and prudent. But we were here, and I do not surrender my quests!

The Tiny Door into Darkness:

Perhaps midway through the alley there was a tiny door – maybe five feet tall and two feet wide.

The 'barker' retail guide tapped on the door and said something in Chinese. The door opened and a small woman waved us to go inside.

Mike looked alarmed and said, "Are you sure? We could go into that little door and be killed. Just like that! Dead! Over! Are you sure?"

I nodded and affirmed, "Yea, of course."

Entering the door was a little intimidating because it was small and the room inside was dark.

But I entered… first, and Mike followed.

And the small woman closed the door behind us.

The Dark Room and Maze, and the Prostitute and Bouncer Salesman:

Once inside the dimly lit room we could see the walls were lined with shelves of random knockoff watches, shoes, ties, and CDs and DVDs of music and movies. There were some women's purses and men's wallets. The selection seemed small and not at all what I had imagined.

The knockoffs did not look of high quality either. They looked like knockoffs, and so Mike and I had no interest in buying anything.

But Mike was worried if we did not buy something maybe they would become upset with us and maybe harm us or mug us. Mike's fear was pervasive for him.

They could see that I had little to no interest in their merchandise.

The small woman leaned over toward us and smiled coyly, "You want something else? You want girl? You want me?"

"No", Mike muttered sheepishly. I replied speaking slowly likewise, "No…we just want…to buy some things…nothing here is what we want."

A man had been sitting in the corner observing us. I presumed he was a bouncer or a salesman. Either way – until we had something to buy, or he engaged with us - he just sat there - and we ignored him.

But now - The bouncer salesman stood up - and walked to one of the walls. He pulled on it and the entire wall opened to reveal a corridor behind it. That hallway traversed the entire outer perimeter of the building, and it had a sloping down and then up long corridor that apparently crossed underground to another building.

The entire knockoff district was operating as a literal underground illicit retail operation on a scale larger than most USA malls when considering the magnitude of those little "dark knockoff shops" hidden throughout the façade of proper retailers.

Mike and I purchased a few things like a fashion tote to carry the other things we bought – watches, computer memory cards, women's purses, and numerous small things.

The underbelly retailers were pleased with our purchases and led us outside once more.

Crazy Sights in Shanghai:

Outside we had no idea where to go. There were not taxis in this part of town it seemed.

And so - we two white Americans wandered the native streets of Shanghai China, each carrying a suitcase-sized knockoff tote bag filled with nick-nacks.

We saw crazy things –

1. A Lamborghini Countach parked across the street from a huge shiny windowed skyscraper, and next to the Lamborghini was a decrepit rickshaw.

   The contrast of income disparity was beyond anything I had ever seen in the USA, UK, or Canada.

2. No gas stations – they were all underground with only pump handles visible at street level.

3. Grocery stores selling 'exotic' food that seemed incomprehensible from an American perspective to eat.

4. When away from the knockoff district - a woman desperate to clean my sneakers (as if they were dress shoes) on the street and did not wait for me to approve her doing so. A police officer witnessed her and chased her off – telling me to not let locals interact with me.

   It was not clear if the policeman was more upset with Mike and I, or with the woman. Either way – we moved on.

5. One particularly short Chinese couple saw Mike towering so tall above them that they ran up and asked if Mike would pose with them while I took a photo of them with a camera, that they had with them.

   I obliged and took the photo and did the same for Mike who also wanted a photo with them for his nostalgia.

   The height contrast was extreme – barely five feet tall versus nearly seven feet tall. It was like seeing a giant next to thin dwarfs.

Indoor Mall - All Prices Negotiable:

We came across an indoor mall as we wandered, and decided to head in. We imagined there might be a phone or information desk that could call a taxi for us.

Inside it was clean but cluttered. Just like the USA there were ATMs to get cash. Everything was familiar just like an American or Canadian or British mall. I suppose malls worldwide were largely the same.

The salespeople were seemingly desperate though. The first booth-store we approached and left without finding anything of interest to buy resulted in the saleswoman chasing us outside the store and offering lower prices on everything – just say what we wanted and make an offer.

There was a huge difference – PRICES WERE NEGOTIABLE!

Indoor Mall - Hidden Knockoffs Behind Walls and Panels:

The selection of merchandise was far greater than the knockoff underbelly district, but they were much more expensive and did not bear the alleged high fashion brands or logos. The stuff sold in the mall were "normal" everyday things.

Mike and I were about to leave the last store when a surprise happened.

A salesman looked at us and said, "You seem okay. Yea? You okay?"

I answered, "Yea, we are okay."

He furthered, "You not police? Not police, are you?"

Surprised, I answered "No, we are not police".

He leaned over to the wall and like the underbelly knockoff 'fake walls', so was this wall fake. It opened to reveal a recessed second wall which was lined with knockoffs. But these knockoffs looked nice and of higher quality.

Other retailers observed us buying something from the hidden knockoff wall and pursued us to likewise buy something from them.

One after another – secret walls and hidden panels opened, all revealing more and more secret illicit goods to purchase.

We bought more things and our 'totes were full' of knickknacks.

Silk Factory and Shop – Kimonos, Comforter, and Sheets:

Mike and I made another trip on a different day to visit a Chinese silk factory and shop.

The factory offered a tour on how silk is 'made' from silkworms. It was interesting to see the process of extracting silk from worms and processing it and weaving it into various garments and blankets.

I purchased a kimono for my wife Katherine and myself, and I bought a king-sized comforter and sheet set. They were great quality and incredibly soft and, of course, silky.

Taxi Stopped on Freeway on Route to Nightclub:

After a dinner with Virtuos – they asked Mike and I to go to a local nightclub to see how Chinese 'partied'.

There were too many people to go in a single car, so the company's attending staff and Mike and me took several taxis. We had Chinese and English-speaking people with us to make sure we got to the club without communication problems.

Our taxi driver got lost and went on the wrong road and entered a freeway headed in the opposite direction. The Chinese speaking Virtuos passenger upset yelled at the driver in Mandarin.

The taxi driver panicked and stopped the car to look at a map.

UMMMMM! We stopped! WE STOPPED ON THE FREEWAY! AT NIGHTTIME!

Other cars swerved all around us at freeway speeds.

It must have been a miracle that evening – the taxi driver resumed driving and took us to the nightclub.

We did not crash or get hit by another car. We lived and made it!

Yea – that was nuts! Pure and simple!

Was this normal for China? Was this an insane anomaly? I will never know…

Contracting in China – Laws and Regulations and 'Trust but Verify':

When asked how Virtuos made decisions and prioritized work, especially since they contracted with many companies not just potentially with us?

Virtuos' founder happily shared over a dinner with Mike Crump and I that he was the 'final say' in the company. And if we had any concerns or issues that he would be our 'go to' to resolve things to our satisfaction. He was extremely accommodating and exuded confidence.

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I pressed further that I did not understand how things worked in China? I told him that I did not know China's laws or regulations working with Canadian or USA corporations, or how contracts might be different.

Of course – Electronic Arts (EA) had people with external contract experience including working with groups in China.

I had learned over time - not to trust 'the way things have been done' - or the people that 'did things the way they have always been done." I had to confirm and verify everything.

It became a hallmark of mine to honor Reagan-Gorbechev era's 'Trust but Verify' mantra, and so I examined and assessed everything myself. No schedule, no company, no feature, no hardware or firmware did not have me deeply involved and assessing and providing related strategic plans.

China Controls Everything:

Virtuos' founder conceded that China controls everything.

Indeed –
1. China assigned a native Chinese citizen as 'company director' who has total authority over Virtuos and its staff and its business.
2. The Chinese 'company director' only observes unless something is done that violates Chinese laws or objectives.
3. Virtuos' founder makes virtually all decisions, but it is possible to be overridden.

Virtuos Chinese 'University Extension' – Only Pass as Art Contract Studio:

Virtuos' office building appeared newly constructed and was impressive in size and extremely maintained and clean). The staff were educated and those that spoke English explained how they were 'lieutenants' being translator buffers with the non-English speaking Chinese team.

It turned out Virtuos' office building was provided by China free of cost because the building was an extension of a Chinese 'university' dedicated to training video game and art and audio development.

Yea – the so-called private contract company was classified as a 'course' under a never-heard-of 'Chinese University' which meant it benefited from Chinese education grants and facilities and free 'student' staff.

Virtuos being a Chinese university extension seemed like a sham, but they passed our due diligence as an art studio. They failed as engineering or full game development in our assessment, but they were close; we could likely have shored up their engineering holes but working in China seemed too much for complex engineering modules.

Virtuos – Chinese Gateway to Tech, Human-Machine Interface and Game Design:

Ultimately –

1. Virtuos provided asset and coding services for companies throughout the world. And in doing so grew its database and network of contacts and experts and business leaders globally.

2. Virtuos was also a leech line into technologists, artists, and business leaders worldwide while gaining access to use or clone technologies, human-machine interface (HMI) and game designs, and even assets (also sometimes with minor tweaks to indemnify them of double-selling should they be caught).

3. Virtuos likewise sought to import experience 'cultural' design from different territories throughout the world. Their goal was to ensure Chinese-made games would feel like Western-made games and appeal to non-Chinese markets.

4. China could influence video game designs and cultural concepts if it delivered highly popular globally relevant games.

   For reference- Tencent is one of the biggest and most successful Chinese video game companies that I can recall.

So bottom line –

Virtuos was a Chinese government extension to harvest technology and build a network of people to support their eventual independent making and publishing of their own games. Virtuos was not… just a company doing work… Virtuos was 'not an innocent enterprise.' Virtuous WAS a Chinese Controlled Company.

E231 International Operations and Cultural Differences and Corruption

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E231 International Operations, Cultural Differences, Corruption, Cash Envelopes, Russian KGB, and Ukraine.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uqdq-e231-international-operations-cultural-differences-corruption-bribes-kgb-an.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/0C4sdrKg-MA

Description:

Richard summarizes the dominating cultures and corresponding attitudes that he has seen across the globe during his travels – Philanthropic & Generous, Struggling & Desperate, and Victim or Conqueror (sometimes a combination of them).

He shares his observations on how government and culture greatly influence work ethic, progress, and innovation.

Hear how a contract-giver should define the work to be done, but not define how it should be done; whereas the contract-taker should define how work should be done, but not define what must be done.

Learn about core culture, fringe culture, and counterculture.

Listen to Richard share his experience working with a company called Nikitova in Kiev, Ukraine, where he worked with an allegedly former KGB operative…

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

Developer International Cultural and Operational Dissimilarities:

For my job…

I traveled more across the United States and Europe and Asia. Throughout - I observed vast diversity in people and cultures.

Attitudes often reflected daily life challenges –

1. Philanthropy and Generosity and Kindness and Helpfulness Were Tied to resource beyond those needed for personal and family and friend and ally survival.

2. Struggling to survive or care for loved ones - all but eliminated compassion and giving to others.

   People allege that hardship breeds greater unity and collaboration, but I have seen it breeds cutthroat dog-eat-dog survive-at-all-costs behavior.

   Scraping by to survive leads to cornered-animal irrational desperation that will bite the hand that would otherwise feed and care for it.

3. Long-standing Victim or Conqueror 'complex' can lead to inappropriate delusions of grandeur and capability or can result in low confidence and constant need for encouragement and cheerleading and handholding through problems and their solutions.

Throughout the world I have seen entire cultures and companies that evolved to be any one or combination of those 'attitudes' –

1. Philanthropic and Generous.

2. Struggling and Desperate.

3. Victim or Conqueror.

Biggest Culture, Operations Influence – Affluence, Location, Governance, Politics:

Attitudes in companies I worked with globally seemed to vary greatly based on local culture and how dense homes were, and according to government and political influences and control.

I suppose that the biggest driver to cultural and operational dissimilarities was how affluent a group was and thusly how removed from fear of Survival they were.

But after survival has been satisfied –

1. affluence can corrupt when so much wealth flows that it disrupts the 'need for innovation'.

2. geographic location including weather and greenery vs cityscape can greatly affected people's outlook on life - right up to hope and aspirations and reduce them to functional work and checklist scheduling and management.

3. Government rules and laws and taxes and operations can be either motivating or soul-crushing to people and dramatically affect their productivity and ability to be creative and innovative.

4. Politics are like governance, but they engender fear of the future and uncertainty of what may come. Politics can erode productivity and excluding a game that revolves around political topics or issues they should be avoided at all costs – within and outside the team.

Therefore -
STAY CLEAR OF POLITICS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RULES AND LAWS AND TAXES!

Let External Companies and Staff Create and Develop and Manage Themselves:

Although I emphasized with everyone that worked with me when dealing with external contracted companies that our job was to define the work that needed to be done and establish confidence that it can be done to quality and on time within budget and resources available to us for the project.

But it was VERY IMPORTANT to empower the external companies and their staff to do the work and manage their staff themselves. It was a common mistake to micromanage and direct outside companies and their teams.

Same Leaders Tend to Create Similar Things:

Micromanaging external companies often eroded trust and partnerships, but it also eroded product innovation and quality.

In my experience –

When the same people supervise creation – similar things are created.

Therefore –

Empower different people to lead creation – avoid shackling innovation with control.

Fringe vs Counter vs Core Culture:

There are times that 'different' cultures are too much to tolerate.

Yea – some people and some companies are INCOMPATIBLE with you and your organization.

That is no big deal! It is entirely reasonable to have people and groups you get along with, and those that you do not get along with.

1. I used to draw on a whiteboard a big 'V' and write inside it –

    'Culture'

2. I would then draw a bigger 'V' surrounding the previous 'V' and write between the two 'V's –

    'Fringe Culture'

3. I lastly drew a big semi-circle connecting the vertices of the big outer 'V', and write within it –

    'Counter-Culture'

4. And then I would conclude that we –
    a. prefer companies and people that share our 'culture'.
    b. support and tolerate 'fringe cultures' to our own.

      c.   reject 'counter cultures' because they undermine our values and goals.

In the end – I counseled people internal and external to our company alike to be flexible and adapt to each group's unique perspective and local laws and governance and culture and traditions while steadfastly not compromising our own values or culture or traditions.

There should be 'room' for both our and our partner's cultural needs and values and practices, while we work professionally together.

Cultural Differences Do Not Exist in Isolation of Reality Around Us:

It is especially important to be compassionate and understanding of people living and working in foreign countries or regions that have vastly different cultural values and traditions and behaviors.

But what I have found the most intriguing is the 'why' of it – Why and how do cultures and their values and traditions and signage and artifacts evolve into reality?

There are a few reasons I have seen –

1. Government Legal and Operating Influence

   Some cultural differences were the result of government influence, and not the result of people's ideologies or beliefs. In fact – I observed through my travels that individual's philosophy bore little impact on the culture they lived within.

   The most notable government actions I have seen are –

   a.   Censorship and Information Suppression and Disinformation and Propaganda.

   b.   Mobocracy – corrupt government run by Mobsters.

   c.   Turning on/off Utilities like Natural Gas to force people in/out of home & bed and to/from work according to government schedules

   d.   'Vanishing' or 'Canceling' of people opposing government or its objectives.

   e.   Incentives to do what government wants – cash, freedoms, childcare, 'pizza', …

2. Challenging Survival

   There is no greater driver of values and beliefs than survival!

   And there are so many things that threaten our survival and well-being –
   1. Hunger and Famine.
   2. Insufficient Water.
   3. Lack of Shelter and Power and Heating/Cooling.
   4. Extreme Weather, Cold, and Heat.
   5. Threat from People and Animals.
   6. Disease and Maladies.
   7. Familial Harm and Ruin
   8. Media and government disinformation and propaganda.
   9. Conflict and War.

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10. Extraordinarily Charismatic People.
11. And so many more external things influence culture.

Until a person is no longer focused on survival, they cannot afford the time or money or resources to invest in anything else but enduring and getting to their tomorrow.

As an aside – Philanthropy stems from a fruitful and successful life where the individual or people have exceeded survival and can invest in culture and civilization.

3. Nuke and Pave

In life there are occasions that are so devastating and physically or emotionally so painful that they shatter our very core beliefs. And in tearing our values asunder there is an open wound for new ideas and views to integrate themselves into that person's psyche.

Indeed – when a traumatic event happens to a person, they become highly susceptible to outside influences and ideological change.

Examples of 'nuke and pave' moments are –
    f. Kidnapping
    g. Rape
    h. Murder
    i. Familial Disintegration and Devastation
    j. Extreme Accidents
    k. Life-altering medical conditions

4. Infinite Influences and Triggers

In the end – I imagine there are countless if not infinite influences and triggers that shape cultures and their values and traditions. I have seen the above cultural influences to be the strongest but am sure others can think of more.

I believe it is nearly impossible to craft or foster a culture or outlook on life that exists in isolation of the reality around us.

Olya Nikitova, KGB International Businesswoman Formed Video Game Company:

Through my business travels I met a tall thin woman with Russian features and long blond hair. She dressed professionally but with a 'sexy' selection of clothing – blouse, skirt, nylons, heels. And she always wore 'make up' and had her nails done. Her name was Olya Nikitova.

Olya Nikitova was not just an intense woman in person. She had an intense life history.

Olya grew up in a small town in Russia. Her natural beauty was uncommon in her hometown, and she was not satisfied with whiling her life away marrying a local and having kids and growing old and eventually dying – just like all her ancestors had.

She was not going to wait for something good to come to her. Olya was determined to make her life into something.

Although I do not know the details of how Olya Nikitova found her 'path' in life, but she had found her way to Moscow and was 'discovered' by the Russian Secret Service KGB.

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The Russian KGB wanted to leverage Olya's beauty as a spy and for espionage. She was 'married' to a fellow KGB agent, and they started an international business to provide for-hire contract services for computer graphics and tools and applications and computer and video games.

The idea was to have a 'legitimate' reason to travel all over the globe. Nikitova's offices were in London UK, Chicago USA, Moscow Russia, and Kiev Ukraine.

Olya called her company 'Nikitova' after her surname. Olya was very proud of herself and how she escaped her smalltown trap.

'Bad Attitude' is a Low-Grade 'Damnable' Offense:

Olya Nikitova was highly intelligent and shrewd, and attractive by even the most discriminating 'attitudinal' people. Olya's intensity and unwavering relentless drive to succeed and overcome any obstacle or barrier came across as a 'bad attitude' to most people.

A first I worried that she might be too intense or too aggressive in her motivation to triumph and succeed. She had her own 'attitude' that kept her going despite adversity and danger.

For reference - in my game *Escape from Hell* I put a rock band in it called "The *'Tudes*" because I have always felt having a 'bad attitude' causes so much consternation and trouble for people that it should be a low-grade 'damnable' offense.

Olya's 'attitude' could have been a problem for me working with her, but we shared a lot of common beliefs and so never had any inter-personal disagreements or issues.

In fact – as I worked with Olya Nikitova (more on that later), I grew to respect her and had a good working relationship with her.

In hindsight – it seems that I also had an 'attitude' since Olya and I appeared cut from the same 'get it done' cloth. It was as if we shared some DNA blueprint for how to succeed like science fiction movie Terminator.

Olya Nikitova, Ex-KGB International Businesswoman:

It was customary to have work dinners with contract partner leaders and key staff, and sometimes line workers as a reward or retention event.

During such a work dinner with Olya Nikitova in Kiev, Ukraine we all had been drinking – perhaps a bit too much wine.

And Olya shared that she was previously a Russian KGB agent and that she was funded by KGB operations to create Nikitova offices around the world so Russia would have inroads without suspicion or questions. Olya was apparently a key KGB global operative.

She explained her ex-husband was and still is a KGB agent, but that she virtually never sees him. It is a marriage for appearances and further travel 'flexibility' for he and KGB assignments.

It all sounded exciting… and rather unbelievable.

But Olya suggested working for the KGB is more fantasy - than dangerous.

Mostly she just transported documents and materials on encrypted electronic devices or passed on messages in person. Or moved cash to pay off "contractors" doing "work" for Olya or her husband (and the KGB).

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She remains apparently 'associated' with the KGB – you do not quit from the KGB.

But Olya Nikitova had become a dedicated full-time businesswoman and no longer engaged with KGB operations.

…Or so Olya said. She was just on call… if ever there was something required of her.

And she fit right in - with her new primary headquarters based in Kiev, Ukraine – a country ruled by mobsters. Ukraine was a mobocracy.

Companies Worried What I Thought of Them:

Most companies were hyper concerned with what I thought of their staff and organization and facilities, and of course their ability to create compelling games and art and sound and music.

Why were they so worried?

Well – because I could shut down their business with my organization and most likely most other groups and companies I knew. And cancel their contracts in the process.

My great (and powerful) reputation as Chief Technology Officer and long history of delivering many successful games added to group's fear of my potential harm to their reputation should I go on a mission to expose a company for bad behavior or failure to honor or deliver on commitments.

Nikitova's Reputation Was Critical to Future and Success:

Nikitova was no different than most companies. It wanted to be successful and generate a lot of money, and ideally give its staff a good experience as the business plowed forward. Its reputation was critical to its maintaining and securing work.

And so Nikitova like most companies worried what I thought of their team and capabilities and facilities.

"Operations Inspector" Paid Off:

During one of my visits to the company Nikitova in Kiev, Ukraine I observed a frumpy man in a trench coat arrive and wait for Olya Nikitova to arrive to discuss 'pressing business matters' according to the office manager who also doubled as receptionist and all-around get-stuff-done person for the group. She told me the man visits every few months to speak with Olya, and emphasized it was business as usual.

The admin escorted me to the team where I spent the next few hours.

After my time with Nikitova's team I returned to the admin, whereupon I saw the frumpy man was still waiting. He looked perturbed, if not outright angry.

My timing was fortunate for me, and perhaps unfortunate for Nikitova. Its founder Olya Nikitova rushed in from the front door and handed the man an envelope as she spoke in what sounded like Russian to me (though I am no language expert and have had little experience contrasting Russian and Ukrainian speech).

The frumpy man rose and returned terse presumably Russian words and handed a manila envelope to Olya.

Later in the day – I asked the admin who the man was and why did Olya give him an envelop in exchange for something in a manilla envelop.

The admin seemed cornered by my question.

She shyly answered that the man was a government safety and codes compliance inspector, and that he was there to confirm their facility is maintained and safe for the staff.

Now – I can tell you that the man never inspected a single thing. He just arrived and sat in a little visitor meeting / waiting room. And then he was given something in a letter-sized envelop and he gave a large full-sheet manilla envelop in exchange.

It was suspicious – to say the least!

The admin saw my disbelief and evident incredulous view of her suggesting he was a safety inspector when he did nothing at all relating to 'inspecting'.

Well – maybe he inspected the contents of the envelop (after he left, since he did not do it when he was there in the office).

FINALLY – the admin cracked under the awkward silent stare of disbelief.

She said the inspector is paid cash to complete his inspection, and that is how they are allowed to maintain their business license in Kiev. She asserted that if he decides not to do an inspection on any visit that was his prerogative. After all – *HE* was the inspector.

It was clear – The Inspector was corrupt and "on the take" for bribes and deals to look the other way.

Nikitova Built in Munitions Factory including Armed Guards:

The physical building of Nikitova was both awe inspiring and a bit scary.

Upon arriving you saw a cyclone fence with razor wire and suspended on car wheels chained to a motor so it could quickly open and close. On either side of the double-wide razor-fenced driveway stood guard towers with armed guards with assault rifles (and allegedly sidearms as well).

There was a buzzer in the front, but the guards barked down from their fifteen foot perches well before you could get near the buzzer. They only wanted to hear that you were there to visit the company Nikitova.

If you were there for anything or anyone else – YOU WERE TO LEAVE IMMEDIATELY! OR ELSE!!!

Olya Nikitova informed me that the guards 'came with the building' lease. The Ukraine expected people to keep their jobs if it was feasible, and apparently Nikitova needed security and so they agreed to employ the previous owner's guards as part of their lease terms.

Why was Nikitova in a building that had armed guards!?

As it turned out – Olya wanted an extremely safe and secure building. One that could survive an assault – because her business was in Kiev which was a mobocracy. She knew that there could be genuine physical threats to her or the company, and so wanted to be secure.

Olya found a 'deal' on a facility that had extraordinary security – a weapons and munitions factory. Indeed – Olya leased a building that was previously used to manufacture munitions and weapons for the government.

And so, the hyper-secured facility made sense. Crazy and wild. But it made sense.

Crazy Electronic Isolation Security to Protect Against Hacker Theft:

Russia and the Ukraine were renown for their hacker talent pool, and the stereotype reputation of willingness to 'copy and leverage' code, tech, apps, tools, and even designs.

Of course – there are many people that would argue the stereotype is not justified. However, it was not relevant if it was true or not because Electronic Arts Worldwide executives believed it was true, and so I consequently had to operate as if it were true. Adopt the 'Trust but Verify' mantra going forward working with Russia and the Ukraine.

In order to sign a contract with Nikitova we coordinated with them to –

1. build a 'vault room' with 24/7/365 video surveillance recorded offsite and available to us as well.

2. house all computers and devices capable of storing data inside the 'vault' and their mice and keyboards and monitors were cabled through the walls to tables in open work rooms where people developed games and artwork.

3. destroy all USB ports on devices within the 'vault' to reduce odds of someone gaining brief access and copying files to a thumb drive or portal disc drive. And it reduced odds of an intentional virus infection via a USB device.

4. isolate all network devices within its own subnet and block all external Internet access from all machines in the 'vault'.

5. define formal policies and training for existing and new hires to understand and comply and enforce.

It felt weird - and not much of a show of faith - to put so many 'controls' and 'measures' in place – against – to monitor – to control - Nikitova. But it had to be done - to satisfy EA Worldwide and EA Canada paranoid executives.

Nikitova's Hard-Life Staff Loved Their Craft – Games and Tech and Art:

The people at Nikitova were hard working and dedicated to their craft. They loved technology, games, art & animation, and sound & music. They loved all things entertainment tech.

But they also had a hard life in the Ukraine.

1. there were health issues and birth defects resulting from the nuclear reactor Chernobyl's meltdown not far from Kiev where Nikitova operated.
2. The government turned off natural gas (and thus home heating, cooking, and showering were timed by political motivation for when people should get up, eat, go to work, shower, and sleep).

3. Gender inequality was widespread, and men defaulted to chauvinism.

4. Owning a home was reserved for the super wealthy. Ordinary people lived in oppressive apartment complexes or in crowded houses.

5. Good jobs were scarce. People endured a lot of negativity and even abuse at work because they needed the income to survive. Even engineers and university educated people struggled to advance beyond basic existence.

It became evident to me that Nikitova's staff had a great work ethic and were excited to learn and deliver compelling products and assets.

Nikitova Showcased Differing Operations Per Country – Futon Life:

I have seen throughout my life at different times - in different companies - and in different countries – people working all night to deliver something great - that they believe wholeheartedly in. Nikitova's staff were all-in.

The team at Nikitova slept so often at their company - that they kept futons in the office that they could unfold and sleep beside or under their desk tables.

I had seen it in Canada. I had seen it in England. I had seen it in the United States. Seeing it in Ukraine did not seem unusual to me for passionate video game developers. But it underscored they were PASSIONATE about and COMMITTED to their work.

Nikitova's staff were determined to succeed at all costs – no matter how long or how much effort was required.

Hard Lives Work Harder, Have Higher Integrity:

I observed that – hard lives, make people work harder… and have higher integrity.

Life's Difficulty Level seemed directly proportionate to how much integrity and work ethic someone had.

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E232 IT IS AN UNFORGIVING WORLD!

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E232 It's an Unforgiving World and Crispy Heart's Dinner with Mobsters.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uqpy-e232-its-an-unforgiving-world-and-crispy-hearts-dinner-with-mobsters.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/DOTSEfExLm8

Description:
Learn how 3 out of 10 people can destroy a team and project, and ruin careers.

Hear how Richard was given the nickname of "Crispy Heart".

And – hear the tale of The Mobster Dinner in Kiev, Ukraine…

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Enter Crispy Heart

Prelude to Crispy Heart – "How Can They Sleep on Futons in the Office!?":

Another experience I had while working at Electronic Arts in Canada…

A French-Canadian project manager working at Electronic Arts Canada (EAC) came to me one day and lamented that I was cruel for allowing EAC to enslave Nikitova to unreasonable schedules such that they had to sleep in the office on futons. "OH, THE HORROR!" she exclaimed!

There were no words or comparisons with other companies or countries that would assuage her fury and sense of injustice. I Detailed how one of our own EA technical directors had boasted often - that he stayed and slept on a futon - to triumph over problems and deadlines. But she reacted with disdain. She was not swayed.

We Specify What and When to Deliver and With What Resources:

I encouraged her to recognize that we do not define how our partners run their businesses or tell them how to operate within their countries or regions or cities.

In fact – it is illegal in most places to direct a contracted company; instead – we are supposed to specify what work must be done and within what resources and schedule.

Simply – our role as publisher was to specify what and when we wanted it, and how much money or resources we allocated to it over its scheduled milestones and related deliverables.

The contracting company was responsible for everything else – period.

3 out of 7 People Can Destroy the Lives of the Seven:

The French-Canadian project manager was adamant that I was cruel to Nikitova's staff by imposing unreasonable deadlines and expectations without enough money to hire enough people to do the work.

It was ironic because she managed a 10-person development team working on a PlayStation Portable (PSP) game. And her team was struggling to deliver on schedule. They were in such bad shape that I had assigned two engineers from my central technology tools team to help them out – a senior engineer and a recent hire converted from a university intern.

I also dove deep into their development plan myself and worked with the Technical Director I likewise assigned to oversee their technical design and plans.

It was obvious what was wrong –

1. Three of the Ten developers on her team were terrible at their jobs. They were not pulling their weight and needed help.

2. Seven of the Ten (not the Struggling Three) were good at their jobs, and they even took on the unfinished work from the Struggling Three.

3. 3-People == 120 hours of 'normal' work weekly.

4. 7-People == 280 hours of 'normal' work weekly.

5. 7-People taking on the extra 120 hours of weekly work translates into about 17 hours of work every week per person.
    a. So – everyday each person had to work an extra 3+ hours just to compensate for the failing team members.

6. The competent team members lost those precious hours every week –
    a. They lost 17 hours they otherwise could have shared with their family or partner.
    b. They lost 3+ hours every day they could spend on personal goals or health.
    c. They lost all that time so they could not invest in learning or growing.

7. The incompetent team members feel bad about themselves and the harm they impose on their colleagues. They are not being forced to open their eyes and evolve or grow the skills needed to succeed in life.
    a. By allowing weak staff to remain employed hurts capable staff and hinders the weak people from finding something they can succeed at.

Therefore –

It is cruel NOT TO TERMINATE EMPPLOYMENT OF WEAK OR INCOMPENTENT STAFF.

It is necessary to prune and excise 'bad apples' to ensure the team can thrive and shine.

Crispy Heart Born – Failed Vilification, And Nickname Made 'COOL':

In the end – she declared my true name was 'Crispy Heart'. And – she spread and evangelized that name and characterization… to everyone she could, that would listen to her.

And – I liked it. It was 'kind of cool' to me.

Rather than fighting her attempt to vilify me – I embraced it - and I made the nickname 'COOL'.

Heh – she failed to manipulate into capitulating to doing what she wanted.

Learned Not to Speak of Personal Lifestyle or Home – Contrast too Great for Some:

I worked with MANY developers throughout the United States and globally…

There were numerous dinners where I would share personal anecdotes or tales to fill the time and forge positive personal relationships.

One evening a colleague of mine, Mike Crump, and I were dining in Kiev with the company Nikitova's middle management and office manager.

As was customary – we devolved into sharing personal stories and tales of our lives and families and adventures.

But it became apparent that what Mike and I took for granted in terms of freedom was not shared by them in Ukraine –

1. Government does it wants, and it is advised to stay clear.

2. Owning a home was a rare luxury, so talking about owned property or renovations or much anything involving material success signaled unintentional 'superiority'.

3. Even healthcare and life expectancy was greatly dissimilar.

I felt like there were too many unfortunate opportunities to expose inequities across countries and companies.

Going forward – Mike and I decided that we should avoid detailing our personal details as they related to success or wealth or freedom.

"Mobster Dinner" with Olya in the "Mobacracy":

Olya's 'driver' to dinner, parks on front lawn so all could see, opened doors and bade us good dinner in thick Ukrainian accent. He removed a pistol from his coat and placed it on the hood of the car.

He clearly had another large 'hand cannon' under his left shoulder too. It appeared to an intimidation message to anyone coming by – "there is someone important in here and if you value your well-being stay clear."

Well, the restaurant thinned out over time, but no new people seemed to come in. After a few hours there was pretty much just us.

Nothing happened. We left and the driver retrieved his pistol and drove us back.

I imagine much of the mobster life in a "mobocracy" is about show and readiness but rarely doing anything without provocation. At least I hope that is what happened because it was surreal otherwise.

It was obvious right then to me – the Ukraine is a "Mobacracy" and Olya Nikitova was a shark happy to swim its waters and devour whatever she had to along her journey.

EA Canada Engineers Played with Ukraine "Kitty Cats" requiring Sensitive Training:

During a meeting with Olya at EA Canada, she disclosed that visiting engineers from EA Canada had been engaging the local "Kitty Cats" after work. She described their playing with the "cats of the night" and I finally "got it" when she said they are sleeping with them!

OH!!! She was talking about prostitutes! And our staff was going out after work on a regular basis and hiring prostitutes (AKA "Kitty Cats"). She indicated it was seen socially as inappropriate even if it was not prevented. Her staff disapproved and worse complained that some of our engineers bragged how great and inexpensive the "girls" were.

The engineers extolling their prowess by paying little for sex in a foreign country was unacceptable.

Moreover, it made her team feel like they were underpaid third-world slaves to these EA people that they perceived were no better but had been born in a country that empowered them to succeed where Russia and the Ukraine had not done so for them. It made them feel bad and thusly less productive too.

Olya needed a way to either stop their "utilization" of local evening services or do so covertly and stop talking about it at work.

I consulted with Human Resources, and we determined the best course was to mandate an International Sensitivity Training course for all people working abroad going forward. I recommended everyone should go through the course now because we could not anticipate when we might ask someone to travel and help a project somewhere.

And so, everyone in Fusion was lucky to take an International Sensitivity Training Course – all thanks to those "Engineers and The Kitty Cats".

E233 Tidbits from EA Fusion_EA Sports Active

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E233 Tidbits from EA Fusion and EA Sports Active Fitness and Wearable Hardware Tracking on Xbox, PlayStation, and Wii.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uqqd-e233-fusion-tidbits-from-ea-sports-active-fitness-wearable-for-xbox-playsta.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/AKDOFg4YWU4

Description:

Richard shares numerous tales and tidbits from his time working at Electronic Arts Canada EA Fusion Division, from experiences to its extravagant facilities.

EA Sports Active earns Guiness Book of World Records entry.

Hear about "Ridin' Dirty' with FIFA.

Learn about EA Sports Active and its peripheral development, including adventures in Hong Kong.

Richard is knocked unconscious 'in the line of duty'…

Tidbits from EA Fusion:

I had many adventures and misadventures at Electronic Arts (Canada)'s Fusion group.

Here are a few of those experiences…

Riding Dirty with FIFA:

One year while working for Electronic Arts (Canada)'s Fusion division - when we were finishing FIFA for release – the game had failed repeatedly to pass the manufacturer quality verification steps.

The game was buggy and crashed and had visual glitches and did not hold a consistent framerate which meant the game sometimes jerked and felt choppy in control and animation. FIFA was "bad".

In my role as CTO, I could only advise on product quality and release. My role included making sure a game was finished and hit the quality bar target. But as things looked dire during development - features had to be cut, people added to the team, or some revision in the design to regain the lost time and polish.

The producers in charge of product release date and quality – refused to cut any features, demanding they were all critical, and they could not change the date because FIFA had retailer and advertising commitments not to mention it had to coincide with the real-world FIFA sport tournaments.

Missing FIFA's release would be so bad people would be fired!

Doing all we could we fixed and fixed and tuned and polished beyond the 11th hour and right up to the proverbial midnight hour of failure.

We were so close that we had no time to verify our last fixes and efforts to polish the game. I thought we should inform the manufacturers that we were close and ask them to work with us and double-down on testing ASAP.

But EA producers feared tilting their hand of a potentially "bad" FIFA would make them scrutinize more closely and could jeopardize approval.

I declared, "You are 'Ridin' Dirty'" like the performer Chamillionaire's song "Ridin' Dirty". I went throughout the FIFA team and producers and played the song as I decreed it was a dangerous game to willfully submit a game that has not been tested to release to the manufacturer for approval and manufacture and sale to the public.

It felt risky and carried the threat of hurting the gaming consumer beyond EA's reputation.

The producers did not care. The threat of failure and losing their jobs exceeded the risk to consumers and EA [to them].

Well – it worked out. The game was "good" and our last fixes saved the day.

We 'rode dirty' and got away with it.

It was bad lesson for the producers as they would cite FIFA Ridin' Dirty to justify risky behavior in the future.

EA Sports Active – Neoprene Strap, Resistance Band pack-in:

While in EA Fusion we developed EA Sports Active - which was an interactive exercise and workout game on the Nintendo Wii.

The first version of the EA Sports Active included a neoprene holster that held Nintendo's motion sensor controller while the player held another in hand. By having motion tracking on the hip leg and hand of the gamer the game was able to determine if motion matched the expected exercise motion.

The neoprene EA Sports Active holster worked well but could be 'cheated' by clever players. Of course – they were only cheating themselves.

To extend the marketing position that the game was holistic we added a resistance exercise strap.

EA Sports Active was a runaway hit for our business unit, and consequently we were given even more money and latitude to innovate and create sequelss, derivations, and entirely new games.

EA Fusion was a proven innovator of original games and experiences… within Electronic Arts.

EA Sports Active – Original Designed and Manufactured Motion Controller Hardware:

Following the success of EA Sports Active, we wanted to capitalize on the consumer excitement but felt the Nintendo controller was not accurate enough to differentiate against the deluge of copycat games coming out to 'steal our thunder'.

We conceived to build our own high precision motion controller and pack it in with the next EA Sports Active.

We hired a hardware design expert consultant to guide us through the process of creating original Nintendo Wii, Xbox, and PlayStation 'game controllers' that were integrated motion controllers that also tracked heart rate and pulse.

EA Sports Active – Hong Kong's 'Different' Lifestyle:

Although there is a lot of detail and tales behind the creation of the hardware that spans adventures in Hong Kong, being offered 'bug cuisine' for meals (supposed sanitary and full of protein and nutrition – but ick!), worker dormitories with provided meals to support multi-month work shifts and fascist-like hyper subordination control.

The most extreme incident was the hardware consultant becoming excessively drunk in his hotel and decided to rest in its lobby to sober up before returning to his room.

However – he was offered more drinks as he 'sobered up', and so he became more and more inebriated. He may well have become so 'lost to the sauce' that he could not have walked to his room on his own.

The hotel security came to him and directed him to return to his room or be arrested immediately and detained in a 'drunk tank' and very likely fined for his embarrassing behavior.

The consultant was in no shape to argue and staggered to his room with the aid of hotel staff.

Hong King drama ended, resolved.

Yea – Hong Kong offered an extremely 'DIFFERENT' lifestyle from what we were accustomed to.

Guinness Book of World Records – Most People Exercising to a Digital Workout:

EA Sports Active was so successful that Electronic Arts was looking for as many ways to get the word out about the game's value as entertainment and a tool for health and exercise.

The team reached out to Guinness Book of World Records and confirmed if Electronic Arts could get most of its staff out on its sports field exercising to EA Sports Active, we would have a world record of the most people exercising to a digital workout and accordingly the most people exercising to a video game.

Fast forward to the event -

YES –

> We achieved a world record –

>> the most people exercising to a digital workout.

>> the most people exercising to a video game.

Guinness Book of World Records – People Stuffed Like Burritos in T-Shirts:

An aside – many game developers spend A LOT OF TIME IN THE OFFICE and AT HOME working on their games because they LOVE TO MAKE GAMES so much that is both a career and a passion hobby.

Marketing provided EA Sports Active T-Shirts for the experience, so everyone looked united and not ragtag in the video and photo recordings from the event.

It was a sight for many to see so many people on sports field exercising to a video game.

But the vision of game developers exercising was an entirely different visual than you might imagine.

The marketing team had not fully appreciated the body shape of game developers. They ordered a typical mix of shirt sizes from extra small to triple extra-large. They felt they had a wide range of sizes so everyone would be covered – literally by matching logoed clothing.

Game developers of the era were generally overweight and out-of-shape.

There were not enough 'BIG' T-Shirts to go around because there were far more big people than medium and smaller people, and marketing's estimate of shirt counts per size were significantly wrong.

Consequently – the developers stuffed themselves into the provided T-Shirts despite their being too small because everyone was excited to celebrate EA Sports Active and attain the world record of the most people exercising to a video game.

The shirts were so tight that they looked like big human burritos.

Staff were merciless as if on a schoolground play yard. They joked and mocked, and body shamed their colleagues. It seemed many people thought 'ribbing' others for their appearance was entertaining, but it did not go well with numerous hurt feelings and tainted relationships.

Yep – their passion for their creation and game drove them to the embarrassing 'photo op' of 'burrito developers'.

There were hundreds of human 'burritos' on the field.

It was such a sight that EA did not evangelize the event much beyond the informational 'fact' that the game had the world record.

The images of the world record were useful from a distant whole-field view where individual burritos were less obvious.

EA's Summer Party – Iced Dunk Tank Knock Out, But Carried-On Anyway:

Another EA Canada event was a studio-wide summer party. Some more recognized and influential studio executives were asked if they would participate in an iced dunk tank venue for staff to throw baseballs at targets. Successful hits would dunk the executive into water filled with ice.

I was asked. I agreed. I went to my iced dunk tank scheduled event.

While approaching the dunk tank a stray hard baseball struck me in the forehead and knocked me unconscious.

KNOCK OUT!

Lights out for me! I collapsed to the ground after a sudden 'sound' bang. I came to shortly afterwards with people all around me. Quickly company medical trained staff tended to me.

My head was swollen huge with red and purple discoloration. It hurt like hell!

Yea – even a summer company party resulted in my being knocked out. That seems like 'Hell Difficulty' to me.

For note – after fifteen minutes or so I demanded and pushed forward to STILL DO THE ICED DUNK TANK!

With swollen purple bruised head and raging headache – I was dropped into the icy water more times than I can recall.

Ironically – everyone knew I was up for being dunked because everyone was talking about how crazy I must be to still do the dunk tank after being so injured.

I suppose people wanted to justify my mad dunk tank misadventure and wound.

But "what wound matters to the body of a knight errant?" as Cervantes said.

EA's 'Insane' Facilities – Sports Field, Two Theaters, Gym, Motion Capture Studio:

This might be a good time to note some of EA Canada's unusual facilities relative to the video game industry much less companies in general –

1. Dedicated sports field for soccer, track, and so forth.

2. Two movie theaters

3. Huge gym

4. World's largest motion capture studio

5. Masssive cafeteria

The only company I have seen that had more 'insane' facilities was Microsoft in the Washington Seattle-Redmond area where they had over fifty thousand employees.

Daughters at Electronics Arts (Canada):

One weekend during a visit I was fortunate to have my daughters visit me in Canada we decided to go into my work at Electronic Arts. I had hoped to both impress and inspire them to pursue education and jobs in high technology or entertainment or at least management in a mega corporation.

I explained to them that it can be hard to succeed on your own without huge cash reserves and coffers to invest in risky big ideas, and without that it can be smart to work for a big company with huge upward mobility and income opportunity. I wanted them to know that you can work for others or yourself – and both make sense based on what you are hoping to achieve.

EAC Multi-Story Glass Building Complex with Skywalks Connecting Structures:

We entered the building from its rear underground entrance, its portcullis-like gate raising up as we descended into the multi-level maze beneath Electronic Arts' thousand+ person office complex.

My daughters were appropriately impressed with the massive multi-story glass buildings with visible sky catwalks between the complex's structures.

We parked and ascended by elevator into what EA called "Phase II" because it had been built much later after its first main building and motion capture studio were custom built.

EAC Biggest Motion Capture Studio in World:

As a tangent – EA Canada's Motion Capture Studio was the biggest in the world at the time. It supported facial capture, full body capture, and even circus acrobatics with cranes and ropes and pulleys and all sorts of wild equipment.

They had trouble keeping it utilized and eventually decided to rent it out to third parties to offset its operating costs and overhead. 'EA Mo-Cap' was its own business. …but EA games always had priority for motion capture.

E234 The Big and Bigger Picture at Electronic Arts

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E234 The Big and Bigger Picture Training, Mentorship and Hiring Broken Toys at Electronic Arts.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uqt2-e234-the-big-and-bigger-picture-training-mentorship-and-hiring-broken-toys-.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/Bywn4MgB1Xs

Description:

Learn about EA's Big Picture and Bigger Picture Theaters integrated as 'meeting rooms' in Electronic Arts Canada.

Hear the tale of how Richard was mocked in a Christmas party for being a genius that few understood because 'he knew everything' and 'people could not absorb or understand because his words and ideas were too complex and he said them too fast".

Richard is judged as elitist because of his Meritocracy-based Mentor Program called "Top for the Top" that paired top talent veterans with rising star staff.

Listen to Richard's 'Hiring Broken Toys' philosophy.

Hear Richard literally question, "Do you know who I am!?"

Richard shares his experience interviewing with EA-Los Angeles.

Theater Meetings, Broken Toys, and 'Do You Know Who I Am' Hubris:

During one of my children's visit to me in Vancouver, Canada…while working for Electronic Arts… We went into the facilities on a weekend afternoon, to see my office and the cafeteria, gym, sports field, and movie theaters (yea – plural)… and cool glass-everywhere high-tech multi-story multi-building campus construction.

I have so many stories from Electronic Arts in Canada… from theater meetings, to broken toy people, and to my hubris challenge 'Do you know who I am!?'

Here are some of those experiences…

Big Picture Theater for Teaching and Presentations:

So - One of our stops on my tour of EA Canada were what EA called 'The Big Picture'. It was a 64+ person movie theater used for watching videos and seeing game demos and presentations.

Many teams used the Big Picture venue to highlight development milestones or communicate larger team messages.

Unfortunately, the Big Picture was not big enough.

THE BIGGER PICTURE – Bigger Venue for More Teaching and Presentations:

Electronic Arts saw the value of having a large gathering and presentation space, but the company had grown so big and had such large teams that the The Big Picture was simply unable to handle more and more team meetings.

The answer?

Build THE BIGGER PICTURE in the new Phase II building (along with a massive underground gym for good measure – EA had too much money!).

The BIGGER PICTURE dwarfed the Big Picture by a lot – it was THREE TIMES the size supporting 180+ seats and more aisle optional seating as needed.

THE BIGGER PICTURE – Showing Off:

I showed my daughters how I presented things by donning the lapel microphone and belt battery pack and transmitter and powered up the huge stage Audio-Visual system and lowered its huge silver screen and powered its rear projector – all remotely at a control station. They were impressed with the sounds and lights and automation. Their Dad was 'cool'!

Mocked for 'Knowing Everything'; EAC Holiday Comedy Event Mocks me as Einstein:

And yes – of course I knew how the AV System worked. I was renown at EA for known "everything" about everything. My reputation was so wide and extreme that a holiday party hired a comedian troupe to mock me as a hard-to-comprehend Einstein of video game development that also just knew everything…period.

My reputation was awesome and complimentary to me. Apparently – others considered it insulting and viewed me as inflexible and unwilling to reduce my intellect to mortal levels so they might comprehend by brilliance.

Human Resources Alleged I was Elitist and Hired Elitists:

In fact – Human Resources would eventually say that I managed the most elite (and elitist attitude) team within EA. They stated I overtly hired attitudinal people that saw themselves as 'better' than others.

Hired Broken Toys to Do Extraordinary Things:

I countered that I hired people that did not fit anywhere, that were seen as 'broken toys' that no one wanted BECAUSE of their attitude. I informed them that amazing talent often has amazing 'mental issues' which may be masked in attitude and social awkwardness and outward appearance problems.

In no way could Human Resources comprehend that people that do not get along or fit in with mainstream staff could actually be better at their jobs than those people they got along with so well.

I WAS RIGHT, OF COURSE!

People that worked for me shined so far above others that my 'broken toys' began being poached by other EA groups and divisions. They saw these previous 'problems' making amazing technical and experience innovations, and they wanted it for their own groups.

'Top for the Top – Done!' – Meritocracy or Bust!:

Ultimately, I just said to any that harassed me that I managed "the top for the top", and anyone without potential to be a top contributor did not merit being on my team- DONE!

Fostered Culture of Meritocracy and Commitment to Excellence:

I asserted to Human Resources that I lived by a code that everyone should do their best and should be rewarded on results not effort, and thus I fostered a culture of meritocracy and commitment to excellence.

I told them my success and our division success depended on meritocracy, and recognition of greatness…and removal of the weak and non-great people.

I insisted that weak low performance people HURT successful people and limit the company.

Human Resources Hoped to 'Fix Me' for my Commitment to Meritocracy Excellence:

Well – Human Resources persisted to 'fix me' over the years, going so far as to assign me a weekly HR Sync meeting – it was as if they wanted the HR person to be my personal psychologist to shape my management course.

I converted HR to believe my way of thinking. And so they moved a second then a third HR person. Finally, the HR Director.

And then Human Resourced finally embraced and accepted – I WAS RIGHT.

Such has usually been my experience. Those that had open minds saw the truth… when I showed it to them.

Heh – those with close minds generally lost their jobs eventually…

EAC Security Guard Demanded I Leave with Daughters ASAP":

Well after all that tangent on Human Resources and Meritocracy, let me say the culmination of my EA tour with my daughters.

A security guard approached us after the Bigger Picture and demanded I leave ASAP because I violated security rules by bringing my daughters to work without signing them in.

The guard further took down my employee badge name and number – as if to report me for my transgression.

And WORSE! I dared bring them in on a weekend!

EAC "Do You Know Who I Am!?":

I was still a high self-esteem attitude personal myself. How else could I lead "the top for the top" meritocracy?

And so, I consistent with my self-mage asked incredulously –

"Do you know who I am!?"

The answer – No and it did not matter. Rules apply to everyone. No one is above the law (rules). Blah! Blah! Blah!

Yea – the automaton parroted his programmed playbook lines, and refused to use the gray matter given him at birth. He was an idiot! He refused to even look up my name to confirm my identity or authority.

"Do You NOW Know Who I Am!?":

That Monday I wrote a fuming email and met with the Human Resources Director to threaten my resignation if justice was not served. The guard embarrassed me with my daughters and was completely out of line, and his refusal to mitigate the situation by not looking up my identity was unacceptable.

It is my understanding that guard shortly afterwards ceased working for EA. I cannot say if my complaints contributed to his exit, or if he just "sucked and was fired" otherwise.

Either way – he was informed that I was the Chief Technology Officer and he should always check the authority and identity of anyone and everyone. And they informed the entire guard team.

Yea – of that guard... he now knew who I was. And – he knew he made a mistake. He was out of a job.

EALA Interview Fiasco:

My reputation at EA was very positive. I traveled EA studios globally to learn and partner and engage with how our division could adapt or make new versions of EA game franchises on portable and video game consoles.

I was asked to interview to become the head Electronic Arts' Los Angeles studio. However, to make a long interview story short it came down to the 'current GM head of EALA' was a conceited prick that could not see how ignorant he was of tech and game design.

I had heard of "EA SPOUSE" which was a big public stink about EALA abusing its workers so badly that its workers' spouses lamented never seeing their partner, and even seeing their health faulter without concern by the company.

It was obvious in minutes that EA SPOUSE was legitimate and was clearly supported if not caused by the current head of EALA.

He was apparently a conceited womanizing deplorable scumbag - as I quickly saw.

Because the current head of EALA was to oversee multiple studios including EALA, I would report to him. AND THAT WAS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!

I declared the interview a fiasco and happily moved on.

Navigating Mega Corporations:

I was learning – painfully –

- how to navigate mega corporations…and their non-sensical ways

- how people hid in the 'fat' of big company inefficiencies, or behind ignorant managers

- promotions and opportunities are often linked to politics and alliances, not to talent and quality of work or product delivered

- people prefer not to offend 'lesser skilled people' over maximizing the talent of 'greatly talented people'.

- Soft Skills have value, but Hard Skills have more value… and those with real talent 'carry' those without talent… and even 'carry' people that are, simply, 'average'… this never getting the rewards they deserve…for being great.

- The key was:

    - Fairly compensate 'average' people

    - But - Reward great people more – greatly if possible

    - Offer training and mentorship to people with high potential

    - Celebrate Innovation and Quality and Speed

    - Drive Meritocracy and Excellence

- And to everyone else –

    - I 'do not care'

    - Others - 'get lost' – especially if you cannot handle me and my team's greatness

    - 'Get out of the way' - let me succeed…and make my managers a lot of money and get promoted… I just needed - NO INTERFERENCE

They Needed Me on The Wall – But Rejected My Going to the Whitehouse:

I accepted that 'I will not go to the Whitehouse', but I demanded that 'I am in command the Wall and the military…and the team…to get stuff done.'

E235 HEALTHCARE AND HEALTH CRAZINESS IN CANADA

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E235 Healthcare and Craziness in Canada - Cancer, Heart Attack, H1N1 Flu Hospitilzed.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uqzx-e235-healthcare-and-craziness-in-canada-cancer-heart-attack-h1n1-flu-hospit.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/s1VwmWtN-YU

Description:
Canadian Healthcare discovers Richard is Type II Diabetic through immigration screening.

Richard shares details about the good and bad of Canadian Healthcare…

Canadian Healthcare is not what it's advertised as being… it's great at emergency care, okay at daily care, terrible at preventive care…

Richard recounts his crazy Canadian health ride… he was knocked unconscious at work, hospitalized for H1N1 Swine Flu, had surgery for Nose & Eye Socket Basal Cell Carcinomas, and underwent angioplasty heart surgery to treat a heart attack.

TECH ZONE + HELL DIFFICULTY SAGA – BOOK 6
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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

Canadian Health Care

Type II Diabetes "Discovered" Through Immigration Medical Exam:

Perhaps the first significant "discovery" in Canada…

I learned that my health was on the decline… It was an unexpected discovery during an 'immigration to Canada' standard health check screening - that my blood-sugar level was very unhealthily high – something like '14' or some such.

I cannot recall the specific blood-sugar reading number, but apparently it was high enough that untreated I would be precluded from immigrating and remaining in Canada due to my eventual cost on the Canadian Medical system.

Canadian Health Screening Surprising Accurate Prognostication:

Although it proved a non-blocking health issue for Canada, their initial screening was surprising accurate at predicting my health issues in the future.

I would eventually develop neuropathy beyond escalating migraines and a litany of smaller health issues. And then the big one – a heart attack!

Two decades later I was diagnosed with mixed dementia with probable Fronto Temporal Lobe (FTD) degeneration and/or Lewy Bodies. And then the generalized "early Alzheimer" and so forth.

The list of issues far outpaced the initial unmanaged Diabetes Type II.

Indeed – it may not have been precisely what the high blood-sugar reading was interpreted to mean but its general prognostication about my medical and health industry cost was surprising accurate.

Canadian Health Excludes Ambulances – Treatment Available if You Get to Doctor:

Ultimately – Canadian healthcare paid for my heart attack surgery, intensive care unit (ICU) time, and everything involved EXCEPT FOR AMBULANCE TRANSPORT (which is apparently excluded **from Canadian Medicine and Healthcare – they treat you if you can get to the doctor/hospital**).

It seemed absurd that the hospital call was not included though any treatment they administered was covered.

Canadian Health Mandates Medics Stay with Patient until Admitted:

It was also a curious 'law' that Emergency Responders such as Ambulance Medics are not allowed to leave a patient until another doctor/medical facility formally admits them.

Consequently – when I arrived at the hospital the two ambulance medics stayed with me for hours, administering oxygen and monitoring vitals while the over-busy hospital prioritized 'closer to death' patients.
It was my first glimpse into Canadian Emergency Care – understaffed but those they had seemed very capable.

In fact – my angioplasty heart surgery was swift and efficient even if scary and wild (more on that later).

And ONLY LIFE-SAVING MEDICATIONS COVERED:

And another point about shortcomings in Canadian Healthcare. It EXCLUDES all medications that are not considered Life-Saving. In other words – every life-saving prevention medication is excluded even if it is critical to managing life-threatening health conditions like Diabetes, Hypertension, and so on.

Even after a heart attack, medications related to my heart were excluded.

Employers Provide Supplemental Healthcare Insurance (for medications):

Consequently – employers provided supplemental health insurance to cover medications.

Heh – so there it is. If you are employed in Canada, you will get private insurance for medications and pay for emergency transport to healthcare and be entitled to pay extremely high tax for emergency-centric healthcare (with very limited prevention care).

Canadian Healthcare is TERRIBLE AT PREVENTION CARE:

Like I said – Canadian Healthcare covered virtually every cost related to my heart attack treatment and surgery and recovery.

But it is worth noting my excellent medical care was after nearly six months of having my complaints that I seemed to be having some kind of heart problems and lost energy with exertion and my left arm up to my lower left jaw would become progressively more numb – especially my left underarm.

Well – doctors all discounted my complaints as 'imagination' and potentially hypochondriac.

I was right. They were wrong. I did suffer a heart attack, and the diagnosing doctor said that I would likely die within a day or two had I not been to the hospital and undergone surgery.

Yea – Canadian Healthcare is great once you suffer a catastrophic incident. But it SUCKS at prevention care and diagnosis.

Friend's Wife Died from Untreated Brain Tumor:

Perhaps the most egregious tale I saw firsthand was an engineer colleague whose wife suffered severe migraines and went years with doctors insisting she was too young to have serious issues and she was just suffering severe headaches.

Eventually her symptoms were undeniably destroying her eyesight and mobility beyond the relentless agonizing pain she endured. Of course – she was allegedly exaggerating, perhaps to get attention.

Her doctors seemed heartless to her suffering.

Much like my heart problems were discounted, so were my friend's wife's laments.

And like my eventual collision with an untreated calamitous health condition so did his wife collide with her health calamity.

Narrowly able to function she finally was admitted for an MRI. She had previously been unapproved for an MRI or treatments because of her young age and demographic and lack of head trauma all supporting low probability of brain disease or issues.

The MRI revealed a highly advanced untreatable brain tumor. She died within the year. Scott, her husband, was devastated. And there was nothing he or anyone could do.

He lamented if he should have taken her to 'The States' (the USA) to seek MRI's and treatment despite their limited money.. perhaps she would be alive. But - It was illegal to seek treatment outside Canadian Healthcare… as well. He would have to spend precious savings and break the law… without yet knowing if there was benefit.

But even so - did he 'let her die' because he complied with Canadian Healthcare?

My heart bled for Scott, for he and his wife suffered years with the culmination being death and loss. He said the tumor may have been treatable early on, but by the time it was detected it had gone too far. It was too late.

And yet Scott and his wife knew LONG EARLIER the signs of his wife's decline and impending demise. And like me and my heart warning signs, so were her signs ignored.

Canadian Healthcare – All About the Numbers, Like Any Other Business:

From Canada determining my tax dollars and job creation and consequently tax dollars versus my potential healthcare cost showed me directly that Canadian Healthcare views people as tools of income that cost money to keep operating.

That was it. I was a tool in Canada, and so long as I added more value than I might cost down the road I was allowed to reside and work in Canada. Should I no longer add value – GET THE FUCK OUT (GTFO)!!!!

Canadian Healthcare bottom line – Is All About the Numbers.

Canadian Healthcare is a business like any other.

Social Insurance Card and Universal Health Care – NOT:

Everyone in America praises Canadian Healthcare as universally available to everyone.

Well – that is not true. Canadian Healthcare is ONLY AVAILABLE to people who cannot work due to disabilities or who are unemployed through no fault of their own (interpretable unless recently laid off – NOT RESIGNED).

So, if you do not work out of choice – NO HEALTHCARE FOR YOU!

That may not seem unreasonable. But it is effectively the same as in America; if you work you generally can get healthcare – albeit at an income contribution to cover some of the costs.

FIFTY-FIVE PERCENT BLENDED TAX to Pay for 'Employed' Universal Healthcare!!!!

Canada charges A LOT for its health care 'contribution' too. After all – my effective rate after income and sales and property tax was about 55%.

So, anyone that alleges Canadian Healthcare is awesome and how all countries should behave has not lived in Canada and experienced it firsthand.   They are victims of propaganda…

Nose and Eye Socket Basal Cell Carcinoma:

As an actively employed high-tax paying worker in Canada I was entitled to my Canadian Healthcare.

During a visit to a doctor about a seemingly unhealing little wound on my nose near my left eye socket, he concluded I needed to see a surgeon to have it removed and biopsied to ensure it was not cancerous – the doctor believed it was cancerous.

In fact – the doctor said he should maybe cut it out right there himself to prevent growth if it was cancerous.

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Instead – with a potentially life-threatening diagnosis I was fast tracked to a surgeon in the local university medical program, where an instructor would do the surgery. In Canada – it is the qualifications of the doctor not where they work that permits them to perform surgery, etc.

He removed the tissue all around the unhealing would and stitched it up. He did the same for an 'unusually large' skin tag on my neck.

I learned eventually the nose 'unhealing wound' was a basal cell carcinoma cancer. And the neck skin tag was apparently just a 'big skin tag'.

The doctor explained the basal cell carcinoma could lead to eventual death though not guaranteed when.

People at work saw the facial stitches and imagined I came out of bar fight with some injuries needing to be stitched up. I went with the narrative in jest outside closer friends and colleagues whom I disclosed the actual tale.

Richard knocked unconscious by errant ball during dunk-an-executive event:

One hot summer day Electronic Arts in Burnaby, Canada held a company-wide outside 'picnic' event with all sorts of festivities like dunk tanks, sack races, hoop throws, and so on.

Executives were asked to sit in the dunk tank as targets for employees to 'take out frustrations' on their bosses and their bosses' bosses. It was all in good fun.

Like I said earlier - I was one of the dunk-tank volunteers.

Unfortunately, while standing in line I was knocked unconscious.

The key to this point is that while company emergency medical staff tended to me, they merely filed a report that I was knocked unconscious, and later Canadian Healthcare asked if I was okay? That was it…

Umm – I guess I was okay. No CT Scan. No MRI. Nothing but a hand touch of my massive red swollen head, and cold compress added with head bandages. Not much in the way of prevention…is the point here.

Compared to Global Healthcare, American and Canadian Healthcare is Okay:

I had felt repeatedly that American and Canadian Healthcare was not great. Of course – there is none better anywhere in the world I know of either.

So, in the pools of 'poor healthcare', Canadian and American Healthcare are 'okay'.

Influenza in Canada:

Again – much like Scott's wife's brain tumor and my heart attack symptoms being ignored… I was ignored again.

I have always been vulnerable to influenzas – ever since near-death with Scarlet Fever (AKA severe strep throat that kills) as a toddler.

And so when I ever contracted a flu it would often spiral to 103-105F fever, and leave me congested with immense breathing problems. I knew to take flus seriously.

So, when I went to the medical clinic to seek treatment it was disheartening to be told to take cold medicine and cough drops and get over it.

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H1N1 Swine Flu in Canada – To the Hospital I Will Go:

My fever became so high at around 106F, and I could barely breathe that I became convinced death was a real possibility. My wife took me to the hospital where they insisted, I was overreacting to a severe flu.

As it turned out – my supervisor at work contracted H1N1 virus and had given it to me. Others in the area also caught the virus, and they died!

Only because I 'overreacted' did I get treatment in the hospital early enough to save my life.

As before – Canadian Healthcare handles actual care okay, but does a bad job at diagnosis and prevention. …or follow-up care or medications.

Heart Trouble – and No One Believed Me:

For several months I found my heart "felt weird" with a gurgling "bubbling" feeling sometimes, but it was only after exertion like walking up a hill or a flight of stairs. Eventually it "sort of hurt" and made my left arm feel numb. I would have to sit and rest for five to fifteen minutes, and it would go away and I could resume my activity.

Things became too frequent, and I had gone to a Canadian Medical Clinic since it was same-day see and ask a doctor about my heart or other possible causes of my problems. But the doctor was dismissive and sent me away as a hypochondriac.

Things persisted and so I went to my General Practitioner (GP) doctor. She said it was unlikely anything to worry about and come back if things got worse. They did get worse. On several occasions I experienced strong unrelenting pressure and pain in my back. Nothing would relieve it. I laid on my back and flopped in efforts to escape my torment. NOTHING WORKED!

Time passed slowly as I would lay on my back writhing. Eventually the suffering stopped, and I could resume normal life – albeit worried about my health after several such incidents.

I returned to the GP doctor. This time she gave me a referral to a cardiologist to have a echo stress cardiogram done to rule out any heart conditions once and for all. She did not believe me still. But at least she agreed to move me to the next level of healthcare.

Clearly no doctor thought I had anything to worry about because the appointment was almost six months away!

Well, at least I had a cardiologist appointment.

Canadian Healthcare – Medications and Some Procedures Not Covered:

Canada does not have "free" healthcare like people say. After you pay crazy high taxes and if you work you do have access to healthcare excluding medications and certain procedures. They also do not pay for emergency transport or ambulance care at all. And they discourage and block people needing treatment until the last possible moment, which results in health problems progressing to potentially dangerous even deadly stages before treatment is given.

Canadian medicine is "different" and is NOT BETTER. It is cheaper on the surface but much more expensive when considering total taxes paid in America vs Canada.

I would not choose to return to or live in Canada – but, it was invaluable for my life's journey and career… to have been in Canada.

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E236 Developer World Tour

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E236 Developer World Tour and My Heart Attack.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55ur0s-e236-developer-world-tour-and-my-heart-attack.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/ZNP45dirHnA

Description:

Richard prepares for the potential of a heart attack when traveling abroad, especially to countries with low quality medical care.

It is after his readiness and even the tour – that Richard has a full-on heart attack… right during the TV Show *Dexter*.

Hear the tale that even after Richard had a life-threatening heart attack, the hospital resisted the notion that he could have had a heart attack because of his age. And yet – he had a heart attack despite their doubting him.

"One of these things is not like the others…" – Richard was possibly the youngest heart-surgery patient in the queue …

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"The Developer World Tour":

Let's talk more about my time at Electronic Arts…

I had a work trip coming up we called "The Developer World Tour" because it went through Amsterdam to London, England where we would take taxis and trains to visit developers.

And from London - we flew back through Germany - and on to Shanghai, China where we visited developers and art house contractors, we were considering hiring for outsourcing needs.

And finally, we journeyed from China to a small country I cannot recall the name of on route to the Ukraine.

The total duration of the trip was a few weeks. I knew it would be especially grueling given the diverse native spoken and written languages (which I could neither speak nor read). And it was HARD on me physically, and mentally. The entire journey was immensely tiring and fatiguing, and at times scary.

There are a lot of wild tales and adventure in "The Developer World Tour", but more on that elsewhere.

Fear of Heart Attack Abroad – Bought Piano for Katherine to 'remember me by':

My self-proclaimed symptoms of heart problems that eventually led to my heart attack had increasingly worried me, so much so that I took some small measure of action to "insure" I would be "remembered" should I suddenly die.

I decided to purchase for my Katherine a piano that should I perish she would have it to look at and cherish and play music in remembrance of me.

It was melodramatic, but it was how I felt. But I was deeply worried that I may pass (yea, die!) on such a long challenging trip.

But it was my duty as Chief Technology Officer to lead by example – even if it meant marching into a Hell that could end my days.

After all, like Cervantes wrote of Don Quixote – What Wound Matters to the Body of a Knight Errant, for each time he falls…he shall rise again! And woe to the wicked!"

I used that Cervantes' quote to gird myself against challenges coming hard and fast, and against the unknown, and to keep my fortitude and willpower despite insane headwinds and deliberate undermining resistance by opposing people.

In the end – I did not die on that trip, but I did suffer a life-threatening heart attack only months later.

Did Not Die on the Developer World Tour – but did suffer heart attack months later:

It should be noted – I know when something is wrong with me, with my body. And doctors and professionals discount, ignore, or outright dismiss me. And every time – I am proven right (unfortunately) but prevention has consistently been missed by doctors regardless of my clarity and persistence for help and treatment.

Heart Attack Watching Dexter TV Show:

One Sunday evening I was watching *Dexter* (a show about a serial killer intent on doing justice through killing) on TV. Suddenly my gurgling weird heart feeling started – but it grew big and strong FAST. I did not know how to process what was happening to me.

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I wondered if I was having a heart attack!? I had been to the doctors so many times about my concerns over my maybe having a heart problem. My family had a history of strokes and heart attacks. But the doctors all told me I was silly and imagining things.

My wife Katherine called 911.

Paramedics arrived within five minutes. They were AMAZING! The hospital was only fifteen minutes away and the ambulance was apparently stationed even closer. They were efficient and direct.

Following rapid assessment, they determined I may be suffering cardiac arrest and should be transported immediately to the hospital for emergency care.

Waiting in The Lobby:

Following remarkable efficiency and impressive speed, the ambulance paramedics took me into the hospital ER entrance with oxygen flowing to my nose as I was laid out in a stretcher.

And then the hospital said, "Wait." The ER was packed, and they said unless I was going to die within the next hour I had to wait.

Apparently, no one calls ahead to check on ER bed availability for heart attack victims. INSANE!

Well, we waited for hours and hours.

Finally, I was taken into ER for treatment.

Doubting Me and Negative Tests:

The nurses inserted an IV and took blood to run tests. They informed me that I had no evidence of a heart attack. I had no enzymes showing heart damage or strain. They told me that I was suffering anxiety. But to be sure they would keep me until 6am when the cardiologist would arrive and make the formal diagnosis.

When the cardiologist arrived, he also expressed doubt and likewise noted the negative enzyme and blood tests. He said that he would give me a quick echo stress test on a treadmill to make sure things were okay as he suspected.

I knew there was something wrong. It had been months leading up to this horrific moment. And they STILL DO NOT BELIEVE I AM DYING!?

What does it take to show people you are suffering and dying when it is "invisible"? If my leg were broken or arm bleeding, they would acknowledge I was hurt. If my skull were cracked, they would admit I needed care. But when it is "inside" they assume you are "full of crap" and are anxious or imagining things.

Again – I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH MY HEART! And the Doctors did not concur.

Echo Stress Cardiogram – "Going to Die Without Treatment – Maybe Today":

They wheeled me to a little room with a big machine with lots of wires and electrodes attaching it to a belt and harness. They put the belt on my waist and set up the machine.

My heart was fine at the time. The cardiologist directed me to begin walking slowly. I did so. He elevated the treadmill a few degrees and directed me to walk a little faster but steadily. I did so.

He lunged forward and grabbed my shoulder and side. He sternly directed his medical assistant to help hold me. My gurgling weird heart feeling was acting up – STRONGLY like I did with *Dexter*.

The cardiologist exclaimed, "It is your heart. You are going to die without treatment – maybe today. You need surgery immediately. We need to schedule an angioplasty to see what is going on inside your heart."

I Had Been Facing Heart Attack Death for Months and Doctors Dismissed Me:

There it was – I had been facing the threat of a heart attack that could be fatal for months and despite repeatedly seeking medical help I was dismissed and ignored.

And when I did go the hospital, they continued to tell me I was imagining things. Yet when a real test was done things had progressed so far that I could die any hour or day.

It could have been the result of Canadian discouragement of treatment that I was pushed to the eleventh hour of life and death. It could have been simple disregard of my earnest plead for help. Maybe because I always "presented well" and minimized my suffering and maladies because I was a "man" and a "knight" that should not be weak or frail.

Whatever the reason – I did not receive medical treatment in Canada until it was almost too late.

One of These Things is Not Like the Others – in Heart Surgery Factory:

They transported me to another hospital where heart surgeries were handled. They wheeled me through a maze of elevators and corridors until I waited in a hallway with lines of patients awaiting surgery. It was an assembly-line of heart surgery!

Eventually I was rolled from the hallway into a staging room. All over the ceiling were painting prints of things like a cat dangling from a bar with the slogan "Hang in There" and forest and water and ocean panoramas and scenes.

A medical assistant came up to me and smiled warmly, "Hey there! You know… One of these things is not like the others. One of these things does not belong. Which is it?" He chuckled and said, "Like Sesame Street – You do not belong here. You are way too young to be here!"

I was the oddball in a sea of senior citizens rolling through for heart surgeries. The situation was surreal – I was in a heart surgery factory.

5-15% Chance to Die:

A non-doctor appearing person approached me in the hallway and placed a clip board near my hand. She said that before I could enter surgery, I had to sign a waiver that confirmed there was statistically between a five and fifteen percent chance I would die on the table. The variance of probability of death was according to the specific heart condition I had but they would not know until they were "in there" with angioplasty.

What was I supposed to do? Not sign!? The cardiologist told me I was going to die if I did not have surgery. Therefore, not signing translated to death. So – With surgery I might die, and without surgery I will die.

Of course – I signed the waiver.

Angioplasty Heart Surgery:

Wheeled into a huge room with the surgeon behind a huge, shielded wall with a massive glass window viewing the surgery room. The doctor controlled everything with a computer. Three lab techs were inside the room wearing thick

heavy lead radiation protective gear from head to toe. I had to presume there must be some major radiation given how much gear the techs wore.

One lab tech controlled the angioplasty "tube" as they threaded up through my leg's femoral artery through it up into my heart while I was fully conscious. They had me hold two handles (like bicycle handlebars) so I had something to focus on and grip. They direct me not to move or the angioplasty tube could rip a vein, artery, or heart muscle – and I could die.

It was alarming and scary – if I moved, I could die!? How absurd! Should I not be in a harness then? Should I not be medicated or even put under for the operation?

Apparently, until they knew what was wrong with me, they did not want to introduce more risk. And somehow doing the operation with my heart slowed down but me conscious was considered the safest and most prudent course of surgery.

Angioplasty Heart Spasm and Rolling Ceiling Tiles:

As I laid there, I heard the doctor call out over the speakers in the ceiling. He said names of drugs and dosages. A second lab tech who oversaw the IV and medications injected drugs into my IV.

The ceiling tiles began to shimmer and dance and then rolled and rolled and rolled. They were streaming and sliding all over the place, mostly drifting backward over me to behind me. It was crazy. I tried to talk, "Am I supposed to see the ceiling move?"

The third lab tech calmy spoke, "It is fine. Just part of the operation."

I did not believe his words. But what could I do? I held onto the handlebars and endured.

Survived Angioplasty:

In the end I survived the angioplasty surgery. The doctor explained that my heart spasmed in the middle of the operation which is why they gave me some major drugs to calm my muscles and heart – which is why the ceiling "came to life" and rolled and moved around.

The surgeon informed me that I sufferd Prinzmetal's Angina which meant my heart spasms. He said it spasmed my entire life and when it did muscles would close in and press veins and arteries together.

Like a kink in a garden hose blood does not flow well during spasms and plaque has greater chance of sticking to my veins, creating blockage.

He told me that I would likely suffer another heart attack in my fifties or sixties even with great care because spasmatic hearts collect more plaque than normal people.

There it was – I was born with a flawed heart.

One more - 'Hell Difficulty' granted to me a 'boon' of a defective heart and cardiovascular system. Oh well… just another thing to 'manage' in life…

E237 PATH TO SUCCESS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E237 Path to Success with Your Brand and I Do Not Belong in the Whitehouse.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55ur2e-e237-path-to-success-with-your-brand-and-i-do-not-belong-in-the-whitehouse.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/cYGbLs-CYJY

Description:
Richard shares some of his thoughts on The Path to Success.

He suggests personal brand and image has more effect on success and promotion than it should…

He shares many concepts like dressing and appearing as the next level you want to be promoted to.

Richard shares numerous ideas to aid the path to success…

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Path to Success - Part 1

Working for 10,000 Person Electronic Arts – later Crazy More Staff at Microsoft:

The biggest companies I had worked at before Electronic Arts in Canada had a few hundred employees – maybe 400 people max.

While 400 people seemed like a big company to me then…EA was over 10,000 people. And later Microsoft had over 50,000 people just in the Seattle-Redmond, Washington area; and they had another 50,000 employees internationally…and that again in contractors. Microsoft had 'crazy more staff' than even Electronic Arts.

It was totally different – working in huge companies.

So – learning to work within mega corporations… was vastly different than working for small companies.

Indirect Path to Success of Features and Corporate Goals:

My education in working for huge companies was often – from Tony Lam… and later – also assigned Coaches by Human Resources and Worldwide Leadership. And I had leadership, Public Relations, and Business training courses, events, and both internal and external contracted 'executive' coaches.

Tony Lam, my direct manager at the time, once… drew on a whiteboard a big box and draw circles all over it and say, "Those are rocks and landmines. You want to get to the other side but there is no straight line through all the rocks and landmines. How do you get there in a straight line without hitting a rock or landmine?"

The answer was to go below or over them. He would then say another answer is to just refuse his direction that you cannot go around them and swerve. He told me that I should always challenge the rules and the problem itself. I should strive to reframe problems in ways that benefit me and my team, and at least mitigate threats or harms they might become.

It was obvious stuff but hearing it over and over and over made it stick. I did modify my approach to problems. I took more time to consider and evaluate the risks and threats and identify possible alternatives and mitigations. I became more strategic because of Tony's mentorship sessions with me.

Funniest nugget I recall – sometimes the answer is not just outside the box, it is not even related to the box. The answer sometimes is an entirely different approach or new problem (and abandon the old one as unworkable – move on and cut losses).

Tony proved to be a great professional mentor for me, and I believe he was instrumental in my growing and rising quickly within the mega publisher corporate world.

Tony Lam – Studio Chief Operating Officer:

Like I said…

Tony Lam was my manager for many years at Electronic Arts (EA). He was a junior engineer turned management early on and rose to Chief Operating Officer when I was Chief Technology Officer. He was an impressive corporate strategist and communicator. He was patient and waited for people to make mistakes and then exposed them so widely and visibly that they would fall from favor and Tony would rise one rung in the corporate ladder of over ten thousand employees.

Tony's journey - was a long corporate climb, but he did get to overseeing almost two thousand people before he left EA to join a Venture Capital firm where he made more money than most people will likely spend in their lifetimes.

Path to Career Success – They Do Not Want Me in the White House:

Tony always told me that EA executive management loved me but that I would never "be in the White House" because I was too straight forward and told things the way they were. He said that executives must lie and "massage the truth" so it was palatable.

He insisted executives had to fabricate hysteria to motivate during doldrum times, and conversely drive calm to ease panic during tumultuous times.

Tony believed my being honest translated to staff not being supported by management they should be. I was putting on them the stress that I was supposed to buffer from them. He stressed people are rarely equipped to deal with stress which is why managers who are better at it are there to protect the team. I believed the opposite - telling the whole truth was better and the team could unite and overcome together.

Tony and I did not agree obviously in how executives should mange – massaged truth or candid truth.

He insisted repeatedly - my approach will hurt morale and limit the company and that is why executives do not want me in the White House where my candor would be visible to the entire company as a "final word" leader.

Working as a "technology leader" even a "tech exec" my role was marginalized as a "mad scientist" or "oddball genius" for any public appearance or when I had outwardly announced contrary opinions. Executive management always made sure to put me in a place of development authority without a public or outward voice.

Much like "A Few Good Man" they had the luxury of not knowing the challenges and difficulties of developing games under tight deadlines and limited resources late into the night six or more days a week sometimes without vacations for one or two years at a time.

They never wanted to know the truth how hard things were or how much staff struggled and suffered to succeed so the executives to go home at 5pm five days a week and park their third, fourth, or fifth "collector car" in the corporate car park's executive row.

I had no inclination of surrendering my honor and integrity and not saying things the way they were. And so, I was and always have been relegated to the bowels of the development ship and disinvited from the White House executive management and corresponding public speaking events (even though I am an excellent presenter as regularly did Ted Talks style presentations to theaters of 175+ people).

However, I did define my brand and rise in a splintered Electronic Arts organization. We called it Fusion (more on that later).

Path to Career Success – More than Talent (Appear as the 'Next Level' Role):

It is not enough to be talented. The wealthy are paid more because they appear wealthy and thusly must be successful, and therefore should be paid more so they bring that success to the company. And the circular pay loops over time elevating people based on their projected appearance.

Tony Lam imparted that even the greatest of talent will be locked away in the backroom or lab to do great work out of sight of the public and funding sponsors unless they have executive presence and charisma and "play the game".

Great talent will never be in leadership positions unless they adopt these executive rules –

1) be a clear discipline leader – engineer, artist, designer, producer, marketing, finance, …

2) have personal brand – what you stand for and why people should believe in you.

3) look like an executive – clothing, car, accessories, attitude.

4) show executive presence – eye contact, clear face and body language, commanding 'will' words (never soft 'maybe' words).

5) Have charming charismatic demeanor – smiles and frowns that invoke emotion.

6) confidently talk smoothly and persuasively – articulate, succinct, hip 'words of the people' to connect.

7) artifacts – items and things that reinforce your brand.

Everything adapted according to the industry and the level you were targeting.

As examples - Dress like whatever executives dressed like in your industry – a suit in financial and venture capital roles, jeans and tee for developers, and slacks and button shirts for marketing and sales. But whatever the "dress code" you had to be well-dressed relative to its expectations.

Similarly, you had to have a car proportionate to your position. And if you expected to be promoted you needed to have the car of the next station. You could not buy too far above your station, or you would be branded "wasteful" and "insecure" which would limit your promotability.

Indeed, there were "rules" to how much money you could visibly spend around co-workers or colleagues.

You had to always dress and drive and present at the next career level or you may never get promoted. Talent is not enough – period (sadly).

Path to Career Success – Define and Project Your Brand:

It was important to differentiate myself from others to advance my career. I relayed the same advice to people in personal one-on-one career discussions ongoing in my career.

People perceive you in a light of their making or one of your making. And so it is always better to craft how people see you than have them make something up about you that you may not appreciate.

Take your brand into your hands.

If you overtly decide the image you want to project, then you can proactively dress and act the role you want people to see you as. You can reinforce the image you project by overlaying what car you drive, how you dress, what accessories you use and wear, what mobile devices and apps you use, what music you listen to, where you live, what restaurants you frequent, where you vacation, and even if you drink coffee or alcohol (and how much and when and why). The list goes on and on.

Everything you do and say, and post defines who you are and what your brand is – and that tells people how to perceive you and what to think about you.

You are your own chief marketing and public relations officer. It is your job to define your brand and make sure people can understand and see it.

Define and project your brand.

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Path to Career Success – My Brand:

What did I do? I decided to be the young cool "rockstar" developer.

Car –
Well, as a freelance developer I showed my freedom and success by driving a showoff sportscar with "SUPERCHARGED" plastered across each side of the car and custom license plates – "D Quest" and later on "KRMA ENT"

When I was nouveu riche (AKA newly rich) and virtually solo freelancer I drove a customized Sports Utility Vehicle to show my practicality but still visible success.

And in the corporate world of Electronic Arts, I drove a Mercedes SLK convertible, and upgraded to a Mercedes SLK 55 Black 400 horsepower convertible when working at Microsoft.

Clothing –
I typically wore all black – black jeans, tucked in black button-down shirt with dark gray undershirt, and black socks with black leather comfort dressy "sneakers".

I donned the "cool young executive" appearance but in all black, everyone talked about me – "the man in black", "Jonny Cash of Games", "Goth Game Guy", etc. It did not matter what they said because they all respected me and talking about me got them to praise me, and thus evangelize me throughout the company without knowing it.

Dressing "the part" but dressing "uniquely" is key to having a brand people notice and care enough about it to talk about it.

Of course, vice-presidents revert to not standing out since their promotion is no longer about visibility. In fact, visibility might elevate expectations which could result in their losing their positions or jobs entirely. Therefore, vice presidents often wore nice but non-descript multi-colored boring jeans or slacks with button shirts hanging outside their pants.

Again, there were rules of "conduct" and "brand".

Appear Successful to be Recognized as Successful:

Your brand should reflect your career and be appropriate to your professional industry. It is imperative to appear the role you seek to be seen as.

Cliché – be the role to get promoted into it.

As above, make sure your brand is strong and clear and reinforces your image of success so your management will see you as meriting a promotion and greater responsibility. After all – you are so successful [looking]!

Of course – you DO HAVE TO HAVE THE TALENT to do the work. But talent alone is not enough. You need your brand and to appear successful.

Path to Career Success – Offices and Brand:

Offices are a complex part of your brand. If you have a choice of having an office or not is the first big thing. Sit with the team or isolate and "lord over the team". It sounds awful but the isolation does create a rift emotionally if not literally physically between you and the team you work with.

I chose to sit in cubicles whenever there was office-shortage or demand conflict. I did not care where I sat outside of how it affected my doing my job.

Over time I was in many offices, however. I observed an office hierarchy and how each office type was perceived -
1) Working in an "open space" is the starter - 'no dedicated place for you' role.
2) Sharing a cubicle is the baseline - 'you are professional now'.
3) Working in your own cubicle is success – 'you have arrived with your own identity'.
4) Working in a shared office – 'your promotion lost privacy and light but feel good you are enclosed now with someone else [that might stink]'
    a. Odd to me that this was an upgrade. I always declined such "opportunities".
5) Working in your own office without windows – 'I oversee the cave now'.
6) Working in a windowed office – 'I am a bigwig leader of leaders. Respect me!'
7) Working in a corner windowed office – 'I am so important my ego extends outside these windows!'
8) Double-wide, Double-long windowed office – 'I am a FIRST NAME. Bow before me!'
    a. Yea, people that go solely by their first or last name only are conceited – "Bill" [Gates], "Steve" [Jobs], "Satya" [Nadella], and then [Steve] "Ballmer", Warren "Buffett", etc. Their hubris and impact on civilization is madly outsized.

Path to Career Success – My Brand:

My brand had organically defined itself for the most part – straight shooter, genius, justified arrogance, 'Bull in a China Shop', Operates in elite ivory tower, Unapproachable Prefers Direct Line to Goal, Values Elite Talent Above Lesser Talented People.

That brand did not sound great to me. I liked the first part – "straight shooter", "genius", even "justified arrogance".

But I did not like the rest – "Bull in a China shop", "Operates in elite ivory tower", "Unapproachable Prefers Direct Line to Goal", "Values Elite Talent Above Lesser Talented People".

I set out to re-define aspects of my "brand" and double-down on elements I like while minimizing if not excising elements I did not like.

EAC Approachability – Stuffed Animals and Jacket and Vision Board:

I hung my Atari Games Anniversary jacket as a conversation starter in my office. It screamed, "I am old school with luminary wisdom and knowledge from legendary Atari" while saying "I am hanging here like any old jacket so I am not conceited, you can talk to me".

Similarly, I placed Hasbro's Littlest Pet Shop stuffed animals that had unlock codes in their "dog tags" that unlocked online games and pet backstories and apps. Like the Atari jacket, the stuffed animals kicked off discussions as to why I would have stuff animals in my office. And people would be both impressed with the business model and tech behind the toys, and that a technology leader was also attune to business models and strategies.

And then there was a "vision board" on my wall full of things that emphasized what I wanted other people to think about me (about my brand). I made sure people saw magazine clippings, company and video game company and console and product logos, and business articles about mergers and acquisition, etc. I wanted people to see the complex tapestry I represented – much more than a mere engineer.

Others Ultimately Define Your Brand:

In the end – you really cannot define your brand, but you can define all the things you think define it or at least imply it. Other people "define your brand" in their heads and when they talk about you.

And so, I strove diligently to define and reinforce my brand.

I am confident that I succeeded because I was a polarizing influence on people and staff – they loved or hated me, few in between.

I had stalwarts that "would march into Hell with and for me". And there were the rare few that "would dance on my grave".

I was and am proud of my "brand".

E238 Path to Success_Champions_Anti-Champions Part 2

Local File:
    .\LibertyBooksVideos\E238 Path to Success with Champions and Anti-Champions and EA Canada Guts EA Fusion.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
    https://rumble.com/v55urb0-e238-path-to-success-with-champions-and-anti-champions-and-ea-canada-guts-e.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
    https://youtu.be/xVp4ghCvf-g

Description:
    Richard shares that success, promotions, bonuses, stock grants… all come from perceived success that is supported by 'higher up' champions.

    He notes that one anti-champion can undermine and torpedo any promotion or recognition no matter well it is deserved.

    Hear how EA Fusion was structured with huge central resource and expert and support teams, to support many smaller core game development teams. Learn how central expert teams provided resources to scale and to audit & aid game teams.

    Richard notes how EA Canada leadership outside of EA Fusion eroded and destroyed Fusion out of jealousy and to take its technology, products, and staff willing to remain.

Path to Career Success – More than Talent (Draft Behind Others):

There were many things to consider as I progressed through my career at Electronic Arts Fusion.

Path to Career Success – More than Talent (Draft Behind Others):

My manager, Tony Lam, told me that even with great talent, phenomenal reputation, and amazing brand - success was not guaranteed. He said it was important to identify one or two senior executives that you believed in and forge a relationship with them.

He emphasized that drafting behind a successful executive would pull you along with them as they were promoted. But fighting for a promotion directly would look greedy and self-serving, and you would not have the executive's support in the first place.

It was critical to befriend one or two senior executives and help them succeed even if it was outside your normal job or responsibilities. As they rose in the company so they would bring you with them.

It worked for Tony. He rose from a test engineer to Studio Chief Operating Officer in under ten years. And he parlayed that into a life-setting cash income from splintering off and joining a Venture Capital firm founded by an ex-EA executive Paul Lee [that Tony drafted behind].

Path to Career Success – Champions:

Tony recommended that while seeking executives to draft behind it was also advantageous to find "champions" in the company – people that liked you and would gladly speak highly of you if they had cause to do so.
He shared that it was important to arm your Champions with talking points even scripts to share with others when they evangelize you. Of course, you do not share it like that with them. You bring them along for the journey and make them part of it, so they are excited and share it as their own (with you!).

People will see over time that you are the consistent element within innovation and great ideas, and so letting others take the credit will serve you ultimately.

Well, that is what I always believed. Life has generally thrown that back in my face as UNTRUE. But I want it to be true and so still assert I WANT IT TO BE TRUE!

Path to Career Success – Anti-Champions:

Tony cautioned that while seeking executives to draft behind it was dangerous because sometimes people see your actions as self-serving or not-on-brand. Some people may see you as a competitor to their own success or goals. Some people just enjoy throwing caltrops in the path of others to see them stumble and fall. And some people need you to fall so they can rise themselves.

There are numerous reasons you may have opposition at work.

But confronting or aggravating OR arming opposition can result in Anti-Champions.

It does not mean you should not engage with opposition, but Tony stressed it must be smart, timed, and prudent. Anything rash or unplanned invariably bites you and may block a future opportunity or promotion. But if you are not certain of the need to confront opposition, he recommended to let it go.

Simply – an Anti-Champion could be in a hallway or a meeting or even in the lunchroom when the opportunity arises to say something derogatory about you. It spreads. In a review someone mentions "what they heard…" and they pass you by for someone they heard nothing at all about.

Yea, someone that did nothing to be noticed for will get the bonus or promotion you deserved because you offended someone ONE TIME. WRONG but REALITY.

Path to Career Success – Success:

I forged champions and unfortunately created anti-champions. But my champions were EA "worldwide" executives and so they overpowered EA "studio executives". And Tony became a "studio executive" himself and so gave me air cover too.

Our EA group Fusion grew from four people to three hundred and twenty-five people. We shipped over seventy-five games on many console platforms. I rose from Technical Director to Chief Technology Officer to Chief Operating Officer. I was successful in EA and my brand followed me to Microsoft and beyond.

Fusion's Ascent – Game Teams+Shared Central Tech & Content Teams Organization:

Although Fusion had an end, it had an incredible journey as it ascended to greatness and phenomenal success. As its waters rose, so did its founders (including me).

As Fusion grew, so did I. I learned a lot of things.

We had to expand our staff headcount and organize our teams to facilitate oversight while empowering teams to own their plans and development [unless they stumbled, and they I stepped in].

Later we set up central groups to provide user interface designs and visuals/sounds, art and animation, sound and music, build systems and pipelines, tools and libraries, analytics, central engineering, and Technical Director Council (TDC)…. Like a Jedi Council.

We had –
1) Front End Engineering Services (FEES)
2) Front End Design Services (FEDS)
3) Fusion Art Services Team (FAST)
4) Art Direction (AD) – two people
5) Central Art and Animation Team (CAT, they did not have an acronym, but I like CAT)
6) Central Sound and Music (CSM, also had no acronym)
7) Technical Director Council (TDC) – five people plus CTO (me)
8) Technical Art Direction (TAD) – one person
9) Central Tech (CT) – two to three dozen people at any time

Having more than half of Fusion's staff working centrally in a shared resource model made planning projects extremely detailed and demanding.

I recall some engineers breaking into tears over the stress of detail and reviews by Technical Directors. Even though TD's were there to help, having your work torn apart is humiliating no matter how nicely it is done.

Central Auditing of Game Team Detailed Plans for Resourcing:

In Fusion's growth we accomplished a lot – we rose from a four-person nucleus to a peak of three hundred and twenty-five employees and seventeen concurrent contracted games under external development.

We hired the highest top talent in the world. They were not used to failure. But our work was so complex and difficult that it crushed them and left some in tears.

Game teams were small because half their "size" was central to Fusion and shared across all game teams as they had need. The idea was to have a pool of people that could move between products and games daily, weekly, monthly, or whatever intervals made sense. But game teams had to submit work requests like they would to an external company.

Requiring detailed (and difficult) planning made product development much smoother and faster, and predictable. Consequently, Fusion was immensely cost efficient and delivered highly reviewed and big selling games.

Fusion Delivered Seventy-Five Games Titles Over Its Six-Year Lifespan:

We made products for handheld gaming devices like PlayStation Portable, Nintendo GameBoy and Gameboy Advanced, Nokia N-Gage and video game consoles like Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, and Nintendo Game Cube. We designed and prototyped and managed manufacturing in Hong Kong directly.

EA Fusion delivered and published over seventy-five game titles in eight languages over its six-year lifespan. It sold over 20 million game units and generated over $700 Million dollars in revenue. It was the second-most profitable division with Electronic Arts worldwide, second only to the Sims division. Fusion created and shared original technologies across EA globally including networking and matchmaking lobby and service, large-scale multiplayer LAN, Wireless, and online gaming tech and tools, and core, rendering, and pipeline tools and libraries.

EA Fusion was a business, product, and technology powerhouse that exploded in success within a year of its formation and grew exponentially.

EA Canada Guts Fusion Leadership, Destroying What They Wanted - Fusion:

 until its sixth year when political forces replaced its leadership or made life terrible for those that remained… to encourage them to self-select 'and resign' to leave the company.

EA Canada believed Fusion's success was its products and people it hired. They were wrong.

Fusion's success was due to Fusion's founders – due to Tony Lam, Dave McCarthy, and me. And to Warren Wall for his championing the division's creation.

Without its founders anymore - Fusion collapsed under the foolishness of EA Canada's usurping replacement would-be executives. They had crushed Fusion, and subsequently lost their jobs as a result.

Had EA Canada's marauding leaders they left Fusion alone their incompetence would likely have not been exposed so quickly. But we had super success, and they seized control and they had super failure.

It was ironic that EA Canada's executives attained what they wanted through political removal of Fusions founders – they acquired the Fusion division surreptitiously.

But without the know-how and trust of the staff the group collapsed. The culture faded and the people disbanded into the wind.

Fusion was no more.

E239 LEARNING AND LESSONS FROM FUSION

Learning and Lessons from Fusion

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E239 Three Reasons People Fail and the Road to 85 - Learning and Lessons from EA Fusion.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55urf6-e239-three-reasons-people-fail-and-the-road-to-85-learning-and-lessons-from.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/5zpo9QLC-PA

Description:
Learn the Three Reasons People Fail.

Hear about the Road to 85 headcount and the Road to 85 Metacritic (minimum).

Richard shares how important it is to remain relevant and current – in skills and knowledge.

He shares how people tend to leave problems when they should focus pursuing opportunities. Running from problems often only delays or displaces them.

Sycophants and lesser-talent people hide in the 'fat folds' of big teams- and describe *WE* finished a task vs *I* finished the task.

Lessons at EA Fusion

No Education or Training can Prepare Teach How to Create and Grow a Business:

There is no education or background that could prepare anyone for what was involved in building an organization and business from literally nothing into the second most profitable division with Electronic Arts worldwide.

I learned so much at Electronic Arts (Canada) Fusion - and I am proud of my ascent from Technical Director to Chief Technology Officer in five years, and shortly afterwards to Chief Operating Officer with the new CTO reporting to me.

I was and am proud of all the amazing number of things in Fusion that I accomplished.

Road to 85 to 150 to 325 Employees and the Second Most Profitable EA Division:

During our ascent - We declared slogans for goal posts we believed would drive Fusion's organization and product quality forward and rally the teams. The most powerful and simple slogan spanned organization and product quality – "The Road to _____ " where it was the road to product quality measured by Metacritic or number of people, we should have in our EA Fusion division.

> Product Quality "Road" -
>
> 1) The Road to 85 Metacritic - We decreed 85 Metacritic rating was the lowest acceptable rating to define a product as product.
>
> Organization "Road" -
>
> 2) The Road to 85 to 150 to 250 to 325 people – As Fusion grew so did our portfolio and expectations of more and bigger games on more platforms and more ways to leverage and share the common tools and libraries and pipelines and game engines and shells.
>
>> We were given more money to go bigger, and each time we succeeded MORE MONEY and GO BIGGER YET!
>>
>> Fusion failed due to political drama and staff with integrity like me and Dave and Tony and Dan from Fusion all eventually abandoned the sinking ship from being cannibalized from all directions after we lost our champions of Warren Wall and John Schappert and Paul Lee.
>>
>> Fusion no longer had any EA Worldwide "elite" champions, and worse it had EA Canada anti-champions that had been envious of Fusion's rise for years and seized the opportunity to install their own "leader" when Dave left, and he drove Fusion into the ground within a year.
>>
>> Lesson was clear – LEADERSHIP and MANAGEMENT MATTERS!!!
>>
>> I have had terrible bosses and good bosses. Good bosses are refreshing and empowering. Bad bosses, who seemingly represent 99% of managers and "leads" and "leaders" out there, are controlling and limiting and often insecure.

Reasons People Fail – Unwilling, Unable, Ignorant (Only Ignorance Can Be Helped):

I am reminded of one of my "rules" that I shared with many people over my career – the reasons why people fail. I distilled the reasons people fail down to three things and no more.

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I have challenged everyone I share my "Reasons People Fail" to show me a fourth reason because I am confident there must be more reasons than I have conceived. Never has someone provided a fourth much less fifth or sixth reason that people fail.

The Three Reasons People Fail –

Three Reasons People Fail – Unwilling:

1) Unwilling – the person refuses to do or complete the objective.

   When someone has an "attitude" and declines to take on an assignment or task obviously the work will not be done.

   There are many forms of "unwilling" like being unreliable and flaky due to disinterest or disapproval of the work. Or preferring to do something else and not worrying about the consequences of not doing the assigned job. Feigning ignorance to gain "education time" to "buy time" waiting for someone else to finish the task or in hopes it will be forgotten or canceled.

   Other than the insidious dishonest ways of being "unwilling" there is the outright refusal of doing an assignment. Some people may claim "conscientious objector" because the work offends their moral code. Others may allege religious or racial inequity to justify their disregard of authority and expectation of delivering valuable work.

   The only options for the "Unwilling" are to
   a. find someone else to do the work and assign the "refuser" something they are willing to work on. This puts them in authority going forward, not you who was supposedly supervising manager.
   b. force them to finish assigned work despite speed and quality risks from "oppressed" staff, and their probable retaliatory resentment and undermining sabotage of future projects and staff morale. Yea – usually it is not a good idea to FORCE staff to work on something they refused to work on; it rarely ends well.
   c. fire them and find someone else to do the work. "Put a head on a pike" and send the message that "resistance is futile". This solution can work well if the "refuser" is a social pariah that the team would feel relieved was "exited" from the company. However, even mediocre possibly below-average employees have friends and allies. You must assume that anyone you fire will have a small to large reactionary "mutiny" to be dealt with – mitigate and massage OR put it down.

   It is obvious I think with that list – there is no good solution to people that are "unwilling" to do their assigned work.

   Regardless of if someone is "acting unwilling" by being slow, flaky, or feigning ignorance they must be treated the same. At some point it is apparent when someone is unwilling to do their work.

   All said - every "unwilling" employee deserves to be asked why they are declining to do their job and clearly understand that not doing their work can result in termination of employment.

   When a manager suspects an employee is "unwilling" they should have a one-on-one (or if serious include a witness, ideally your own supervisor or a human resource manager) "talk" with the person to discuss employee's explanation and assess if there is something other than "unwilling" behavior.

   When an employee firmly is "unwilling" despite the "unwilling talk" and the reason is not a "standard" company justification (some companies have legitimate reasons to decline certain projects, e.g., conscientious

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objector's declining military contract work), I recommend firing them swiftly and taking their badge/keys and walk them out immediately without any time to interact with other staff or equipment.

I have had fired employees format servers and flash local and network storage, even purge source code (which is irrevocable writing over data, not just removing it from drive master index file attribute table). And then there are the people that run around and "piss in every pot" they can before their last day or hour; they go to lunch and dinners and congregate all-day in the cafeteria or watercooler or vending machine areas to bad mouth and lament their fate.

Yea – no good comes from keeping around a fired "unwilling" person. Toss the bad apple out from the bushel IMMEDIATELY!

Three Reasons People Fail – Unable:

2) Unable – the person does not have the ability and cannot attain the ability to do or complete the objective.

   There are legitimately tasks that some employees are physical or mentally incapable of completing, and those tasks should not be assigned to those people under any circumstance.

   If a task is a requirement of the job and will be recurring, that person needs to be informed they were an inappropriate "bad hire" and that is the company's fault and that is not their fault – but you must terminate their employment and find someone that is able to do the work.

   Ending the employment of someone that is "unable" to do the work assigned to them can be charged with a lot of legal risk. Is the person unable because of a medical condition or temporary substance abuse problem or progressing addiction? Is there a problem at home or with the person's family that is preventing them from doing their assignments? Many counties and states and cities have laws protecting staff from losing their jobs for being unable to do the work if the reason is a handicap, injury, sickness, and for some health and psychiatric conditions and disabilities. It is a potential rat's nest of issues to fire a "unable" person.

   Obviously, the best thing is to have done a better defining the job role and expectations and interviewing effectively against them. In such cases – own the mistake and find some other work for the person or pay them out and move on.

   BUT BE FAIR AND HONEST AND FOLLOW HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTIONS AND COMPLY WIH THE LAW.

   Sometimes jobs and projects change so much that employee and work may no longer be a fit. It is simply the way of evolving business and opportunities. This is where people should be "laid off" since it is neither the employee's nor the company's fault in most cases. Employees should be paid as generously as the company can afford for legitimately evolved into "unable" staff.

Three Reasons People Fail – Ignorant (only remediable reason for failure):

3) Ignorant – the person does not possess the knowledge necessary to the assigned work but given sufficient time is capable of learning and becoming able to do the job.

   Failure due to "Ignorance" is the best kind of failure. It is a "learning opportunity" as the saying goes. If the project and company can afford someone learning how to do the work, it is often a great investment for the company.

Staff appreciate being given the chance to learn and often feel gratitude for the change of pace and focus. They appreciate the recognition that things can be hard, and management recognizes side-bar education from the main project is valuable.

In my experience "ignorant" staff become loyal dedicated experts when given the chance to learn at the company, especially if the company also assigns a mentor to further assist learning and growth.

In the unfortunate scenario that the company cannot afford to train someone to overcome their gap in required knowledge then they should be "laid off" since it is a misalignment of ability to job need.

The bottom-line –
1) Unable and Unwilling people are "showstoppers".
2) "Ignorant" people can be trained if the company can afford the time and money.

Business Cards Arranged to Mirror People's Table Seat Placement:

I learned from a Vice President a technique during the 'printed business card' era of placing the business cards around the table matching where people sat around the table.

The idea was to mirror their placement so you could look down at their personal business card that contained their name, job title, phone number, work address, etc.

An imaginary invisible line connected the card to the seated person across the table, thereby allowing easy reference to the person's first name (very personal touch, and shows respect and value) and their role on the team.

Eventually printed business cards became a thing of the past as digital 'everything' took over.

But without business cards I just wrote down the same information rapidly during the introduction phase. If I missed someone, I would try and deduce who they were and their role throughout the meeting and round-out my 'seat placement notes' at the top of one of my notepad sheets.

And the notepad of placement also served to confirm who was present at any given meeting, and which professional disciplines like engineering, art, music, game design, producer, etc. the group elected to attend. *It often showed their priorities and who had 'a voice' in their company.*

The technique may have evolved but it remained a great tool to make a personal touch with people.

Death of Business Cards:

Not much to say here… But one fateful meeting I extended my business card as was customary…

…and the person looked bewildered, and upon taking the card expressed "we don't do that anymore" with a 'Dinosaur' 'judgy' clear undertone.

Staying Connected and Relevant:

I saw then I had to make sure I was connected and current. I never imagined I was not…

I had a similar experience much later when a Public Relations partner talked about tweeting, and I had not yet heard of Twitter. There were significant evolutions I had missed at times…but I made it a priority to never let 'pop culture' things get by me again.

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I watched YouTube and all sorts of streams available on the web, and even expanded my reading to include vapid pop culture people and events.

People were generally surprised if not totally dismayed by how much I knew about pop culture and music and fashion given my 'nerd tech' role and background.

People Leave Problems Instead of Pursuing Opportunities:

It has been my experience that people typically leave problems without addressing them instead of pursuing opportunities that benefit them.

In other words – opportunity very commonly coexists with challenges - if not existing in direct opposition to a major problem that must be overcome. PROBLEMS EXIST IN THE PATH OF OPPORTUNITY most of the time….because the PROBLEMS are OFTEN THE OPPORUNITY…itself.

But overcoming those problems yields meaningful reward.

Many people see opportunity but are unwilling to take the leap to attain it or endure hardships to achieve them.

In fact – people run from challenge and problems and consequently miss out on significant opportunities had they just 'grinned and bore it' for a little bit longer.

Running from Problems Often Only Displaces Them:

Even worse for people running from problems to avoid conflict or risk is that they tend to run right into a different problem…sometimes as a direct consequence of NOT RESOLVING THE ORIGINAL PROBLEM.

Do Not Displace Your Problems – Fix Them:

I coined the phrase, "Do Not Displace Your Problems – Fix Them!"

It was a simple concept but apparently one that most 'big company' people are unwilling to do.

Sycophants and "Lesser Talent" Staff Hide in Corporate Inefficient and Folds of Fat:

They are commonly risk averse and prefer to hide in the folds of corporate inefficiency and fat.

It was usually the lesser talent people that struggled to compete on a side-by-said comparative level, and/or who were sycophants focusing on idle praise and complements to get promoted rather than delivering impactful meaningful measurable value.

Despised "Losers of the Fold [of fat]:

Throughout my life - I have despised the "Losers in the Fold [of fat]". They have been the downfall of many good teams – their lower contribution has forced teammates to pick up the slack and work harder and longer.

Proud to be Crispy Heart – Still Had Much to Learn

I am proud to be 'Crispy Heart', and to learn how to navigate the complexities of big corporations.

Indeed – I had so much ignorance, in how to work in mega company… I still had much to learn…

E240 Learning and Lessons at EA Fusion Part 2

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E240 The Bag of C Between Us, Deception, Unfair Questions, and Under and Over Estimation - Lessons from EA Fusion.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55urh7-e240-the-bag-of-c-between-us-deception-unfair-questions-under-over-estimati.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/YqFVfqsooyA

Description:

There is always a Bag of C!&P between each person – avoid putting more 'stuff' in other people's 'bags'…

People overestimate what they can accomplish in one year, but they underestimate what they can accomplish in three years.

In scheduling and delivery – you cannot lose a week in a day.

Define yourself through one or two Superpowers or Mega Strengths.

Un-great people use Bravado to hide their inabilities.

It's unfair to ask someone to do something they cannot do.

Mankind is a Problem-Solving Beast; He Makes Them When There are None to Solve:

A bit of a tangent here…

My mother told me as a pre-teen that –

> *"Mankind is a problem-solving beast, and when he has no problems, he creates them."*

There are many parallels to her words – Idle Handles are the Devil's Workshop, and so forth.

Of course – my mother's caution was more specifically aimed at me to 'not grow up to be like my father'.

Apparently, my father was prone to create problems if ever he had any 'down time'.

This can unfortunately translate to – people at work 'creating problems', usually subconsciously sabotaging things so they have more things to do or ways to shine.

Sometimes people even intentionally create problems – through lackadaisical attitude or willful harm.

Learning at Fusion:

And with that – let's resume my sharing some of my lessons at Electronic Arts (Canada)'s Fusion business unit…

People Overstimate What They Can Do in One Year, Underestimate Three:

An executive vice president shared a great quote that stuck with me over the years –

> *"People underestimate what they accomplish in three years, but overestimate what they can do in one year."*

The idea - that people will make all sorts of incredible plans to achieve amazing goals - but invariably fail to accomplish them within the timebox they gave themselves.

And then - they get frustrated - or if it was a group or company effort – it is aborted or canceled outright. …and involved people potentially fired from their jobs!

Bottom-line: Expectations dashed translate to punitive actions.

Multi-Year Project Success with Upfront Planning, Prototyping, and Foundation:

And yet if people embrace a huge project spanning years, they tend to underestimate what they can accomplish with careful course correction and maximized foundation and planning.

It was all about aligning expectations according to the time and resources available, and making sure upfront planning, prototyping, and foundation laying are invested in before 'content' is made. And ensuring there were healthy but minimally intrusive checkpoints and big milestones along the way.

Indeed –

> With active management **people can achieve amazing things over three years**, but usually fail to achieve even 'good enough' things in one year.

It is the **overestimation that translates to numerous failures** – late schedule, cut promised features, over budget, missed marketing window, contract costs and issues, low morale resignations, …).

It is **underestimation that leads to failure** from things like unimpressive non-innovative lackluster products that few people want, much less will pay money for. Whether it is over one, two, or three years – delivering 'less' results in 'less' of a product for the consumer.

Also, **underestimation is an easy way to NOT BE APPROVED** to make the product.

Frustration and disappointment in failure to promise enough or deliver against expectations (regardless of if they were unrealistic or not) typically kills most efforts from ever finishing...

Cannot Lose a Week in a Day:

It was a simple phrase –

You cannot lose a week in a day!

Whenever people were surprised their team was going to be late on a specific deliverable or date that had recently been promised or assured as 'on track', I would query "how did you lose a week in a day?"

I made clear that recently they had reported a rosy story for the team and project, and then a couple of days later they might miss their milestone and be a week or more late. I asked again, "How did you lose so much time in a day?"

Of course – there is no good answer other than an external event shattered the solid planning.

However, it was a very rare day there was any plan-shattering event. No – it was the person was not paying attention and was just saying what they imagined was going on without actually verifying it themselves. Sometimes they took their teams' word for 'all good' status…but did not look themselves.

Yea – usually people lose a week in a day because they were "asleep at the wheel".

'Bag of Crap' We Carry Every Day, and 'The Bag Between Us':

A producer shared with me a particularly effective albeit vulgar image for how people might view working interactions with each other.

He described an imaginary 'fannie pack' hip bag attached to everyone.

Throughout the day "shit" is added to their bag that they must empty before they can go to rest at night.

1. "Shit Happens" all by itself – into the bag!
2. People ask for things – into the bag!
3. Manager / Supervisor demands things – into the bag!
4. Relationship and family challenges – into the bag!
5. Pet and Household woes – into the bag!

The idea is simple – lots of 'stuff' gets added to our 'bag of crap' all the time, and we must do stuff to empty it.

And 'stuff' takes time and effort to do, so it detracts from the things we are supposed to or need to do.

'Avoid Putting 'Shit in Other People's 'Bag of Crap':

The advice here is obvious –

> Avoid putting shit in other people's bag of crap. They have enough on their own, and so adding to it will just make them dislike you (even if subconsciously).

Take 'Shit' from Other People's 'Bag of Crap'

If you can take 'shit' out of someone else's 'bag of crap' they will generally be very appreciative and will certainly speak well of you should the situation arise in the future.

And if you do not offer to take the 'shit', it might be shoveled your way anyway…and you will not get recognized for being the shit-cleaner you are.

Define Yourself Through One or Two Strengths and Measurable Value:

I am sure it is apparent through my tales that I strongly believe every single person needs at least one single defining thing that showcases their strengths and quantifiable measurable value to the rest of the world.

Many chats and mentorship sessions have stressed the importance of identifying one or two things the person was truly 'awesome' at, and finding the job or responsibilities that maximized them.

As a rule – I discourage pursuing more than two 'awesome' talents because most people 'imagine' they have more talents but cannot differentiate their mediocrity from others' greatness.

'Un-Great' People Use Bravado to Deceive and Inspire Other 'Un-Greats' to Follow:

Such is often the case – those that are not great are so ignorant that they perceive themselves to be great. And likewise, 'un-great' people will follow the 'false greatness' because they, too, cannot differentiate greatness from bravado and deception.

It becomes a dangerous cycle when a collection of 'un-great' unqualified people are propelled into management or leadership positions, and they naturally draw in people that 'sound awesome' like they do.

And so – The 'Un-Greats' destroy companies and teams because they willfully or ignorantly hire 'less capable' 'Un-Great' people. Their chance to succeed is hiring truly AMAZINGLY GREAT people to compensate for the 'Un-Great' weight around the necks organization or group.

'Un-Great' People Are Not 'Bad' – Just Insufficiently Talented To Do the Job:

It became clear to me that the world was chock full of 'Un-Great' people. They were not 'bad' but were merely unqualified or incapable of doing the work required of them.

Unfair to Ask Someone to do What They Cannot – Hurts Them and Everyone Else:

It was no different than asking me to run a marathon; I just cannot do it. I could never have done it given my health – osseus bars in my feet, overweight most of my life, and spasmatic heart (AKA Prinzmetal's Angina).

Heh – nevermind the high blood pressure and other random maladies. And of course later in life – the full meal deal enchilada 'special' with every degenerative malady you can think of it feels like…

My point is simply that expecting someone to do something that is literally beyond their ability to accomplish is unfair and setting them up for failure.

It is more valuable to have an honest conversation with a person put in an impossible-to-succeed position and find a different role for them that plays to their strengths.

…and if they have no identifiable strengths relevant for the 'industry' being worked in, then I hate to say it – THEY NEED TO LEAVE.

The rest of the team should not suffer compensating for 'dead weight' because management did not have the inner confidence and prowess to handle it head-on (and ideally respectfully).

Keeping someone on the team that cannot 'pull their own weight' hurts them in the long run due to unlikely career progression (and potential eventual firing) and the team they're on because they must work harder and longer to take up the slack left by the less capable staff.

Honestly – 'dead weight' hiding in the corporate folds of fat is a hot button for me. Cliché – it makes my blood boil to see people lose their quality of life because someone else is dragging them down.

Working With People Is Hard – More Senior You Are, The More Autonomy You Had:

It was clear to me – working with people was hard. Whereas, working with computers was easy.

I had to improve my 'people skills' if I wanted to rise further in mega corporations…

And – the more senior you were in a company – the more autonomy, and control you have over your choices, assignments… and destiny…

And all of these lessons … I was learning … would help me become, a more senior leader.

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E241 DEVELOPER INSIGHTS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E241 Developer Insights - Don't Fret About Making Decision, Make Your Decision Right - Live and Act at the Next Level.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55urql-e241-developer-insights-dont-fret-about-making-decisions-make-decisions-rig.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/GRXeYhmXr0k

Description:
Endure, outlive, and outlast… become in charge. Assess how long – or if – an incompetent manager or executive will be in power. Waiting for their departure will open a chain of promotion opportunities… if you can wait.

Introduce 'lame duck' known flaws so executives can feel good about finding them and contributing.

Promotability depends on real talent and perceived talent.

Define your brand and live by it.

Don't fret about making the right decisions, make your decisions right.

Use the 'Bow Wow' Test with your pet – to find a problem in an idea or in source code…

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Lessons at EA Fusion – Part 3

People Act Like the Next Level Position – Flaunting Authority, Wealth, Power:

Ever since working at Electronic Arts in Canada, a company of about ten thousand employees and half again contractors in the era, I realized that people dressed like the next level of responsibility (especially in management).

In fact – they went out of their way to drive fancy cars, wear fancy clothes, don fancy watches and jewelry, and went on elaborate vacations and expensive restaurant outings. Even their children's birthday parties had to be 'HUGE'!

Yea – people 'acted' the next level position so executive management might see them as already operating at that level – and thus should be promoted to that level when an opening presents itself.

These 'posers' literally flaunted wealth and assumed power and directed people with implied authority.

It disgusted me.

Endure, Outlast, Become in Charge:

My EA supervisor said some people simply 'endure and outlast' everyone until they become in charge – no one else of the 'old guard' remained, and so they became in charge of the largely abandoned or 'in automation' non-innovative company.

He noted it takes only a few interactions to identify untalented poser executives from the skilled ones.

Skilled executives ask insightful questions that make you question your assumptions and/or plans. Whereas untalented executives talk generalities and latch onto obtuse seemingly irrelevant things like – 'more red in the scene would make it better' or 'do you have the cloud plan in place?'

Yea – useless questions or direction that costs the team work to address, even though it was completely STUPID!

The takeaway here was that executives may be incompetent and it was important to determine quickly if they were talented or not so as to tailor reports to the things they cared most about.

Lame Duck for Poser Executives – Saves Time and Frustration:

It became a common tip to insert a 'lame duck' in every design and milestone report that would be seen by EA Worldwide executives.

What is a lame duck?

Back in early USA military days Generals would inspect war plans and strategies. They invariably were compelled to insert their incredibly awesome 'contribution' which only such a stupendous veteran could have conceived.

Their incredibly awesome 'contribution' was usually something inane – like should soldiers carry more ammunition into combat? Why isn't there a backup radio in the tank? Even big things like – that helicopter looks unstable so I need to see more test flights completed.

All of these disruptive 'poser executive' directions can often be mitigated or entirely prevented by inserting a 'lame duck'.

The 'Lame Duck' was a deliberate easy-to-find flaw in thinking or strategy or design that the poser executive would find and feel good at demanding its removal or otherwise correction.

And since the 'Lame Duck' was never a real part of the plan, no time was lost outside the team leadership divining the best and most appropriate lame duck for their executives. And better yet – no team frustration with executive 'stupid interference'.

HEH – Smart Interference is okay… just not Stupid Interference…

Promotability Depended on Talent AND Perception:

With all that experience in corporate facades and cons, I was unsure how I might get promoted myself in Electronic Arts (EA).

I had always been talented and been in technical leadership roles, but I had not been promoted as an employee outside of Atari Games (whose promotions were 'unique' to say the least – more on that elsewhere).

I had to learn what it took to be recognized and get promoted.

My manager at Electronic Arts told me a bit of corporate wisdom –

> Executives are often the acting posers I was disgusted by, and
> they rarely had real talent but rather used deception and manipulation, and
> they cannot understand the difference from skilled and unskilled, and
> they value sycophants and people that make them feel good (and certainly not bad!).
>
> Material business impact and results cannot be denied by them, but
> that is in direct competition with people self-promoting and marketing themselves, and
> self-promoters go out of their way to insult and diminish others to elevate themselves.
>
> To compete I had to do the same – dress the part, speak with authority, and assume responsibilities not assigned to me. He told me to 'step up and seize the next position', or some untalented person would take it and I would report to them.
>
> Bottom-line: I had to showcase superior talent AND APPEAR AND SOUND SUPERIOR.
>
> Though I did not like what he had to say, one thing resonated powerfully with me –
>
> > **If I was not in charge, someone less talented would be, and**
> >
> > **I would be subordinate and have to take direction from them… and their inferiority!**
>
> THEREFORE – I HAD TO BE IN CHARGE!

Live and Act Like the Brand for Next Level Promotion Position:

Although the journey took years I had changed my perception. I purchased a convertible Mercedes Benz. Every day no matter what the event I wore dark (if not black) button-down shirts and 'very dark' black jeans.

I wore so much black that people took notice, some joking I was EA's Johnny Cash dressed in all black (something the singer was renown for).

Take note here – PEOPLE TOOK NOTICE of me. They spoke of EA's Johnny Cash in his convertible Mercedes. Once talking about me they had to think of things to say – he is the highest tech leader in that Fusion business unit. He

designed and led the team that built re-usable tools and libraries and frameworks for dozens and dozens of games. The list went on…

The key was that I WAS NOTICED! …and became a topic of conversation.

Define Your Brand, Your North Star and Stay True to It:

I had begun to define my personal brand. Brands are things other people create, not you. You can only give people defining things that they associate with the brand, and for a personal brand … it is what they associate with you.

People began talking about and interacting with me as an executive – just because I drove a fancy car, dressed better than most in the company (which was not hard – LOL), and spoke with authority and confidence.

And it did not take long for my manager to come to me and deliver a promotion, and then another, and so forth.

I rose from Technical Director (TD) to TD II to TD III to Chief Technology Officer (CTO) to Chief Operating Officer [with the backfill new CTO reporting to me].

Well – the moral of the story is that people are shallow and promote staff according to how they project themselves as much as they do for hard real talent.

If you want to get promoted – define your brand, be talented, and exude confidence.

Sadly – talent is not enough in this world.

One final comment on all this – you must be consistent and stay true to the brand and course you choose. You must honor your North Star and keep marching toward it without falter or doubt, and others will see your intensity and recognize you… and believe in youl… for it.

Don't Fret Making the Right Decision:

It is easy to get stuck worrying if you have made the right decision or decisions.

Did you choose the right things to define your personal brand? Is your task breakdown and estimation and dependency assessment and risk analysis accurate? Will your team question the project direction and design?

Indeed – there are an infinite number of choices and most will result in failure.

Some people need no information to make a decision – usually dumb and fails.

Some people need 100% of information to make a decision – wasted a lot to get there

Some people need 60% of information to make a decision – enough to win but not waste time

There are gradients from zero to 100 percent information to make a decision, but the point is that either extreme of ZERO or ALL information is suboptimal (to say the least).

INSTEAD –

**DO NOT FRET ABOUT MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION,
MAKE YOUR DECISION RIGHT.**

It is a simple mantra I espoused – get enough information to make an informed decision (60% is my default but could be more or less based on situation) and make a plan and execute against it. As new problems or discoveries show up – course correct and adapt.

I often joked that if you leave dock towards Hawaii and are even 1 degree off in course you will miss the island entirely. Never mind winds and ocean currents shifting course despite your best efforts.

So, of course, such a trek requires course correction constantly as the vessel proceeds to Hawaii.

In the same fashion – development projects need a thorough plan to 'get to Hawaii' but they need to not over-index and waste time and resources to get going. And they need to plan for course corrections and iteration in their plans and schedules and deliverables.

Remarkably people resist slotting in iteration and course correction blocks of time. It is something that a senior executive must request to ensure all staff adhere to the principle.

Enough Knowledge to Make a Decision:

Listen to yourself is my truest advice. When highly unsure do not make changes. But when you have 66.6% (2/3) of the information to make a decision you have enough so make the decision instead of wasting time collecting more data to justify your indecision's delay in making the call.

I often generalized – 60% information is sufficient to make an initial plan and get going.

In some leaps of faith, it can be unwise to "jump" if it will completely untether you from income, family, or livelihood. Such sacrifice is rarely justified.

And never make a leap of faith without a safety net below should you slip from the trapeze high tightrope act and fall. You need to make sure total failure is not livelihood or literal death.

My Princess (pet cat) Was My Freelance Foundation in her Director's Chair:

So many years I worked alone in my apartment, condo, townhouse, or house. It did not matter how big or small my abode was – I worked alone for the majority of my early career.

I had a pet cat named Princess that lived to twenty-two years old. She was with me for most of my freelance contractor game developer years. She would sit on a green pillow atop a foldable directors chair (with its arms folded down); she was my friend, ally, and supervisor.

She was MY PRINCESS!

Whenever I would find myself struggling to devise a solution to a complex problem – sometimes a game feature that had never been done on any computer or video game console. I was pushing the limits of the tech in the era.

But I had no one to talk to. I had no one to explain my tech ideas or problems to.

I DID HAVE my PRINCESS to talk to.

And so I did…

I explained all of my programming challenges and she listened intently. She would look upon me, and sometimes open her mouth as if to utter support or maybe even a solution. She was my freelance foundation.

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Princess Made Me a Better Programmer and Designer:

Detailing my programming flow and algorithms with Princess helped me think through things. Simply by going through the process of having to explain everything out loud to Princess made me see things in a third-person perspective and see mistakes or potentially better approaches.

Princess made me a better programmer and game designer.

The 'Bow Wow' Test (tell it to me like I was a dog):

I used my Princess talk-through things technique a lot, and later in life shared the concept with others. But I modified it to be the 'bow wow' test.

Yea – people seemed more receptive to explaining things to a dog than to a cat.

I never knew why dogs were more 'explain-to' capable than cats…

…or maybe most people do not have cats that would sit with them long enough to listen to a problem to its end.

Either way - "the Bow Wow Test" had more of memorable name impact than the "Meow Test".

People extolled the surprising value of just talking out loud to a pet at a canine-level of knowledge (no assumptions) everything they were thinking and why it made sense, and through the process discovering insight or exposing flawed algorithms or dependencies.

Spirit and Intent vs "Words of Agreement" and Contracts:

In any agreement there is the "intent" or spirit of the agreement where both parties know what the expected outcome is. However, there are times that expected is abused or subverted.

"Bad actors" hide behind legalese hyperbole and use broad stroke letters of intent (LOI) or contracts to accommodate their future revisionist history and modified recall of the contract or agreement to suit their "new desired outcome".

Whether verbal or written in contract - intent and spirt of objectives should be what matters most.

An odd corollary –Unreputable lawyers will seek to discard the spirit and intent of agreements and contracts – so as, to manipulate and con people… just as the devil would con someone out of their soul – corrupting the 'intent' of their 'deal' with their contracted 'victim'.

Attorneys use courts to uphold the Rule of Law - to entrap and ensnare people make soul-wrenching bargains to protect their livelihoods and families – all to make money, and propel their selfish lives forward… at the expense of other people.

And – downtrodden, beaten, and lost… those people become vulnerable to doing evil behavior themselves… just to get by, and maybe even retaliate against the unjust abuse they endured.

"The devil works in mysterious ways" – and contorts and twists contracts and agreements, to the detriment of the would-be benefactor.

Companies and individuals can operate…just like the devil…

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Psychology of Loyalty - Cats vs Dogs:

An interesting psychological idea…

Have you entered a coffee shop like Starbucks and seen donation jars for charities or schools or "social causes"? And have you noticed often times there are two or more donation jars to choose from.

Euphemistically, imagine a coffee shop with two donation jars – one labeled "Cats" and the other labeled "Dogs". The signage on the feline jar showcased a cute kitten wearing glasses winking and its mouth open as if speaking with a slogan "Keep on Meowin'". The dog jar sported a big lab puppy face with tongue hanging out with its slogan "Bark and Experience More".

As a person enters the coffee shop, they see the donation jars at the register as they wait in line and place the order.

I felt the kitten was adorable and with its wink and open mouth seemed to call to me and plead for my help. It was a simple but powerful image that pulled at my heartstrings.

Conversely – the dog was cute and was probably adorable to "dog lovers", but I have never been a dog lover. I like some dogs; even had a few dogs I was close to. But dogs are just "not as good as cats" to me.

A woman in line in front had been studying the signs –

> Cat – Keep on Meowin'.
>> A pun on the phrase "Keep on Truckin'".
>
> Dog – Bark and Experience More.
>> A nod to the game *Ultima'* saying "Journey Onward, Experience More".

She quipped, "Puppies! I love puppies!" and she put her returned coin change in the donation jar for dogs.

I knew we were all being manipulated by those images and slogans. They were designed to appeal to all sorts of things – emotional connection to animals we likely grew up with, slogans reminding us of nostalgia and free happier times. Even so – they were successful at manipulating me. And I am HARD TO MANIPULATE (or so I have believed).

I recall learning a few psychological ploys to maximize donations –

1) Guilt or shame people so they will feel good about themselves when they donate, and bad about themselves if they do not give to the "cause".

2) "Tribal" identity and inclusion so people feel they are "part of something bigger than themselves" and are "a valuable contributor to the tribe".

3) Declare Faith or Superstitious "North Star" to inspire people to "pay for a better afterlife". They could suffer now… for the future. So donate now…

It was not about emphasizing the actual benefit of the "mission" or showing tangible need. It was about inspiring emotional sympathy or pity or shame to disarm resistance to sacrifice. The person is "setup" to feel like a hero only upon rescue the defenseless "baby animals" by donating money. And if the cute animals were not enough, the inspirational phrases hearkening to fundamental ideological concepts of nostalgia with "keep on truckin'" and "Journey Onward, Experience More".

"Cats and Dogs" is my label for the manipulation of people to donate or take action by leveraging guilt/shame, tribal belonging, or Faith/Superstition.

When you cannot buy people's support - and instead want them to do what you want…even pay you – it is leverage and manipulation that are most effective at improving the probability of success.

"Cats and Dogs" is one method of improving the probability of success.

I learned – even the most innocent of things, like a donation jar, are coated with manipulative messages, slogans, artwork, and even affinities and 'values'…like love of cats or dogs…

Manipulation…is everywhere…

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E242 TRYING TO MAKE GAMES POST WORK
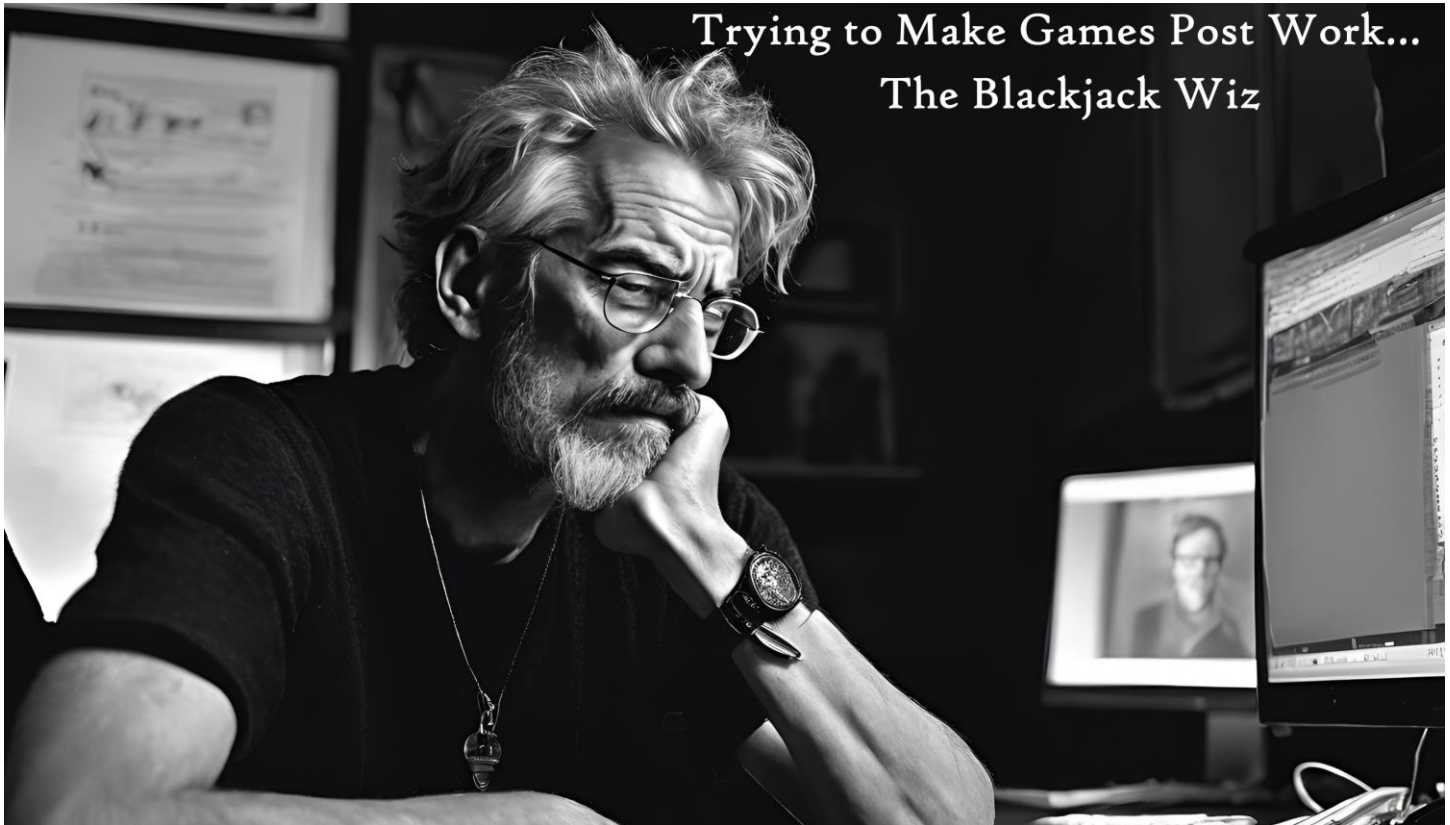
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E242 Trying to Make Video Games Post Disability and Forced Retirement - The Blackjack Wiz - and Writing My Autobiography.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55urz2-e242-trying-to-make-video-games-and-writing-post-disability-the-blackjack-w.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/It6U9kURewo

Description:
Richard recounts his struggles writing and publishing The Blackjack Wiz on iPhone, iPad, Android Phone, Tablet & TV, and PC Windows.

Richard concludes that he had to abandon Blackjack Wiz - and with it, abandon his career.

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The Blackjack Wiz

Retirement Apps for Phones and Tablets – A Challenging Proposition:

Jumping around a lot here… I had left Electronic Arts (Canada) and joined Microsoft's Xbox division (a lot more on this later).

Fast forward – to after I had left my job at Microsoft - and moved to Nevada. …and no longer had a job - or could even work.

I imagined that maybe I could write small apps for phones and tablets – and eek out an okay living in my sunset years… especially as my mind was suffering neurodegeneration by then (though I did not know it…at the time – things were just stupidly hard…

It made no sense how slow and hard things were for me… given my past 'brilliance' and speed of learning things and creating software.

Counting Cards in Vegas, Moving on Up the Casino Food Chain:

Well – to the tale of my making my first (and last) app.

There were many weekends when I lived in Southern California - that I would drive to Las Vegas and play Blackjack at the Casino tables. I started out gambling in the smaller casinos to make sure I knew what I was doing before I dove into the 'big leagues' of gambling.

My innate near-photographic memory combined with quick area scanning and internal math calculator substantially improved my Blackjack game winning to loss ratio such that I regularly started with a few hundred dollars and ended the weekend with a few thousand dollars.

Yes – there was the occasional weekend that I lost a few thousand dollars despite my 'card counting' abilities.

In fact, once I became convinced the casino was cheating. I was winning continuously and the 'pit boss' tapped the dealer's shoulder to replace him with another smooth non-talking serious dealer.

The 'pro' dealer smiled and flung cards like throwing star shurikens, and they landed right under one another perfectly like he leaned over and gently inserted or placed them by hand. The only words he ever spoke were what the next card that would be dealt would be – he was never wrong!

It was apparent that the dealer was not there to win back the casino's money but rather to discourage continued play at the casino's loss.

It worked – Everyone, including me - left.

Of course – I just changed the casinos I went to and used the smaller casino discouragement as reason to move up to the bigger casinos where the sea was vaster and there was more money flowing.

I graduated to the huge casinos like Caesars Palace, the Bellagio, Circus Circus, Excalibur, MGM Grand, and so forth.

I imagined I could be just as successful and lucrative as the smaller casinos but be less noticeable in the massive crowds in the huge casinos.

Counting Cards in Vegas, 'Comp'ed' Rooms & Meals Regularly:

It must sound ridiculous for me to allege that I regularly converted a few hundred dollars into a few thousand dollars. My main limitation was the drive to Las Vegas was long and traffic between Southern California and Vegas extremely long in miles and took hours to make. And then there was the sheer boredom of repetitively playing Blackjack for hours and hours on end.

My weekend Blackjack gaming became a job and with the unpredictability of winning and losing COMBINED with my commitment to my children's care and child support I went to Vegas six to twelve times a year.

But during those trips because I typically won so much the casinos would offer me frequent gambling loyalty points for future hotel stays and meals and shows, and often immediate offers of a free meal or additional nights stay in the hotel so I would stay longer and keep gambling. They hoped I my winning streak would end, and they would win all their money back.

Casinos were so motivated to reclaim their lost cash to me that they would send me offers in the mail for free weekends with shows for me and friends – all comp'ed FREE.

Reduced Incentives Translated to Reduced Gambling – Not an Addict like Father:

Some friends were so dismayed that they said I must be like Rain Man from the movie with my ability to count cards and reliably predict the next series of cards – and win.

I never felt confident to spend more than my allotted $300-600 maximum weekend 'gambling budget'. I admit there were times I went to $900 before aborting my gambling for the trip, but usually I was good at not exceeding $600. And given many visits garnered $2,000 - $3,000 in winnings I never worried about the weekends I lost and went home a 'loser'.

I hated so much being a 'loser' that it TOOK THOSE INCENTIVES to get me to keep going back to the casinos.

Ironically – the casinos reduced their loyalty 'perks' so much as they tightened their fiscal belts over the years that I stopped going to Vegas and gambling except when friends explicitly were going to gamble on their own and invited me to tag along.

Although my father Silver Seaborne had a severe addictive gambling problem, it appeared that I was good at it but did not have an addiction to gambling at all. Or my intelligence and will power was strong enough to moderate my risk-reward fiscal behavior.

Making Blackjack Wiz, Long After Monte Carlo (thirty years later):

One of my first games I wrote was *Monte Carlo* which was a gambling simulation on the Applie][GS computer. *Monte Carlo* was a suite of casino games intended to let players game themselves, with friends, and against computer artificial intelligent opponent 'bot' gamblers.

I had a lot of personal gambling experience and engineering history developing gambling games with *Monte Carlo*. I had spent much of my career in the trenches as well as strategically directing design and architecture.

Thirty years later - I was well positioned to develop a game independently I felt, and I could make a gambling game easily with my mixed background of technology, video game development, artificial intelligence, popular gambling games, and the math behind Blackjack and card counting.

I conceived – The Blackjack Wiz – for iPhone, iPad, AppleTV, Android Phones & Tablets, and TV. I even made an Xbox One version…but that was never published it.

The Blackjack Wiz was the natural product for me to make as my pioneering return to freelance game development in 'effectively, forced retirement'. It offered customizable Blackjack rules to match most variants used throughout the world.

The game included an artificial intelligence that monitored the player's behavior and winning:loss record associated with it and rated both against its own AI projected play and outcomes (without cheating by using its internal data) and advise the player on what should be played, or what should HAVE BEEEN PLAYED when the player does something 'wrong' or 'less right'.

Beyond the sophisticated gambling artificial intelligence and natural language advisor on how to play Blackjack using virtually all variants across the globe, the game also taught most forms of Card Counting and further allowed the player to create their own card counting rules to explore if they could devise a superior technique.

And the game had all the trappings and bells and whistles of contemporary games – splashy graphics and animation, many musical tracks and sound effects, achievement and instructional popups and overlays.

Blackjack Wiz was a complete and extremely thorough educational gambling simulation with a vast array of configurable rules and options and Card Counting instruction. I made it for Windows 10, Windows Phone, Apple iPhone, Apple iPad, Apple TV, Android Phone, Android Tablet, and Android TV.

My wife Katherine made a professional grade web site and marketing materials needed to offer it online for purchase.

We sold *Blackjack Wiz* for $2.99 - $4.99 on the Microsoft, Google Play, and Apple App stores.

Challenges Developing Blackjack Wiz:

There was one HUGE challenge to creating *Blackjack Wiz* – ME!

Yea – I began writing *Blackjack Wiz* as my neurodegeneration was taking hold and clouding my mind and making me lose focus and break into emotional throes of sobbing and sorrow. None of that was like me – ever.

There was no way to comprehend why I struggled so much making the game *Blackjack Wiz*, until it became apparent that I was suffering mental cognizant decline. And with eventual diagnosis confirming and explaining why I gave up on making more games and even on updating or maintaining *Blackjack Wiz*.

Operating at 70% Peak if At All:

I found that my mental acuity outside of highly familiar 'rote' procedures like drawing a sphere or using long-used extensive and advanced vocabulary had fallen precipitously from where it had been throughout my life.

As best I can surmise my cognizant capabilities had deteriorated to about seventy percent of what I think it had been. Which I contend made me 'normal' on how I presented and appeared to people.

Things that Took Minutes Now Took Days:

But my 70% Cognizance was catastrophic and devastating to my ability to remember and mitigate risks and dependencies of the work I was doing. It resulted in odd gaps of knowledge that were bottlenecks to finishing sections of code or application features.

My reduced mental acuity translated into things that might take minutes taking days.

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It took me many months to write a program that should have been done in under a month given my history and background.

Only a few years earlier I had programmed as a hobby a complex script-based adventure game engine. And now I could barely write a blackjack simulation (albeit an advanced one).

Maintaining Blackjack Wiz 'Insane' and 'Impossible':

Things proceeded to become more and more challenging and difficult for me.

I had spent a year and a half following Blackjack Wiz with disappointment in both its sales and experiencing corporate 'business manipulation' by Apple saying I had to incorporate to indemnify them from selling gambling games.

And then there was the relentless mandated SDK and Security update releases expected by Google Android and TV, Microsoft Windows and Tablet and Phone, and Apple iOS Phone/Tablet, and Apple TV.

I believe there were updates per platform required virtually every few months; it was insane just to keep the games current much less add new features or polish what was already there.

Abandoned Blackjack Wiz, and with it My Career:

Ultimately – Maintaining Blackjack Wiz was an insane and impossible task for me going forward.

I abandoned the game entirely, and with it my professional game making career.

The Blackjack Wiz – Part 2

Years Seeking Diagnosis and Treatment – Totally Disabled (tragically validated):

It took a few years of languishing in my neurodegeneration and going to doctor after doctor in hopes of securing a diagnosis if not a treatment or even cure.

But no doctor or hospital or clinic ever had a solution or treatment or cure.

Eventually - a psychiatrist agreed that no one with my successful history would or could fabricate my litany of problems, and moreover dropping precipitously from a Studio Manager at Microsoft to an unemployed struggling to function much less work person.

The psychiatrist also observed my behavior was inappropriate and consistent with a number of serious psychiatric disorders including bipolar, manic-depressive, obsessive-compulsive, and more that I do not recall.

Bottom line here – the psychiatrist concluded I was messed up in the head regardless of whether it was caused by physical brain degeneration or chemical imbalances (for whatever reason too).

And consequently – the doctor recommended treating the symptoms without a definitive diagnosis.

And to that end – he agreed that he would support Mayo Clinic doctors' evaluation that I was totally disabled.

Although the diagnosis was a lot to process and internalize, I accepted it.

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After all – how could I deny my long list of physical and mental and emotional problems and instabilities!?

I *was messed up in the head*.

At least for once – I had a doctor that validated me! Even if it was a negative conclusion.

Writing Biography as Insightful Adventure:

After months and years passed and with adjusted medications, I found the motivation to write my 'life's story' as an auto-biography. But I did not want to write a boring recounting of my life's experiences.

No – I wanted to write about my life's experiences under the lens of insight and my values and how the world might be better if people paid attention and learned from my own journey through 'Hell Difficulty'.

I wanted to write my auto-biography as an insightful adventure.

Millions, Billions of People Struggle Throughout Their Lives – Rich and Poor Alike:

Of course - I know that I am not alone in living a hard life.

I recognize millions perhaps even billions of people hurt and struggle throughout their lives. Some never have many 'positive' good things happen for them. And yet they all live and die – like everyone else.

Rich or poor – we all have our struggles, but some hurt more than others.

My Empathy to the Most Hurt and Tormented Souls:

And to the poor souls that hurt more than most or live lives filled with torment –

> I offer my empathy and my tale of sorrowful challenges that were overcome until my very essence and being was stripped from me gradually so that I might witness my own loss of reality and self.

> PLEASE - I IMPLORE those living their own 'Hell Difficulty' to NEVER GIVE UP and to fight and fight until your fight is over completely.

> And as Dylan Thomas' poem said, '*Do not go gentle into that good night*".

Remembering Tragedy All-at-Once Broke Richard (in the tale of 'Hell Difficulty'):

In writing my auto-biography entitled 'Hell Difficulty', I decided to write the tale as what might happen if one pivotal event happened that sent Richard into the 'legal and psychiatric system'.

Within 'the system' Richard's neurodegeneration would be exacerbated by forcing him to unseal and relive his long suppressed soul-crushing memories.

Richard's 'difficult' upbringing and childhood through young adult experiences had long been corked and sealed inside bottles high up on 'forget-about-me' shelves.

But now the doctors are making Richard remember all those terrible things in his life –

ALL AT ONCE!

AND IT BROKE HIM!

IT MADE HIM BECOME PROGESSIVELY –

*Richard the Hell-Challenged and Hellscape Journey ala Dante Alighieri *

Defender and True Knight of Righteousnous

Richard The Fulcrum that Humankind will be Judged by

Worn Knight of Woeful Countenance

Richard Quixote Spiritual Embodiment of Cervantes' Dream

Indeed – remembering all the tragic events in Richard's life all-at-once was too much for him to process and bare, and it broke him – completely.

The very 'treatment' for Richard would contribute to his final losing of his mind.

His 'treatment' drove what was left of his sanity out if his mind so that he would concoct his own Quixotic mad misadventures!

Half to Three Pages Per Day Writing:

As to my writing experience in authoring 'Hell Difficulty' – it was hard. It was 'hell difficult' to write. I have shared challenges throughout my story, but the key point is that doing anything is hard and doing something that other people must understand and not be offended by is especially difficult for me now.

Even with the immense power and capabilities of syntax, grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and even social appropriateness of programs like Microsoft Word and access to the world's 'memory' (even of me and my life!) through the Internet – I struggled to write.

But determined to write I managed to write first-pass drafts of one-half to a peak of five pages per day, every few days. That may not seem like a lot, and probably it is not a lot of productive writing.

Writing a few pages every few days was an accomplishment for me. And it gave me a purpose to look forward to – even if it often drove me to tears as I relived my suppressed sorrows in reality (not just in the fictional narrative of Richard's Quixotic evolution).

Foggy Brain Further Diminished Capacity:

My confused mind was not limited to writing.

Many mornings and evenings I found myself 'foggy brained' where I struggled to focus or even follow conversation topics.

I often felt "I was not there".

For sure in any case – "I was not all there".

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I was aware of my difficulties and could 'see' how my brain was foggy and suffered slowed and diminished capabilities. I could tell it was not just the result of being tired or stressed, or not getting sufficient or quality sleep.

My challenges finding the right words in the moment during conversation got worse and worse.

My activities sometimes stalled mid action with my losing ability to change course or initiate new actions; it was crazy – just standing in the shower thinking I was done but unable to stop from standing for minutes under the showerhead thinking it is time to stop.

Emotions and anxiety interfered with my ability to stay focused or feel creative or effective at expressing my thoughts or emotions.

The result is me and others being upset often. And then me being more upset because I uncontrollably created the situation in the first place.

Worst perhaps of relationship erosion were time when my mind leapt to falls conclusions of where someone was going with their conversation, and impatiently interject a thought 'over the person still conveying their point or meaning on their topic.'

Rude and Even Obnoxious Presuming and Interrupting Topic Discussions:

Yea – I apparently was rude and even unintentionally obnoxious with the importance of concluding the topic since I already evidently knew what the conclusion was – so why waste any time waiting for the words to spew further!?

Obviously – that was not 'me' either.

But something in my inner 'supervisor' no longer had executive or even functional control over some of my thoughts or emotions.

All the things I had learned on how to influence and constructively engage with people largely melted away.

And despite my best effort and decision to be patient and wait to the end of topic speaking by anyone else (including my wife!), I still often end up cutting off and rudely speaking my erroneous conclusions.

It became evident that whenever I was ignorant of something even in the slightest that my inner 'supervisor' in my brain would freak out and initiate an emotional outburst of irrationality – fury, anger, rage, intense frustration, exaggerated anxiety, and even suicidal ideation in extremely despondent situations.

Whenever my inner 'supervisor' detected a problem or anomalous perception or behavior – things went awry and typically resulted in my melting down and being 'useless' for the rest of the day and night. And often unpleasant to be around – or so I imagine.

Blackjack Wiz – The End:

Tragically – all my hard work and effort and suffering and sorrow and tears translated into self-doubt and personal discovery of my horrific mental decline and neurodegeneration.

And that nightmare extended to Katherine as well because she cannot sit and watch me hurt without hurting herself (she loves me!).

How much money did we earn for the Herculean feat? I suppose we earned a few hundred dollars in sales.

No – the making of *Blackjack Wiz* while insightful about my mental decline was not worth the immense effort and harm it took on my wife and me.

The game had a short life and will be lost to the annals of time as a blip in my career – at a time in my life… when there were fewer days ahead than behind.

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E243 POWER FIRST NAMES AND RISING FUSION

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E243 Power of First Names of Executives and Rising Fusion.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55urz8-e243-power-of-first-names-of-executives-and-rising-fusion.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/PHN17_I3-hg

Description:
Hear about the Power of First Name executives and leaders.

Richard sets the narrative with 'Rising Fusion' for the next series of episodes being about techniques and methodologies in due diligence and software development.

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PartoftheHellDifficultySagaandTheLibertyZone*

___FirstNameExecutivesandTheirAuthority&Power_

##'PowerNameExecutives–AndAllTheirAuthorityandPower:__

Youmayrecallmytalkingabout'FirstName'Executivespreviously.IamrepeatingthemalongwithmanythingsI'velearnedovertheyears.

WhileworkingatElectronicArts(EA)inCanada–growingourFusionbusinessunitanddivision–wewereempoweredinanovelexperiment–tobea'Start-UpwithinEA'–asanewbusinessapproach.Thedivisionwouldnotbebeholdentoanygrouporstudioorexecutives…ExceptEAWorldwide'FirstName'Executives.

OnlythemostseniorexecutiveswerecalledbytheirPowerNames–becauseeveryoneknewthem,andthuswhoyouwerereferringto–evenifyoujustintonedtheir'MIGHTYSINGLE-NAMETITLE'(beitlastorfirstname,orsometimes'alwaystheirfullandcompetename).

TheirPowerNameheralded–thattheywerefromEA(orMicrosoft)OlympusasaMonarch,ifnotaWorldwideExecutiveGod.

InvokinganEAWorldwideoraMicrosoftexecutivebytheir'PowerName'endedarguments-anddirecteddecisions.

'PowerNames'were–well-powerful.Theyrepresentedauthorityandpower.

ThesameruleheldtrueatMicrosoft.

Ofcourse–MicrosofthadVicePresidentswhenIworkedthere,so…yea–theywerenot'powernames'withinMicrosoft.Onlythebiggestofbigwigs–werePowerNames–atMicrosoft.

SomePowerNames–thataresonoteworthytheywentglobal–

FirstNames:

-Bill-forBillGates[Founder,Microsoft]
-Steve(orBallmer)-forSteveBalmer[CEO,Microsoft]
-Phil-forPhilSpencer[HeadofXbox]
-Satya-forSatyaNadella[CEO,Microsoft–succeedingSteveBalmer]

LastNames:

-Mattrick-forDonMattrick[FounderofDistinctiveSoftware,EASports]
-AndbriefHeadofMicrosoftXbox
-Schappert-forJohnSchappert[FounderEATiburon,HeadEAC,CEOEA&Xbox]

HybridNames:
-DanVan-forDanVanElderen[CEO,AtariGames]

Rarely-FullNames:
-ScottCronce-forScottCronce[CTO,EAWorldwide]
-PaulLee-forPaulLee[COO,EAWorldwide]
-WarrenWall-forWarrenWall[EAFusion&EASportsFounder,EAWorldwide]

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You get the idea…

Whatever 'The Power Name'… invoking it – summoned power at your disposal… though it may also invoke fear – and distrust. None-the-less… Power Names… *were power*.

I Was a 'First Name' at Electronic Arts (Canada) – or 'SEABORNE, MR. SEABORNE':

As an aside – I became a 'First Name' within EA Canada because of my success with growing Fusion. I was only a First Name with the developers and teams I worked with at Microsoft – which is typical…so my only true 'First Name' era was at EA Canada.

Heh – occasionally, some people called be 'Seaborne' on homage to John Schappert referring to me as – 'MR. SEABORNE!!!!' – at all possible opportunities.

Fusion From 4 to 650 People – 75 Games, 20M Units, $700M Revenue, 6 Year Run:

I was a key member of the 4-person instantiation and formation team for the Electronic Arts Fusion business unit division, from its 'Startup within EA' model to a fully independent 325-person division with several more hundred contract developers.

In total – at peak – Fusion:

- employed nearly 650 people

- shipped over seventy-five games – in many languages across the world

- sold over 20 million units

- earned $700 Million Revenue

- Fusion had a 6 year run - before being destroyed, scrapped, and pieced out - by jealous, competitive - internal studios, divisions, and business units

Learning Snapshots at EA Canada Fusion:

I learned a lot… on the journey of growing such a small group to such a large group.

In no particular order – I will recount some of my tales and moments and epiphanies from founding, shaping, growing, and making the business, its staff, and contracted partner groups – all - highly successful.

And - so – Here are some of my tidbits of insight and experiences at EA Fusion…

Games and Business Both Have 'Local App' Software and Online 'Services':

Game Development and Publishing - are similar - to many businesses – especially other software businesses.

More and more apps – have a local program component - and an online 'service' component.

Games are the same – they often deliver a local 'product' – as an app, digital download, or even a physical medium like a CD/DVD disc.

And – they ALSO - have an 'online' service component… just like non-entertainment apps.

Breaking Convolution of Software & Services into Smallest Functional Components:

Since… business is about making a product or delivering a service – or both… to understand a business… it is important - to break down the convolution of software & services - into their smallest functional components.

I have found it easiest to use a whiteboard to visualize in a mind map - all the apps and services that may be involved – and how they talk to each other – and how data flows and propagates & aggregates throughout the architected interfaces.

It can be helpful to have access to their API's - and documentation on middleware or otherwise externally made/licensed - and how it is linked, imported, otherwise integrated… into the product or service.

It is complex… but simplifying complex 'systems' is fundamental to comprehension…and thus – to being able to affect meaningful change… and bring personal positive impact to the business and the team.

The Next Episodes Have A Lot About Learning:

As we progress through the next series of episodes… you will find they have a lot more focus on learning and insight.

I hope – that I have made them interesting enough – as you journey through the subsequent 'hopefully informative' episodes.

E244 ASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES PART 1
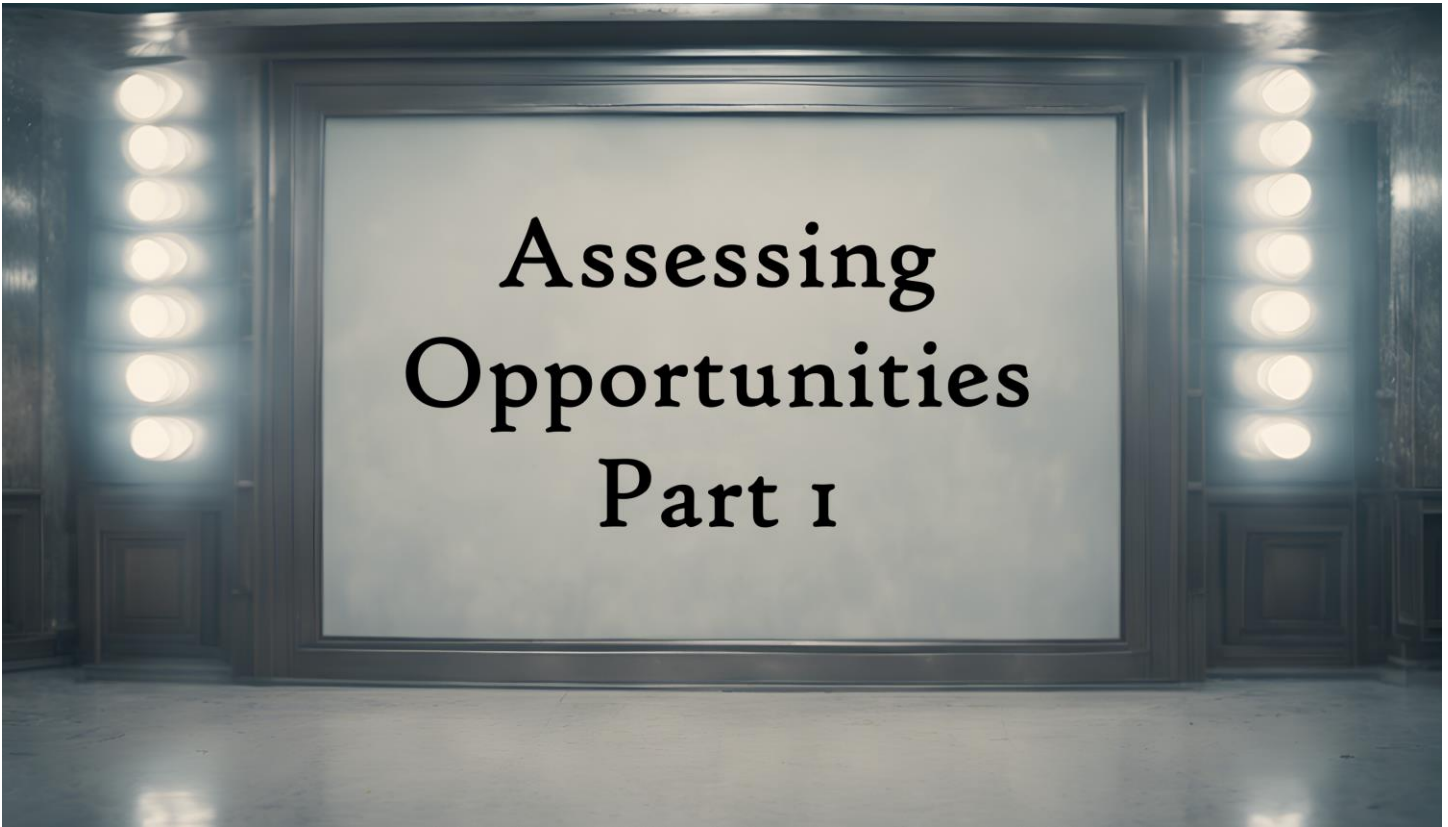
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E244 Assessing Opportunities Part 1 - Time Boxed Deliverables, What Done Looks Like, Decision Makers, Phased Development.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55usba-e244-assessing-opportunities-part-1-time-boxed-deliverables-what-done-looks.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/OFJxe7slohc

Description:
Richard shares his views on 'the four stages of development'.

He explains how Xbox Fitness used scheduled releases called 'Trains' – as the 'trains' had a fixed schedule for when they would leave the Xbox Fitness Cloud Station and deploy to consumers.

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Opportunities, Differentiators, Time Boxes, Constrained Resources

More Learning Snapshots from EA Fusion and Microsoft Xbox:

As I worked with developers and executives – it became clear how important it was to assess opportunities and developers.

Although there are seemingly endless approaches, techniques, methods, and the like to find, assess, and engage with people and opportunities… I have found – there are a few recurring things that should be in everyone's proverbial 'development and leadership tool bag'.

And - so – Here are some more tidbits I learned while working with internal and external developers over the years… since my early contracting years to my time at Electronic Arts, Fusion and Microsoft, Xbox.

Determining and Assessing Staged or Phased Features, Services, and Content:

Many apps and services – have discreet segregated features - or deliver them over time in phases or staged releases. Some products offer additional, sometimes optional - downloadable content…as another form of phased features or content…. Sometimes – at a cost… to the consumer.

To determine and assess staged or phased features, services, or content… I find it is also useful to use a whiteboard to visualize each 'Release' of an app or service, and assign a name to it.

Xbox Fitness Weekly 'Train' Content Releases – As Example of Staged Releases:

For example –

When we were in Xbox Fitness, we had weekly content releases… which we referred to as 'Trains'. These would be equivalent to 'Staged Releases'.

We had metaphorical locomotive trains leaving our Microsoft Xbox Fitness Train Station weekly, releasing the update in regions across the world hour-on-the-hour…allowing rollback should any region result in functional or experiential failure or performance degradation.

Phased, Staged App & Service Development and Releases:

It was important for us to make sure that people never worked in 'the live' retail space – where consumers were playing.

We needed phased ways to develop and test, and then release our weekly Trains.

We needed our team to modify and test software, content, and data changes separately from the product that was live in retail… being used by our customers.

4-Stages Of Development and Software & Service Release:

We used four stages –

- Development (Active Development Site, App & Service Source + Build Depot)

- Test (for Quality Assurance/QA and Producers to evaluate Builds for features, polish)

  o This is a Snapshot of App & Service Builds - for QA Test

- o It is just a copy at any given moment of the Development Build

- Staging (for Release Candidates)
  - o This is a QA Test Approved Build – Promoted to Staging as a Release Candidate
  - o Retail Data Snapshot is taken, and is Replicated into Staging for Test with the New App & Service Builds
  - o This is 'DEEP TEST' for a *Release Candidate*

- Retail (LIVE APP & SERVICE - IN THE WILD)
  - o This is where the active app & service are hosted - in the wild. It is is where real people use the software and online service
  - o Once a Staging Release Candidate is approved to RELEASE… the app & services replace the Live binary executables, local data, and services… and Live online data is adjusted, if needed, for the updated release

Ensuring Protection for Personal, Financial, Contact, and Password Information:

Of course – I always worry about, and – thus – make sure there is proper protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII), Financial Information, Monetary Instrument Information (AKA Credit Card info), names, emails, phone numbers, passwords, etc.

Revenue Deferral Percentage for Stand-Alone Products with Online Service:

As an aside –

When games sell a stand-alone game that can also connect to an online service…

- the publisher must defer a portion of the retail revenue…

- …until the 'online service' commitment for the product has been fulfilled

- most 'online service' commitments are 3 months long… but they vary…
  - o The actual product online duration is often buried in the pack-in materials, or in a look-up Terms of Service…in app or online - which we all know, that no one reads…they just click through).

Classic Research & Development (R&D) Utilizes Staged Development:

Okay – back to looking at development… and pursuing opportunities…

Classic examples of staged development and assessment, could be –

- Research & Development / R&D (ideally, with Marketing Involvement), or

- Ideating, researching, prototyping concepts or areas of interest or known opportunities

- Phased Scheduling (Pre-Production, Production, Post-Production, Publish)

Steps and Techniques to Assess Opportunities and Shape & Drive Development:

As I worked with internal and external groups, more and more things kept surfacing…that were valuable approaches, processes, or techniques.

Here are some of the steps and techniques I have used to assess opportunities and shape & drive development… I am going to list some of the ideas that come to mind – as I try to recall them.

I will describe the ideas in generality … because the deep details would be too much for a podcast.

Time Box, Resources Constraint, and Defined 'Completion' w/ KSI's+KPI's:

Time Boxes…

I Used Time Boxes with Constrained Resources and Defined 'Completion' Finish Lines:

1. create schedules with defined 'Time Boxes' and 'Available Resources' for the project – to constrain and drive forward each stage of assessment, planning, and development –

    o   Specify a block of time and set of resources for each stage / milestone

    o   Define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) if the assessment, planning, or development stage/milestone will be extensive - or especially complex with spanning multiple teams/disciplines/products/services internal & external

    o   Define Metrics to measure for feature and product/service experience for functional delivery and customer-grade quality

    o   Avoid any task being smaller than ½ a day (ideally, no less than one day)… combine smaller tasks into minimally a ½ day task. Tracking less is absurd, unncessary overhead.

    o   And avoid any task being larger than 5 days (ideally, only a few days)

Determine 'Key Players' – Key Staff and Outside Stakeholders & 'Interested' Parties:

Key Players…

2. Determine 'key players'
    o   leaders / business owners
    o   managers / product owners
    o   Informal / formal 'team representatives' (AKA 'shop stewards') as influencers
    o   Product and development domain experts
    o   outside stakeholders / investors
    o   any otherwise 'interested' parties with power or influence over the product or business

3. identify owners and their methods to track product development, features, and quality

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Define What 'Done Looks Like':

What Done Looks Like…

4. define 'What Done Looks Like' – AKA what 'Completion' and 'Success' look like – and how they will be measured

    o Provide a summary the planned deliverable's proof or experience or feature/product/service functionality, polish, … and what will be proven or delivered

    o Define Key Success Indicators (KSI's) for 'completion' and 'service' evaluation. That way – the team knows – what and how – they will be measured.

Use Rubrics, Metrics, KPIs, KSIs, Telemetry, and Analytics Wherever Possible:

Using Rubrics, Metrics, KPI's, KSI's, Telemetry, and Analytics…

Wherever possible – move ideation and schedules and most everything… into some kind of measurable units.

With a way to measure function, presentation, input control, and schedule… you can form waypoints, milestones, or other interim or final finish lines.

- Use rubrics, metrics, key performance and key success indicators (KPIs, KSIs)…

- Collect telemetry from both products and tools.

- And – use analytics to track progress and function and quality over time.

Making your work objective – helps everyone.

Rubrics and Metrics help everyone know what is expected and what success looks like.

So use them!

Use Rubrics and metrics…

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E245 ASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES PART 2
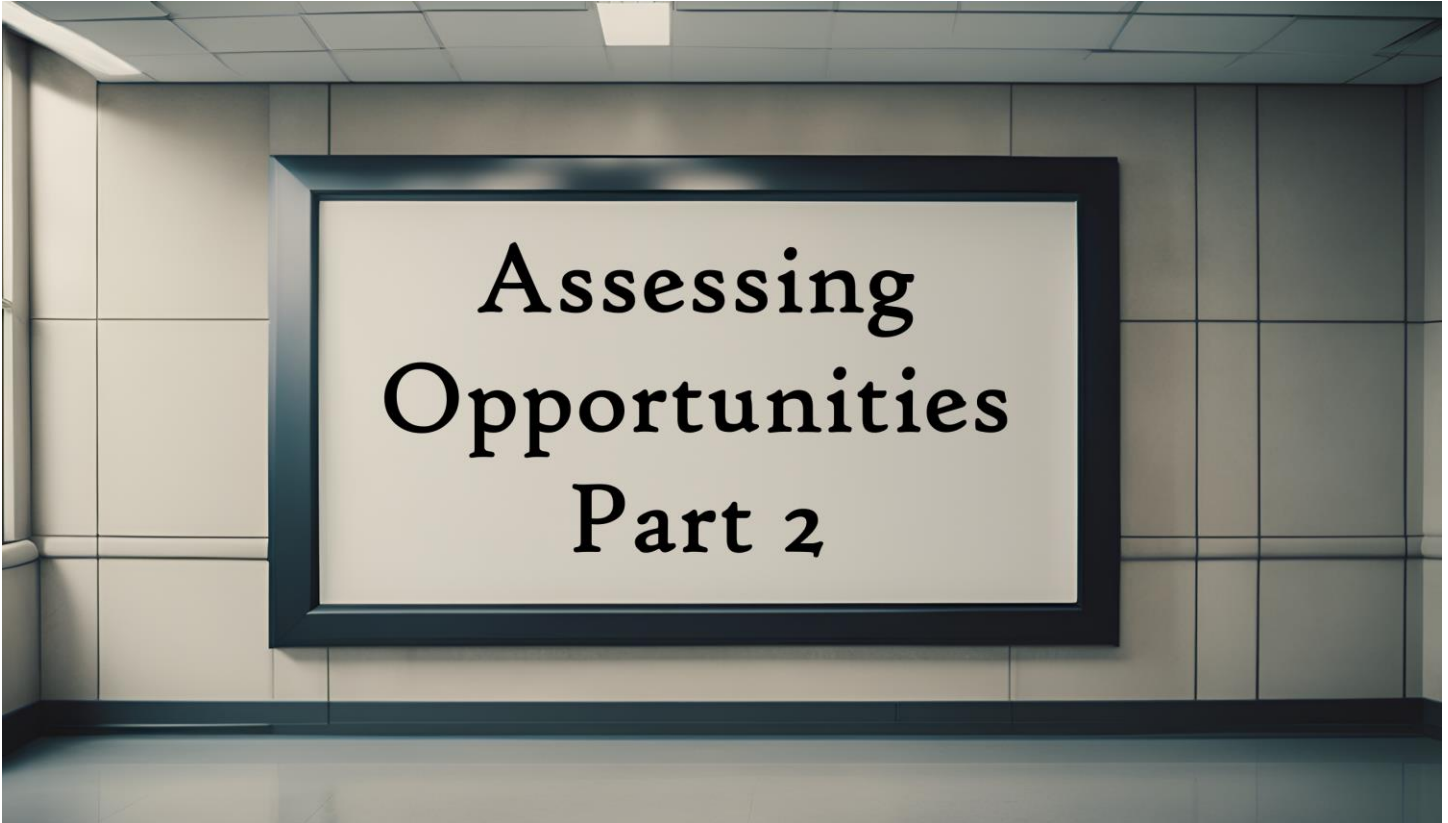
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.\LibertyBooksVideos\E245 Assessing Opportunities Part 2 - Define Opportunity Consumer and Market, Threats and Risks, Stakeholders, Focus Test Roadmap.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:

https://rumble.com/v55usit-e245-assessing-opportunities-part-2-define-opportunity-risks-stakeholders-t.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:

https://youtu.be/pYQ5x9EKoqg

Description:

Identify and Research Opportunities.

Define Market Demographics and Psychographics.

Define Product Differentiating Strengths and Competitors.

List Risks, Threats, and Mitigations.

Define Key Staff and Decision Makers.

Focus Group and Prototype and Validate.

Finding Markets for Opportunities

Identify and Research Opportunities:

Finding Opportunities…

Be clear about what you are offering to develop.

5. identify the opportunity – leverage backlog ideas, think tanks, dev team, marketing

6. research the opportunity – using a time box

7. specify broad-stroke unique differentiating feature or market – ensuring 'blue oceans' with limited competition, versus 'red oceans' full of competition

Define Target Market Demographic and Psychographic – And Make Personas:

Know Your Market – Know Your Audience – Know Your Judge…

Who are you selling to? What is your market?

8. determine target market demographic and psychographic

9. create fictional 'personas' with backstories - as imagined target 'customers' or 'consumers' – each showcasing the product 'need' in the marketplace… satisfying those persona individual's needs, wishes, and desires…

10. quantify the market size and *potential* 'Return' on the 'Investment' (ROI)

    o   Assessing minimum, maximum, and probable business impact and 'Return'

    o   Is it financial, human, operation, environmental impact, or… whatever else? What does it do? What is its value?

Define Your Product's Unique Differentiating Strength and List of Competitors:

What makes your product-service-feature special?

11. make a list of existing and new competitors in the target market… and what their products or services – offer as features… or capabilities.

12. determine your service's / product's detailed 'unique differentiating strengths' – usually a new, innovative, unique feature or capability – that will differentiate – elevate your product from the rest – and, thusly, beat the competition

    o   The 'differentiators' should be clear and unique – easily communicated to the customer - to ensure the product launches in 'blue ocean' with limited competition

13. define Product/Service at Retail - Key Success Indicators / Key Performance Indicators relative to achieving product/service goals and 'Returns' on Investments

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Define Risks, Threats, and Mitigations for Your Product:

What internal risks and external threats exist to deliver the product-service-feature – and what are your mitigation strategies and plans to address them.

14. Define internal risks, external threats, and mitigation plans for all stages of product-service development and live at retail.

15. Define methods to track product-service performance live at retail, including decision makers and escalation paths.

Define Key Staff and Decision Making Process and Decision Makers:

In addition to product-service assessment, it is imperative to identify key staff with unique knowledge, relationships, or otherwise critical to success.

16. Identify staff that will be working on the product-service-feature or related tools – and define them formally as 'key staff'.
    o Everything must be done to retain 'key staff' – obviously
    o For contractors – 'Key Staff' should be listed in the contract - and 'Remedy Options' laid out should any of them leave the project or company

17. Establish the decision making process, and who the decision makers are

    o All teams and products encounter problems – and with problems, come the need to make decisions… and not everyone will agree with each other

    o It is critical to establish a formal decision making process and the decision making authority escalation chain – and where the 'buck stops'

Focus Group Test The Idea- Validate Product Design, Functionality, and Polish:

Make sure the real-world agrees that your product-service-feature have value.

18. Focus Group Test Product Design, Functionality, and Polish… and then, Adapt Design, Fine Tune, Polish… or even major reset or 'Course Correct' if objective data merits it

Finding New Market Opportunities Is Not Easy:

No matter what tools or techniques at your disposal… it is not easy finding new market opportunities…

All the ideas in this episode are – just that – ideas. There is no hard and fast rule – or method – to finding opportunities.

My hope is you find some insight in this 'functional' narrative.

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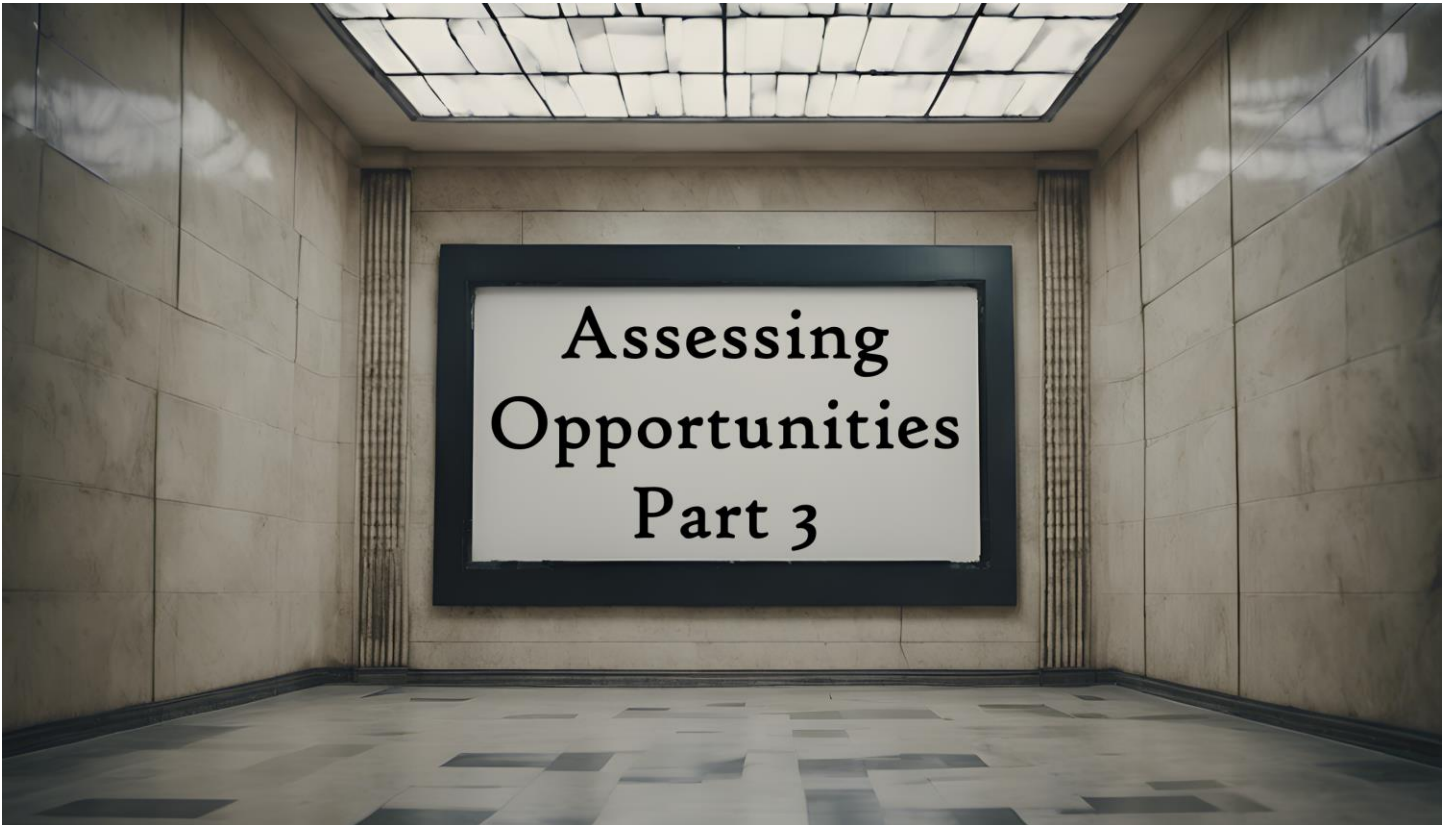
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E246 Assessing Opportunities Part 3 - Prototype Proof of Concepts and Features, Focus Test and Refine Product, Integrate Analytics.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55usge-e246-assessing-opportunities-part-3-prototype-proof-of-concepts-test-and-re.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/H98jjwjWpAU

Description:
Leverage Tech, Tools, Assets, Partnerships - Avoid Not Invented Here Syndrome.

Prototype Early, Prototype Often.

Build Proof of Concept Product-Service Experience – And Focus Group Test It.

Integrate Automated Testing.

Focus Group Test, Iterate Final Product to Achieve High Functionality & Polish.

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Leverage What You Have – Prototype the Rest

Leverage Tech, Tools, Assets, Partnerships - Avoid Not Invented Here Syndrome:

Leverage Existing Tech, Assets, and Partnerships…

Take advantage of work that was done already done; leverage tech, tools, assets, and relationships to catapult your development forward – and likely – reducing bugs – all while continuing familiar customer functionality. Leverage what you have – prototype the rest.

19. Formalize avoiding 'not invented here' syndrome.

20. Harvest and leverage existing tech, tools, assets, Partnerships… anything available to the team and product-service that will expedite delivery, improve quality, or make development better.

    o And give 'credit' where it is due… of course. Don't be a code, tool, or asset thief! Give recognition – where it's due.

Prototype Early, Prototype Often:

Prototyping – Early and Often…

Validate Concepts and Features – again - Prototype and Focus Test them… early, and often.

21. Prototype rough quality proofs and feature functionality (without polish) to establish concept feasibility, accessibility, and desirability
    o Early prototypes should be 'ugly' and 'fast & cheap' to make
    o Again – Prototype early, prototype often … in stages of quality

22. Polish the best - 'winning' 'Functional Prototypes'

23. 'Focus Group' Test the polished 'winning prototypes - for feedback and insight

24. Iterate prototype & polish loops – until 'ideal product-service, feature' is found and proven… or until the 'Time Box' runs out – the latter usually indicating 'good enough' or 'abort'

Build Proof of Concept Product-Service Experience – And Focus Group Test It:

Making a Proof of Concept…

Build an Integrated 'Proof of Concept' to prove the 'envisioned final product-service' is good - and delivers on its promises.

25. Convert the product-service prototypes into modules – that will be integrated into a Master Product-Service project – down the road… or be re-used.

26. Create Master Product-Service software – service (ideally, a game or cloud feature)

27. 'Focus Group' Test the Proof of Concept Product-Service - for feedback and insight

28. Iterate Proof of Concept & polish loops – until 'ideal product-service' is found and proven… or until the 'Time Box' runs out – the latter usually indicating 'good enough' or 'abort'

o It can be hard to cancel a product so late in the process – but it serves no one to release a 'bad' or otherwise 'unwanted' product… but there are times, canceling is the smart move…

▪ stop throwing good money, after bad…as they saying goes.

Build and Final The Product-Service:

Real Products and Services…

And finally – what stage is the opportunity at… is it already a built, real product-service, as it is intended to be delivered to the customer?

29. Assess / Create the final Product-Service software (still, ideally - a game or game tool, of course)

Integrate Telemetry and Analytics:

Telemetry and Analytics…

30. Integrate Telemetry and Analytics functionality into the retail product.

o Use telemetry to understand customer feature utilization and areas to improve.

o Also - Use telemetry to ensure Quality Assurance tests and exercises all user flows and product-service features. And – they have a fair, complete coverage of them.

Integrate Automated Testing:

Automated Testing…

31. Integrate automated testing – for variable range limits, and for anywhere a 'bot' can be used to traverse or simulate users and their behaviors

Focus Group Test, Iterate Final Product to Achieve High Functionality & Polish:

Objectively Assess the Opportunity…

Whatever stage the opportunity is – from pie-in-the-sky concept to ready-to-release product… make sure to objectively validate the experience and functional value with real customers.

32. I have said to over and over - 'Focus Group' Test the Final Product-Service - for feedback and insight

33. Finalize the Game with Quality Assurance testing for functionality, and Producers testing for experience quality and polish. They are two separate things that should be tested – by different people.

o As an aside – I suggest using subjective measures like 'quality and polish' using numerical range of 1-4, so people cannot sit in the middle without an opinion – as happens when people score 1-5 (which is remarkably 'standard' common with project managers). With 1-4: they must choose 2 or 3 – they must choose a side of 'good enough'…there is no true 'middle'.

Submit Product-Service for Online Publishing – Or Release to Manufacture:

Once confident in the product or service – Sign, Commit… ultimately - Submit for Publication - Release…

34. Submit the product-service for Online Publishing, or to Manufacturers for final validation and manufacture.

35. Distribute or Publish the Product-Service at Retail - Online

<u>Mouthful and Two Data Bytes:</u>

There you go…

Well – that was a mouthful and two 'data bytes'…

Seriously… I speculate – few people will have listened - through such a long-winded 'spiel'… on Assessing, Seizing, and Delivering new Opportunities.

So – hats off to you! You are a rare breed, and I hope there was something of interest or value for your time.

E247 JOBS ARE NOT UNIVERSITIES

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E247 Jobs Are Not Universities - Everyone Else Pays for Your Education at Work.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55usqa-e247-jobs-are-not-universities-everyone-else-pays-for-your-education-at-wor.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/okjVDbFwjPY

Description:
Taking Fun and Making Games Seriously – As Serious Business. Making Games Takes A Lot – to Create Your Dream Game.

Business is Not University: Business Is About Making Products, Researching, or Offering Services.

Everyone Else Pays For Your Education At Work.

It Is Incumbent On Everyone to Learn Within the Scope of Normal Duties.

Revisions In Force (RIFs), Layoffs Can Jettison 'Dead Weight' and Mismatched Staff.

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

<u>Working and Taking Fun & Games Seriously</u>

<u>Taking Fun and Making Games Seriously – As Serious Business:</u>

I have always felt making games was my pursuit of passion, my true calling - in life.

But making games is… not all fun & games. It is serious business.

Indeed –

- Professional Game Developers take fun and making games seriously

- They recognize they are in a serious business… even if they love it, love making entertainment and games

- They know they are making games for their customer, not necessarily for themselves

    o Though – it is 'awesome' when 'you, the developer' are the target market yourself.

    o But – professionals can make games for people and markets… that they do not enjoy or like to play themselves. They can succeed – because games are an art form, and they can adapt their craft.

<u>Making Games Takes A Lot – to Create Your Dream Game:</u>

Making games Takes A lot. It requires –

- A Brilliant Concept

- Team of DISCIPLINE AND DOMAIN EXPERTS

- Team sizes from a few to hundreds of people

- COORDINATION across Groups and Companies

- A LOT OF WORK

- And – A LOT OF MONEY

- Oh – And a Publishing Path to make all the hard work visible and available to the world

So – taking fun & games seriously… requires all that - and keeping an upbeat fun-loving creative attitude… while you stress and work your butt off to create your dream game.

<u>Business is Not University:</u>

Business is not a university. Let's start with that. Business is not a university.

And – jobs are not universities. Jobs are for work. Universities are for learning. Your job is not a university.

Business Is About Making Products, Researching, or Offering Services:

- Business *IS* about making products - or researching – or offering services… …in all cases - businesses deliver - some kind of 'output'.

  - You could say – you 'give' to your place of work, to your business… it 'takes' from you.

Business Is Not About Educating or Teaching – Unless It's a School:

- Business *IS NOT* about educating or teaching… unless, of course, the business is a school – or, maybe, an internship

  - Sure – people are expected to learn and grow their skills at work, but it is not the 'purpose' of the business – to teach its employees.

  - But staff education and training - on-the-job - is a 'given'… but - it is not a class with coursework, or assignments. You learn as you go…

  - Lastly – many companies may offer educational opportunities, but again – it is about making you contribute more…not about being a school just for the sake of learning

  - You could say – your company 'takes' from you at your place of work, for its business… and you 'give' to it for its success, so that it might in-turn further reward you

    - And of course – your business pays you for your rendered work, service

Everyone Else Pays For Your Education At Work:

You may learn at work, or even take classes… but your work duties remain; they still must be done.

Everyone else pays for your education at work…

Ask yourself –

- Where did your work go… that - you did not do - while 'in school'?

- Did your tasks pile up, waiting for your return to 'work' - so you must work longer hours or harder (or somehow, smarter) to catch up?

- Or - was your work so unimportant that it went undone and unmissed? …and there was no impact for losing time?

  - In such a scenario – you may want to update your CV, Resume…you may soon be out of a job… visibly, now measurably not offering tangible 'value' to the business… is not a good sign for your – continued employment.

- Or - did someone else take on your workload, so you could attend 'class'?

  - Even temps / consultants / contractors take people's time to ramp up and contribute, so taking time to 'learn at work' always costs teammates' time…which is 'on top of their normal job'

- What about co-workers lost time from friends, family… their pets? Or time to spend maintaining or improving their health?

- Was it selfish to take time off work - to learn and improve yourself?

  - Or - will it save time and offer greater impact long-term, so the hardship on others to 'pay' for your time - was worth it for everyone, not just for you?

- workload was required or someone else was needed to step up and take on your otherwise 'missed work' while 'in school'. If that's the case…you owe the team a lot…for covering for your 'education'.

It Is Incumbent On Everyone to Learn Within the Scope of Normal Duties:

Ultimately - people must deliver their 'normal' assigned workload - whatever it is - so others can see their friends, family, and pets… and attain work-life balance.

It is incumbent on everyone to learn outside core work hours, or learn on-the-job within the scope of their normal duties and responsibilities.

Revisions In Force (RIFs), Layoffs Can Jettison 'Dead Weight' and Mismatched Staff:

Revisions in Force (ROFs) or Layoffs… can feel impersonal and cruel, even evil.

- Poor management decisions or shifting business landscape and markets that result in business failure - and drives layoffs - is terrible. But…it happens. For good, or for bad… Layoffs happen for struggling businesses.

- Cleaning House of 'dead weight' and underperformers is a frequent driver for layoffs

  - Weak managers use layoffs to jettison 'dead weight', underperformers, resource leaches, and fringe & counterculture 'bad attitude', 'undesirable' staff. They avoid having the necessary hard conversations, informing staff of performance issues and even termination; they are pathetic and should be managers.

  - Good managers give people performance improvement plans (PIPs) and manage them to success, or out of the business.

  - Bottom-line: using Layoffs to 'clean house' … is 'weak'.

- Talent Reshuffle and Mismatched Skills Layoffs can be justified… or not

  - It is a difficult balance for a business that pivots toward new opportunities that require different skills and even domain expertise - that requires new and/or different people… for the business to train or terminate its mismatched staff

  - A good company will strive to find a 'fit' position for each employee during a re-organization or pivot to new opportunities… but it is possible there are no 'fits'

  - A bad company will 'turf' everyone without matching skills… without any effort to find a new position or train them

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Making Games is Not a University – Your Career and Future Are In Your Hands:

So – there you have it.

- Making games is not a university; it's important to take making games seriously… And – you should, likewise, take seriously - your job, your career, or whatever you do or create.

- Learning how to do your job – is your personal responsibility; it is not the responsibility of those you work for. It's on you to be, and stay, relevant and useful.

- There are justified times to end someone's career, and there are times- it is not justified.

Your career and future are in your hands.

E248 PURSUING YOUR NORTH STAR RIGHT HERE RIGHT NOW

Local File:
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55usu4-e248-pursuing-your-north-star-right-here-right-now.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
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Description:
Right Here, Right Now and The Pursuit of Your North Star.

The Past in the Mirror, Present Transient, Future North Star Destiny.

People Need to Work on Important Things Daily Towards the Ultimate Destination.

Don't Fall Prey to 'The New Shiny'.

Life is Like a Chair – Four Legs Solid, Three Legs Unstable, Two Legs or One You Fall.

Pursue Opportunities and Take Risks – One Chair Leg At a Time.

Right Here, Right Now and The Pursuit of Your North Star

Right Here, Right Now:

It is common for people to get caught up – dwelling on their past mistakes or risks ahead and how they might mitigate them.

Let's simplify the problem in one sentence, in a one-liner –

People burn time, emotion, and productivity to –

- o fear

- o consternation

- o imagined *potential* scenarios

Of course, my prior notion about 'just moving forward' applies here too –

- Don't fret about making the right decision… instead, make their decision right

  - o Usually through close monitoring and course correction – as things progress

But there is an overarching, simple, approach as well –

- 'Right Here, Right Now' – What is matters most, what will you do about it, what actions must be taken RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW… to succeed at what matters most, at what is most important

  - o 'Right Here, Right Now' – is a mindset, if not a mantra, that should be considered every single moment of every single day

  - o The idea is not to be mired in aspirations of tomorrows, or woes of yesterday…

  - o The goal is to be 'in the moment' - doing what needs to be done – unshackled by emotional and mental distractions

The Past in the Mirror, Present Transient, Future North Star Destiny:

Although 'Right Here, Right Now' is a powerful and 'forward-progressing moving' mantra…

- it is still important to leverage the past for its knowledge and insight

- it is also important to have near, mid, and long-term horizon goals

Over time, I developed a way of summarizing how I viewed Past, Present, and Future –

The Past is in the Mirror [the rear view mirror],

The Present is Transient [ephemeral, temporal]

The Future is What We Make of It [it's in our hands]

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A variation I have used –

> The Past is Behind Us,
>
> The Present is Tomorrow,
>
> The Future is Our North Star

It was a simple message – I hoped – that

- The past is done

  - Past emotions and suffering are anchors – that hold us back, and limit us

  - Being over – the Past should offer only knowledge, not pain or 'baggage'

  - But - the Past should empower and fuel the future – from motivating events, circumstances, people, or pets

- The present is passing; it is ephemeral; it is temporal. The moment it happens, it is Past

  - Investing towards your North Star - your future – everyday is important, ever chiseling towards your intended goals

  - Practice the "Right Here, Right Now" model – and, in every moment, do your best - shine and be excellent - as a Paragon in your skills, in your demeanor, and in your behavior.

- The future is what we make of it; it is in hour hands to craft our destiny - or let fate assign a random outcome

People Need to Work on Important Things Daily Towards the Ultimate Destination:

Managing people's confidence in the business and their role within it – can be hard.

It can seem like managers and employees alike need – a lot of soft, touchy-feely skills… with all this abstract stuff about managing emotions, doing what is most important in the moment 'right here, right now', and focusing efforts to navigate towards a longer term North Star.

> All the while – you have to actually *do the work*.

In my experience - People's productivity is heavily influenced by their happiness - and their belief - that what they are doing each day - matters…   They need to see - and believe – that there is an ultimate 'destination'… that merits their working towards it, even suffering to achieve it.

Let's define what a 'Destination' is –

- 'Destinations' are abstractly – products, services, pleasing people, deliverables, …

- 'Destinations' help to define the Finish Line, and shape 'What Done Looks Like'

- 'Destinations' offer clarity of Vision and of Mission, and thusly should inspire aspirations and motivations

- 'Destinations' should be the centerpiece of rally points

- 'Destinations' are important

Don't Fall Prey to 'The New Shiny':

It can be easy to see the 'new shiny' opportunity – like a new project, feature… even a new job.

And – when we see the pretty, attractive, new shiny thing… we are easily distracted, and may forget our other priorities and obligations.

The 'new shiny' could be something at a company's or in an individual's life or at their work.

It is imperative to watch out for 'The New Shiny'. It is – most often – a delusion, an illusion that will waste your time… and possibly kill your project, company… or maybe, just end your job.

Life is Like a Chair – Four Legs Solid, Three Legs Unstable, Two Legs or One You Fall:

The best way I have found to avoid 'falling prey to The New Shiny' – is to quantify company and individual 'lives' into 'pillars of life'… or – less grandiose – legs of a chair.

Yea – "Life is like a chair."

 Or – dramatically – "The Pillars of Life… are like a chair."

The idea is –

- Assign to each leg of the chair – a cornerstone of success, happiness – in life, business

    o For example, each of the four legs for *individuals* might be –

        ▪ Health (AKA Personal wellness - Physical, Mental, Emotional)

        ▪ Family (AKA Friends & Family – Immediate, Extended/Remote)

        ▪ Home   (AKA Where You Live - Geography, Culture, Climate, Environment)

        ▪ Money (AKA The Mullah - Income, Cost of Living/Expenses)

    o Whereas, the four legs for *companies* might be the opposite –

        ▪ Money (AKA The Mullah - Revenue, Cost of Operations/Goods)

        ▪ Family (AKA The People - Staff, Customers)

        ▪ Home   (AKA The Facilities – Buildings, Operations)

        ▪ Health (AKA Longevity of Product, or even Business)

- If any 'action' or 'move' would affect adversely or put at-risk two or more 'legs of the chair' – DO NOT TAKE OR PURSUE THE ACTION OR MOVE

- Most people and individuals cannot 'survive' the change curve – and transition – to anything that creates instability across multiple 'legs of the chair'

- The chances of failure doing anything beyond normal living your life - or running a business… are greater when changing how things are done, or pursuing new opportunities or ideas

    o The risks for destabilizing 'Chair Legs' are exponential for each leg put in threat

        ▪ One Leg: 2X RISK (twice risk of just running the business, living life)

        ▪ Two Legs: 4X RISK

        ▪ Three Legs: 8X Risk

        ▪ Four Legs: 16X Risk

- Bottom-line:
    o With 4-Legs: Living and Working in a known 'safe place' with predictable future

    o With 3-Legs: Mostly safe, unlikely to fall with effort. But –could still fall, and fail

    o With 2-Legs: Only the most skilled – or lucky – can succeed with only two legs

    o With 1-Leg: Virtually guaranteed failure… You are rebooting your life, business

        ▪ Good luck - with that!

Pursue Opportunities and Take Risks – One Chair Leg At a Time:

Although it is fundamental to risk-reward assessment –

      It is CRITICAL that you pursue opportunities - and take risks to achieve great things…

      …just do so – one chair leg at a time…

No College Degree for Me - Pursued Dreams and Aspirations:

I recall… making the decision –

- to NOT pursue a college degree.

- to NOT attend University.

- Yep – No College Degree for Me. I aspired for something more…

I decided to –

- to pursue my dream of telling stories.

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- of making humankind better through them – through their stories, lessons, and fun.

- and - of making computer and video games… because I had a deep passion – A DEEP LOVE for them.

I believed pursuing a career and life in computer and video game development –

- was a major opportunity – to pursue the blossoming - of the computer & video game industry.

- and – was an equally major - decision to make.

- And, of course – telling stories and games – were true to my core self – to my heart…

It was a lot of soul-searching and personal reflection.

But –

- I made the decision to pursue my dreams.

- And – if my pursuit of video game development - did not pay off… I could always pursue a 'normal job'… it was not – a one-way, one-time decision…

  o I could make my decision to 'go for it' –

    ▪ and either succeed,

    ▪ or burn some 'life' and time… and fail… but also - learn and gain wisdom.

    ▪ And – NO MATTER WHAT – I WOULD *KNOW* that I gave it a try…

      • How can you not pursue your dreams – when you can!?!?

  o You know –

    ▪ There is no reward – for those that do not take risk to gain reward –

      • If you do not play baseball – you cannot even hit a ball.

      • If you do not swing for the fences – you cannot hit a homerun.

      • Well – I was going for a homerun - in becoming a video game developer!

Perhaps –

- foregoing a college degree to pursue video game development – so early in my life –when the industry was still in its infancy… was the smartest decision I could have made for myself… at the time.

- I took one of the biggest risks of my life – and it paid off; I was successful.

  o History is proof of my success… and – of making the right decision.

Pulling Yourself Up By Your Own Bootstraps:

As the saying goes – I pulled myself up, by my own bootstraps.

I encourage everyone –

- to pursue their passion and dreams – above following tradition and expectations of them – blindly…

- to do… what is right for them.

- to not do… what people tell them to do…just because they told so.

- pull themselves up, by their own bootstraps.

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E249 ROCK SIFTER TUMBLER FOR EXPERIENCE SHAPED AND HONED LIFE

Rock Sifter and Tumbler of Life

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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55usv6-e249-rock-tumbler-and-sifter-for-experience-shaped-honed-life-and-skills.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
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Description:
Rock Sifter and Tumbler of Life – Sorting and Polishing People as They Evolve.

Don't Find Yourself Jumping from the Bell Tower, Down to Your Death:

Rock Sifter and Tumbler Are Part of Growing as a Person – They Are Good Things:

Do Not Protect Incompetence (including your own management/executives):

Your Life and Future Are In Your Hands – Don't Let the Tumbler or Sifter Define You.

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The Rock Sifter and Tumbler of Life

Rock Sifter and Tumbler of Life – Sorting and Polishing People As they Evolve:

My mother told me two metaphors when I was a child… that stuck with me –

- The tale of the Rock Sifter

- The story of the Rock Tumbler

Rock Sifter of Life – Sorting People to Where Their Maximum Place for Success:

1. She told me that there is a mighty metaphorical 'rock sifter' in life.

   a. It pulls everyone up its conveyor belt… until the 'holes' match the peak ability of the person ascending it. And – drop they go, into their highest potential role

      i. People find maximum success and happiness when they are in the right role

   b. However – some people manage to skip their 'proper' matching group, missing their intended rock sifter hole

   c. People that rise beyond their intended sifter hole… rise to their incompetence, and hurt themselves and others

      i. This is known as the Peter Principle – being promoted to the point of your incompetence

Rock Tumbler of Life –Polishing People as They Evolve:

2. She told me that there is a mighty metaphorical 'rock tumbler' in life.

   a. Everyone starts their life and career – with rough edges and sharp surfaces - from their inexperience and problem-solving in life and working with others

   b. But - Everyone is put into the rock tumbler of life… and it spins round & round, as the people within, bash into each other - over and over…and over

   c. Every 'turn of the tumbler' - rubs off another rough edge, or dulls another pointy or sharp surface – of the people inside its turbulent rotation

   d. The tumbler 'smooths' people – it softens their attitude and lessens their overreactions. The tumbler makes people 'better' - and easier to get along with - and to work more effectively as a team member, even as a leader

   e. The Rock Tumbler of Life is important for everyone to experience – so they can evolve and grow into wiser, more capable people

   f. However – some people manage to evade challenges in life, and do not enter the Rock Tumbler of Life. They may be ill prepared to deal with strife and loss, and may fail in life because they never learned how to cope and interact with problems and others.

g. And – some people stay in the Rock Tumbler of Life too long. They become dark minded, jaded, and can withdraw or even resort to extremes like suicide…or worse, violence against others

It is important to ensure people have exposure and experience to challenges and problems in life, or they will never learn and adopt the skills necessary to cope and adapt to challenging if not outright defeating situations.

Don't Find Yourself Jumping from the Bell Tower, Down to Your Death:

In reference to an earlier episode about a young woman committing suicide at U.C. Berkeley –

It is imperative –

Learn coping skills, so when you fail…

…you do not find yourself jumping from the Bell Tower, down to your death

No amount of plexiglass will stop you from finding 'somewhere' to jump from…

- o Oh yea – after the woman killed herself, the university installed plexiglass to stop others from killing themselves the same way…

- o Seems like 'why' is more important than 'how'…but that's just my opinion.

Rock Sifter and Tumbler Are Part of Growing as a Person – They Are Good Things:

So –

- The rock sifter of life will ensure you are placed in the right role for your skills and experience

- The rock tumbler of life will teach coping skills and how to succeed in life

The Rock sifter and tumbler are part of growing as a person. They are good things.

Do Not Protect Incompetence (including your own management/executives):

On the topic of people who rose beyond their talent – that rose to their level of incompetence, as per the Peter Principle… These are people that missed their 'appropriate' rock sifter bin – and were promoted too far, or prematurely; maybe…someday…they could be competent…but they are not now.

Well… It is natural to want to help other people.

- Your motivation to help people could be a genuine earnest desire to 'give'.

- Or – your motivation could be about you – that helping others makes you feel like a 'good person', which makes you feel good about yourself

Whatever the reason – or motivation –

- pause before helping…

- ask yourself – will help allow an incompetent person or process or operation continue?

- Helping 'bad' and 'failing' people, processes, or operations…actually hurts them in the long term

- Allowing failure to persist – hurts everyone

  - The incompetent person can't 'pull their weight', thereby making others compensate and take on their work *in addition to their own work*

  - The right *competent* people do not have the job…because an incompetent person has taken it

  - The incompetent person will not improve – because they are 'hiding in the folds of fat' as a corporate parasite

  - When incompetent people are in management or executive roles… they can destroy entire products, teams, and companies

  - Incompetent people hire *more incompetent people* - because they literally cannot tell the difference of talent vs no-talent people… because they are *themselves* no-talent people.

- do not help incompetent people – outside your job responsibilities

  - of course – do your job, and work diligently.

  - but – do the minimum required for 'incompetent people' - so they must do work themselves – and their 'incompetent' work will expose their dysfunction and inabilities

  - And – hopefully – a competent person will assume the position previously held by a 'loser', 'poser'… 'actor'.

Do not protect bad people as they bring down good people.

It is especially important not to protect the incompetence of executives, or your direct management chain. Making your own boss(es) look good – when they do not deserve it – will hold you and team back - and they may even get promoted to an even more 'harmful' position.

Your Life and Future Are In Your Hands – Don't Let the Tumbler or Sifter Define You:

Whether the rock tumbler or sifter – influence your life…

Remember – your life and your future are in your hands.

Make decisions that benefit yourself, your family, and your friends… and then your co-workers and business.

Don't let the Tumbler or Sifter define you… try to define yourself…

E250 MANAGING PROJECTS TO SUCCESS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E250 Managing Projects to Success - Schedules, Quality and Delivery Measures and Tests, Confirmation Bias.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55ut9w-e250-managing-projects-to-success-schedules-quality-delivery-measure-tests-.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/yaFwAz4-6-k

Description:
Schedules, Quality, Competence, and Metrics.
Scheduling - Using Actuals vs Estimates and Min-Max Time Units (Half-Day to Five-Day).
Watch for 'Human Convenient Round Numbers.
Watch for Unsupported PFA'ed Numbers (Plucked from Air / Arse).
Watch For Bull-Based Planning – Texan Long Horn Development.
People Tend to Be Indecisive – Especially to Avoid Being Cast in a Negative Light.
Confirmation Bias Corrupts Quality Assessment.
Quality – Scoring 1-4 Removes Indecisive 'Middle' Choice (be either side of 'good').
Single Owner Per Task or Delivery.
Dependency and Risk Assessment, Mitigation.

Schedules, Quality, Competence, and Metrics

Scheduling - Using Actuals vs Estimates:

Creating, tracking, and course correcting project plans and schedules is… hard… and very complicated. I am going to share some random ideas on I have on scheduling and planning.

When assessing schedules – I have many rules and guidelines. However – one jumps out as simple, and immensely important.

Always use 'ACTUAL' historical data for –

- task estimates

- dependency analysis

- risk mitigations

- quality of work-product

- deliverable performance

The goal is to use historical performance by individuals and teams (even divisions, or entire companies) … to create new plans and schedules.   And – to assess and review them - and track them over time.

Validating and refreshing schedules with Actual Progress of function and quality – is key to having confidence in a plan or schedule.

Bottom-line:

Schedule and Track using Actuals versus Estimates

Schedule - Min-Max Time Units (Half-Day to Five-Day):

When scheduling – I have seen many small things lead to missed deliverables, or many days (or weeks) overhang work.

I look for task estimation to include historical actuals first, but then I look to see the team's task breakdown and their dependencies with time capacity estimates.

It is important to –

- Define a Minimum, Maximum, and Probable Estimate for Time and Cost for any task – or its dependencies.

- Understand the variables that would lean towards Minimum or Maximum, and find ways to minimize 'Maximum Leaning' variable risk

- Avoid any task breakdown or capacity estimate under half a day, and more than five days.

    o Group small tasks together if they are less than half a day

    o Break tasks bigger than five days into smaller tasks – as dependency tasks

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Watch for 'Human Convenient Round Numbers:

Whenever people provide estimates…watch for suspiciously convenient 'human numbers'.

People tend to 'make up' numbers conveniently being increments or factors of the number of finger digits on their hands –

- Yep – People love to estimate things in 'magical human numbers –

  o One, Five, or Ten…

  o then Twenty, Fifty, or One Hundred…

  o And then Five Hundred or One Thousand…

  o You get the idea… big – round – numbers.

- When you see – magical human numbers – ask to see the 'build up' supporting tasks and details…

  o It is possible – that the estimate legitimately is a 'magical human number'…just – usually – improbable.

Watch for Unsupported PFA'ed Numbers (Plucked from Air / Arse):

I have used an acronym – PFA… when it seemed like estimates were just Pulled from the Air – without any analysis or assessment.

- I would make sure people knew my acronym of PFA upfront…

  o PFA stood for:

    ▪ Pulled From the Air – Plucked from The Air

- To make people remember they should avoid using 'PFA ESTIMATES' – I made it easy to remember… with a slightly vulgar variation…

  o Nasty PFA stood for:

    ▪ Pulled From Your Arse!

Watch For Bull-Based Planning – Texan Long Horn Development:

I have seen MANY, MANY times – project managers and lead engineers present excel sheets or MS Project or Jira tasks summaries…

  …All To Prove They Had… A Plan!

Well…

Just having paperwork or documented tasks and estimates written down…

- DOES NOT MEAN THERE IS A PLAN!!!

- DOES NOT MEAN PEOPLE ARE FOLLOWING THE PLAN!!!

- DOES NOT MEAN PEOPLE ARE TRACKING TO THE PLAN TIMELINES OR RESOURCES OR COSTS

Proceeding with an imprecise, incoherent so-called 'Plan' or schedule has a simple name –

> It is…

> > Bull-Based Development

'Bull-Based Development' is heralded by plans that are predominantly –

- Bull-Based Development - is often a collection of chicken scratch notes

- Bull-Based Development - may have piles of incohesive, incoherent deliverables – often without inter-team integration.

- Bull-Based Development – may use tasks with estimates (maybe even dependencies) – but the estimates have no supporting actuals - or any historical comps.

- Bull-Based Development - rarely shows a master roll-up plan – from subordinate deliverables, schedules, and teams.

. . .

To help people remember to watch for 'Bull-Based Development' Chicanery… I offer a very visual image to use…

- Bull-Based Development is a lot like a Texan Longhorn…

  - The 'Plan' has One Point Here…

  - And – it has another Point Here…

  - And – there is a WHOLE LOT OF BULL IN BETWEEN!

  - Don't Make a Texan Longhorn Development Plan!

Celebrate Risk and Reward Success:

On to another topic…

People tend to be indecisive. They are conflict averse. They often – go along for the ride – in the path of least resistance.

I contend people are afraid of failure... and that is why they avoid commitment - and take 'safer' paths. They worry of looking bad to others - or losing their job… and livelihood. These are real – legitimate – things to worry about.

But – innovation and extraordinary achievements come from… RISK.

It is typical –

> REWARD is PROPORTIONATE TO THE RISK OF PURSUING IT

So – my advice, is simply –

Celebrate taking risks,

And reward success.

People Tend to Be Indecisive – Especially to Avoid Being Cast in a Negative Light:

Again – people tend to be indecisive. They avoid 'taking a stand' or 'making a decision' whenever it might cast them in a negative light – even if it might, conversely, cast them in a positive light.

Yea – people tend to be indecisive, especially to avoid being cast in a negative light… even at the cost – of not looking good – in a positive light.

Confirmation Bias Corrupts Quality Assessment:

Objectivity can be hard...

Evangelizing and training 'objectivity'… may prove ineffective, if not useless. People… often… just cannot be objective. They are wired to believe in things – even if not rooted in fact.

That is the origin of confirmation bias… people are wired – to believe things – they already want to believe.

Superstitions Can Be Real – They Protect And Control People:

On a tangent – that is related, as you will see…

Superstition is real… at least to the person experiencing it.

The thing about superstitions is –

- Complying with a superstition rarely hurts you or anyone you know.

- Ignoring a superstition *may* hurt you or people you know.

Example –
- Villagers warn of a werewolf in the forest at night, so no one should enter the forest at night

- People that do not go into the forest at night – cannot, inherently, be attacked by the alleged werewolf

- People that ignore the warning – and enter the forest at night – vanish, never to be heard from again

    o Evidently – the lost people is proof, that there is a werewolf in the forest at night

    o However – it could be there is quicksand, wild animals, bandits, … all sorts of dangers – that are not werewolves

    o But – superstitions serve a purpose, they protect people

    o HOWEVER – superstitions can also be used to control people

Like superstitions –

- people have pre-existing notions and beliefs

- it imperative to get around their innate filters and distorting confirmation biases

- it is important to find ways to work with people… to ascertain what 'they really believe' once the superstition is dispelled

Quality – Scoring 1-4 Removes Indecisive 'Middle' Choice (be either side of 'good')

It may be impossible to extract 'honest' answers from people - given human nature to gravitate towards 'confirmation biases' – where they find things that justify their views - and reject things that oppose their views.

Rather than arguing with people – or pressing them relentlessly to provide a 'more true, and more accurate' assessment or estimation… it is preferable to find a 'tool' or 'process' that removes the emotion and bias from assessments.

As example, imagine a graphics-heavy user interface screen –

- Quality is both subjective and objective

    o There are functional things that must work, and work well – for quality

    o There are experience and interface 'flows' - and navigation - that must be intuitive – for quality

    o There are 'presentation' things – like graphic art and music - that must 'look good' or 'invoke emotion' – for quality

    o There are motivation and aspiration experience and risk-reward 'beats' - and related gamification to keep customer attention and interest

        ▪ This is not just for games… experience 'beats' make software flow intuitively, with each beat following its predecessor like a song

        ▪ 'Beats' can also reward 'discovery' or expanding feature use by the customer

        ▪ Visuals can be an instrumental part of 'beats', especially as 'tutorial' flows and cues

- Breaking down 'experiences' into its components… is not easy, or intuitive; however, it is necessary

- Once 'functionality' is separated from 'presentation' for quality assessment – it is necessary to stack rank the features and score them for quality.

    o Functionality is a Boolean test – it works, or it does not work

    o Presentation is a Score of 1 to 4 – avoids middle-of-road non-decision

        ▪ Using a traditional 1 to 5 Score - people often choose '3' to be safe without making a real assessment

- Using a 1 to 4 core - people must choose which side 'of the middle' their assessment lands… it is either 2 or 3 (there is no true, non-committal, middle score)

- In summary, about Quality –

    o Functionality: It works, or it does not work

    o Presentation: Score 1 to 4   (no true middle score, removes ambiguity)

Schedule – Single Owner Per Task or Delivery:

Back to some scheduling best practices…

A pet peeve of mine – is seeing scheduled tasks with multiple 'owners' or people working on them.

Assigning tasks to groups of people – even just a pair of people – removes trackability on their contribution and progress. It suggests the task was not reduced to small enough 'jobs' that can be pieced out to individuals.

Some people may argue that some 'jobs' just require multiple people. But - Knowing that each person will *do something* themselves – inherently proves that their work can be defined and listed separately.

It is a lazy manager and scheduler – that defends 'lacking detail or tasks for individuals'.

Schedule – Dependency and Risk Assessment, Mitigation:

No schedule should be without dependency, risk, and threat analysis… and corresponding detection, mitigation, and fallback options [should thing go too sideways to recover].

Make sure to delineate internal risks and external threats. Pay attention to the internal project risks and external threats to the project, team, company, or product-service at retail.

Books can be written about dependency and risk management…

And so – my goal here, is to simply state that no project should be greenlit to proceed without detailed dependency, risk, threat, and mitigation assessment and plan.

A Lot of Functional Information:

I have shared a lot of functional information. It may be one of the more boring, even disinteresting of my narratives. But – my hope is to share 'how to' insight… intermingled throughout my tales…

E251 UNDERSTANDING GAME DESIGN AND DESIGN DECONSTRUCTION

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E251 Understanding Video Game Design and Design Deconstruction - 2 to 3 Max New Things.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55ut42-e251-understanding-video-game-design-and-design-deconstruction-2-to-3-max-n.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/fOOP90kgiXE

Description:
Learn How to Use Design Deconstruction.

Introduce 2-3 Things New At Most…In Any Experience – Software or Game.

Make Sure There is a Risk-Reward Loop and Reward Gratuitous Play.

Give Something Valued, And Take it Away – To Motivate 'Vengeance Zealotry'.

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Game Design and Deconstruction

Game and Software Design Deconstruction:

I have often found it difficult to explain or show people what 'good software design' looks like.

Games, Productivity, Engineering… all forms of software… have experience designs. They have human-machine-interfaces ala graphic user interfaces (GUIs), experience 'beats', functional and presentation features and elements, visuals & sound, maybe music and video, …so much more.

Although there are courses on interface and software design… they always trail behind the newest and most innovative experiences and software.

It is important to adopt 'Design Deconstruction'… a method to dissect and understand what works and does not work.

Learned Formalized Design Deconstruction from Shyang Kong:

I learned to formalize 'Design Deconstruction' from an excellent game designer and think tank, and later in life – great business founder and leader as well…I learned a lot from Shyang Kong, while working alongside him in Electronic Arts Fusion (Canada).

How to Use Design Deconstruction:

Use the software, play the games, and deconstruct them –

- learn all there is about the target market's competing software – that you are pursuing and developing for

- break competitor software down into their 'feature', 'function', 'presentation' elements, experience 'beats', risk-reward loops, things that provide cues or guidance on what to do, where to go next in the game, setting and atmosphere reinforcements (often things like critters running around or flickering light from sconces… all things that make the world feel alive), …

- score 1 to 4, each competing feature, function, art, animation, presentation, sound, voice, and music, control, risk-reward, even things like accessibility and intuitiveness

- stack rank the features. Functions, and presentation elements according to its importance to the experience – thereby establishing 'cut-line' for 'harvestable' features or ideas

- Distill competitor software into categories; Score them 1 to 4, and stack rank them… just like was done for individual features, functionality, beats, and presentation elements

- Try to write a Developer and separate Marketing 'Positioning Statement' that can be a Razor to cut extraneous things out of the vision and design… as if you were going to pitch the game for development.

  o The idea here is this – if you understand the game well enough to write a pitch for the game as it will be experienced and another for developers to better understand the vision.

  o An example might be –

    Developer Pitch (goal: show game/TV/movie/book comparisons for vision) –

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- Be Ultima IV's Avatar of Virtue, in Dante's Inferno, to rescue your girlfriend - partnering with the worst villains in history - and escape from Hell ….

Marketing Pitch (a bit long, but gets the point across – emotion with vision) –

- Venture into Hell to save your girlfriend, engaging with and even recruiting tormented souls… Outwit the Devil and blast his minions all the way to the deepest depths of the Inferno … using garden hoses to rocket launchers – Hell has it all! Hell is Hot!

When designing a new experience – you will have a vast repertoire of prioritized, quantifiable concepts and software design 'wisdom'… gathered from all over the world and its designs.

I recognize and give credit to Shyang Kong for Design Deconstruction formalization and methodology.

I strongly encourage – that everyone use Design Deconstruction.

Atari Games Fundamental Rules for Games

While at Atari Games there were two fundamental design rules for all games…

Introduce 2-3 Things New At Most…In Any Experience – Software, Game, …:

1. In any game - Never introduce more than three 'NEW' things (preferably two 'new' things) – features, controls, whatever…

    a. Players may feel stupid or dumb...struggling to understand a lot of 'new', unfamiliar, foreign things…
        i. And feeling stupid – is not a fun experience; people did not buy your game to feel dumb

    b. Player may feel smart and wise…being able to immerse themselves immediately into a new game - and make progress to mastery quickly.
        i. Feeling smart and wise – is a fun experience for most people.

Make Sure There is a Risk-Reward Loop and Reward Gratuitous Play:

2. In every game - Make sure there is a reward with gratuitous play within the first minute of gameplay, and another reward every five minutes – at most – thereafter must be awarded.

    a. Rewards are key to players feeling 'accomplishment'. And - rewards encourage players to spend more, to drop a few more quarters into the arcade coin-op game machine… to keep on playing.

        i. After all – 'they were so close' to beating that…boss, level, …whatever.

        ii. And – the dopamine release will be impressive when the opposition is overcome by the player's ever-improving skill and gaming prowess

    b. Rewards deliver dopamine – making Risk-Reward Loops addictive

Give Something Valued, And Take it Away – To Motivate 'Vengeance Zealotry':

Another rule… I learned while contracting with Electronic Arts.

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Trip Hawkins at Electronic Arts suggested every experience needed at least one, if not multiple, major 'Hooks' and corresponding 'Losses'.

The idea was – to give something of great value – like a Skateboard, a girlfriend – or rockstar celebrity status, whatever… something the person values *a lot*.

And then – the sacred 'thing' or 'person' is taken from them, menacingly… …but there is a chance, a way, to reclaim the lost object or person.

Of course – the person will leap at the opportunity regain that which they cherished…

And, in having and losing – the person becomes radicalized, motivated like a zealot…

They will love your software – the experience – because of the way you designed it.

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E252 ISLAND OF BROKEN TOYS AND TALENTED GREAT PEOPLE

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E252 Island of Broken Toys and Unappreciated Broken People with Incredible Talent and Value.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55utaj-e252-island-of-broken-toys-and-unappreciated-broken-people-with-incredible-.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/ySzcraj2ru0

Description:
Being Crispy Heart – Judging Three People Runing Seven Other People's Lives.

Fusion was the Island of Broken Toys.

Unappreciated, Social Outcasts Related to Being a Broken Toy – Wanted Fusion.

Broken Toys Outpaced, Outshined 'Normal Employees'.

Suggestions on How to Work with Broken Toys.

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Crispy Heart and The Broken Toys

Being Crispy Heart:

Previously I spoke of how a few underperforming people on a team – can drag the otherwise 'good successful people' down - as they take on the work of training or doing the work for the incapable team members.

I shared how three people in a ten person team – that were unable to do their work - translated into additional load and impact on the otherwise 'capable, good' seven other teammates.

These were the 'cost' to the competent team members –

Given:

8. 3-People == 120 hours of 'normal' work weekly.

9. 7-People == 280 hours of 'normal' work weekly.

Therefore:

10. 7-People taking on the extra 120 hours of weekly work is about 17 hours of *additional* work - for every competent per person, every week
    a. So – everyday, each person must work an extra 3+ hours just to compensate for the failing team members

11. The competent team members lost those precious hours every week –
    a. They lost 17 hours they otherwise could have shared with their family or partner.
    b. They lost 3+ hours every day they could spend on personal goals or health.
    c. They lost all that time so they could not invest in learning or growing.

And – for my recommending removing the 'challenged three team members' from the PlayStation Portable (PSP) game, MVP Baseball… I was labeled 'Crispy Heart' - by its project manager – a French Quebec Engineering Major turned Project Manager, named Michelle Mancuso, at Electronics Arts (EA) in Canada.

That is a tale told earlier; however, it is important to repeat the 'reason' I was dubbed 'Crispy Heart'.

I hold the title of 'Crispy Heart' as a badge of honor – that I will have the hard conversations, and do the difficult things…when they are justified.

And – my alleged 'dark, cruel, crispy hearted' actions… are 'good', team and family saving protection by unshackling the anchors that are drowning them – removing the albatrosses from around their necks.

As 'Crispy Heart' – I am free to do what must be done, for the greater good of the team, product, customer, and company. I am proud to be Crispy Heart.

Everyone Wanted to Join Electronic Arts (EA) Fusion – Given Its Freedom, Success:

As Fusion rose in power – its reputation for doing things differently – outside the control and purview of Electronic Arts (EA) 'proper'… only beholden to EA Worldwide executives.

With our independence and success – Fusion attracted talented people, interested in getting in on the action of the rising star business unit, division.''

Fusion was the Island of Broken Toys:

Importantly – people from all over EA sought to join fusion –

- There were legions of 'normal' staff interested in joining the 'new, shiny, independent, successful business'

- Later – there were 'corporate gold diggers' that hoped to join Fusion – because it was so successful… that it paid better bonuses and stock grants than most other divisions.

- staff that felt disenfranchised or unappreciated, or even ostracized… saw Fusion as a last stop…before they would resign, and leave EA

- Quite a few people that hoped to join EA Fusion were – social misfits and anti-management and authority personalities. They felt 'outside' the teams they worked in

The most valuable staff that ever joined Fusion were those disenfranchised, 'last stop before leaving EA' people. I joked, 'they were *broken toys. They wanted - to be in the Fusion toy box. OTHER TEAMS - did not really want 'BROKEN TOYS' around, or to play with them.'

And so – Fusion became the 'island of broken toys'.

Unappreciated, Social Outcasts Related to Being a Broken Toy – Wanted Fusion:

It might sound offensive – if you do not feel rejected and discarded, like a broken toy. If you are one of those people – that feels unappreciated and a social outcast – you may well relate to 'being a broken toy'.

Fusion heralded the greatness of 'being broken' – because it meant you were special, and succeeded despite the challenges of 'other people'.

Broken Toys Outpaced, Outshined 'Normal Employees':

With the expanding reputation that Fusion celebrated and valued 'broken toys' – people that 'did not fit in' – extraordinary talent came to us, and helped make our division great.

In my experience – 'Broken Toy' Employees outpaced and outshined 'normal' employees… by a lot.

Working with Broken Toys:

As an aside – working with Broken Toy employees… requires an understanding - and free-latitude approach – most of the time.

The caring and feeding of Broken Toy employees comes down to this –

- give them the space to succeed

- don't micromanage them

- Adapt deliverables and how you work with them – and they will deliver great things

- Give quality one-on-one personal time with them

- Offer a mentor – for soft or hard skills, or just fitting in to the division

- Give them a real career roadmap – that they can believe in

- Be clear on the vision and mission of the company and products, and empower them to make it happen – part of the plans and course corrections… not just workers completing assigned tasks

- Give them the tools and support they need to do their job

- Strive to let them work on products, tools, features that they have a passion for

- And – let them 'free' to succeed

- Make sure – always recognize and celebrate accomplishments

Now – that list may seem 'obvious' – but somehow, many managers and executives don't do these things. They demand compliance and people to just 'do their jobs'.

So – I hope that you will embrace and benefit from your own Broken Toys.

Just remember – you must protect them, possibly on their own 'Island of Broken Toys'.

EAC AND EA Divisions and Studios Were Jealous of Fusion's Broken Toy Success:

Akin to the Island of Broken Toys – Electronic Arts (Canada) Fusion was an outcast relative to EA Canada 'proper'… and the rest of EA's divisions worldwide.

Everyone was jealous of the 'attitude' Fusion – and all its success, even with people previously thought to be failures or 'bad apples' working on our teams. In fact – they despised the fact that some of our top performers and innovators were those 'broken toy employees'.

Simply – EA Canada and EA Divisions & Studios globally were jealous of Fusion's broken toy success.

E253 RISE AND FALL OF EA CANADA FUSION

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E253 Rise and Fall of EA Fusion in EA Sports - Tech Jedi Council, Success Influence Reverse Takeover from Within.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55utl0-e253-rise-and-fall-of-ea-sports-fusion-jedi-council-reverse-takeover-from-w.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/BImD8edg1JQ

Description:
Richard shares a tangent on how criminals 'interview for their next job' while in prison – because that is where the criminal 'job network' was.

EAC Fusion Was Wildly Successful – And So Could Do Whatever It Pleased.
Other EA Divisions Saw Fusion as a Threat – That Could Expose Their Failings.
EAC Fusion Were Nation-Loyal Pirates Within Corporate EA.
Reverse Takeover from Within EAC.
"Jedi Council" – Am I a Jedi Knight or a Sith Lord.
"Jedi" Council, Central Tech, and SWAT.
'Recruiter Test' of Loyalty Before Raise, Bonus, or Promotion – Reject Cold Calls.

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Criminals Interview in Prison for Their Next Job:

Mostly unrelated to my tale to this point… but this random tidbit comes to mind…

My mother used to say to me –

- Prison is where criminals network with each other

- Inmates interview for their next 'job' while in jail

I speculate – like prison – nefarious immoral, even amoral, people – will network and form syndicates to 'do bad, self-serving things'… but not in prison… instead, in mega corporations.

Also – like criminals interviewing for jobs in jail – people interview with other corrupt corporate 'inmates' – so they can join their syndicate… and 'do evil together'.

Other EA Divisions Saw Fusion as a Threat – That Could Expose Their Failings:

Let's get back to the tale of Electronic Arts (Canada) Fusion… And – specifically, some tales of how the group grew, structured its teams and organization, and how it ultimatelt – fell… and died.

Well…

With Fusion's reputation - being outside 'proper EA' - we were quickly seen as - 'isolated, separated, and elitist' – a 'competitor' business unit to them and their interests.

Other divisions saw Fusion as a competitor – a direct threat – that might take away their products – their business - or show how bloated and ineffective their studios and teams were.

Fusion represented the light of truth, that could pierce the veil of corporate deception… and that made many people uncomfortable, if not outright terrorized… of being exposed, and losing their cushy, gravy train jobs.

EAC Fusion Was Wildly Successful – And So Could Do Whatever It Pleased:

With most other EA groups viewing Fusion as a threat… our division had few allies. But – our success – gave us the power of EA Worldwide…of Electronic Arts Olympus and its Might.

But Fusion was wildly successful…

And so – Fusion could do whatever it – dang well - pleased!

EAC Fusion Were Nation-Loyal Pirates Within Corporate EA:

Largely operating 'alone' in the vast oceans of Electronic Arts' staff and studios… we were 'different'.

Fusion was rogue. We countered the 'establishment'. Fusion had its own culture.

I began evangelizing - that Fusion was like a pirate ship – broken off from the British Royal Navy – and we were succeeding where the Navy could not. We won battles for the Empire, though we were pirates. We secured loot and booty from competing nations – and never the from the British.

The idea was this – Fusion was a splinter group from the Royal Navy – that became nation-loyal pirates.

Like pirates amidst the era – Fusion operated with virtual impunity, empowered by the great corporate machine and EA Worldwide executives… originally because one of its executives – Warren Wall - split off as a Broken Toy himself, and formed Fusion with the original Four (of which I was one).

And – Warren Wall - had close a relationship with EA Canada and Worldwide executive Paul Lee and most other Worldwide leaders. Therefore, he invariably came out the victor in any escalated conflict.

No one messed with Warren Wall…

And so –

No one messed with EA Fusion…

Recognizing the jealousy – Fusion evangelized its image - as Free Agent Pirates - within EA Canada. That 'image' helped shape the 'brand' of Fusion – as a scrappy, underdog… that could pull off the impossible. And – we attracted many people, seeking to leave their teams and join Fusion… as their last bastion.

The Road to 85 People and Metacritic – and Beyond:

I referenced this before… but for completeness…

Fusion began as a 4-person group - and grew to 325 employees; we had nearly that again in contractors, bringing Fusion to over six hundred people.

We declared our first business unit milestone would be to make a minimum of 85 Metacritic scored games – and to hire enough people to reach 85 employees. It was our DOUBLE-DEFINITION 'ROAD TO 85'… it was cute, and it made for easy watercooler conversation… that kept people focused on our mission.

Well – we achieved both… And kept expanding. Like I said – we grew insanely in size, and in speed of growth.

Once we achieved 85 staff members – we set a new target of 150 - and then to 250 - and then to 325. Fusion stopped growing at 325 employees… and about 300 contractors.

Reverse Takeover From Within EAC:

Often frustrated with the stupid decisions – and outright incompetence – of Electronic Arts (Canada) / EAC executives… Pauline Moller, and Moira Dang.

Seeing how they were allowed to continue their reign over EA Canada – and even were bonused for it… My manager of the time, Tony Lam, and I mused…we should pursue a reverse takeover from within EAC.

Yea – we envisioned being so successful – that EA Worldwide would give us more and more products to translate to new platforms, make sequels for, and make new products.

And – with our success, EA Worldwide would keep giving our business unit, division more money and more products…

To my analogy of Fusion being an ex-Royal Navy vessel, turned Pirate Ship –

Fusion planned to plunder and sink actively opposing country vessels – that the Empire otherwise would let it sail with impunity and total independence.

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…even if British Citizens and the Royal Navy looked down upon us… we would continue to be pirates.

"Jedi Council" – Am I a Jedi Knight or a Sith Lord:

With a love of science fiction – and Star Wars – I formed the "jedi Council' in Fusion.

The Fusion Jedi Council was comprised of all of its Engineering Technical Directors (TDs). I say that – because the one and only Technical Art Director…was, well, an artist with deep knowledge of 3D art packages…therefore, he was not a true TD; he was a Technical Art Director (TAD).

I managed the Central Technology group directly – as well as my dotted-line oversight of every team, engineer, tool, pipeline, and product.

Because of the "Jedi Council" – people sometimes joked - if I, Crispy Heart, was really a Sith Lord [from Star Wars] - as opposed to a Jedi Knight.

In other words – they mused if I was an incognito 'dark lord' covertly controlling and corrupting people and the business… or if I was a Jedi Master overseeing all products, people, and tech.

Of course – I was a Jedi Master.

"Jedi" Council, Central Tech, and SWAT:

Although I directly managed Central Technology and the Technical Directors, I was a dotted-line manager overseeing the rest of the engineering and technical staff. Over time – I likewise became the dotted-line manager for all management as well.

People in Central Tech built common tools and support building games for testing and eventual manufacture and release. But – they also operated as SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) for tech and products. They would be called in – to solve hard problems, or optimize games for size or speed. SWAT *very often* saved the day.

Central Tech built cross-platform technology that allowed games on different platforms to re-use code, assets like art, sound effects, music, levels, telemetry… even online lobbies and gameplay services, etc.

And – SWAT would help integrate and educate staff on 'new shared tech'.

'Recruiter Test' of Loyalty Before Raise, Bonus, or Promotion – Reject Cold Calls:

An interesting discovery I first encountered at Electronic Arts – and later saw at Microsoft… were 'tests of loyalty' before a promotion was given, or major raise or bonus granted.

Companies and managers would test loyalty- especially before promotion or more authority & leadership…. They would ask allied outside employment recruiters or companies solicit you for an interview; and if you take it- no promotion for you. But May do interview to see how disloyal you are…

Atari Games and original EA at Chess drive - later Redwood Shores in Foster City, CA did loyalty tests…

Charles Weitzer recruiter retained as regular loyalty tester … and sometimes even asked to poach disloyal… company asks him to get disloyal people out of company…excise the cancer.

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Ironically – Charles made money either way… he made more if they sought a new position – which would happen because they asked to interview for new jobs… or because they would subsequently be passed over [due to their disloyalty] for recognition, and become disgruntled…and seek a new job themselves, anyway.

It was a win no-matter-what for 'Tests of Loyalty' by Employment Recruiters.

But – you could lose *big* responding to that seemingly innocent phone call by a recruiter…

- You – just – never know… So – do not respond to a 'cold call' job opportunity.

- Reject cold calls

Fusion Would Eventually Be Dismantled and Consumed by Rest of EA, Losing Execs:

Although there are many more tales of EA Fusion… let's flash forward to the end of Fusion…

Fusion had lost Warren Wall and our Worldwide Executive champions – through their attrition, pursing different opportunities themselves… usually outside EA.

We did well – for a few years – without Warren's protection. But… the hordes threatened non-Fusion people…clawed at, and tore down, and eventually eroded Fusion… The death knell was EAC's inserting 'loyalist' that was functionally incompetent, and a bad leader too.

EAC's 'new leadership' chased the talented people away, and made poor product and development decisions… They destroyed Fusion in less than one year.

Without major executive protection, or continuing success to protect the division – the sharks circled Fusion. The 'Royal Navy' turned its guns - on our lone 'pirate ship' - called Fusion.

And – they fired!

Fusion swiftly sank… it was dismantled, and consumed… by the rest of EA.

. . .

Let me emphasize – there will be little, to no, success… without executive support, without a powerful corporate influential champion - looking out for - and defending you and your interests.

And – no amount of success… can protect you - from corrupt 'leaders' - and big corporations where 'evil can hide in its folds'.

You need a superhero, a champion – if you hope to be successful in a mega corporation.

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E254 KAIZEN METRICS AND EVER IMPROVING

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E254 Kaizen Continuous Improvement - 10 people 10 Percent Better - Constructive Guidance vs Criticism - Tough Message Sandwiches.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55utlg-e254-kaizen-continuous-improvement-10-people-10-percent-better-and-message-.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
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Description:
Kaizen – Continuous Improvement.

Mentorship Program and Engineering Training and Bigger Picture "Ted Talks".

Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) and Hiring & Firing Are Your Friends.

Constructive Guidance and Resistance to Criticism Sandwiches.

Make 10 People 10% Better – Double Your Value – Compounds and Spreads.

Making People and Products Better - Kaizen

Many Ways Exist to Improve Performance and Success:

There are many ways to improve the performance of your team.

And I have tried – many, many ways to help people succeed – to become better at their jobs, or even in their personal lives. But… in the end, there has never been a one-size-fits-all for people and their lives and careers. And so – I am going to share some random tales of things trying to improve people's performance and success.

And – with individuals improving their skills, products will be better and consumers better served and satisfied.

Kaizen – Continuous Improvement:

The word 'Kaizen' – in Japanese – generally translates to 'Continuous Improvement'. The most notable renown corporation that evangelized its adoption of Kaizen was – Toyota, first at its Japanese Headquarters…and then exported culturally to its operations globally.

And so – I will share how Kaizen's philosophy – of continuous improvement – was at the heart of making people, teams, and products great… at EA Fusion.

Mentorship Program and Engineering Training and Bigger Picture "Ted Talks":

One example I have tried to help people thrive and flourish was – a mentorship program… where veterans were paired with less experienced people, so they can 'show them the ropes' and teach them how to be more effective at their job.

I set up a formal mentorship program for the engineers within our division, and created instruction, guidelines, and examples for people to leverage and learn from… especially in mentorship sessions.

I presented 'Ted Talk' style 'how to be an effective mentor' sessions, and shared numerous educational sessions on new platforms or program languages, algorithms, code & data optimization and pre-baking fixups, and numerous tips & tricks… not to mention new Central Technology being rolled out.

The mentorship program was so successful – that EA Canada adopted it to use throughout Canada. And – even EA Worldwide shared it out to the rest of EA Studios, as something they might consider replicating or adopting.

I am proud to have been instrumental - in greatly improving staff's talent within Electronic Arts.

Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) and Hiring & Firing Are Your Friends:

Do not let 'low performers' bring down the team's productivity and its morale. Excise underperformers – but only after offering a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

You owe it to the team…

- to be a good manager

- to ensure everyone knows what is expected of them

- ensuring everyone knows how they can grow their skills - to maximize their efficacy

- to have the hard conversations – to manage up, or out…

Constructive Guidance and Resistance to Criticism:

There are potential reactions from having hard conversations with people –

- they can get upset

- Sometimes – they become enraged

- Rarely – they become destructive, even violent

No matter how nice you are, or how you package the message… many people will still struggle to embrace constructive feedback. And worse - some people will not accept criticism – at all…period.

Even Criticism Sandwiches with Positive Bread Surrounding Negative Meat Fails:

Indeed – for some people – There is no criticism 'sandwich' good enough to deliver the message successfully – such that they 'hear it' and can 'act on it'.

A 'message sandwich' with a positive introduction and positive conclusion… should make the nasty taste - of the 'meat of the matter' - criticism, palatable.

One Engineer Rejected His Criticism and Guidance – on 'Not Breaking The Build':

I recall one incident of an engineer, named Jamie, that had a very sour response to being given constructive criticism – on 'how to not break the build' in this case.

Jamie frequently checked in code - into a shared version controlled project – into its main source code branch… He committed code that he did not test with current 'main line' branch of code…and, invariably, broke other people's code. …and would blame them for the main branch of code no longer working.

Jamie rationalized it everyone else's 'failure' – because they should fetch his new files - and make their code work with them – if, somehow, he had done something that made their work incompatible with his.

Whatever was wrong, however – in no scenario – was it *ever* his fault. It was *always* someone else's fault, and thus their job - to fix 'his main line branch breaks'. Again - it was never his job, as he was not to blame – of course. And yes – he rejected all blame and responsibility, for his role in any 'failings'.

One Rage Quitting Engineer – Formatted Network and Local Data Out of Spite:

One day – that engineer, Jamie, broke the build for the seemingly thousandth time…

Whatever the count was…it was high.

Jamie was making the team miserable, and the game was always in an uncertain, unstable state. Things were not good… and he had to address his shortcomings - or be exited from the team – likely fired.

Well – he was, once again, un-receptive to 'constructive guidance'. But this time – he was informed that without remedy, he would lose his job.

Jamie flipped out! He swore – profanities flew in every direction, at every person and thing… Jamie was steaming mad - and returned to his desk. Whereupon – he promptly formatted all network drives he had access to, the version control source depot, and then he formatted his own computer's hard drive.

And then…

> HE RAGE QUIT!!!

Yea – he declared out loud, "I QUIT"… so loud that all in the building's main floor could hear his words… of his abandoning them, leaving the team.

Security was called… and he was escorted out of the building.

. . .

But… there was damage. People were disturbed. All of his work on his local computer was lost. Restoring the network drives would take a day, and there would be wasted time as people synchronized their changes since the last backup was made.

Yea – the loser engineer 'rage quit' and hurt the entire team. Everyone he had considered a friend – turned on him, as he dumped his fury all over them as MORE WORK for them. He already caused strain with breaking the build… and now – he flamed - and rage quit. No one had any respect for the engineer – after seeing his pathetic, immature destructive behavior.

It was not just his mediocre quality of work – and his inability to take criticism – but he was inconsiderate of his fellow workers and alleged 'friends'…by throwing all that extra work onto them. He did not care – at all – about his 'friends' or 'colleagues'.

…yea – real nice…NOT!

The Sting Takes 24-Hours (sometimes a weekend) to Become Rational:

Most people – even the best of us – struggle to accept criticism… even if we do not rage quit or melt down like Jamie the engineer…

We still feel 'the sting'. Criticism hurts. It stings. It smarts. It does not feel good.

But… criticism, when constructive, provides insight into problems and recommendations for possible solutions.

And – people will see the 'benefit' and glean insight from the criticism… once they are over, recovered from 'the sting'.

When people first hear something negative, especially something negative about them… their 'cackles' go up, their guard goes up, and their frontal cortex lights up like a storm of emotional rejection and potentially managed (or unmanaged) fury.

It is tough to accept or embrace something negative about ourselves… and so – give people time to recover from 'the sting'.

In my experience –

- Most people need 24 hours, a full day, to recover from 'the sting' of constructive criticism

- Some people need a weekend to recover from 'the sting' constructive guidance

- And for those that need more than a weekend – 'grow up' and 'get over it'… or get out!

There you have it delivering negative information to people usually results in their inability to rationally respond until they recover from 'the sting' from the hurtful information – usually 24 hours up to a weekend to process it - and get over it.

Make 10 People 10% Better – Double Your Value – Compounds and Spreads:

During manager-employee one-on-one meetings – I always made sure to emphasize my '10% Better' Mantra.

I would say –

- Rise each day - and ask yourself, "How can I help someone become 10% more productive or innovative today?"

- If you can help someone achieve 10% more each day…and they can help another person achieve 10% more… once ten people have done so, it is like an entire EXTRA PERSON joined the team…for free…and people are proud of helping each other… do great things.

- If you can train someone to be 10% better – forever more- then incredible!

    o Imagine – training 10 people to be 10% better in a year. The team would be strong – as if they had an extra person on the team. …all because of deliberate effort to find ways to help people be 10% better…

    o And imagine – if every year, everyone got 10% better… the compounding Excellence…incredible, awesome!

- I would suggest – new tools & libraries, frameworks, processes, workflows, …anything that makes people create higher quality, fewer bugs, and deliver faster within allocated resources…is a massive win for the customer, for the company, for the team, and for them.'

- Inspiring teammates with leadership, encouragement, side-by-side help, and just being a cheerleader for them can be enough…sometimes…to achieve that extra 10%

Strive – ever year- to improve everyone you work with - to become 10% better at their job. Your role in making people better… greater - will be recognized eventually - and you should rise and be promoted - over time.

    After all – what company would not seek to retain and reward – a star employee that makes everyone they work with better, while they do their own work?

Throughout my career – I would both strive to improve myself constantly - and seek to empower and help others be great… with me.

'10% Better' is an example of one of my many Continuous Improvement messages… one of my Kaizen messages.

Kaizen – Japanese Word for Continuous Improvement:

So again – Kaizen was a focusing lens – to remind and hone people's commitment to ever-improving, and ever doing better… for themselves, for the team… and - most importantly - for the customer.

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With one word – so much can be conveyed… and rallied behind.

'Kaizen' - 'Continuous Improvement' – something worthwhile for everyone… to pursue.

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E255 STAYING FOCUSED ON THE MISSION

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E255 Staying Focused on the Mission - Defined Done, Cut Lines, What Good and Success Look Like, Feature Function Pillars, Product Marketing Razors.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uttq-e255-staying-focused-cut-lines-what-success-look-like-feature-pillars-and-m.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
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Description:
TBD
Work Towards a Plan, Not Towards a Goal or North Star Alone.
Venn Diagrams – Job, Game Team, and Central Team Responsibilities.
Having an Idea is Not Special – Delivering an Idea IS SPECIAL AND MAGICAL.
'Average' Sees the Need for Something – 'Genius' Sees the Solution for Things.
Genius is understanding what you were not taught (self-learning comprehension).
Three to Five Pillars for What Matters Most (WMM) and Stack Ranked Features, Tools, and Work.
If Everything is a Priority (is Important), Then Nothing Is a Priority (or Important).
Be Third to Cross the Minefield.
And so much more…

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Keeping The Team Focused on The Mission Can Be Difficulty:

It can be difficult to keep people focused on their work or the mission, especially when it spans - months or even years. And – finding ways to help people work together… is exponentially more difficult - as teams grow in size - and projects expand in scale.

There are many ways to help people and teams - to stay focused on the mission.

I feel that my many mistakes, missteps, and failures… afford me a unique perspective… to speak of things that *DID* work for me – out of a multitude of failed or poorly executed ideas.

Here are a few ideas…that come to mind.

Work Towards a Plan, Not Towards a Goal or North Star Alone:

While I extol the value of a North Star to keep people motivated and moving in the right direction. A North Star - shines the way forward; it highlights and showcases 'Goals'.

However – North Stars do not contain details or plans or schedules. They paint a broad stroke vision – that people can rally around.

. . .

Therefore – the team needs a formal 'plan' that they can work towards, which will lead them to the North Star… to achieve the objective – to fulfill the goal.

Venn Diagrams – Job, Game Team, and Central Team Responsibilities:

Another tool I have found useful… is the Venn Diagram.

Venn diagrams have often been vilified – as overused, or unable to convey useful information.

But – it is the incompetent person that over-uses or abuses the 'Power of the Venn'… Diagram.

Well, anyway – I have found Venn diagrams to be instrumental in showing how groups work together, and where their responsibilities are uniquely their own…and where they are shared, overlapping with another group.

I, likewise, used Venn diagrams to show different job roles and how they overlapped in some areas…but had unique discipline responsibilities as well.

Fusion's 325 Full Time Employees and 300+ Contractors… needed to know what groups existed and how to interact with them.

A Master Group Venn Diagram showing all Fusion groups … was a keystone to understanding and navigating and working within EA Fusion.

Don't let people vilify great tools… if they can be useful to your objectives.

I have found Venn diagrams to be highly valuable… in the right situations.

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Having an Idea is Not Special – Delivering an Idea IS SPECIAL AND MAGICAL:

So many times… someone, somewhere – would say to me, "Hey, I have an idea…"

Of course…

Everyone has ideas.

The magic is not 'having an idea'.

The magic is DELIVERING THE IDEA.

'Average' Sees the Need for Something – 'Genius' Sees the Solution for Things:

Let me say it more succinctly –

- AVERAGE PEOPLE - SEES THE NEED FOR SOMETHING   - they have ideas

- WHEREAS - GENIUSES SEES THE PROBLEM, AND ITS SOLUTION   - they make it happen

Genius is understanding what you were not taught (self-learning comprehension):

On the topic of 'genius'…

I have concluded that true genius –

- genius is a person's ability to understand things they were never taught

- genius is the ability to self-teach, to self-learn and comprehend new things

- genius is the ability to retain and recall knowledge – and apply it in familiar and unfamiliar situations

Let me emphasize these two points -

- genius is the ability to apply knowledge in different ways - than it was originally learned

- genius is seeing and doing things differently, not working at them 'harder' – but rather working at them 'smarter' – from a different tact.

What Matters Most (WMM):

I have shared the principle of What Matters Most (WMM) previously. Dave McCarthy – at Fusion – first coined 'What Matters Most'…and it stuck.

WMM was simply an acronym - as a rally cry - to staff and teams - to categorize and break down features and tools - and to prioritize them - so the team focuses on the most important things…

Therefore, with a prioritized feature and tool list - the team will focus on –

On What Matters Most

WMM should not change much… if at all. WMM should be like the points of the North Star. They may flicker a bit – but they are always there, shining the path for the team to follow.

And – they do not change much, from day to day.

Three to Five Pillars for What Matters Most (WMM):

I have found it useful to only have three to five 'WMM' pillars. They are major features to a product, tool, or service. The product would obviously be 'incomplete' without any of the WMM features.

However – There may be other features or tools that are not under a WMM pillar… but still needs to be done. Even things like Technical Debt must be 'paid by engineering' eventually…even if it is not WMM.

In general – WMM is like a MAJOR Feature List, with optionally a supplemental list of MINOR features. The point is – a product would be unacceptable without its MAJOR (AKA 'WMM') features.

Stack Ranked Features, Tools, and Work:

Much like What Matters Most focusing on the top MAJOR features of a product… ALL features and subordinate features, tools, and work –

- They should be prioritized for importance to the product (score 1-4, so there are no middle-of-the-road scores for indecisive staff)

- They should be grouped with dependent or related deliverables

- Finally - they should be stack ranked relative to each other… with a likely 'cut line'

Keeping the Stack Ranked Features, Tools, and Work list with a cut-line helps the team know where they should *not be spending their time*… they should be focused on things at the top of the list, and work downward… specifically: they should not work on anything below the cutline… and they should never start from the cut-line and work upwards – always work on the most important WMM things – at the top of the list - first…

If Everything is a Priority (is Important), Then Nothing Is a Priority (or Important):

I just want to emphasize that it is common to see people argue how so many things are a priority - or are important. However – if everything is a priority, or is important, than nothing is more important or higher priority than anything else.

Therefore – if everything is a priority, nothing is…

Therefore – if everything is important, nothing is…

What Success Looks Like (WSLL):

What Success Looks Like (WSLL) can easily be confused with What Good Looks Like (WGLL)… But WSLL is very different…

WSLL it is about the 'finish line', the 'end state'. Whereas – WGLL is about the behavior, the journey to achieve WSLL.

WSLL should primarily be measured with a clear description of what 'done looks like' and how crossing the finish line will be measured. …and – if there are 'failure' states – the opposite of WSLL.

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You must know failure, to avoid it… and, thus, to succeed.

WSLL should use Key Success Indicator metrics, comparisons, and 'what done looks like'.

What Good Looks Like (WGLL) – Simple Ideas Can Be Powerful, like WGLL:

When I worked with Dave McCarthy at Electronic Arts Fusion, he came to work one day and declared we should focus on What Matters Most. It was simple… and we made it stick.

Simple ideas… can be powerful.

What Good Looks Like (WGLL) describes individual and group behavior. It describes how each person, each discipline (like engineer, artist, producer, designer, program manager …), and each group should engage and interact with others… and what was expected of them at their experience level.

WGLL evolves with each person and group.

For example – WGLL for a senior engineer might include mentorship of others, whereas WGLL for a new hire might include networking across disciplines

WGLL should use Key Performance Indicator metrics to make objective otherwise subjective opinions on 'behavior'.

For example – a KPI might be how many mentorship meetings did a senior engineer have with a junior engineer each month.   WGLL may indicate senior engineers should meet weekly with mentees…and so – this KPI would be useful to track the education of less veteran staff.

. . .

It might be key – to making everyone 10% better…

Draw on the 'Cave Wall' Whiteboard Graphing to Visualize and Illustrate Problems:

I am just going to say it… Pictures are really, worth a thousand words. Well, I love words. I do… but pictures… are valuable too.

As an extreme – in a meeting once, an executive named Bing Gordon, once said to me -

> "For the love of God, a picture… give me a picture…"

He was emphatic. Almost pleading.

I suggest – when possible –

- use whiteboards

- Use visual aids

- Draw diagrams, lines, circles, mind maps, … to move ideation and words…to images and ways to group concepts and thoughts

- Use colored markers to further delineate and group things

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There is something simple and intuitive – to draw on the cave wall to illustrate our thoughts and ideas.

The whiteboard is our corporate 'cave wall'. Use it! And use all its marker colors!

I use whiteboards for everything… visualizing problems, making mind maps, showing relationships, collaborating with groups of people.

I use different marker colors – for categories or groups.

I add 'sticky notes' to Whiteboard 'drawings' and 'writings'… for WHOA! MORE BRAINSTORMING, COLLABORATING POWER!!!!

When in doubt – use the whiteboard… and consider bringing in stickies.

You can also – give specific colored markers to individuals – to separate and see their ideas easily.

Group Names Can Influence Thinking – Example is 'Us vs Them':

As an aside – I found often people want to name their teams… especially if they break out into smaller 'task force, problem solving' teams within a greater, larger meeting.

I have railed against people dividing themselves into cliques, clubs, or groups…that are not already defined as part of the organization.

Group Names Matter!

In order to make my point… I would walk up to the whiteboard – and make two columns for team members – that would be formed.

I would label one team – 'Us'. And I labeled the other team – 'Them'.

And then I would write 'Vs' between the two columns.

. . .

Most people see – immediately – how the division pits people against each other.

- They see how trying to sound smarter, more innovative – even potentially trying to diminish the competing team – is not being a 'team player'.

- Seeing 'Us' and 'Them' – makes obvious that –

    o   we are putting ourselves 'ON SEPARATE TEAMS'.

    o   "WE ARE NOT WORKING TOGETHER ANYMORE' .

    o   'EACH TEAM WILL BE SEEN AND COMPARED AND JUDGED RELATIVE TO THE OTHER TEAM – not one larger, united team.

It is important – to keep everyone seeing themselves as part of ONE TEAM… even if they work on different things, or projects.

Team names – clearly separate and bifurcate individuals on teams.

Blue and Red Oceans, Avoiding Bloody Red Oceans:

Although talked about previously – it is valuable to emphasize by itself.

Blue and Red Oceans… It is important to know what color of ocean you are in…

- Blue Oceans is a metaphor for a product marketplace with very little competition.

- Red Oceans is a metaphor for a product marketplace full of competitor products

- Obviously – people want to release products in Blue Oceans, but not every opportunity is in a Blue Ocean

- The 'bloodier' red the Ocean, the more it should be avoided

- Only pursue opportunities - with product designs that have at least - one unique differentiating feature – when entering a red ocean

Be Third to Cross the Minefield:

I attended a conference with Will Wright, the creator of Sim City, Sim Earth, and The Sims.

Will Wright had a simple message that stuck with me…

If you are competing with ten people to cross a minefield to claim a big cash prize –

- do you cross the minefield first - to ensure you claim the prize…before someone else claims it?

- do you cross the minefield last – to ensure everyone else blows up, showing you the safe path across – though you may not claim the prize.

- how many people, out of those ten, would you wait behind…let traverse the minefield…before you take your shot at it?

There is no right answer, of course. All opportunities and situations are unique and different.

The general 'feeling' was that it was prudent to let two people go first.. and then go yourself, as the third minefield traverser.

The REAL CONCLUSION WAS THIS –

- You must take - RISK - to get into a Blue Ocean

- You must take - EVEN MORE RISK - TO WIN IN A RED OCEAN.

As an aside –

- You can reduce your risks by leveraging existing tech, features, designs, etc.

- Having the right people and experts will massively reduce risks, and improve odds of finding a blue ocean…or winning in a competitive blood-red ocean.

Ever Striving to Be Better:

In a nutshell – I have always striven to be better. And I have likewise – striven to help others be better. As with my earlier evangelizing of continuous improvement 'Kaizen'… all aspects of my life and career… have sought to relentlessly get better… no matter how good or strong I was already at whatever 'it' was.

I hope my sensei offering empowers people to do great things… that is the legacy I hope to give… they people I helped have the confidence, wisdom, and expertise to do great things.

That is my wish…for people to be great - and do great things… and to help others do the same.

E256 CHANGE CURVES AND HEARTS OVER MINDS

Change Curves and Hearts over Minds

Local File:
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uu2c-e256-change-curves-and-hearts-over-minds.html

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Description:
No Plan Survives Contact with the Enemy – But Innovators Persevere.
Armchair Warrior Strategies and Tactics Are Ineffective in an Unforgiving World.
Get in the Trenches and Get Dirty – Work with People and Roles at All Levels.
Ivory Tower Isolation Does Not Protect Against Bad Plans.
Managing Change Curves.
Win Hearts over Minds- Unite Under North Star, March into Hell for Heavenly Cause.
People Gladly Sacrifice to 'Do the Right Thing' or 'Stand by Their Tribe'.

<u>Managing Change Curves and Capturing Hearts and Minds</u>

<u>No Plan Survives Contact with the Enemy – But Innovators Persevere:</u>

I have seen so many excellent plans… by amazing teams and project managers… that utterly collapse, fail, and become a fireball plummeting to its fiery heap demise…

Indeed…

No matter how well planned or executed – no plan survives contact with the enemy.

It is a simple concept…and one that I think has been experienced by most everyone at one point in their lives… if not all the time, in their lives.

I find – the more driven and innovative someone is in their work… the more likely their plans will falter, or outright fail. But… they react - and course correct - and keep on going.

Unwavering – innovators preserve themselves despite setbacks. They persevere through problems!

So – Innovators persevere through setbacks and revise their plans upon contact with the enemy… course correcting, so they will ultimately succeed.

<u>Armchair Warrior Strategies and Tactics Are Ineffective In Unforgiving World:</u>

The real world is not forgiving - or predictable. Armchair warrior strategies and tactics imagined rarely work. Armchair warrior strategies and tactics – are usually, ineffective – especially, in an unforgiving world… *in our world*.

<u>Get in the Trenches and Get Dirty – Work with People and Roles at All Levels:</u>

It is usually needed to get in the trenches and get dirty – work with the people, at all levels and roles you can. Be every role and every job… so you can make sure your strategies, tactics, and plans are holistic and can be adopted by everyone effectively.

Create and refine plans – with the people doing the work. Avoid 'ivory tower' management.

<u>Ivory Tower Isolation Does Not Protect Against Bad Plans:</u>

Indeed – it is easy to sit back, in an ivory tower, and pontificate on the right approach to business and implementing plans.

But – engaging in the real world – overcoming the multitude of unexpected, and even unrelated but business-impacting, things that will block your path to success – is hard… and – it is inevitable.

And – hiding in an insulated ivory tower for protection against potential bad plans… will not end well, in the long run. The world will burn around you – and, eventually, you will burn with it.

So – recognize plans and products with evolve, they will change – over time.

All businesses must change – at one time or another – and they often must change many times - over the course of their corporate 'lifetimes'.

Managing Change Curves:

Just as it is hard for executive leadership to deal with changing business needs and operations, even resourcing… it is hard for the rest of the company, and its divisions, teams, and groups.

There are many books on managing change – helping people through the 'Change Curve'.

For me – I distill all those books down to this simple message…

- Change is inevitable

- Therefore – people must adapt and evolve to succeed - within the new 'Changed Circumstance'… versus working and fighting… railing against it

- But - People do not like change. They resist change.

- So – people need time and help… to get from one side of the 'change valley of doom & gloom' to the other side where there is 'happiness and aspiration'

- It is executives' and management's job to show the problems with the status quo – the way things are – and why it is important to move towards the new 'Change'

  o Some executives - use the fear of a burning oil platform, of the end of the company… to scare people to embrace the new Change

  o Other executives – use the promise of golden futures and glorious rewards… to encourage staff to embrace the new Change

  o Of course – there are all gradients in-between fleeing Doom & Gloom and pursuing Golden Tomorrows…

    ▪ In my opinion - the worst 'Change Approach' is to be middle-of-the-road, matter-of-fact… and leave staff to 'find their own way', floundering across the Valley of the Change Curve

Like I said – there are many books about Managing Change and Change Curves.

There you have it - my distillation of what I have read and seen firsthand… around Change and helping people get to the 'other side' of Change.

Win Hearts over Minds- Unite Under North Star, March into Hell for Heavenly Cause:

Focusing on facts and data and details… to help people through *change* may work… but for most people – it will fail. It could even upset people and make things work – focusing on facts and data.

In fact – I have found that calling on people's emotions and beliefs… is far more effective, at helping them see the value of getting to the other side of the *change*.

Inspiring people to follow you toward a Uniting North Star… or into Hell for a Heavenly Cause… usually comes down to heartfelt camaraderie and trust. …and not from details or plans.

People Gladly Sacrifice to 'Do the Right Thing' or 'Stand by Their Tribe':

Indeed –

- people will gladly sacrifice to 'do the right thing'

- and - 'stand by their tribe'

- So – find *why* people should care, and show them *how* they can be part of the plan

- And then – share the details of 'what', 'where', 'when', and so forth

FIRST and FOREMOST – Inspire people by capturing their hearts, before pursuing their minds

- This is true of Change Curves, or any Call To Action…

- people respond to their heart.

Again - People Gladly Sacrifice to 'Do the Right Thing' or 'Stand by Their Tribe'.

E257 IMPORTANCE OF POSTMORTEMS

Local File:
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Rumble Episode Link:
   https://rumble.com/v55uu2l-e257-importance-of-postmortems.html

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Description:
   Projects Come… Projects Go… What Was Learned and How Can Things Improve.

   Postmortems – People, Product, Process, Tech, North Star.

   Don't Be Married to Your Ideas or Old Ways.

   Watch for Divide & Conquer Chaos Vs Marching Together in One Direction.

   Separate Signal from Noise – Secret of Great Critical Thinkers.

   Five Tenants for Project Postmortem Review – People, Product, Process, Technology. North Star.

Owning Your Postmortem

Projects Come… Projects Go… What Was Learned And How Can Things Improve:

Projects come… and Projects go…

- But – what did we learn from them?

- What was learned - and how can things be improved… going forward?

- How much did we learn – organically, formally?

- How much insight grew from opportunity… or from necessity?

- Was there something that could be done differently – next time?

- How could the team or product have been better, or more successful?

- Is there something that should be done still – going forward, as a business or team?

So many questions… after a product is done, shipped, and archived.

One way to glean insight from a finished project – is to review what went well, and what went poorly… and how things might have been done differently… done better.

One way to glean insight … is to perform a postmortem review of the project and its development journey.

Postmortems – People, Product, Process, Tech, North Star:

It surprises me – how many people either ignore - or minimize - the benefits of performing a Postmortem at the end of a project… or at a specified 'interval' or milestone.

A postmortem is just a fancy name for assessing how a product and its development went – the good, the bad, and the ugly. It is a formal way to collect feedback from the team – to understand what they saw as beneficial and hurtful…or just a benign waste of time.

Postmortems are ways to review how things went during product development and after a product is released to retail.

Don't Be Married to Your Ideas or Old Ways:

And – importantly – do not be married to your ideas or old ways. Let the postmortem reveal opportunities in product, features, process, and tech…. and improve product development in the process… maybe even improve future products.

Watch for Divide & Conquer Chaos Vs Marching Together in One Direction:

I have seen many people divide their teams into discreet – totally autonomous – teams.

Sometimes – the rationale for total isolation – is to remove distractions, remove exposure to other people's code and dependencies, or concurrently develop many elements and components – to stitch together later.

Whatever the reason – be cautious!

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- Divide & Conquer both creates sub-teams but also creates psychological & work division.

- Working together towards a common goal – even when people are assigned tasks largely in one sub-area – fans the flames of unity and collaboration.

  o In this way - everyone is ON THE SAME TEAM – AND MARCHING TOWARDS THE SAME INTEGRATED PRODUCT!

- Imagine a football game – the team clashes to fight for gaining distance on the field, but also fight to prevent loss of yardage on the field.

  o Every person is on THEIR ONE TEAM … and every person has the same GOAL – Move the football closer to the field goal post… stop the opponents from getting the ball closers to your goal post.

  o Imagine – dividing the team into 'defenders' and 'advancers'…

  o The team would lose the flexibility and expectation – that every team member should 'step in' when it makes sense. They are not an isolated team…that exists independent of the other team members. They may change their core responsibilities – as required… in the moment.

  o Finally – 'bake off' competitions within the same team… to ostensibly get the 'best' results possible… are bad.

    ▪ The same people on the opposing team could unite and help THEIR OPPOSING TEAM! Double the team size and innovation!

    ▪ But – dividing the teams –

      • the people duplicate foundational and some feature work.

      • And they grow hostile, competitive attitude towards otherwise team mates… whom they may be working with in the future… but now – with hostilities.

There are times team division – can be advantageous. But – the default outcome of division… has been 'suboptimal' – from my experience.

Electronic Arts (EA) Fusion Suffered From Being Identified as Separate from EAC:

As an aside – I believe one of Electronic Arts (Fusion)'s downfall… was the relentless competition from EA Canada versus EA Fusion.

EA Fusion suffered from being identified as separate from EA Canada.

We could all have been better off – working united. Instead – we isolated, competed, and undermined each other. EA Canada was far bigger than Fusion; without powerful champions protecting Fusion…it was destined to die – being the smallest competitor.

Separate Signal from Noise – Secret of Great Critical Thinkers:

As you progress through a Postmortem – use this mantra as a filter – to help everyone focus on things that will make a difference going forward –

Separate Signal from Noise

Again –

Separate Signal from Noise

The secret to great critical thinkers is that –

> They Separate Signal from Noise

Critical thinkers seek to discard BS. They try to reject erroneous extraneous things, so they can focus on their goals and immediate tasks.

> Failure to focus on the Signal –
>
> - o will allow the oceans of 'chatter' to drown out your thoughts…
>
> - o and - distract you from the INFORMATION – only found, in the SIGNAL.

It is imperative to separate the signal from the noise… to find what matters.

There is pertinent, valuable information to be found in postmortems. But – there is also a sea of irrelevant details and unproductive so-called insight.

Again -

> Separate signal from noise

It will help everyone stay focused on learning from the Postmortem things the team can act on – to improve the product, service, development, or team.

> * Separate signal from noise *

Five Tenants for Project Postmortem Review:

Postmortems should span five tenants, and culminate in conclusions and actions –

1. People

   - Who were the rockstars, and who were the albatrosses [around the necks of the rest of the team]?

   - What skills were missing from the team, that should be invested in…for future product development?

2. Product

   - What features shipped unpolished or were cut, and should they continue or be used in a sequel or other product?

     - o What can be done – to ensure similar low polish or cut features are not lost in the future?

   - To that end - In sequels, derivations, or products leveraging share-able adoptable features or libraries should be double-downed on… or minimized - or cut entirely?

3. Process

   - What scheduling issues came up, and can they be mitigated in future schedules?

   - What workflows need improvement?

   - How did risk, threat, and dependency analysis and mitigation play out?

4. Technology

    - What 'Technical Debt' (more on that later) exists - hacks that need refactoring, tech that should be harvested for re-use, or new tech that should be made… to maintain the product, and for future products?

5. North Star –

    - Given insight - should the business or product or features or tech change?

    - Make a plan - and allocate time & resources – to address 'conclusions and decisions' from Postmortems

Doing Postmortems Is Important:

There are certainly many, many more things to look for in Postmortems…

I just wanted to note the importance - of *DOING POSTMORTEMS* after shipping a product - or after hitting a major milestone… and of making a plan according to the insight gleaned from them… or even from the customer.

Postmortems – are – important.

E258 TECHNICAL DEBT AND HEROES

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Description:
Technical Debt – Catch Up During Change & Down Times; Avoid Accumulation:.
Information is Data Interpreted for a Purpose; Data Alone is Useless.
Information is Foundation of Plans of Action, or Staying the Course of a Plan.
Wisdom is Knowledge from Interpreted Experience.
Villages Need Heroes, Heroes Do NOT Need Villages.
Protect Yourself to Protect Others.
Watch For Manufactured Crises – To Justify a False White Knight.
Could 'Dumpster Dive' Into Source & Data Version Control – For Project Insight.
Firefighters vs Fire Marshals – One Possible Mitigation to Manufactured Crises.
Importance of a 'Fixer'.
Heroes Come in All Forms.

Heroes & Villages - And Technical Debt

Technical Debt – Catch Up During Change & Down Times; Avoid Accumulation:

People plow forward – in the name of making progress, towards finishing a product or service or tool. But – they leave hacks and inefficient code behind… in their haste – to get done and ship their software.

All things left 'hacked' or 'inefficient' or worse… 'flawed and buggy'… will bite the team and the product / service down the road…   …so fix them, while you can… before things go 'sideways' in the wild of retail – in the customer's hands.

Fix them – before the team has forgotten how to fix them… or even what to fix.

The 'stuff' left behind that needs to be refined, refactored, improved, or outright fixed… or even entirely replaced… is known as –

> 'TECHNICAL DEBT'

Technical Debt – Catch Up During Change & Down Times; Avoid Accumulation:

So – what is 'Technical Debt'?

Coming from an engineering, technical director, and code firefighter background coupled with my design and business experience… I have seen the tremendous impact of poorly maintained code, tools, and libraries on development efficiency and innovation…not to mention quality of the end product's experience.

Code, tools, libraries…even game code if it is to be re-used in a sequel, derivation, or just a game that might benefit from something it did in code… they are all things that need to be maintained, so that others can confidently use them.

All of these things – are 'Technical Debt'.

Technical Debt must be paid… or schedules slip, excessive hard-to-find bugs happen, and product and code quality is reduced.

Unfortunately – business leaders, executives, producers, and finance partners - one and all - rarely support investing time and money – PEOPLE – on something that 'already shipped'.

Indeed – they are ignorant of the bailing wire and duct tape…that gets plastered and hacked throughout code to 'Final' and release the product. Every update… compounds the 'legacy of ruin' that is mounting 'under the hood' from unmaintained hacks and shunts in code.

All this code - that needs to be cleaned up - even be re-factored – to be maintained for ongoing adoption, re-use by other products and teams… is called 'Technical Debt'.

It is engineering time - 'skipped' in the interest of time - to ship a product. But – it is at a cost, that should be paid… soon. …before the people that know what they did – are gone.

My advice – make sure to have a technical post mortem, and make sure any 'technical debt' is planned for… and paid for.

If you do not pay Technical Debt – your product and team will have far more bugs and performance issues, and easily burn as much time in wasted unnecessary debugging and optimization work… than it would have taken to pay the Technical Debt.

And in paying the Technical Debt – others can leverage your code too.

Bottom-line: Quantify and Pay Your Technical Debt – AFTER A TECH POST MORTEM

Information is Data Interpreted for a Purpose; Data Alone is Useless:

I have often heard people demand - that we should do something they believed needed to be done - based on their 'experience' or intuition. People were supposed to accept their allegedly 'wise words' as 'absolute, unquestionable, truth'.

I have seen huge telemetry reports of vast amounts of collected data – showing outliers, mins, maxes, means, etc. People dump so much telemetry data… as if the data dump unto itself meant something – that it was actionable.

Well –

- Data, alone, is useless …

  - That said – it is a good idea to provide 'second tier' 'all data slides' – to to show 'additional' raw data – in hopes of 'emergent discoveries' or 'emergent epiphanies

  - Distil, map, group data into meaningful categories and aggregates

  - Merge data into 'integrated data' – where it contributes to the interpretation of the data - into actionable or insightful information

- Data interpreted becomes information – which provides insight and may guide actions

  - Information is key to making decisions and taking *informed* actions

Therefore –

- Insist that telemetry and analytics be reported as information first and foremost – WITH summaries, interpretations, and recommendations.
  - And then – raw data should be offered, in hopes of emergency discovery or insight.

Therefore –

- Data alone offers little value… until interpreted

- Information is data interpreted for a purpose

- Make sure to collect information… to make informed decisions

Information is Foundation of Plans of Action, or Staying the Course of a Plan:

Information is the foundation of Knowledge. With information – we can discern relationships, correlations, and causation… Of course – how we 'interpret' information… is unique to most people.

That is why – product and discipline leaders -

- should provide their interpretation of data and information … to the team and company.

- explain how it applies to the team and company

- detail how it affects its business and products

- conclude with a new plan of action, or just stay the course of the current plan

Wisdom is Knowledge from Interpreted Experience:

In life – you are your own executive leader… You interpret all the data and information in your life… for yourself.

I like to believe – that wisdom is knowledge from experience

- Your experience in life is 'data' – just sample points in a complex input system
  - 'Life Data' is Knowledge – without meaning, just facts and events

- You interpret your 'experience data' and distill it into simpler concepts
  - 'Experience Data' is grouped, summarized 'data' – still just input samples

- Wisdom is derived from actionable 'experience data'
  - 'Experience Data' both shapes and is influenced by beliefs, superstitions, and values
  - Wisdom is the result of processed and internalized 'experience data' against your ideology

Learning from Others is Rare:

It is unfortunate – that so few people seem able to learn from other people's mistakes or missteps.

I have strived – myself – to observe others stumble or fail… and to understand why they did so, and how I could avoid blundering myself… as they did.

I hoped to glean wisdom from other people's stories or my observed consequences of their decisions or actions.

Alas – most people must fail themselves… to learn. They seem unable to learn from others.

All I can say is this –

> Try to learn from others…

Yea – I know…it is easier said than done. In the moment – we get caught up in our 'normal way of thinking' – and – may suffer momentum that pushes us forward… even if imprudent.

I admit – that I am – victim of the same failings… but I will always strive… and try to learn from others…

Villages Need Heroes, Heroes Do NOT Need Villages:

The phrase 'It takes a village…' is overused… and may be misleading.

It is my experience that villages fail, fall, and die… when severe hardships come their way.

They need extraordinary talent to save them… from time to time.

It is heroes that rise to save the village – whether from disease, famine, or war… whatever – they save the day.

Heroes save villages…

- Therefore – Villages need heroes, to save them

- Conversely – Heroes do not need villages, because they can go anywhere

In a similar way –

- Projects need Technical Directors and Expert Leaders, whereas TD's and Leaders do not need projects … because they can make their own

<u>Protect Yourself to Protect Others:</u>

It can be counter-intuitive… but it is critical to protect yourself at all costs, first and foremost… no matter what.

It is not selfish… It is about being there…for others.

If you falter or fall… you will not be there to help anyone.

Modern psychiatry would tell you that you must care for yourself – so that you can care for your spouse and children… and extended family and friends.

Airplanes directs passengers to first use oxygen masks for themselves – and then help others.

These are all the same message –

- Make sure you are 'okay', so you can be capable of helping others.

- Protect yourself to protect others

Being a hero is selfless - but make sure to protect yourself first… so you can be the selfless hero you are.

And remember – the village will not save you. But - you can save the village… and be a hero.

<u>Watch For Manufactured Crises – To Justify a False White Knight:</u>

That all sounds… pretty… well… HEROIC!

But… are their 'anti-heroes'? …that covertly harm the team and project… even final product?   …for their own gain?

I have seen a few times… the dismaying sabotage by nasty, no-integrity, evil people…

They – literally - manufactured crises – to justify their swooping in - to be a hero…

That's right – these people were fine with ruining projects, products, and people's lives… just so they could be perceived as a 'White Knight'

Could 'Dumpster Dive' Into Source & Data Version Control – For Project Insight:

When your 'auditors' are 'crooked'… you are at a disadvantage.

You could get into the weeds… of everything.

You could 'dumpster dive' as they say – pursuing version control source code & data depots for clues … of what is *really* going on. …presuming you have the expertise – to know what you are looking at – and find what you are looking for…

I have found – dumpster diving – a useful tool… but – it does not scale, and can feel 'invasive' and 'untrusting' to the team.

And so – I suggest pursuing version control depots… and task & bug lists… for project insight… but do not 'go deep' – unless the project is failing (then do what must be done… to recover the project).

Firefighters vs Fire Marshals – One Possible Mitigation to Manufactured Crises:

One solution that potentially mitigates nasty corrupt people that would manufacture a crisis… so they could appear as a hero – to save the day – from the very threat they created.

Incentivizing people to do the right thing… can overcome selfish, greedy, corrupt people…

- They will do the right thing – because it benefits them more to do so… to do the right thing.

Imagine –

- People become heroes by 'saving the day' from a crisis – and are often celebrated
    - There is clear incentive – to always have a crisis…

    - If there is not a crisis – people driven to be heroes will create one

    - Surprisingly – some people create 'problems' and crises subconsciously… because they just feel better when they 'solve problems'.

- Therefore – Although Heroes may not NEED VILLAGES…– they DO NEED CRISES – in order to be heroic and save the day…

- So – how can a would-be hero be HEROIC and CELEBRATED without a crisis? …we don't want crises… They are bad.

- If Heroes are Firefighters… can they also be Fire Marshals? …and prevent fires?

- In fact – Fire Marshals inspect, audit, and assess… and they have the power to direct actions – and change. Fire Marshals can SHUT THINGS DOWN… or MAKE THINGS MOVE FORWARD…

- If PREVENTING CRISES as a Fire Marshal… was MORE CELEBRATED and MORE REWARDED… then…even corrupt, low-integrity people – will DO THE RIGHT THING … and PREVENT FIRES! NOT START THEM…JUST TO PUT THEM OUT…

- Reward Fire Marshals…MORE than Firefighters.

In summary –

- Reward and Celebrate Problem Prevention

- Make being a successful Fire Marshal the highest honor with great respect.

- Make being a firefighter a valuable skill… but one of recourse, not one of desire.

Importance of a 'Fixer':

Let me tell the tale of 'Fixers'.

I am not talking about cliché – Mobster 'Fixers' – that 'clean' a crime scene… to remove all evidence.

I am talking about product development 'fixers'.

- Product Fixers are All-Powerful Cross-Discipline Subject Matter Experts… They can be thrown in the deep-end of complex tools, code, or pipelines… of products… even finance, legal, marketing, public relations…

- Product Fixers are cliché 'Jacks of all Trades' … but they are Experts in at least two to three domains as well.

- Product Fixers are brought in when products are failing, or floundering badly enough to require external intervention.

- Product Fixers usually engage projects when they are trying to finish… because most people are addicted to iteration… or cannot recognize when an experience is 'good' – often because they have been close to the feature during its evolution … and lost perspective.

- Product Fixers must have the authority to make changes to the features, tech, or schedule… even to the staff assigned to the project.

- Product Fixers make sure products ship… on time… and of high quality.

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Heroes Come in All Forms:

And finally…

Heroes come in all forms.

Give latitude to everyone… to rise to challenges, and be heroes… and recognize, and celebrate them.

Your village…needs heroes.

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E259 CHANGING THE PLAYSTATION PORTABLE

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Description:
Changing the PlayStation Portable (PSP) and Creating EA Sports Active Hardware Peripheral.

With Great Success – Comes More Opportunities…for More Success, Or to Fail.
EA Sports Active Hardware Innovation –Motion & Heart Rate Sensing Wearable.
Proprietary Chips to Communicate Between Game Pads and Consoles.
Shenzhen, Hong Dormitories and Cafeterias – People Just Had to Do Their Jobs.
Subordinate Culture Everywhere – Especially to 'Business & Work Givers':
Meals of Bugs and Nasties:

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Changing Playstation Portable (PSP) Destiny and EA Hardware

PlayStation Portable Hardware Design Changed Because of Me:

When I first joined Electronic Arts (Canada) and we formed our independent division – named Fusion – we intended to be the top publisher on Day One for the PlayStation Portable (PSP).

But – we had one major problem. The PSP did not exist yet. In fact – there were no prototypes, or even early hardware.

The PSP was a hardware design – that had not yet been built. BUT – Sony was confident in the design and its presumed performance.

However – I worked closely with our most senior technical directors…

We deduced the PSP intended capabilities were impossible - due to its low CPU memory and VERY slow memory BUS (AKA it was slow to move data around – between processors like the CPU, GPU, or buffers for devices like the UMD)

In order to prove our supposition – we both modeled data movement rates in probably game use, and we made an Xbox version of a game using cross-platform libraries and code… and created arbitrary delays in areas the PSP would hit bottlenecks…

The outcome – I visited Sony of America, in Redwood Shores, California…

- I presented our research and conclusions

- I presented our recommended improvements to the PSP hardware design

    o   increasing both the CPU memory and the UMD buffer memory

    o   add Direct Memory Access (DMA) between CPU, GPU , and UMD RAM

    o   increase the clock rate (AKA the speed) of the main CPU

Although it delayed the PSP development – Sony of Japan adopted the recommendations, and they made a much more compelling handheld gaming device as a result.

Sony of America expressed dismay – that Sony of Japan adopted our recommendations… they rejected Sony of America's own requests…   I guess – we were more 'convincing'.

Plus – we had a portfolio of products we would publish on the platform… if they did what we wanted. That was kind of a – Ace in the Hole, should we need it. …we did not.

I am proud of how significantly I shaped the PlayStation Portable (PSP) hardware design - and thus the games, and their features and quality.

With Great Success – Comes More Opportunities…for More Success, Or to Fail:

With great success – comes more opportunities… to have more success, or to fail.

It takes risk – to achieve reward. And the reward is often proportionate to the risk taken.

EA Sports Active Hardware Innovation –Motion & Heart Rate Sensing Wearable:

I talked about EA Sports Active's custom motion sensing and heart rate detecting wearable hardware, and some of the challenges we faced in Hong Kong.

And – due to confidentiality agreements… I believe may still be bound not to disclose anything about that tech or its development 'journey'.

But – there is an interesting tale here that can be discussed…

Not a Medical Device – per the FDA:

It was enlightening to learn – that regardless of how accurate or inaccurate our heart rate sensing technology was… we had to –

- explicitly declare 'EA SPORTS ACTIVE IS NOT A MEDICAL DEVICE'
    - and emphasize it is 'entirely for fun and entertainment'

- explicitly declare the importance of 'consulting your [medical] doctor before using EA Sports active and its peripherals… before exercising

- and disclaim all responsibility for any harms from exercising or using EA Sports Active

Yea – that was a lot of Cover Your Arse (CYA)… for 'fitness game' wearables - for the wrist and leg – that tracked motion and heart rate.

EA Avoided Liability By Disclaiming Its Zero Responsibility for Fitness or Heart Rate:

You might wonder why EA went to such extremes to assert IT IS NOT A MEDICAL DEVICE or a MEDICAL FITNESS EXPERIENCE… And why they, further, emphasized the heart rate is 'for fun' – and may not be accurate…

The answer came down to simple… liability. EA did not want anyone to need medical attention – and certainly not to die – from using its games.

Therefore – EA declared it had zero responsibility up front - because EA Sports Active was just a game – and, as a game, it was not a medical device or a real fitness experience. EA shifted all risk - back onto the consumer.

It was not nice… but it was… pragmatic business.

Proprietary Chips to Communicate Between Game Pads and Consoles:

While we were developing the motion and heart rate detection technology with an external group, innovating cutting edge wearable heart rate detection tech… we discovered that each of the different gaming consoles (Nintendo Wii, Xbox 360, and Sony Playstation) – they all had exclusive, proprietary ways to communicate between the game console and their 'game pads' or game controllers. They did not use Bluetooth – or any standard communication.

And – some of those proprietary chips were physically large and were power hogs, relative to what was available otherwise at the time.

Video game consoles of the era - generally used…well…less expensive tech…which meant it was older…and thus, bigger and less efficient.

Proprietary Chips Were Bigger, Burned More Energy, Cost More Than Public Chips:

It turned out the wireless transceiver was unique to consoles, and so to make a device that could talk directly them natively… required a lot more than you might expect.

It required a dedicated security chip to ensure wireless transmission and reception was properly encrypted & decrypted.

One console had its security and wireless transmission integrated into a single 'chip'.

> Yea – I am not at liberty to disclose which one…sorry.

Unfortunately – the combined security wireless chip…was physically huge, and it was super expensive.

> Apparently – the maker of the chip earned a royalty for every device manufactured using it. And – they were not going to let that gravy train go away…

To make matters worse – the mandated security wireless chip… ALSO drew A LOT of power. Other platforms could use AAA batteries… But - this platform required AA batteries…just because it burned through power so much faster to support its security wireless chip.

Therefore – we had to build a HUGE and cumbersome wearable, to support the bigger chip form factor and AA batteries instead of AAA batteries.

Shenzhen, Hong Dormitories and Cafeterias – People Just Had to Do Their Jobs:

I discussed this a little bit in an earlier episode. It was remarkable to learn how workers in manufacturing world center, Hong Kong, would commit to months-long work stints (much like fishermen going off for months at a time to far away fishing locales).

Just like fishermen would sleep on their vessels… the manufacturing workers slept 'in their vessels'; in other words – they slept 'at work', in provided 'worker dormitories'.

In fact – the dormitories provided cafeteria food and all life requirements.

People were able to arrive to the company – and just live and work – without worry of anything. They just had to… do their jobs. …simple as that.

Subordinate Culture Everywhere – Especially to 'Business & Work Givers':

It may be worth noting – that although Hong Kong was not formally 'Chinese' / China at the time… the workers treated their employers as if they were Communist leaders.

Workers were extremely subordinate to their 'bosses' and 'visitors'. Both bosses and visitors… could control their livelihoods, easily. And so – they literally bowed, even took to their knees in the present of the great 'business & work givers' - that EA and its people represented.

Meals of Bugs and Nasties:

It's worth repeating the tale of Chinese and Hong Kong cuisine…

I am confident – that it is all edible, and completely healthy.

But…

It is hard to embrace eating bugs… much less bugs while they are still alive!

From a Western, USA perspective – the food provided to workers, even to 'business & work givers' was disgusting and gross.

And yet…

This was the real world, real life of Chinese and Hong Kong manufacturing. It was not pretty, or kind. It was… dark.

And yet – the people valued their jobs, they needed them.

Tales Recounted For Making the PSP A Viable, Good Platform and EA Sports Active:

I hope my recounted tales of making the Playstation POrtaable (PSP) a viable, good platform… and of EA Sports Active's 'Not-Medical' Fitness Hardware Peripheral creation… have all offered entertainment, and hopefully some insight too.

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E260 JAMDAT MOBILE MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E260 JAMDAT Mobile Mergers & Acquisitions M&A.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uue3-e260-jamdat-mobile-mergers-and-acquisitions-m-and-a.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
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Description:
Cloak & Dagger Theatrics – and Fluid Coordination.

Secret Meeting, Opposite Room 512 – with EA Worldwide Execs and Others.

All About Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) – of JamDat Mobile.

Discovered Buried Library Not Owned by JamDat – Big Savings Anticipated.

EA Bought JamDat Mobile.

Cloak & Dagger M&A

Mysterious Call from Glenn Entis of EA Worldwide:

Jumping around in my time at Electronic Arts in Canada…

On one late Tuesday afternoon… my phone rang at work. It was Glenn Entis – an early pioneer in DreamWorks and close ally to big wig Distinctive Software (and thus EA Sports) founders - Don Mattrick and Paul Lee.

All three were EA Worldwide executives… and all three were among the wealthiest people in Canada.

To reflect how wealthy, they were – when I say they were some of the wealthiest in Canada… let me give two simple examples…

- Don Mattrick recently celebrated his 25th Ferrari…for his collection. Don Mattrick had TWENTY-FIVE FERRARIs at the time…and they were all expensive collector cars over the years - since the first Ferrari was made
  - Don stored several 'work' Ferraris - in EA Canada's 'executive parking row'

- Glenn Entis once showed me some rare coins from his personal collection. They were old, pretty, and I presumed worth a lot of money. It turned out – that one coin… was worth as much as most people's houses
  - And – Glenn had a large collection of coins… most of immense value

So, back to the tale…

Why was Glenn Entis calling me?

I Was EA's – If Not the World's – Top Handheld Technologist…So Glenn Asserted:

Glenn Entis sounded gravely serious. He asked if I was able to travel to the United States, to Los Angeles… tomorrow.

And – he asked if was prepared to meet with a potential developer, and perform deep due diligence assessment of them. He acknowledged – that I had no time or material to review beforehand. …but, he assured, that was okay.

Glenn said – he had heard that I 'walked on water' technically - and the developer we were to assess - was all about handhelds… which I was *also* alleged to be EA's, if not the world's top handheld technologist… or so Glenn Entis of EA Worldwide asserted.

Glenn's Deliberately Vague and Incomplete Directions:

Glenn asked if I would be able to catch a 6am flight out of Vancouver Airport (YVR), to arrive as early as possible at Los Angeles Airport (LAX).

Of course – I was able to get up early, and get to LA.

And so – Glenn asked if I would book my own ticket, and he asked that I call a phone number - that he provided - when I landed…before I got a rental car or a taxi.

Someone would – apparently – give me directions to where I was supposed to go.

But – they could not tell me the night before, or even before I got on the plane.

It was… strange... to say the least.

Cloak & Dagger Theatrics – and Fluid Coordination:

It seemed… Glenn anticipated my confusion - with all the cloak & dagger theatrics… and he assured me – that everything was all last minute, so coordination was 'fluid'.

To me, though - It did not add up… it was weird. But – it was my job. And - Glenn was a very senior worldwide executive.

I had to just go forward… and see what happened next.

      After all – my life has always been one of adventure!

When I went to book my flights – there were only First Class tickets available.

But – Glenn directed me to 'book them anyway'… and so I did.

Landed in Los Angeles, Called Phone Number for Next Steps:

I landed in LAX… and, per instruction, went to a pay phone and called the number given to me by Glenn Entis to call when I arrived in Los Angeles.

It may be worth noting – I had a Blackberry mobile phone at the time. I could have used it to call the number… but I was directed to use the pay phone – and so I did.

A woman answered generically, "Hello, how may I help you?" No company name, or anything but a woman answering her phone. It could be home or work… who knew…?"

I said I was to call this number…she asked for my name… And upon hearing my name, she told me to go to a Hilton hotel near the airport.. and ask the hotel clerk about a room…using my name.

Taxi to Hilton Hotel, and to its Lobby – to Obtain an Envelope with More Directions:

I took a taxi to the nearby Hilton hotel - and entered its lobby. The front desk clerk, upon hearing my name, handed me an envelope. He smiled, "that is all I have for you. Have a nice day."

I opened the envelope – only to find MORE DIRECTIONS. I was to go to an Embassy Suites – to the one that was away from the airport - as there was apparently another Embassy Suites hotel nearby…close to the airport.

And – I was to inform the hotel clerk of my name at Embassy Suites…for further instructions.

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Alrighty… This cloak & dagger stuff…was ridiculous.

And yes – this was all real.

Was I Being Pranked or Tested – With All The Cloak & Dagger Stuff:

I had to wonder… was all this cloak & dagger stuff… some kind of prank? Was it some kind of 'loyalty' or 'confidentiality' test? Whatever it was – it was all… utterly nuts!

Taxi to Embassy Suites, and to its Lobby – And Another Cloak & Dagger Envelope:

Another hotel – the Embassy Suites – and another lobby – and another front desk clerk.

Upon hearing my name – the clerk handed me an envelope.

SERIOUSLY!!! ANOTHER CLOAK & DAGGER ENVELOPE!!!!

To The Fifth Floor, Room 512 – But No One Was There:

The Embassy Suites envelope directed me to go to its fifth floor – to Room 512.

Well – that was much easier than trekking to another hotel.

I reached the fifth floor - and went to room 512.

But – Room 512 seemed empty. There was no one there. I knocked and knocked. No one…

Secret Meeting, Opposite Room 512 – with EA Worldwide Execs and Others:

The door behind me – to a different room – opened. It was EA Worldwide Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Scott Cronce. He gestured to follow him inside the room, and so I followed.

Inside the room was a conference table – and a projector, displaying the contents of a connected laptop – on a pull-down screen at the opposite end of the table.

Glenn Entis, Paul Lee, and Scott Cronce were all there. …and so were – many other people I did not know. Some were apparently EA Worldwide executives. Others were executives from another company.

All the cloak & dagger stuff led to this moment…

All About Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) – of JamDat Mobile:

Scott Cronce announced my arrival - and indicated that I was EA's handheld guru and technology expert.

Scott declared that I would conduct full technical due diligence – over the next three days – of JamDat Mobile technologies. And – upon my conclusion, EA would adjust their financial offer…accordingly.

Apparently – my opinion was going to be a big deal…to JamDat…. Whether or not they bought JamDat, and how much money they should pay.

All About Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) – of JamDat Mobile:

Scott leaned in to me – and explained that it was 'all on me' - to make sure EA's purchase of JamDat Mobile was prudent. And that I needed to determine if there were any holes or risks to their technology… for cross-platform, cross-provider mobile phone development - and market distribution tools for regions and carriers throughout the world.

I Had Coincidentally Programmed a Game as a Hobby using Qualcomm's Phone SDK:

Well – I was very likely EA's most experienced handheld developer. However – I was not well versed in mobile phone development.

Entirely coincidently – I had recently programmed, entirely as a hobby project, a game on a phone using Qualcomm's Phone SDK.

That knowledge - coupled with my general developer and handheld development experience - including on the Nokia N-Gage phone-game handheld 'taco' (as it was colloquially referred to - at the time) …
> …gave me the unique expertise to be the sole due diligence expert for JamDat Mergers & Acquisition due diligence.

Discovered Buried Library Not Owned by JamDat – Big Savings Anticipated:

During the deep dive – one library built into every game did not have source code. It was a pre-built binary library that was added to existing games. No one could explain what it was… that day.

The next day, however, revealed what it was. The library was compiled from custom code owned by an individual engineer *BEFORE HE WAS HIRED BY JAMDAT*.

In other words –

- that engineer *OWNED THE LIBRARY, AND ITS CODE*

- JamDat *DID NOT OWN THE LIBRARY OR CODE IN ALL OF ITS GAMES*

EA's Lawyers were excited… The discovery should translate to steep discounts in the price of acquisition.

JamDat Deal Was Obscene:

On my last night… I dined with EA's execs and M&A Legal Team…

During that dinner with EA's Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) lawyers… they asked how much money would it take for me to build a JamDat…from scratch, from nothing?

I recall citing it would not be cheap – it could be tens of millions of dollars, though I doubted it would approach $100 Million dollars.

The lawyers' jaws dropped…

I thought – perhaps my number was way high…

But – one of the attorneys leaned in and said, there are eyes and ears everywhere. We should not talk about this stuff here. Sorry for my colleagues' question. He added – just so you know… your number is… WAY LOW. You are magnitudes off the real price… it is much higher.

And then – he thanked me for my due diligence.

Penthouse Suite for Me:

Scott Cronce informed me that there were no hotel rooms close enough – to ensure we can resume without threat of late arrivals…or starts.

And so – Scott reserved the penthouse suite for me. All by myself – I had a massive multi-room penthouse in Los Angeles. It was luxurious… and it was unnecessary… and it was wasteful.

> But – it was a cool experience.

> It is just one random sample of my larger-than-life experiences…

> Cloak & Dagger flights, calls, taxis, hotels, and penthouse suites…

> All – extraordinary, larger-than-life…

EA Bought JamDat Mobile:

It is a matter of public record now – EA did buy JamDat and became one of the biggest phone game publishers in the world.

And I was a key part of their acquisition and saving tens of millions of dollars. EA demanded a steep price reduction because of my finding one library – that JamDat did not own… and so – EA argued 'who knows what else JamDat did not own…that EA may have to deal with later…'

My 'tens of millions' in price reduction… more than paid - for my First Class trip, taxis, and excessively luxurious penthouse suite…

So – what did EA pay for JamDat Mobile… after the price reduction?

> $680,000,000! $680 Million! $680M!

Yep – I thought the price was excessive, but EA felt it was an appropriate price.

I guess – after all –

- EA would pay whatever it took to become a mobile phone world leading publisher – over night

- I was the world's most experienced and top expert for handheld development

- And – my extraordinary talent and random hobby work with Qualcomm phone development… resulted in my being part of nearly Three Quarters of a Billion Dollars business acquisition…

    o And – I saved EA tens of millions of dollars… in only a few days

Come on – You must admit it…
- That was an amazing story

- with cloak & dagger mystery

- a discovery of 'foreign owned code'

- and exposed sale of things they did not own driving the price down tens of millions of dollars

Well… I thought it was a cool 'adventure'…. Anyway. I hope you did.

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E261 INTERPOL, IMMIGRATION, AND THE FBI – PART 1

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https://rumble.com/v55uuff-e261-interpol-immigration-and-the-fbi-part-1.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
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Description:
Traveled Abroad to Assess Potential Contract Developers – And Mitigate Gaps.
Canada Border Customs & Immigration Stopped Me – Sent Me to 'the Back Room'.
Destroyed Canadian Work Permit – Banned from Entering Canada EVER AGAIN.
All of My Travel Was Monitored, Tracked, and Reported to FBI.
'NO RECORDS FOR YOU' – Declares FBI.

Who Was I - Drug Lord, Human Trafficker, or What!? – All Because of my Residency Permit.

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Canada, Interpol, and FBI – No Records For You!

Traveled Abroad to Assess Potential Contract Developers – And Mitigate Gaps:

During my first year – living in British Columbia, Canada – working for Electronic Arts (Canada)… we were both hiring internal staff and external contract companies.

In addition to interviewing candidates for employment… I also performed due diligence on potential contract developers.

One of my duties was to assess external developers - for their ability to deliver on the work we were considering contracting them to do. And – if developers were 'close' to being capable of what we needed done… I was to identify ways to mitigate - shore up - or compensate - for their shortcomings.

To assess remote developers meant – that I traveled *a lot* - nationally and internationally… to assess potential contract developers and their capabilities…and their ability gaps… and to provide mitigation recommendations to compensate for their skill gaps. I must have travelled well over – a million miles.

Canada Border Customs & Immigration Stopped Me – Asked Standard Questions:

During the first year of hiring and assessing outside contract development studios – I went through Vancouver International Airport (YVR) often.

On one of my returns to Canada, going through Vancouver Airport – as I always did – had a very unexpected turn of events.

Canada Border Customs & Immigration Stopped Me – Sent Me to 'the Back Room':

It was late, on a Sunday night… approaching 11pm. So - things were not too hectic or busy, in the airport or at Customs & Immigration.

The Canada Border Customs & Immigration agent asked me a variant of their 'standard' national 'port of entry' questions –

- Are you bringing any food, fruit, vegetables, alcohol, or tobacco products with you?

- Are you bringing over $10,000 USD of goods or merchandise into the country?

- …the standard, stupid list, of questions… that if you were 'smuggling' something – you would just lie, and move on. They were STUPID questions…and wasted so many people's time.

    o Of course – no one can plead ignorance – if they did smuggle goods or cash into the country… like anyone would really care – about otherwise 'legal goods'…

Canada Border Customs & Immigration Stopped Me – Sent Me to 'the Back Office':

But – there were more questions… this time.

The Border agent asked additional, probing, identifying questions –

- This is your work permit, right?
  - 'yes' I answered

- You are the 'Richard Seaborne' identified on this U.S. Passport…and this Canadian Work Permit, right?
  - Again – I answered, 'Yes'.

- You are returning from Utah, Salt Lake City…right?
  - 'yes' I answered

- You live on Pender Street, in downtown Vancouver…right?
  - 'yes' I answered

Finally – the border agent directed me to go to the far corner of the Customs & Immigration intake area – where everyone lined up to enter the country.

She told me – in no uncertain terms – that I could not enter Canada until I spoke with the senior Immigration agents in the back offices.

Into 'the Back Office' Room – Into Hell's Maw:

The agent returned my Passport and Work Permit to me, and I went to the door in the corner of the immigration intake area. And inside – I went.

The room was small, split into two areas by a long counter running from side-to-side of the room. About 90% of the room was on the 'worker side' of the counter, and the remaining cramped 10% was there for customers…just enough to stand there, uncomfortably…possibly with luggage.

An immigration officer gestured for me to come to him, and once there – he asked for my 'papers'.

Of course – I handed him my U.S. Passport that had my Canadian Work Permit stapled inside it.

Immigration Agent Unleashed a Question Barrage on Me to Confirm My Identity:

The immigration agent was offensive, and terse –

- Are you the Richard Seaborne that lived at… blah-blah address?

  - He asked about five of my prior addresses

- Do you recognize any of these phone numbers?

- He wanted to see if I reacted to phone numbers – that were presumably my own telephone numbers from long past

- Where were you born, and at what hour?

  - What!? At what hour!? I stammered, "that is ridiculous…no one knows what hour they were born…!"

  - Other than validating my birth place – it appeared to be a way to test if IU was fabricating things (AKA lying)

Destroyed Canadian Work Permit – Banned From Entering Canada EVER AGAIN:

After a litany of silly, inane questions like those… he ripped my Canadian Work Permit from my Passport, leaving the stapes behind. He raised it up – dramatically – and ripped it in two.

Yea – he ripped my Work Permit in half. He destroyed it.

And he said, "Your Work Permit is hereby revoked. You are hereby banned from entering Canada. You may depart by plane – back to the United States.

The agent informed me –

> I was on the FBI's International Terror Threat list – a list compiled and provided to all countries, following the 9/11 terrorism, and resulting U.S. Patriot Act.

> Therefore – Canada cannot support potential terrorists entering or passing through Canada, and they absolutely would not allow a terrorist to work in Canada.

Despite my renting a condominium in downtown Vancouver, Canada… where my wife and possessions were…

Canada was blocking me from returning home… because the FBI allegedly listed me as a terrorist threat… Insane!

Central Immigration Canada (CIC) Magistrate Waved Magic Wand to Allow Work:

The agent told me – that because I insisted that I already had been living in Canada – he would contact a magistrate in Central Immigration Canada – located in Quebec, Canada.

Well… that translated to –

- There is some hope…

- I had to wait… for hours and hours

Eventually – the immigration agent called me back to the counter. He explained the CIC Magistrate agreed to give me a six month Work Permit (WP) and a six month Temporary Residency Permit (TRP).

The agent emphasized – I had six months to pack up, and get out of Canada… or clear up all the matters…with CIC and the FBI.

EA Hired Former Central Immigration Canada (CIC) Attorney:

Having returned home – after that madness at Canada Immigration… I prepared my rant to Electronic Arts…

I threatened to resign and return to the U.S. – unless EA could resolve the situation, and ensure it would not happen again.

EA took things very seriously – and they hired a former CIC Attorney… that was allegedly friends with numerous CIC Magistrates.

All of My Travel Was Monitored, Tracked, and Reported to FBI:

The former CIC Attorney, representing me now, had me provide an affidavit identifying the only two possible reasons – that I could think of – that the FBI may want me on their 'Watch & Track' list –

1. My father, Silver Seaborne, had State and Federal Warrants for his arrest…as an international weapons dealer – a merchant of death. And he was last known – to have fled into Mexico… never seen or heard from, again

2. The Hidden Fortress was shut down by the FBI and its founders and many members prosecuted and convicted for cybercrimes and hacking. I was identified by the FBI as an active member of the Hidden Fortress – but no charges were levied against me. They merely talked to me.

Those were the only two things – that I could conceive at the time – that could remotely merit my being tracked anywhere – and everywhere – I went in the world.

Plus – I had no idea…all this time, that my travel was being monitored, tracked, and reported to the FBI… and for how long?

> Had I been tracked – ever since the Hidden Fortress was shut down, when I was kid? Since my father abandoned me, when I was six months old? Insane!

> There was no justification to track me… but they did, and still are.

Obtaining My FBI Records With Hand, Palm, and All Ten Fingerprints:

I had to obtain my FBI records – to see what Canadian Immigration was seeing.

I learned – you cannot request all FBI records about you. But – you CAN request 'available' FBI records about you… if you provide signed request with accompanying full-hand, palm, and all ten individual fingerprints.

'NO RECORDS FOR YOU' – Declares FBI:

As it turned out – the FBI refused to provide my records, as they are apparently required to do. They simply said that I was, in fact, not a terrorist or a terrorist threat.

I could only assume – they had no records on me… but that I must be tracked.

Yea –

- "I was not the droid they were looking for…"

- and yet – I remained 'marked' as a terrorist droid.

At least – I had an official document from the government of the United States – that said I was not a known threat – and thus, was not a threat to Canada.

Drug Lord, Human Trafficker, or What!? – All Because of Residency Permit:

Well… future Immigration & Customs checkpoints – sometimes – had problems and challenges…

After all my pushback with that former CIC attorney - Central Immigration Canada (CIC) granted me a one-year Work Permits – that had to be renewed annually. And – I was issued a matching Temporary Residency Permit (TRP), for the same year-long duration.

TRP's are amazing documents.

Once – when going through Customs & Immigration, returning to Canada… the Immigration agent began to question me…why did I have an Interpol Tracking ID, and why did it indicate "May Not Ask Questions" on my file.

Well – The answer is actually great. My TRP had specific instructions from the CIC Magistrate – that directed 'NO IMMIGRATION AGENT' could ask me any questions or seize my Work or Residency Permits… UNLESS I COMMITED A CRIME.

So – I replied…snarkily, "I think that paper in my Passport…says that I don't have to answer any questions."

The agent looked disgusted, mumbled something like 'drug dealer, trafficker' under her breath…

Indeed – I learned later – that the predominant reason someone is granted a Temporary Residency Permit (TRP)…is because they have criminal or questionable political backgrounds.

Although I had a TRP for very different reasons… immigration agents looked upon me with disdain…the moment they saw a TRP attached to my Work Permit.
Well – if they were reasonable – I would never have needed an 'override' permit… It was their fault…and they made themselves upset – while wasting time.
Like I have said – from the beginning – it was all – insane…

E262 INTERPOL, IMMIGRATION, AND THE FBI – PART 2

Local File:
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https://rumble.com/v55v1la-e262-interpol-immigration-and-the-fbi-part-2.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/QtoWGo7hOFg

Description:
Why might I be tracked by Interpol and the FBI…!?

There was Pirates Bay International, MDIdeas, and ITAT – The Mob.

PBI and The Apple Computer Heist.

PBI and The Stolen Memory Cards.

Pirates Bay International – Crime and Alibis

And There was Pirates Bay International, MDIdeas, and ITAT – The Mob:

As an aside - I had not considered it - at the time… and Canada did not require any further 'imagined reasons why I may be on the FBI and Interpol tracking lists'. But I did have one other 'possible explanation'.

perhaps my association with PBI Software could have put me on the FBI or Interpol's tracking list.

After all –

- PBI Software, which allegedly stood for Pretty Big Initials…was really cover for Pirates Bay International

- MDIdeas was More Damn Initials

- ITAT stood for 'It Takes a Thief'

- All three business entities were wholly owned by William Low – who operated it as a laundering front for the Chinese Mob - known as the Thong

- PBI Software laundered money - through legitimate and bogus sales of games and hardware - including my games, as it turned out

And then… there were the heists…

PBI and The Apple Computer Heist:

PBI Software's most senior hardware engineer, who was sort of a 'made man' by William Low – the CEO and President of PBI Software, MDIdeas, and ITAT.

Well…

I learned from that senior engineer… when he was trying to convince me that I was part of a dangerous group now – with William Low, and the Thong. And – I should not rock the boat, and just do my part… and be rewarded for it.

He told a tale of he and William Low breaking into Apple Computer, and stealing the hardware specs for the Apple][GS computer… and, from those specs – how they had a jumpstart - to design both - a stereo sound card - and a memory expansion card.

MDIdeas foundational hardware was… built on stolen hardware designs and specifications… by that engineer I was speaking to. He certainly would know the truth…

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PBI and The Stolen Memory Cards:

Now – you may think that William Low would be happy selling his own hardware…from his company, MDIdeas.

But – you would be wrong…

William Low was always on the lookout for 'opportunity' – whether it was legal or illegal, that did not matter.

William discovered a competitor had a truck full of memory cards they were planning to sell at an event hosted in the San Francisco Convention Center. William was also going to be selling MDIdeas hardware at the same convention event.

Well… William stole everything from that truck. And – he put them up for sale, in *his* PBI Software and MDIdeas booth… on the convention floor.

PBI Sold Stolen Memory Cards on the Convention Showroom Floor:

That might sound… well – umm… dumb. I think it was.

It proved… it was… very dumb.

The competitor - whose truck was looted – both reported the theft to police - and discovered their stolen merchandise for sale at William Low's booth.

They purchased one of their stolen memory cards – opened it, right there…in front of the salesperson. And – they pulled out a registration card…for THEIR COMPANY, not MDIdeas or PBI Software.

And – they declared, the serial number matched the range of those stolen!

William Low… *was BUSTED*!

PBI and Dead Brother in China Alibi:

The police were called, and William Low explained that he obtained the memory cards from his brother's business.

William Low - miraculously revealed a receipt – that proved he bought the memory cards from his brother… just the day prior.

The police demanded to speak with William Low's brother – and likely, arrest him.

Things went sideways for the police, however. William Low's brother…was apparently in China…and conducted business remotely. And – he was dead. Yea – he had a recent unexpected heart attack, and … just like that … conveniently … he was dead.

Now – I doubt William Low ever had a brother… but… there was no way to disprove William's Alibi … now that his alleged thieving brother was dead and gone.

It makes me ponder… Could my role with PBI Software, MDIdeas, and ITAT…have been another reason the FBI and Interpol may be tracking me?

Heh – who will ever know…?

E263 INTERPOL, IMMIGRATION, AND THE FBI – PART 3

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E263 Interpol, Immigration, and the FBI Part 3.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uum4-e263-interpol-immigration-and-the-fbi-part-3.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/omUXSSI6VqU

Description:
Random Tales of Traveling Abroad…

The Man Worried Smuggling Cheez-It Snack Food – Smuggled into Canada.
Insane Import Taxes, Tariffs on Individual & Retail Shipped Items and Purchases.
Beans and Taco Sauce Were Scarce and Overpriced in Canada.
An Original Xbox Prototype Development Kit – Was Perceived as a Bomb.
Hard Disc of Secrets – International Spy – or Intellectual Property Thief.
Americans Cannot Be Questioned by Canadian Immigration – Declared A Producer.
Challenged for Abandoning Canadian Permanent Residence.

Random Tales of Traveling, Living, and Working Abroad

The Man Worried Smuggling Cheez-It Snack Food – Smuggled Into Canada:

One time when a producer and I went to visit a game developer in Seattle – called Undead Labs – to see if we should sign them to develop a zombie game – which the did, called *State of Decay*.

. . .

While there were certainly tales of due diligence assessment… what stood out from that trip was… well… the Canadian Immigration Border.

This time: however – it was not 'about me' at the Border.

It was about the producer!

Well – the producer had asked that we stop at grocery store in Washinton State on or drive back to Canada – so he could buy some Cheez It snack crackers.

Apparently – he LOVED Cheez Its… But Canada does not sell Cheez Its… His only source… was the United States of America…

     The United States of Cheez Its!

. . .

And – he did not just buy a box or two of Cheez Its…

He filled two carrier totes – full of Cheez Its boxes; he cleared the store shelf out of Cheez Its.

. . .

Somewhat embarrassed by his excessive Cheez Its acquisition… he asked that we just put them in the trunk … and not tell Customs & Immigration about them…

He argued – they are just snack food, they don't care…

. . .

At the border – the agent asked if we purchased anything… or if we were bringing anything back with us.

I deflected (not lying) – and stressed *I* did not purchase anything. *I* am not bringing anything back… I added, "We were visiting a potential video game developer in Seattle… We are from Electronic Arts."

The Customs agent began to wave us through…

But – the producer exclaimed, "We have a trunk full of Cheez Its! We have a trunk full of Cheez Its!" He was sweating a bit – and very panicked.''

The Border agent demanded to inspect the trunk… and upon seeing grocery bags full of Cheez Its cracker snacks… She returned – and said, "You must love Cheez Its… You're clear to go…"

. . .

My lessons learned –

- people can have odd passions for specific kinds of foods – for whatever reason.
  - Had we stuck with our sole purpose – to assess a video game developer – not detour to buy Cheez Its… things would have been fine.

- people can make a plan – but they may not stick to it – even if it might get them in trouble.

- People can have a momentary emotional breakdown over small things – even smuggling a few grocery bags of Cheez its.

Insane Import Taxes, Tariffs On Individual & Retail Shipped Items and Purchases:

Another curiosity – while living in Canada – was the discovery that Canada has excessive import tariffs…even for things mailed by individuals.

. . .

As example - We had a gift mailed to us from the States – a blanket – and we had to pay half the cost of the original blanket (according to its written on the international shipping label) … as a tariff tax.

Beans and Taco Sauce Were Scarce and Overpriced in Canada:

Beans and taco sauce – in Canada – were easily FOUR TIMES THE PRICE of the same items (even from same manufacturer) – than the price just across the border in Washington State, USA.

. . .

Consequently – every few months Katherine and I would drive across the border – to buy bags of beans and taco sauce. I guess they were our 'Cheez Its'. However; we always declared them on our return to Canada.

. . .

One time – when returning to Canada – the Customs & Immigration was near jaw drop dismay hearing (and inspecting) our many declared bags of beans and taco sauce.

And, like the would-be smuggled Cheez Its – the agent declared, "You must love beans and taco sauce!"

I replied, "I like quesadillas and burritos…"

To which the agent replied sarcastically, "I guess you do… love quesadillas and burritos."

And – we were waved through – to return to our Vancouver, Canadian downtown home.

An Original Xbox Prototype Development Kit – Was Perceived as a Bomb:

On another occasion – before I worked for Electronic Arts – and was working for Interplay – Titus Interactive… as the U.S. Technical Director. Yea – I was the ONLY 'U.S. Marshal of Technology' in North America – for Titus.

When entering Canada through YVR Vancouver International Airport – to visit a developer - going through security - I placed an original Xbox prototype development kit on the security X-ray scanner conveyor belt.

The Customs agent inspected the some-what white translucent encased Xbox – and said – this looks like a bomb! What is it?

. . .

Well – I assured him that it was not a bomb. I explained it was video game development kit…from Microsoft…for a brand new video game console that will be coming out.

. . .

Well – turned out the agent loved computer games. And – with emotional excitement – he let be pass through with the Xbox Development Kit.

. . .

Funny –

- there was no proof the Xbox was not a bomb…or any threat at all.

- I was approved to proceed – entirely based on the agent's like of computer games; that did not seem 'appropriate' or 'safe'.

Hard Disc of Secrets – International Spy – or Intellectual Property Thief:

Yet on another occasion – while I was working for Xbox Studios in Microsoft…

I was stopped at the UK/Heathrow London Airport Customs & Immigration – for a discovery of a hard drive in my suitcase.

They asked what was on the hard drive – and why was it separate from a computer – all by itself?

I have to imagine – I am not the only person that traveled with a hard drive… but they acted like I was a pariah for having it.

. . .

TECH ZONE + HELL DIFFICULTY SAGA – BOOK 6
MORE ADVENTURES + THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY
PART OF THE HELL DIFFICULTY SAGA
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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

Part of the Hell Difficulty Saga and The Liberty Zone

I answered –

- the hard disc was a complete game image including all raw art, sound, music, etc.

- and - raw data is huge because it is lossless and not compressed.

- I furthered – there is also interim 'processed' data – and multiple images of the game in development.

I guess it was sufficient confident-sounding 'technobabble' – the agent surrendered trying to understand - and stop the delay for others being processed through security – and let me pass with the Hard Drive.

Americans Cannot Be Questioned by Canadian Immigration – Declared A Producer:

Yet on another occasion – while I was working for Xbox Studios in Microsoft…

A producer – that reported to me – was driving to visit a Canadian-based developer – from our Redmond, Washington Xbox studio.

Well – as is typical – Canadian Immigration & Customs asked him what the purpose of his trip to Canada was…

. . .

The producer had a surprising and off putting reply…

- He declared that he was U.S. of a Citizen – and he worked for Microsoft…

- And - his work was top secret. They could not know what it was!

- And - it would take the President of the United States to compel him to expose the secret project he was working on.

- Americans Cannot Be Questioned by Canadian Immigration – so he declared

Customs & Immigration would have nothing of the arrogance and attitude of this producer.

They arrested and detained him – locked him inside a mostly-empty office.

They contacted his manager – at Microsoft Xbox Studios – in my team.

It escalated quickly – we had to de-escalate with Canadian Immigration… and show them we were handling the situation… and it would not happen again.

. . .

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Well – Canada released the producer… never entering Canada but for the Immigration & Customs office… and he returned to the greater Seattle area… near our offices in Redmond, Washington.

And – we formally designation that the producer could not travel international for six months – and would attend training for working internationally.

Kept Nose Clean – Tracked by Interpol For Rest of Life:

Well – regarding my own long-term immigration.

I spent the next six years or so… working with a Work Permit and a Temporary Residency Permit…. renewed ever year.

Katherine and I even became Permanent Residents of Canada (equivalent to the way a Green Card was, in the States – all rights, but cannot vote).

Like I said – Electronic Arts (EA) hired an immigration attorney for me – who used to work for Canadian Central Immigration – and so had a lot of influential connections.

In any case – I followed my guidance - I 'kept my nose clean' – as the former CIC Attorney strongly advised. He said to never get into any trouble – not even an argument, or intoxication in public…nothing.   I never even got a traffic citation – not even a speeding ticket.'

. . .

The immigration attorney declared – any single violation or run-in with the law, would almost certainly result in my immediate expulsion from Canada – forever more.

And – he informed me that Interpol was tracking me, not just individual countries - or the FBI. He said – they would likely track me for the rest of my life.

He noted – that any 'crime', anywhere in the world… would likely result in my expulsion from Canada, as well.

Again – it was all silly, and unjustified. Nothing ever happened… other than waste of my life and abuse of my wife and my emotions.

Canadian Permanent Residence (PR) was Like American 'Green Card':

Canada has an immigration process for becoming a Canadian Citizen. The U.S. recognized dual American-Canadian citizenship. And so – my wife and I petitioned to become Permanent Residents of Canada… which is the equivalent to an American 'Green Card'.

Permanent Residents (PR) documents granted full legal rights – excluding the right to vote.

Also – you had to have PR status…before you could apply for citizenship. You also had to have PR status to work in Canada – I believe – for over seven years.

Obtaining the Permanent Residence (PR) Card – Was Long, and Challenging:

Canada requires application for Permanent Residence (PR) to occur exclusively at Country Ports of Entry. In other words – my wife and I had to drive out of Canada, into the United States, and turn right around…to drive back into Canada.

Well – once, back in Canada, and inside the Immigration office…

The immigration clerk shook his head – with obvious borderline hate. He challenged that I should not be allowed to become a Permanent Resident…given my terrorist background. He expressed disdain for the magistrate that let this happen…

He made my wife and sit around for hours and hours… until his shift ended, and he left.

The next 'shift' of immigration officials processed our PR documentation…and we were done. Simple.

It was remarkable – how much hatred that immigration officer held for me, a person he had never met or known before in his entire life.

And - my so-called FBI file - it said nothing…really… just a voided *potential terrorist* label - and a directive to track me.

I guess – not knowing *why* I should be tracked… left a lot to the imagination of individual agents.

Challenged for Abandoning Canadian Permanent Residence:

With the demise of Fusion – I had taken a job with Microsoft Xbox, back in the U.S., in the Seattle-Redmond area of Washington State.

In returning to the United States – my Canadian Permanent Residence (PR) status would expire, eventually. And – it abandoned near term path to dual citizenship.

Once – when visiting a developer in Canada, after I no longer worked or lived in Canada… An immigration agent stopped me, to chastise me for abandoned my PR status with the great country in the world.

He challenged that he should not let an effective traitor enter Canada…

I will never know if he was serious, or giving me a bad time…as a very good actor.

But – whatever the case… he let me into Canada. That was the end of that story.

E264 RECOGNITION AND MENTORSHIP

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E264 Recognition and Mentorship.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uumm-e264-recognition-and-mentorship.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/2OKWegSt4Cw

Description:
Protecting Individual and Team Innovations and Work

Bad Actors Sought to Learn My Vulnerabilities Covertly, Feigning Mentorship:

Recognize and Celebrate Team and Individual Successes:

Recognized, Celebrated Successes Protects Individual and Team Work From Theft:

Protecting Individual and Team Innovations and Work

Strangers That Sought to Know Who I Was and My Experience Appreciated It:

Over time – I have given mentorship to many people – from engineers to managers to producers to finance partners… even to human resources. I have always spent the time to - help others – even if it meant skipping lunch or staying late hours.

Helping others was always important to me… and I made it a priority.

Bad Actors Sought to Learn My Vulnerabilities Covertly, Feigning Mentorship:

The only people I recall that were unhappy about my mentorship… were people that were covertly trying to learn about me… to sabotage my ideas and approaches, to run off and 'piss in the pots' of others in hopes of tainting their belief in me…and my methods.

Bluntly – there were some 'bad actors - that sought to learn my vulnerabilities covertly.

They feigned being excited mentees… but were really trying to find ways to corrupt or challenge my ideas or methods, and then spread their 'doubts' secretly after each mentorship session.

But – it never had impact on the business, the team, or me.

Recognize and Celebrate Team and Individual Successes:

Ultimately – Good Ideas survive and endure… even when assaulted head-on by jealous or otherwise destructive people.

Of course – there are methods to protect every individual and the team, ensuring their innovations and work are seen and credited as their creation.

I have always made sure to make visible and celebrate successes –

- Products

- Features

- Tech

- Tools

- Designs

- Art

- Animation

- Sound

- Music

- All things innovation…

- And – of course – the team collectively and every individual (no matter their role, admins – are included!). Everyone has something to celebrate!

- You get the idea… recognize and celebrate people, the team, and everything they created.

Recognized, Celebrated Successes Protects Individual and Team Work From Theft:

Let me very clear –

- It is much harder to steal something that everyone knows about, and who created it.

- Celebrating people and their accomplishments – protects their work for them and the team by publicly receiving recognition and credit for making it.

- And people appreciate their being recognized for their accomplishments.

- I have even suggested that people send an e-mail after working late or extra hours… just to make sure the team and management know you were there – making a difference.

Everyone wants to be appreciated and recognized for their value.

So – recognize and celebrate people and their accomplishments!

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E265 ALL ABOUT DUE DILIGENCE AND ASSESSMENT
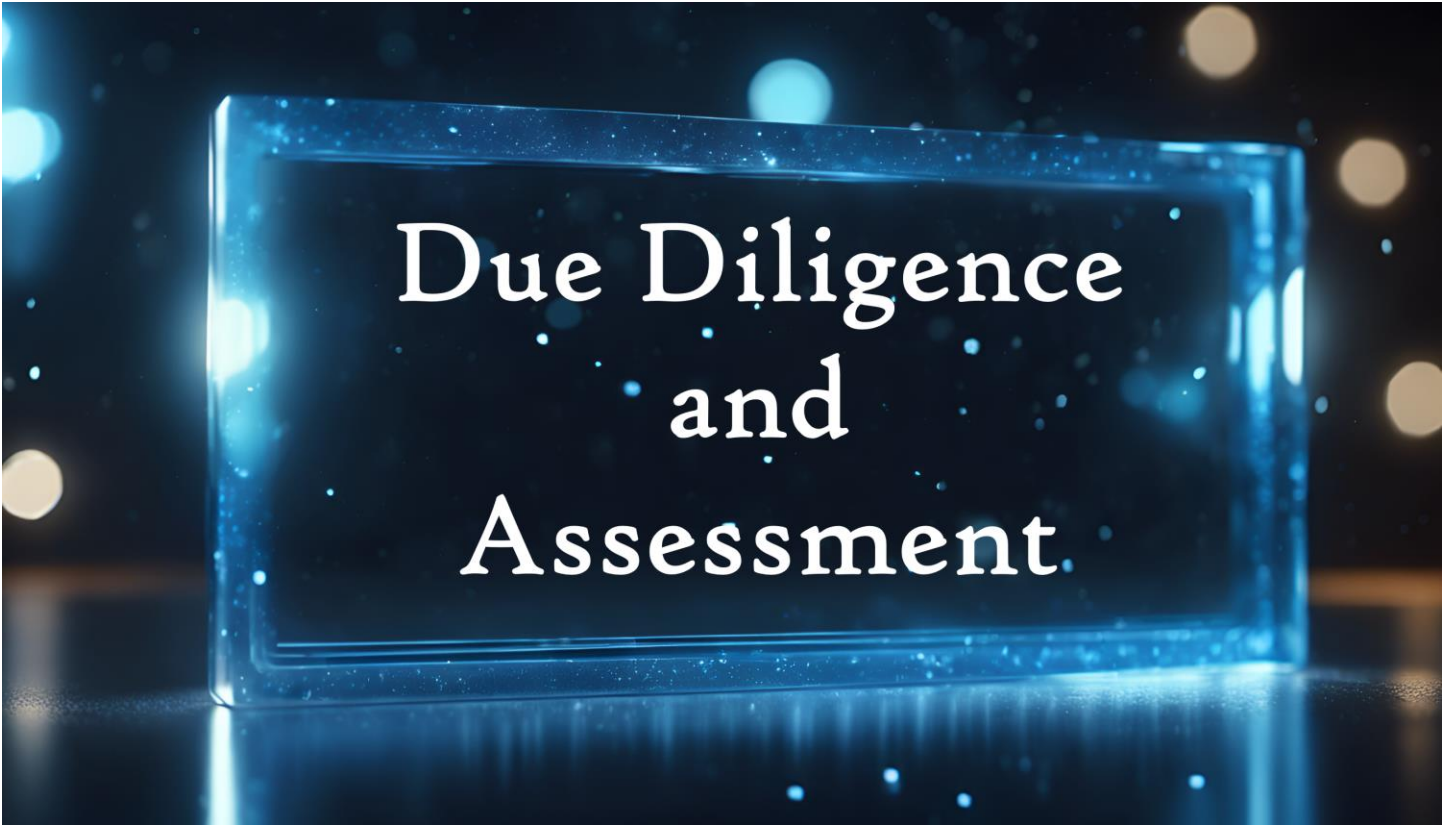
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E265 All About Due Diligence and Assessment.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uuq4-e265-all-about-due-diligence-and-assessment.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/YKyxOAiFKdI

Description:
The Complexity of Due Diligence and Team & Project Assessment.

What is Due Diligence and Why Due Diligence Matters.

Due Diligence Insight Is Derived from My Failures.

Avoid 'Checklist Management'.

Episode Will Be 'SUPER TECHY' and 'CHECKLIST HEAVY'.

The Complexity of Due Diligence and Team & Project Assessment

What is Due Diligence:

There comes a time – when projects and developers and companies – must be assessed for their ability to deliver on a Promise… to deliver on work they commit to.

But – there is a HUGE amount of information you may need to effectively assess the capabilities and status of companies, developers, and projects.

. . .

The process of reviewing companies, developers, and projects for their abilities and status - can be extremely complicated – and is inevitably tailored to every project, group, company, or opportunity.

The process has a name… it is performing DUE DILIGENCE… before taking action.

Why Due Diligence and Why It Matters:

It is important – to know the waters – before you jump in. Due Diligence is the process of investigating the 'waters' before you wade into its depths... ignorantly.

No – Due Diligence will give insight... and dispel ignorance.

Due Diligence Matters.

Do YOUR DUE DILIGENCE…

Due Diligence for Team and Project Assessment Is Complicated:

Due Diligence for teams, projects, and companies… is – well – complicated.

Potentially Repeated and Redundant Information:

There are numerous instances – where one insight or idea – relies on another insight or idea. Such concept dependencies… have required that I repeat some information or concepts…

I have tried to minimize any repetition… but – on the other hand – hearing something multiple times - especially through an audio format – may reinforce them.

Due Diligence Insight Is Derived From My Failures:

I must confess something…

   Most of the information and ideas - I will present… are – well – from my mistakes.

Yes – over my career – I have stumbled, faltered, and even failed… in a multitude of ways directly… or through contracted companies and developers.

My offered – I hope - *due diligence insight*… is derived - from my failures - as an individual engineer, a freelance developer, a lead engineer, technical director, studio director, chief technology officer, chief operating officer… you get the idea.

And, so – these episodes are – in a way – about my failures… in hopes – there is some valuable insight - even one small nugget - that will offer benefit to your endeavors.

Avoid 'Checklist Management':

It is very difficult – at least, for me – to communicate the magnitude of information and ideas… spanning project and company and team assessment – coming in cold… with limited (even zero) prior knowledge.

As a result, much of what I will share –

- will be a mix of high level and minutia detail.

- may feel like a very long list of things to do or look for.

Therefore – it is imperative –

- to NOT TAKE EVERYTHING HERE AS GOSPEL OR FACT…'

- to avoid 'Checklist Management'

Yea – Checklist Management… is bad.

Use the 'checklists' – as things to potentially 'check'… not a list that MUST ALL BE DONE.

Use your common sense… and employ on the ideas or questions… that make sense for your objectives and needs.

Episode Will Be 'SUPER TECHY' and 'CHECKLIST HEAVY':

That said…

'Checklists' are extremely useful to ensure you have thought of everything…

   …even if you *DECIDE NOT TO GO FURTHER THAN CONFIRMING IT DOES NOT APPLY – OR IS NOT IMPORTANT*

. . .

And, so – Here follows my recommendation for a super techy, checklist heavy 'high level' summary of things you might consider when assessing a team or project through due diligence.

Objective: Capability – Gap Analysis Across Disciplines and Domains:

The objective of Capability – Gap Analysis is -

- to assess Ability against Need - spanning the different disciplines and domains required for the project.

Capability – Gap Analysis Should Be Applied Wherever Work Will Be Done:

Capability – Gap Analysis should be applied wherever work will be done –

- On Core Team(s)

- In Content Team(s)

- For Expansion Team(s)

- And ongoing – With Maintenance / Service Team(s)

Capability – Gap Analysis Should Incl Disciplines, Subject Matter Experts, Leaders:

Capability – Gap Analysis – spans disciplines, subject matter experts, and leaders.

Capability – Gap Assessment should Include –

- Experience Design (includes Gamification, Tuning, Balancing, …).

  o Experience Designers are usually lower level producers – as they aspire to rise to more senior Producer roles.

  o As an aside – it is bizarre how it is common for QA/Testers to become junior 'grunt' producers on game design… and then to promote to product producers (owning business, with marketing & Public Relations!?)… and then to Executive Producer (overseeing multiple products, or one huge product).

    - And – there are rarely education or training paths – for these very distinctly different, disparate roles – to learn about the next higher level… outside of 'apprenticeship' learning on-the-job from their more veteran 'leader'.

- Art & Animation (and Lighting).

  o Artists – of course.

  o Also – rendering and animation engineering domain experts.

  o Note – very often – Game Animation is tied to Game Logic, Input-Interaction Timing, and even computer-game AI driven behavior.

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- Sound Design & Music Composition - all things audio.

- User Interface (UI) / Graphics User Interface (GUI) – Input Control, Flow, Cues.

  o Includes Human Machine Interface (HMI) Design

  o User Interface Art

  o UI button, window – popup, and screen connection links and flows

  o UI Engineering - may include 'Front End' tech ala Flash, and 'Back End' tech joining the 'UI' to the game code & data.

- Content 'Area Design & Layout' (ALA Game Level)

  o Junior Producers (sometimes QA/Test) are assigned to area-level design and layout and tuning/balancing.

- Generalist Engineering – jacks of all trades – workhorses of 'getting stuff done'.

- Motion Capture (Mo-Cap) for Body & Face.

- Film and Computer Generation (CG) Video (and high resolution poster renders).

- Promotional High Resolution Video and Still Image Capture.

  o May include Virtual / Augmented Reality Overlays.

- Client/Cloud/Networking (low level, and high level)

- Optimization for Performance, Data, and Memory & Storage Requirements

- Tools/Ingestion/Build/Pipeline Engineering and Management

- On-Team Integrated - and Separate-From-Team - Quality Assurance / Test

  o This may include Test Engineering - as well – for automated testing.

- Localization – Internationalization

  o BTW – I dislike how translators have separated Localization from Internationalization …

    - localization being more literal.

    - Internationalization being more 'cultural' intent…not a one-for-one translation…

- Database Design – Architecture

  - Often just SQL – or MySQL – but whatever database tech used… games need database design, mapping, reduction, and analysis

- Telemetry and Analytics (engineering, product integration, analysis, reporting)

  - Some call this 'Business Intelligence' (AKA BI).

  - Expertise should at least include design, data map reduction, and analysis.

- Platform, Device, and Operating System Expertise

  - A few experts can keep a group moving – like the 'team lubricant'

- Subject Matter Experts – Design, Art, Audio, Tech, Management, Market, …

  - IDENTIFIED A 'PROJECT FIXER' 'just in case'… hopefully never needed.

- Device / Hardware Engineering (for experiences delivering new hardware)

- Release Management

  - Release Management is especially critical for products with ongoing content releases, updates, or patches

- Sustainment – Maintenance Post Launch

  - Should have automated machine monitoring – for health of operation.

  - Should have on-call 24/7/365 – AKA ALL THE TIME – PEOPLE.

    - May not need a – full-time, dedicated team… depending on scope of product or service.

  - Should have secondary and escalation contact people.

  - Should have Product Version to 'Revert' – Should Irrecoverable Circumstances Happen.

- Marketing and Public Relations.

- Legal (contracts, Middleware, Open Source Licenses, …)

  - Watch out for Open Source Licenses (like GPL) – they handcuff much of what you can do… and you usually must share back changes you make to the Open Source middleware – NO SECRETS OR ADVANTAGES FOR YOU… just a jumpstart from the beginning… make wise choices… consult Legal – corporate lawyers.

- Social Media and Community Engagement and Management.

- Sponsorship and Partnership Evangelism and Engagement and Licensing.

- Business - Finance Planning and Analysis.

- All of these – roles – usually have a range of staff experience assigned to them.

  o Executive Producer – Final Product Owner.

    - Executive Producers (EPs) – drive product pitch, design, quality

  o A Lead – almost always.

  o An aspirant 'lead' – effectively 2nd in Command.

  o The Floor Staff – the rest of the team.

  o And – THE FIXER!!!! At least – an identified 'Product Fixer On Call'

  o Discipline Directors – like –

    - Creative Director.

    - Technical Director.

    - Computer Graphics Supervisor (CG SUP).

    - Audio Director.

    - User Interface / Front End UI-UX-HMI Director.

    - Cloud-Networking Director, …

      - Directors often operate across multiple products and teams.

- Company Leaders and Final Decision Makers – Studio Directors, VPs, …

  o Company Leaders are responsible – for everything – period.

<u>Due Diligence Assessment Requires a Tremendous Broad and Expert Knowledge:</u>

Due Diligence Assessment requires a tremendous amount of knowledge – both expert and broad holistic.

E266 REPORTING ON DUE DILIGENCE AND ASSESSMENT

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E266 Reporting on Due Diligence and Assessment.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uuu5-e266-reporting-on-due-diligence-and-assessment.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/KNl7_aHJroM

Description:
The Value of Reporting on Technical and Development Plan Reviews.
ENGAGEMENT Should Increase Fidelity and Narrowing of Scope Over Time.
Perpetual Looping Five Stages of Developer Engagement and Course Correction.
Review Objectives.
The Output – Let's Discuss This Before We Get Deep Into the 'Checklist' Weeds.
RACI (Responsible, Approving, Consulted, Involved) Ownership Model.
Technical & Development Plan + Milestone Reviews Need A LOT of Pre-Work.
Due Diligence and Project-Milestone Assessment and Reporting – A Lot to Digest.

Reporting The Results of Due Diligence and Project Assessment

The Value of Reporting on Technical and Development Plan Reviews:

Let's talk about reporting on the results of technical and development plan and milestone reviews…

This episode includes a huge list of technical and development questions and areas… that should be considered and reported on - when assessing a project or feature or tool or product – for organization, team, progress, function, stability, performance, quality, …most everything to do with delivering a product or service.

ENGAGEMENT Should Increase Fidelity and Narrowing of Scope Over Time:

It is imperative to engage with development teams – in constructive fashion – seeking to ever increase fidelity and narrow scope over time.

Perpetual Looping Five Stages of Developer Engagement and Course Correction:

Although there are MAJOR - KEY MILESTONE REVIEWS… there are many milestones and waypoints along the journey of product development… that also need to be assessed.

Again - These interim milestones should also be reviewed…

I have often recommended what I call –

> The Perpetual Looping Five Stages of Developer Engagement and Course Correction.

The Five Stages are –

1. Vision & Goals   (Decisions, Requirements, North Star)

2. Roadmaps, Deliverables, WSLL, KPI's   (Objective Measures, SMART)

    • SMART:
        • Specific.
        • Measurable.
        • Actionable & achievable.
        • Relevant.
        • Time-Bound – Time-Boxed

3. Teams, Communication, & Partnership   (everyone knows role & responsibility)

4. Implementation & Proofs   (specific measurable progress)

5. Review & Course Correct   (objective analysis & revision)

    • And then Loop Back to #1 (perpetual loop – of course-correcting product development)

Review Objectives:

Every developer is unique - possessing different strengths and weakness.

The goal of developer review - is to understand how we can best work with a developer - and optimize for success - including identifying where to maximize their talents - compensate for skill & expertise gaps - and augment their process(es) or technologies or staff...

The review should generate –

- Executive Summary with clear recommendation to pass or work with the developer, risks to success, and mitigation.

- Product evaluation (for pitched IP or features).

- Capability assessment with resource capacity, expertise, risk, and mitigation including requirements from your own company.

- Engagement plan with "how we'll work together", measurable "what success looks like", and tailored roadmaps.

- The Review Leader should assemble individual reports into a summary report for first contact consumption.

The Output – Let's Discuss This Before We Get Deep Into the 'Checklist' Weeds:

And in the end… it is necessary to document and report – on the conclusions and actions decided during the Due Diligence and/or Project or Milestone Assessment.

Due Diligence and Assessment Requires a 'conclusion'…

Due Diligence and Assessment requires documented recommendations and insights.

Things that should be included – but are not limited to – are:

- Executive Summary

  - Outcome Status (PASS/FAIL/WAIVED/DELAYED).

  - Risk Level (1-10; 1=no risk,10=will fail plan).

  - Top, Major Risks (must have owner, action, and dates).

    - Includes caption for risk.

    - Includes summary of risk, impact to project if not addressed, mitigation plan, owner, and date to be completed.

  - Top Concerns (must have watch owner and decision dates).

    - Same List (as Top, Major Risks) –

      - Includes caption for risk.

      - Includes summary of risk, impact to project if not addressed, mitigation plan, owner, and date to be completed.

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- Detailed Summary (for the team – people getting into the weeds)

    o Outcome Status (PASS/FAIL/WAIVED/DELAYED).

    o Risk Level (1-10; 1=no risk,10=will fail plan).

    o Major Risks (must have owner, action, and dates).

        • Same Reporting List as Top Risks – but May Include Lower Risks – that may not concern Executives – but do concern the team.

            • Includes caption for risk.

            • Includes summary of risk, impact to project if not addressed, mitigation plan, owner, and date to be completed.

    o Risks (must have owner, action, and dates).

        • Same Reporting List as Major Risks – but Include Much Lower Risks – that should be tracked – but are not major team focus areas [yet].

            • Includes caption for risk.

            • Includes summary of risk, impact to project if not addressed, mitigation plan, owner, and date to be completed.

    o Concerns (must have owner, action, and dates).

        • Same Reporting List as Risks – but Includes issues that could escalate into risks – in the future – and so should be watched … nothing more [yet].

            • Includes caption for risk.

            • Includes summary of risk, impact to project if not addressed, mitigation plan, owner, and date to be completed.

RACI (Responsible, Approving, Consulted, Involved) Ownership Model:

- RACI (Responsible, Approving, Consulted, Involved) Ownership.

    o Use a formal responsibility model for the team – for every single deliverable, risk, concern, everything…

    o I have used a simple RACI model for responsibility for teams – most often

    o The RACI Responsibility Matrix indicates key roles and responsibilities in the Development and Review Process.

        • R - Responsible point of contact for doing the work. There could many people involved, but this is *THE* primary point of contact.

        • A - Approving staff responsible for approving the item / document / task.

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- C - Staff Consulted about the item / document / task.

- I - Informed staff that need notification and information about the task.

Technical & Development Plan + Milestone Reviews Need A LOT of Pre-Work:

o A Technical Design Review (TDR) and Development Plan Reviews (DPR) – both - require a lot of pre-work… as well as the culmination in a formal review.

o TDR & DPR reviewers are assigned specific areas to review…

o At the beginning of a project the Project-Program Manager must confirm responsibility for all deliverables and document updated top risks, major risks, risks, concerns, mitigations, and team & individual responsibilities ongoing.

- Note: Domain Expert Directors declare and write the Executive Summary and Top Risks – whereas the project manager writes the detailed review.

o All design and technical documents and briefs are the responsibility of the project manager to ensure are scheduled and delivered … in time for preview and formal review.

Due Diligence and Project-Milestone Assessment and Reporting – A Lot To Digest:

That was a lot to digest…

So… I am sure you're looking forward to the Episode covering…

A Deep dive into Technical and Development Plan Review Checklists…

See you next episode…

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E267 TECH AND DEV PLAN REVIEW PROCESS PART 1

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YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
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Description:
There Is A LOT Involved with Technical and Experiential Product Development.

Define Team Structure and Organization Interaction Interfaces – Swim Lanes.

Define Tech & Experiential Design Authors, Dev Plan Reviewers-different than RACI.

Leads And Directors Typically Found on Projects.

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Define Everyone on The Team – Org Structure, Leads, Directors

There Is A LOT Involved with Technical and Experiential Product Development:

There Is A LOT Involved with Technical and Experiential Product Development.

Working with huge teams – requires huge commitment and attention to immense detail….

This episode will be one of the most 'techie' and 'deep' of the episodes to date…

. . .

This episode is – especially – hard to communicate complex ideas verbally… without any visual references… not even a whiteboard…

Well… this is my effort – to share what I can – verbally.

My hope – is that – there will be some ideas or elements in this episode that directly benefit your endeavors… or – at least – inspire some 'thoughts' or 'ideas' that will help your mission and projects.

And… with that – preamble… I will dive straight into the

> *DEEP DIVE, DEEP DETAIL, DEEP TECH & DEV PLAN REVIEW*

I will present the ideas in as much of a 'checklist' style as I can… using only spoken words.

Define Team Structure and Organization Interaction Interfaces – Swim Lanes:

It is important to formalize individual and group responsibilities and organizational structure…

And – how do people engage with each other – and other groups?

- Do they use formal 'work orders' – as if contracting with an external group… for extreme clarity?

- Do they use fluid - 'free-form' - project tracking tools – like Jira to hand-off work units and tasks between people?

- Do they use 'sneaker-net' to communicate everything – the most informal process…and inefficient when teams are a dozen or more people in size

  o As an aside… I have found… Small teams – can actually be more efficient using 'sneaker-net' in-person, verbal communication… provided everyone is solid, competent…independently capable.

Define Tech & Experiential Design Authors, Dev Plan Reviewers-different than RACI:

Much like the team leader list - outlined in the Due Diligence episode - most teams and groups - have assigned discipline and domain leads and directors.

It is important to define them – so everyone on the team –

- knows who's who.

- what everyone and every group and team's responsibilities are.

- what to expect from them.

- and - how to engage and interact with them.

Leads And Directors Typically Found On Projects:

I will outline typical leads and directors found on teams – hopefully providing some context - for the kind of leadership roles – your products might need…

- **Business Leaders, Directors, and Final Decision Makers:**

  o Studio Director / Studio Manager – Final Division Owner and Decision Maker.

    - Everyone and every product and service – reports to the Studio Director.

    - The buck stops with the 'Studio Head'.

  o Executive Producer – Final Product Owner.

    - Executive Producer (EP) – drives product pitch, design, quality.

  o Finance Planner & Analyst (FP&A).

    - Finance Planner & Analyst (FP&A) – guides budgeting & analysis.

  o Outsourcing Director.

    - Outsourcing Director – ideally – there is a single point of contact for engaging and contracting with external parties and companies.

  o Creative Director

  o Technical Director

  o Rendering Engineering Director, …

    - Directors often operate across multiple products and teams.

  o Cloud-Networking Engineering Director, …

    - Directors often operate across multiple products and teams.

  o Art & Animation (and Lighting) Director and/or CG Supervisor (CG Sup)

  o Audio (Sound & Music) Director

  o User Interface Front End (UI-UX-HMI) & Popup and Inter-Screen Transitions Director.

- **Discipline and Domain Leads.**

  o Overall Experience [App/Game] Designer Lead(s).

    - Overall Experiential & Content Leads are formal designers - or senior experience design-centric producers.

  o Feature – Area Experiential & Content Lead(s)

    - Experiential & Content Leads are usually producers.

  o **User Interface (UI) and Input & User Control Lead(s)**

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- Front End (FE) Designer for - User Interface (UI) – Graphic User Interface (GUI) – Human Machine Interface (HMI) Lead(s).

- Input & User Control (keyboard, gamepad, network) Lead(s)

o **Content Lead(s)**

- Area/Level Design and Layout Lead(s).

- Gameplay Tuning & Balancing Lead(s)

- Localization and Internationalization Lead(s).

o **Art & Audio Lead(s)**

- Art & Animation Lead(s).

- Sound & Music Lead(s).

- Film & Mo-Cap Lead(s).

o **Quality Assurance – Test Lead(s).**

- There may be QA-Test Lead(s) embedded with the team – and on a separate larger test team.

o **Engineering Leads**

- Overall/Generalist Engineering Lead(s)

- Front (FE) Engineer Lead(s).

- Rendering Engineering Lead(s).

- Sound & Music Engineering Lead(s).

- Networking/Cloud Engineering Lead(s).

- Telemetry & Analytics Business Intelligence (BI) Lead(s).

- Database and Data Schema Lead(s).

    - Database and Data Schema Leads May be Data Analysts or Engineers (maybe both)

- **And – THE FIXER!!!! At least – an identified 'Product Fixer On Call'.**

    o We have and will – again – speak of Product Fixers…

    o They are a godsend – when you need them… else – they can be 'overwhelming'…

Well – the next episodes are going to get deep… so – bear with me.

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E268 TECH AND DEV PLAN REVIEW PROCESS PART 2

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YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/aPXyoy3ghfI

Description:
Conducting Deep Dive Technical and Development Plan Reviews.
Briefs Should Be Short, Succinct, and Avoid Wasting Time in Documentation.
Who Should Attend a Technical or Development Plan Review.
The Role of The Reviewer.
Leverage your Experts.
What Are the Results from A Technical or Development Plan Review – Pass/Fail.
Post TDR-DPR Review Follow-Up Order of Events.
RACI (Responsible, Approving, Consulted, Involved) Ownership Model.
And – That Is How the TDR-DPR Meeting is Conducted.

Conducting Deep Dive Technical and Development Plan Reviews

Deep Dive on Technical and Development Plan Checklists:

Game Team Leads and Project Managers prepare and document mandatory technical and design briefs - to satisfy the product's Design / Creative / Technical designs prior to the formal Technical Design Review (TDR) or Development Plan Review (DPR) project or milestone meetings.

Technical and Development Plan Review Briefs Include – obviously:

- technology Briefs, and

- development Briefs.

Briefs Should Be Short, Succinct, and Avoid Wasting Time in Documentation:

Briefs:

- briefs should be ½ to 3 pages in length (on average)… never more than 5 pages.

  o They should literally be as short – as *BRIEF* as possible (hence the name, BRIEF) – to communicate the plan.

  o The goal is to communicate the vision – not spend excessive time in documentation vs. doing real productive work on the project.

- briefs may require lists, tables, diagrams or charts.

- briefs may identify summaries for types, quantities and formats for assets.

Bottom-line:

   Briefs should be short, succinct, and avoid wasting time in documentation.

   They should provide enough information – to get everyone on same page – and that's it.

Who Should Attend A Technical or Development Plan Review:

The fewest people required – should attend formal Technical and Development Plan Reviews (TDRs, DPRs)…

Attendees usually are –

- Project Manager

- Most (if not all) Leads and Directors and the Executive Producer

  o Lead Engineer(s)

  o Lead Artist(s)

  o Lead Producer(s)

  o Overseeing Discipline and Domain Directors

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- o Finance Partner (Finance Planner & Analyst – FP&A)

- o Quality Assurance (QA) Test Lead

- o Localization – Internationalization Lead

- o Outsourcing Lead

- o Executive Producer

- o Optionally: Marketing and Public Relations Leads (depends on review content and purpose)

- o NOTE: It is imperative to have the LEADS present –

  - because they should *know* the true plans and details… unlike Directors that may (or may not) have the deep insight and architectural knowledge – that hands-on staff would know…

  - If possible – identifying directors or 'subordinate leads' that can be represented by others… is preferable, for large teams. Reduce your review attendance to the fewest people possible…while not compromising holistic understanding across the team…if attending major reviews will help people know what's going on.

- Studio Director

The Role of The Reviewer:

Often – it is the Technical Director – or Chief Technology Officer – or Chief Operating Officer - that runs Project and Milestone Reviews…

Regardless of who the Reviewer is…

The Reviewer -

- guides/supports preparation, runs the meeting, manages expectations and declares pass/fail for technology & development plans.

- summarizes the action items, Major Risks, Risks, and Concerns before ending the meeting.

- may request additional auditors to assist in the TDR or DPR, including reviewing Technical & Development Briefs and attending TDR & DPR meetings.

Leverage your Experts:

- The team can decide whether a particular brief requires input from a Lead engineer, artist, …anyone.

  - o Different people know intimately their workflows and duties… tap on them for insight.

  - o You can even bring people in – for a portion of the meeting – to cover their part – and then release them – set them free.

- Specific briefs can be created by any combination of people, but they will be reviewed in the meeting by all parties.

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What Are the Results from A Technical or Development Plan Review – Pass/Fail:

A PASS requires –

- Formal Reviewer Approval is Required for the total implementation plan, including TDR Document, Technology Briefs, and Development Plan Briefs.

- All tech & development briefs require TD, EP, and all assigned Directors' approvals.

A FAIL occurs if –

- either of the Technology or Development Plan is failed to attain 'PASS" approvals

- A failed TDR-DPR may include requests for clarification or additional Briefs, which should have a follow-up meeting within a week… do not waste time – and do not lose what is fresh - and urgent - on people's minds.

The Results:

- A project should not proceed to Production until the TDR-DPR is satisfied – and is PASSED!

- Document the Outcome for Everyone to Read and Follow.

- Upon TDR Approval, a list of an Executive Summary, Major Risks, Risks, and Concerns must be generated.

Executive Summary:

- A high level, summary of the following reports – is documented – including -

  o Executive Summary

  o Top & Major Risks

    - Top and Major Risks - must have a mitigation or contingency plan (or both) – and be defined before the next milestone can be approved.

  o Risks:

    - Risks must be tracked from milestone to milestone to determine if they must be escalated into a Major Risk - or if they have been resolved - and can be closed.

  o Concerns:

    - Concerns should be documented and monitored - to see when they are resolved - or if they should be escalated to Risks.

Post TDR-DPR Review Follow-Up Order of Events:

Following the TDR-DPR Review, I recommend the following order of events – to follow-up on any actions or take-aways from the review…

- The Reviewer will author and update ongoing the Risks document to indicate Concerns, Risks, and Major Risks - in order of priority. Upon completion, the Reviewer will provide the assessment to all TDR – DPR meeting participants…

  o And – it should be shared out to the entire team – but, only - once all Review Attending stakeholders have signed-off… …more on their sign-off here…

- The project manager will work with the Directors and Leads - to provide mitigation and contingency plans - in writing - in the Review Repot document covering Top, Major, & Standard Risks… and Concerns.

- The Directors and Leads will review the Risks document with the game team's Mitigation Plans - and either accept or reject the mitigation plans & solutions. All mitigation plans and solutions must be accepted by all parties prior to formal TDR – DPR Approval.

  o The CTO must approve the TDR and Tech. Alpha requirements prior to leaving Pre-Production.

  o What is Tech Alpha? …more detail later… but for now…

    ▪ Tech Alpha – is an unpolished, but wholly functional application.

    ▪ It is the *ultimate* proof of concept – and experiential immersion.

  o Tech. Alpha should be scheduled with the CTO, Tech Director, and appropriate parties one week prior to committing to Tech Alpha development.

  o The COO must approve the TDR - DPR prior to leaving Pre-Production.

- Every subsequent milestone should be reviewed with the same TDR - DPR Checklist - mostly tracking Top & Major Risks, Risks, and Concerns. New Top & Major Risks, Risks, and Concerns may be introduced at each Milestone Review – along with additional follow-up or action items.

RACI (Responsible, Approving, Consulted, Involved) Ownership Model:

Although I discussed RACI as a development responsibility approach… I will repeat it here…for the sake of this episode… I apologize for burning RACI in your ears…

- RACI (Responsible, Approving, Consulted, Involved) Ownership.

  o Use a formal responsibility model for the team – for every single deliverable, risk, concern, everything…

  o I have used a simple RACI model for responsibility for teams – most often

  o The RACI Responsibility Matrix indicates key roles and responsibilities in the Development and Review Process.

    - R - Responsible point of contact for doing the work. There could many people involved, but this is *THE* primary point of contact.

    - A - Approving staff responsible for approving the item / document / task.

    - C - Staff Consulted about the item / document / task.

    - I - Informed staff that need notification and information about the task.

And – That Is How the TDR-DPR Meeting is Conducted:

We have still to get into the weeds of what to look for – specifically.

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I hope – all of this Technical Design and Development Plan Review (TDR – DPR) process is landing constructively…

Well… next-up: The REAL DEAL – DEEP DIVE IN WHAT TO LOOK FOR…

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E269 KEY MAJOR MILESTONES AND EXPLANATIONS

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YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
    https://youtu.be/iZ0sl37D7b4

Description:
    Key Major Milestone Names and Explanation.
    PRE-ALPHA MILESTONE.
    TECH ALPHA MILESTONE.
    Exceptions To Tech. Alpha – Document, Schedule, and Resource Overhang Work.
    Content Engineering in Production (vs Proofs during Pre-Production).
    ALPHA MILESTONE.
    Tuning & Content Lock.
    PRE-BETA MILESTONE.
    BETA MILESTONE.
    FINAL MILESTONE.
    DONE MILESTONE – Finishing House Keeping Work Post Beta and Final.

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Key Major Milestone Names and Explanation:

In product development… vocabulary and acronyms are a major part of the job.

Let's define some key words I have used over the ages to describe key MAJOR MILESTONES…

PRE-ALPHA MILESTONE:

Pre-Alpha occurs – like it sounds - before Tech & Product Alpha.

Pre-Alpha represents the stage in development where –

- 100% of product design is locked and functioning in software.

- 80% of all assets are in-game at Alpha or shippable quality.

- Runtime executable fits within retail console memory and operates at target framerate.

- Backend server(s) / Cloud connected functionality delivered 100% design & technical.

- User Interface is complete, functioning; only minor API + load support changes are expected going forward.

- DLC "packs" demonstrating operable code supporting dynamic load and runtime resolution… only – of course – for Products that support Live digital content post launch - such as downloadable content.

Pre-Alpha may not have everything finished yet –

- Media layout and load time optimization may not yet be done… but a test 'layout' and 'release candidate image' should have been done – at least proving the pipeline and process.

- Tuning of otherwise finished User interface, control mechanics, accessibility, interaction balancing, experience layout and flow, etc. Tuning may continue half way to Beta.

- Final DLC content may extend through Beta and beyond Final, adhering to a confirmed digital content roadmap.

- Telemetry and automated test technology is instrumented in game with active data collection, analysis, and unit tests operating; all planned telemetry will be instrumented between Alpha and Beta. 75% of the game is open for testing including Easter eggs, with the remaining 25% completed by Alpha.

TECH ALPHA MILESTONE:

Tech Alpha represents a technology-specific Alpha expected as the product seeks to exit Pre-Production to enter Production.

Tech Alpha is needed as part of the Technical Design Review (TDR) - to improve development predictability - and quality of games - by proving the tech and risks early on and…

Thereby - focusing production on content & polish atop stable at-framerate fitting-in-memory technology.

It is especially critical that all tech related to the usable / playable, networking / cloud, and hardware be proven before leaving Pre-Production – and entering Production… because their failing, otherwise, is too high a risk to proceed.

Of course – there may be formal 'exceptions' made – and still proceed into Production… even with failing Tech Alpha. The key – is to make sure the overhang work into Production fits within the scope and capacity of the team and is prioritized over previously planned feature and engine work.

In other words – anything for Tech Alpha unfinished – called a Tech Alpha Exception… needs to be finished ASAP - even if approved to enter Production despite limited Tech Alpha overhang work.

Some key things expected at Tech Alpha –

- All input & interaction / play mechanics.

- Each level/character/object archetypes fully implemented and in software.

- Representative graphics, sound, and music for all archetypes and areas proven to shippable quality in software.

- Network & cloud functionality fully operational.

- Runtime is stable and runs at target frame rate performance.

- Tech Alpha includes Technical Director review of native code, scripts, and real assets.

Exceptions To Tech. Alpha – Document, Schedule, and Resource Overhang Work:

It may not be possible to achieve Tech. Alpha in all aspects of the game before the intended Product Alpha should be completed – usually, for the sake of the rest of development progress…

… or due to corporate politics (but let's not go there…).

Document, schedule, and provide resources and staff to complete all Tech Alpha Exceptions as Overhang work… no matter how big or small – or how risky – the team thinks the overhang is.

Again – document it, formally prioritize Alpha Overhang work upon entering Production.

The Alpha Overhang Plan should include a list of Exceptions – with – the following information…

- list of Exceptions w/ RISK-LEVEL Rating between 1-4 (1 is lowest risk, 4 is MEGA RISK).

  o Typical Alpha Exceptions may include *A FEW* (not *MANY*, not *A LOT*) of Overhang Deliverables.

  o Exception Overhang work may cover –

    ▪ outstanding proofs by specific date(s).

    ▪ production areas that are affected by the unproven tech or archetypes

- List of Dependency, knock-ons associated with the Late Deliverable (now an Exception).

- Mitigation(s) and fallbacks for Alpha Overhang – especially if never finishes…

- Scheduled Overhang Tasks - with named staff and resources - to finish Exceptions.

- Area of Production that will be impacted by Overhang…needs to be identified and related scheduling and resourcing – re-worked…

- Oh, and yea – you want NAMED real people everyone knows and trusts – and who are committed to the product and its dates…

- Named Staff need to be formally assigned swiftly to Overhang work – so, everyone else on the team - will see…

    …that there are consequences to missing Alpha, like -

    …cut or reduced scope.

    …lower quality features.

    …reduced capabilities.

    …losing key staff.

- Again – there are consequences to the project if completion is further delayed.

Content Engineering in Production (vs Proofs during Pre-Production):

Content engineering and Tech Alpha Exception work may go through Production - but they should never go beyond the formal Product Alpha.

All functionality and proofs of concepts and assets – should all – be integrated and proven before Product Alpha (which includes Tech Alpha).

Content work beyond Product Alpha typically requires additional data size, performance, and corresponding further optimization during production, and so time should be scheduled to support such work…

… which is at the expense of something else (not an ideal situation to be in – obviously

… it would be better to have spent the time finishing Tech and Product Alphas properly

… letting Alpha work overhang in Final'ing – puts previous feature work at risk to be cut

ALPHA MILESTONE:

Alpha defines the stage in product development where –

- all features, glued / integrated meta experiences.

- server-cloud solutions are completely working in software.

- 90% (or more) of all assets are shippable quality in game.

- Product fully operates to target specifications –

    - fits within target memory.

- o fits within target media storage.

- o network/cloud hosting+lag+latency bandwidth operating within specifation.

- o product runs at target frame rate.

- o Scene-screen-level transition & load times proven for all levels/areas and archetypes.

- o 100% of the game is open for testing including Easter eggs.

- o Telemetry and automated test technology is instrumented in game using active data collection, analysis, and reporting.

  - ▪ As an aside – I have found it compelling and inspirational to have a big display on the wall – near the team… that showed the latest analytics and insights. It made every 'part of the journey and solution'… It united the team!

Alpha should forecast capacity and expert resources needed to –

- finish any remaining placeholder content or expand variations of areas or archetypes.

- tune the game (iteration should not be needed during Alpha).

- debug the product according to domain/area bug-fix rates vs. QA bug forecast counts.

- Identify features or areas that need iteration beyond Alpha; note if QA concurs that iteration is needed. And involve the Executive Producer – to make final calls.

Tuning & Content Lock:

Tuning & Content Lock is critical… to finishing the product.

There comes a time when tuning and balancing and tweaking… must come to an end.

Tuning & Content Lock follows Alpha - typically by 3-4 weeks – halfway to Beta.

Tuning & Content Lock is a *sub-milestone* that denotes the shift from tuning, content, and localization refinement to full-on debugging of the game.

PRE-BETA MILESTONE:

Pre-Beta is usually 1-2 weeks prior to Beta - and represents the team's belief the game is ready to be declared Beta.

The team is convinced there are no longer any bugs in the game but is affording itself a little time to catch up if proven mistaken.

Pre-Beta occurs prior to game Beta and represents the stage in development where –

- 100% of game is functioning in software.

- 100% of all assets are in-game at shippable quality.

- Product runtime executable fits within target device(s) memory

- Product runs at target framerate.

- Product is at or approaching zero bugs and is pre-certifications compliant (if needed).

- Backend server / cloud connected functionality is 100% complete with used functionality, APIs, bandwidth & Unique Users Target Capacity verified with load-lag-latency testing…

- Software that supports Live digital content post launch such as downloadable content -must, also, have test DLC "packs" demonstrating operable code supporting dynamic load and runtime resolution.

BETA MILESTONE:

Beta is formally declared by Quality Assurance (usually not by the developing product team).

Quality Assurance (QA) – the Test Team – must –

- have zero must-fix bugs.

- must be CERTIFICATION and age verifications have been approved on target release device(s) and platform(s).

- all QA telemetry is disabled (there should only be customer telemetry at BETA).

- QA/Testing should move to staging servers/cloud – preparing to release on Live Retail servers/cloud.

- Beta is where Release Candidates (RCs) may be declared. RC's must operate without any must-fix bugs … for a reasonably long usage duration.

  o The idea – is the product must deliver a good experience without any must-fix issues – for 200 hours of use.

    - Releasing products without passing the RC Countdown… often results is disaster – and lost jobs.

  o RC Countdown Starts – typically at 200-hours or 2-days)

  o RC Countdown Resets - to full-time 200 hours/2-days - every time a must-fix bug is found.

  o When the RC Countdown touches down at ZERO must-fix bugs… the product is ready to be submitted for final platform – device – manufacturer for retail or digital release…

    … which is the last step the game team will need to do on the RELEASE CANDIDATE – unless the product fails Platform Release Certification.

    … with an approved and submitted Release Candidate (RC)… the product will undergo final CERTIFICATION review – by its target release platforms and devices.

  o While waiting for QA or Target Platform(s) & Device(s) to review the product… there is a lot of Product House Keeping work that can be done (we'll talk to that I a moment…)

FINAL MILESTONE:

And - The FINAL Milestone…

With Quality Assurance (QA) approval of a zero must-fix bug product Build – the product is sent to its Target Platform(s) & Device(s) for CERTIFICATION.

- Any CERTIFICATION rejections… need to be responded to immediately.

  o The team needs to be available – on call; not on a 'I AM DONE VACATION! PREMATURE – that would be!

- With Target Platform / Device CERTIFICATION approval… the game is "golden" – and can be released to LIVE RETAIL

DONE MILESTONE – Finishing House Keeping Work Post Beta and Final:

And – You're Not Done Yet… There remains the *DONE* Milestone…

… Note: The Dev Team still has work to do (even when the game is released) –

- Finalize Documentation.

- Archive the Complete Project and Tools – source, interim, final code & libraries & binaries & processed data.

- Do Postmortems.

- Work against Project Technical Debt.

- Harvest code, tools, assets – for re-use.

With Shared Vocabulary and Understanding – Will Travel:

Well – I hope – with definitions of Key Milestones… things will be easier to discuss.

With shared vocabulary and understanding… we will travel and triumph!

E270 PRE-PRODUCTION TECH AND DEV PLAN REVIEW

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E270 Pre-Production Tech and Development Plan Review.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uvdi-e270-pre-production-tech-and-development-plan-review.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/AjypJt0ACR0

Description:
Pre-Production Review.
Pre-Production Organization Briefs.
Pre-Production Planning & Review Process – By Team.
Workdays Should Match Everyone's Workdays – Tried 4-Day Work Week – Stupid.
Pre-Production Technology Design Briefs.
Pre-Production Experience Design Briefs.
Pre-Production Development Plan Briefs.
Pre-Production Discussion Briefs.
What to Look for in Tech and Experience Design Briefs.

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Pre-Production Deep Dive - Tech and Development Plan Checklist

Pre-Production Review:

Let's talk about all the PRE-PRODUCTION planning before full-on Development begins – BEFORE the PRODUCTION Phase…of Software Creation.

This episode… well… will be VERY LIST-y…. Here we go…

Pre-Production Organization Briefs:

✓ **Organization / Team Profile Brief**

There should be a profile document detailing the development team experience and specialties, noting key information. If a category doesn't exist or apply to the game, specify Not Applicable (N/A). Describe your team and their experience honestly in the most persuasive, convincing way possible in order to establish confidence in your ability to deliver an excellent quality game, on time

✓ Experience on the target platform/s, and doing cross-platform if appropriate

✓ Experience with the game genre

    ✓ Audio (Sound, Voice, and Music)

    ✓ User Interfaces (U/I) – Front End, Back End, and Overlays/HUD

    ✓ Tools/Build Pipeline

    ✓ Localization (catalogs all Loc. content & provides game solutions)

    ✓ Technical Requirements Checklists (TRC's) adherence for Platform(s) and Device(s)

    ✓ Lead / Management

✓ Content Development Experience in key areas:

    ✓ Art:

        ✓ 3D modeling (organic and inorganic objects)

        ✓ 3D texturing

        ✓ 3D animation (morph targets / blending, Bones-I/K, etc.)

        ✓ Object and 3D Rigging (character setup, weighting)

        ✓ Lighting

        ✓ Effects

        ✓ World Building / Layout

        ✓ Interface Design (Art & Layout)

    ✓ Audio:

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- ✓ Sound Effects
- ✓ Music Composition including Live, sequenced/MIDI, digital, etc.
- ✓ Outsource management
- ✓ Sample Reduction

- ✓ Production:

  - ✓ Design (especially as related to game genre)
  - ✓ User Interfaces (flows and mockups)
  - ✓ Technical Requirement Checklists (TRC's); Memory Card flow, display Safe Area, …
  - ✓ Marketing interface / support
  - ✓ Schedule adherence
  - ✓ License interface / management
  - ✓ External development experience

- ✓ Engineering should be assigned specific domains – and subsystem/s:
  - ✓ Rendering
    - ✓ 3D Rendering
    - ✓ World/terrain scene graphing + CPU sorting/clipping/culling
    - ✓ Character & object rendering & animation
    - ✓ Geometry and texture compression
  - ✓ Artificial Intelligence (AI), as it relates to genre and design
  - ✓ Physics/Collision.
  - ✓ Networking-Cloud.
  - ✓ Input
  - ✓ Optimization – Performance and Storage.
  - ✓ User Interface (UI) – Human Machine Interface (HMI), Graphics User Interface (GUI)
  - ✓ Experience (ala Game Play) and Tuning-Balancing

- ✓ Management
  - ✓ Schedule development & tracking.
  - ✓ Inter-team/group experience.
  - ✓ External development experience.

- ✓ Training
  - ✓ Training Plan (university, internal courses, etc.) in place, as needed.
  - ✓ New team member guidelines and Getting Started.
  - ✓ Build / Data Conversion documentation.

- ✓ Missing / Needed Staff List.

- ✓ Are there shared team members with other teams / groups?
- ✓ Principle Contacts / Leads.
    - ✓ Lead Producer / Designer.
    - ✓ Interface / flow Producer (Front End, Back End, HUD)
    - ✓ Localization Producer (within the Localization Group)
    - ✓ QA Lead.
    - ✓ Development Director.
    - ✓ Lead Engineer.
    - ✓ Front End Engineer.
    - ✓ Lead Interface Designer.
    - ✓ Lead Artist.
    - ✓ Assistant Art Lead.
    - ✓ Lead Technical Artist.
    - ✓ Lead Technical Director.
    - ✓ Network Engineer.
    - ✓ Build/Pipeline Engineer.
    - ✓ Audio Engineer.
    - ✓ Lead Sound Artist.
- ✓ Previous & New Product Team & Skills Identified - (original developers handoff teams)
    - ✓ Leadership Venn diagram showing discipline coverage - design, business, operations, technical, financial, …
    - ✓ Org chart showing team structure to focus work contexts - feature, domain, product, infrastructure, …
    - ✓ Team profile(s), HC/resource ramp plan, and rate logic with assumptions driving forecast.
        - ✓ Identify capacity demand vs. available capacity including hiring need and local talent resource pools.
        - ✓ Separate raw from expert capacity to validate resource plan and capture expert critical path bottlenecks.
        - ✓ Assess organization's ability to sustain unassigned HC - team members not assigned to project and non-team members entirely.
- ✓ Decision process(es) to align group and resolve conflicts, including leadership and per-discipline & team member processes.
- ✓ Flexibility in Process, Technology, Design, and Resourcing – it sets backdrop for engagement plans including objective understanding of potential tension & collaboration points.
- ✓ Commitment and Exit Strategy for Studio leadership and key staff ensures presence throughout relationship.
- ✓ Facilities and security review providing confidence in physical & electronic data safety, team size & scalability, …

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- ✓ Hardware equipment and software (HW/SW) review

  - ✓ Have: Catalog original developer-made, licensed, leased, and purchased HW/SW.

  - ✓ Need: Confirm loan or otherwise supplied/paid for HW/SW.

  - ✓ Usage: Evaluate workflows for both efficient and over-dependence on limited HW/SW.

  - ✓ Legitimacy: Confirm legitimate ownership and rights to HW/SW, including license/lease expiration.

  - ✓ Encumbrance: Open Source, 3rd Party Code, libraries, tools, middleware, etc. rights to use, modify, & distribute.

  - ✓ Watch for employee owned or independently developed tools, code, and ideas not formally signed over to the developer.

- ✓ Have the mailing lists been created - and the proper parties included (CG Sup., TD, …) for the project?

- ✓ Outline the meeting roadmap and who should attend which. Have the team leads from the central teams been included?

- ✓ What is the expertise planning for this project? E.g. who will be required to work on what and when?

Pre-Production Planning & Review Process – By Team:

- ✓ **Team Profile(s) with domain expertise, veteran grade with primary game area(s) responsibility.**

  - ✓ Assess overhead and support developers needed for operation, e.g. IT, Facilities, Security, Senior Managers, etc.

- ✓ **Techniques & tools to focus and direct development and planning.**

  - ✓ Development Process(es) for development stages - Ideation, Pre-Production, First Production, Production, Final'ing.

  - ✓ Pre-Production Roadmap & Plan setting Key Milestones, Waypoint Milestones, Proofs, Other Key Dates, & Pre-Pro Deliverable roadmap with dates w/ task estimate durations.

  - ✓ Development Schedule with named resources, technical planning & estimates, design + tuning planning & estimates, and rough final'ing assumptions & forecasts with capacity & experts.

  - ✓ Identify assumptions driving estimates, dates, and deliverables.

  - ✓ Include discipline raw & expert capacity to avoid invalid staff month estimation.

  - ✓ Note critical path and related pushed dependent tasks.

  - ✓ Include time boxing strategy for prototyping/ideation, restarts, iteration, tuning, and integration.

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- ✓ Is there a guiding rule for percentage of time per box slice or category of work?

- ✓ Use True Cost of Execution per game area/feature.

  - ✓ Are current estimates for each area derived from true cost actuals or unproven forecast estimates?

- ✓ Milestone Delivery Map with visual layout of features per milestone and WMM tags.

- ✓ Feature-Capacity/Cost Map grouped against WMM (ensuring most spend is on WMM or Foundation "delivery" tech).

- ✓ Capability-Capacity-Gap-Solution Plan w/ Budget/HC Ramp + Experts.

- ✓ Assumption Validation Strategy for all disciplines and scheduling.

- ✓ Sick, Vacation, Parental Days Off factored into scheduling–especially for domain experts.

  - o Some countries – like France – mandate a country-wide 'time off' – spanning over a month off - every year - during the summer.

- ✓ What is Work-From-Home / Remotely policy for staff… and does it align - and work successfully - with rest of their company, teams, and external partners?

Workdays Should Match Everyone's Workdays – Tried 4-Day Work Week - Stupid:

  - o As an aside – I experimented with a 4-Day Workweek once…

    - ▪ It was okay 'enough' for the team…

    - ▪ but - it did not mesh with real-world daycare.

    - ▪ and – it limited otherwise used mornings/evenings - for gym and personal life…

    - ▪ and - working with other 5-Day Per Week teams - external and internal – proved very problematic.

    - ▪ All-in: After a long trial period… we reverted to 5-Day Standard Workweeks.

- ✓ **Technical Management Plan with meetings & cadence, signage, reports, documentation, and communication approaches.**

- ✓ **Product Version-Feature Plan, including Scope & Roll Stack Ranking (to record features for future releases/DLC).**

- ✓ Ongoing forecast vs. actual analysis and improvement plans.

- ✓ **Quality Assurance / Test Techniques**

- ✓ Focus / User Research demos and plans.

  - ✓ User Research Plan signed off.

- ✓ Dedicated vs. shared test resources.

- ✓ Embedded [with team] test staff vs. separate located testers.

- ✓ Open For Testing Roadmap established from Production Day 1 through Alpha.

- ✓ Total and per domain bug forecast, find rate, fix rate, and regression verification plan (and assumptions driving).

- ✓ Road to Final Plan and supporting assumptions, including requirements from 3rd Party and Publisher QA.

- ✓ Leads, Directors, and EP signed off on production test plan for the software.

- ✓ **Dependent groups signed off**

  - ✓ Are any Shared Services signed off on support requirements?

  - ✓ Has Hosting signed off on server, bandwidth, and support requirements?

  - ✓ Has Hosting signed off on API, cross-platform, marketplace, and authentication requirements?

  - ✓ Has Marketing signed off with the plan for demos, still art, screen captures & videos, and events locked and scheduled for dev team?

  - ✓ Has Legal or Corporate Affairs signed off on all tech, designs, business issues… especially for Open Source and Middleware - and Their License Requirements and Constraints?

<u>Pre-Production Technology Design Briefs:</u>

- ✓ **Technology Briefs (1 brief per subsystem, tool, data pipeline)**

  Each game subsystem, custom tool, data conversion/build pipeline tool, AI, features (like a game's scene graphing, rendering, rewards system, character progression, …).

  Every feature, tool, and technology should be addressed in their own review briefs - and be reviewed separately.

  There should be a brief explanation justifying technology choices, demonstrating both an understanding of the technology and the team's cost-benefit analysis of it.

  All Technology Briefs should include:
  - ✓ Existing technology.
  - ✓ Modified / re-tooled existing technology.
  - ✓ Licensed technology.
  - ✓ New technology.

Mandatory Technology Briefs Are –

- ✓ **Hardware Use / Performance Brief**
  - ✓ Target Frame Rate/s (sustained or variable)
  - ✓ Display resolution/s (dimensions, color depth, and 3D Culling Z-Buffer)

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- ✓ Has the CG Sup calibrated all art & dev & QA stations / dev kits to "true color" to RGB display… using specialized color calibration hardware?
- ✓ Target platform and device features utilized / maximized (wireless, Bluetooth, touch screen, 8K/4K/HDTV, game pad, mouse, track pad, stylus, tablet, …)

- ✓ **Memory / Media Allocation Brief**
  - ✓ Memory Allocation (RAM, VRAM, Media/ARAM)
  - ✓ Media Allocation (storage allocation, placement, etc.)
  - ✓ Saved Game/s (data to be saved, compression, size, etc.)
  - ✓ Technical Requirements Checklist (TRC's) adherence.

- ✓ **Processor Utilization Brief**
  - ✓ Processor Utilization (Concurrency - Parallel Processing - CPU/FPU/GPU – and each Core)
  - ✓ How multi-threading will be used (if at all).

- ✓ **User Interfaces (U/I) Brief**
  - ✓ UI / FrontEnd Technical Brief (in consultation with User Interface Design lead)
  - ✓ Front-End User Interface - Integration into Product Client Back-End experience code.
  - ✓ Graphics User Interface (GUI) 'transition' and 'special effect' and sound tech brief

- ✓ **Input Devices Brief (game pad, mouse, keyboard, touch screen, …)**

- ✓ **Marketing Tools Brief**
  - ✓ Explain the plan for how marketing will be provided screen shots, video captures, etc. from the game.
  - ✓ Are there ways to capture super-up-resolution images from the game … for poster art?

- ✓ **IP Encumbrance review for Open Source, 3rd party code, libraries, tools, middleware, etc. rights to use, modify, & distribute.**
  - ✓ Watch for employee owned or independently developed tools, code, and ideas not formally signed over to the developer.

- ✓ **Techniques & tools to focus and direct technology.**
  - ✓ Tech Roadmap with deliverables, Test-For-Completion (TFC's), owners, and dates to exit Pre-Production mapped out and implemented.
  - ✓ Tech Feasibility Analysis documented for WMM, Magic Moments, Narrowed Design, and Features.
  - ✓ Tech Stack overview and modularity & containment. Plus - module interfaces mapped with any container hopping exceptions identified.
    - ✓ Each subsystem, feature, build target, and hardware / Hardware Abstraction Layer (HAL) and Software Development Kit (SDK) interface - should have only ONE clear contained interface contract. (Keep Engineering and Dependency tech upgrades easy – by minimizing direct communication with them)

- o Examples of common mistakes include multiple subsystems (and developers) writing directly to the GPU or Hardware via HAL/SDK redundantly.

  - ✓ "Follow the Data" for each type of asset or experience in a product - it is a way to ensure software architecture protects private implementation flexibility - and defines long-term interface contracts for other subsystems, features, tools… that developers can trust and rely on.

- ✓ Tech Stack plan with containment (modularity) and module interfaces map with layer hopping exceptions identified.

- ✓ Tech Leverage Plan w/ identified existing tech to be used as-is, harvested/re-factored, licensed/purchased, & shareback plan.

- ✓ Dependency List & Requirements Plan with external support noted (e.g. Live/Retail, Mobile/Phone-Tablet-Laptop, Localization, QA/Test, Outsourcing, Shared Services, Licensors, Sponsors, …).

- ✓ Foundation "Delivery" tech complete so only features & content will be done in production.

- ✓ Features proven in software with shippable code within target memory and frame rate (Tech Alpha).

  - ✓ Exceptions are okay with solid plan and veteran experts scheduled to prove/optimize in production.

- ✓ Concurrency (parallelism) & Profiling in code for automatic memory, FPS, CPU/GPU/BUS, & media access calc + optimization.

- ✓ Unit Tests planned and instrumented where possible early on to set expectations and be examples.

- ✓ Technical Design Documents (TDD's) & Reviews (TDR) with task planning, estimation, dependencies, risks, mitigation, …

- ✓ **Editing, Tuning, & Preview Tools to allow non-engineers to tune and edit game content, art, and audio.**

- ✓ **Configuration Management solutions in place for automatic builds, backup, version control, distribute content builds, …**

- ✓ All build targets - should be buildable w/ relative paths - over a network – as a disconnected virtual machine without any presumed, preset environment vars.

- ✓ All physical builds should run under disc emulation to verify proper read-only file management, relative path support, & seek/read rate tolerance, and performance.

  - o Media that can be physically damaged – should have redundancies of critical data such as program binaries.

  - o Runtime code should be tolerant of missing or corrupted asset data – gracefully informing the user of problem – and continuing as best operation as possible.

    - ▪ In the 'old days' –

      - • we would duplicate program binaries and key data – on the inner and outer most tracks of CD & DVD Read-Only Disks (CD & DVD ROMs).

      - • And - 'presentation' data like art, levels, etc. was not duplicated… it was stored on the middle tracks of the DVD.

- If a 'program' track failed to read – the software would seek the opposite extreme end of the disc's data tracks…in hopes, it was not damaged too…

- If BOTH were damaged – the DVD was deemed destroyed… Otherwise – scratched discs might still work!

✓ **Localization tech integrated in software supporting text DB, formatting, fonts, and screen real estate scaling.**

✓ **Online and Cross-Device tech interface & topology mapped out and working in software on all supported platforms.**

✓ **Cloud Logic & Storage working in software with latency tolerance.**

✓ **Dynamic Content Capability built into game to support including scripting, overlays (e.g. .dll's), multiple asset files, …**

   ✓ DLC unlocks/content.

   ✓ Server-driven content (events, modified content, configured UI choices, links, & defaults).

   ✓ Native code vs. script plan, including function/data exposure, runtime resolution/fix-up, & binding approach.

✓ **QA/Test tools integrated in game and in backend solutions to support online load/stress tests, UI & loc crawlers, …**

✓ **Telemetry tech instrumented in client with server backend to support QA coverage and consumer telemetry.**

✓ **Screen & Video Capture Tools supporting up-res'ed visuals with integrated audio (as possible).**

✓ **Audio-Visual Targets (A-VTARS) in software demonstrating look & feel, quality, variety, and cadence of effects.**

Pre-Production Experience Design Briefs:

✓ **Product vision and playable demonstrations with summary of work/cost to date & outstanding and risks & mitigation.**

✓ **Market Opportunity Analysis (MOA) and Consumer Research reinforcing product design decisions and positioning.**

✓ **Techniques & tools to focus and guide product design**

   ✓ WMM locked with consumer facing feature positioning "elevator" statements, reinforcing "heart of the game".

   ✓ Design Tenets defined illustrating philosophy behind WMM & Magic Moments.

   ✓ Narrowed Design Document to what defines the product competitiveness with innovation & quality (not scope).

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- ✓ Magic Moments List with WMM ties & consumer-facing "elevator stories" people will say about each Moment.

- ✓ Stack ranked features w/ grouped supporting elements, incl. WMM tags and Capacity/Budget associated per feature.

- ✓ Game Design Documents (GDD) and supporting detailed materials solidified and representative of all game features.

- ✓ Glue "meta" experience & breadth proven in horizontal slice that stitches features & modes together in united accessible experience.

- ✓ Vertical slice core-x playable showing core game experience is fun, engaging, mechanically proven, and accessible.

✓ **Communication and team alignment approach(es) and cadence**

- ✓ Partner & staff design alignment techniques (senior exec, marketing, licensors, developers, team).

- ✓ Standups, SCRUM & Velocity, reviews & course correction, signage / posters, schedules, printouts, sprints, demos, play sessions.

✓ **Feature Proofs & Risks List identifying proven & unproven design ideas / features with plans to prove & lock them.**

- ✓ Control & Mechanics intuitive, accessible, and fun for demographic (core of the game, why people will play).

- ✓ Personalization and Stickiness showing how the game delivers customized experiences and reason to return play.

- ✓ Social & Community Plan providing local, Live, Mobile, & Web interaction, shared content, and bragging experiences.

- ✓ Progression & Discovery map incl. pacing, passive (e.g. time played), active (e.g. player skill), selective (e.g. talent trees).

- ✓ UI Presentation & Navigation look & feel, controls, and UI "screen" link navigation map.

- ✓ Post Launch Content Plan to support Paid & Free DLC, Marketing unlocks/content, dynamic server-driven changes/content & events.

✓ **Audio-Visual Targets (A-VTARS) & media designs in software demonstrating look & feel, quality, variety, & effects + cadence**

✓ **Telemetry plan with specific information requested from user play, UI, and modes including why it's important.**

✓ **Localization Plan with territories and supported languages in voice, text, and video**

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Pre-Production Development Plan Briefs:

✓ **Development Briefs**

  A list of key development briefs should be generated to reflect an understanding and comprehensive plan to deliver the game as it has been designed.

Mandatory Development Briefs Are:

✓ **Required Equipment / Software / Facilities Brief**

  Provide a list of anticipated equipment, software, and facilities needs the development will need.

  ✓ Computers (desktop, servers, wireless adapters, etc.)

  ✓ Platform Development & Debug Kits

  ✓ Software seats (e.g., compilers, 2D/3D art packages, Flash, etc.)

  ✓ Security Devices / Software (Network, VPN, etc.)

  ✓ Have we identified the 3D applications and tools that were used by the source team and which ones are required for our development?

    ✓ What are they?

    ✓ Are there any modifications or needs to support/improve these tools?

  ✓ What 3D, 2D, Audio, Video, …or other… authoring & editing programs are used?

  ✓ List any plug-ins or or other tools. Are there any missing? What are the requirements?

✓ **Workflows Brief**

  The Workflow brief should illustrate the Workflow between the game team and external groups, identifying handoff points and ownership at each stage. It may include swim lanes and handoff points.

  ✓ Has the Art Signoff Process been created for all art asset types?
  ✓ Has a workflow map been made with each stage of how assets get into the product?
  ✓ Has a pre-production and production framework been produced showing each stage of how assets make it to the game?
  ✓ Any outsourced work must have a planned workflow and a date it will be established and proven (must occur prior to any contract discussion)

✓ **Capacity Plan Brief**

  This is a capacity plan for all staff and external groups.

✓ **Milestone Themes Brief**

For every major and minor feature, identify if it already exists, is it a:

- ✓ Existing feature?
- ✓ Modified feature?
- ✓ New feature?

✓ **Visual Style Guides Brief**

This brief should show visually mockups for all key areas of the game, including game play and front end interfaces.

- ✓ Have visual targets been documented for each asset type and overall game? Where are they?
- ✓ Have visual targets been determined possible by the TD and lead engineer?
- ✓ Have these visual targets been approved by the Art Director?
- ✓ Do we have the all the tools required to achieve the visual targets? If not what is needed?
- ✓ Are there conceptual designs required? Has the art team been notified and time for conceptual work been scheduled… or is it to be outsourced?

✓ **Audio Style Guides Brief**

This brief should provide links to Audio Style Guides for static & dynamically generated / stitched / "effector" sound & environmental effects, music, voice overs, etc. targeted within the game, including game play and front end.

✓ **List of Licenses and Legal Needs / Issues Brief**

✓ **Top Risks Brief**

This should include Major Risks, Risks, and Concerns the game team recognizes should be watched until mitigated; each risk should include:

- ✓ Fallback / contingency plan details / description
- ✓ Test case/s or proof/s to validate / invalidate the risk early on
- ✓ Date for contingency adoption / discard decision
- ✓ Owner / who determines contingency plan adoption / discard

✓ **Key Dates Brief**
- ✓ Provide a list of all key dates for the project outside of the core development schedule and milestones.
    - ✓ E3
    - ✓ Marketing events
    - ✓ Genre timelines: e.g. Sports must be released in key intervals
    - ✓ Movie / License Coinciding Release
    - ✓ Focus Tests
    - ✓ QA Major Reviews
    - ✓ Exec Review

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- ✓ **Pre-Production Prototype, Feature, & Tech. Roadmap Brief**

  This should include a complete development schedule that delivers prototypes and final solutions (not throw-away or un-shippable code) to prove out and deliver game features, technologies, workflows, and pipelines within target retail platform(s) memory, performance, and load times.

  - ✓ Pre-Production Timeline Checkpoint Spreadsheet filled out with buckets and bubbles (of work) and Key Milestone dates. All work has specified proof outcome, duration, assigned staff, and approval/signoff owner & process.

  - ✓ Corporate and Security deliverable schedule completed and incorporated into Milestone Deliverables

  - ✓ Feature and Tech. Mind map with deliverable schedule completed and incorporated into Milestone Themes

Pre-Production Discussion Briefs:

- ✓ **Is this an iterative title? If so, outline the questions below for both the previous build and the current console build. The point is to leverage any work we can from previous builds if possible.**

- ✓ **Have the source art team been made aware that we are working on a similar title? Who was notified and how?**

- ✓ **What procedure is in place for contacting the source team for information?**

- ✓ **Has the source team been asked for access to all available documentation? Where can this documentation be sourced from?**

- ✓ **Is the game design finished?**

  Is there a Game Design, at least a solid overview design of major features? The design should indicate any play mechanics that are different than the previous version, including new interfaces, AI, levels, characters, uniforms, music, etc. It is absolutely critical that Feature Specs be completed prior to related Tech. Briefs being authored.

- ✓ **Is there a postmortem available?**

  If this is a sequel product or is based an existing game engine, is there a Post Mortem available and has it been reviewed?

- ✓ **Is cross platform development planned for?**

  Even if you're not planning to develop across multiple platforms currently, games should always plan for cross-development wherever possible. What is your plan to support this immediately or in the future?

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✓ **What version control software will be used?**

Version Control is important to any team development. Everyone should use version control software, including artists, engineers, sound artists, designers, producers, etc. There should be a standard directory structure that is intuitive and consistent. All documents from game conception to completion should be saved. If it was written for team use, there was a reason for it…and it should be saved.

✓ **What software package does each discipline use?**

    ✓ Engineers?

    ✓ Artists?

    ✓ Producers?

    ✓ Sound Artists?

    ✓ Management?

✓ **Is there a documented guideline or example for directory structure?**

✓ **How is it backed up?**

✓ **Who will administrate the version control server?**

✓ **How will bugs be tracked?**

Use a shared network accessible bug tracking database, such as Jira.

    ✓ What bug tracking software package will be used?

    ✓ Who will customize it to suit your team and project?

    ✓ Is there a clear bug reporting, fix, regression test workflow in place?

    ✓ Who will administrate and maintain the database and server?

✓ **How will daily and weekly builds be done?**

There should be daily builds from a cleaned source to validate current source is functional. There should be weekly builds that include complete re-build from all raw assets, including deletion of all build caches and intermediate files.

    ✓ Is a Release / Final build done daily, allowing QA to test in the morning?

    ✓ Is each Build named properly for everyone to reference?

    ✓ Is there a central location for build status reports?

    ✓ Are builds labeled in Source Control so source can be retrieved per build?

    ✓ Is there a dev build separate from a "known good"/stable/art build? The methodology of having two builds, where one is always functional saves countless hours over the life of a production.

✓ **How will metrics (performance & memory use) be tracked?**

All code should be built from the start to track:

    ✓ Memory use

        ✓ Per allocation type

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- ✓ High/low watermark at different stages of the game (Front/Back End, …)

✓ Processor performance from major subsystems top-level to inner key loops

✓ Frame rate

✓ Automatic metric gathering nightly, not just from QA/test play? Self-running demo play with two AI players from automated builds is a good way to allow nightly running of the games to derive real-world metrics from play.   An automated comparison can identify areas of improvement and loss.

✓ **Have major development phases been planned?**
Define the development cycle in terms of phases; e.g.

- Raw Port Phase, Proofs Phase, Reduction/Enhancement Phase, First Playable Phase, New Features Phase,

- Finaling Phases - Pre-Alpha, Tech Alpha, Alpha, Pre-Beta, Beta, Final, Archival, Postmortem.

✓ **Is the game simulation deterministic?**
   ✓ Cosmetic Presentation which is Engine-Simulation independent - uses a separate Random Generator – and separate Random Seed.

   ✓ Avoid using ANSI/standard Random to ensure future compatibility. It is possible the default Random will not be the same in future compiler revisions, and may not be the same on different platforms such as PC, Xbox, PS2, PSP, N-DS, etc.

   ✓ AI/Physics/Simulation functions use a controlled seeded Random Generator

✓ **Have render, simulation, and networking updates been de-coupled?**

It is important to separate the game's major updates from each other so game play is consistent regardless of latent network communication, slow rendered scenes, etc. Each major update (rendering, simulation, and networking) should be tied to elapsed time, not the current game frame.

✓ **Are times planned to evaluate & improve work flow, data pipelines, tools, game integration, etc.?**

The process and tools used by artists and designers to create art, layout levels, and place objects should be evaluated for workflow and data conversion / build pipelines frequently to minimize confusion, focus work, and increase – remove or automate repetitive actions and procedural functions.

You Made it through The Deep Dive Pre-Production Episode – Congratulations:

You Made It through The Deep Dive Pre-Production Episode – Congratulations!

What to Look for in Tech and Experience Design Briefs

Technical and Experiential Design Brief Requirements:

On to another topic… on What to look for in technical and experiential design briefs, documents…

It's important to set the level of detail – and what you expect – from designs – regardless, if experiential or technical…

A tech or experience design brief should include, but not be limited to:

- Status Quo/Current Situation (What exists today? What is the background?)

- Need (Problem or Opportunity Justifying Work)

- Solution (High Level Description of Proposed Work)

- Expected Benefit / Return on investment, like:

  o Functionality.

  o Performance gain/improvement.

  o Memory – Storage use reduction.

  o And – of course - Revenue, Profit… the mullah!

- Technical Implementation Plan, including:

  o What work has been done to-date- already finished and work-in-progress?

    - Detailed work description, identifying existing, modified, & new code/libraries/tools.

    - Some types of work may require different supporting information -

      - Memory / Media / Performance Maps / Tables / Graphs / Charts.

      - Internal states, objects, & targets to the algorithm / subsystem / engine.

      - Inputs to the algorithm / subsystem / engine.

      - Outputs from the algorithm / subsystem / engine.

      - How things are profiled and measured – snapshots & over time

  o Are there Task breakdown with time estimates, dependencies, and who's doing the work?

  o Are there Tests For Completion (TFC's) to confirm work is solvent / finished (tool, person, QA, …)

- Risks (to successfully implementing plan), including –

  o What risks exist, including the probability of risk being realized?

  o When must a risk be must be reacted to (date the fallback decision must be taken / ignored)?

  o What is the fallback contingency plan should risks prove problematic?

  o Who owns the fallback decision?

- Sign Off Plan (who is responsible for signing off the work as finished).

E271 PRODUCTION TECH AND DEV PLAN REVIEW

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E271 Production Tech and Development Plan Review.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uvcj-e271-production-tech-and-development-plan-review.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/QtGeQ6rJ6uA

Description:
Production Review.

Mandatory Production Tech Design Briefs.

Production Development Plan Briefs.

Production Development Plan Schedule Briefs.

Final'ing and Finishing – Hopefully Without a Needing Help – From a Product Fixer.

Production Deep Dive - Tech and Development Plan Checklist

Production Review:

Let's talk about all the PRODUCTION planning during full-on Development – AFTER the PRE-PRODUCTION Phase has been completed and PASSED…for Software Creation.

Mandatory Production Tech Design Briefs:

✓ **Technology Briefs (1 brief per subsystem, tool, data pipeline)**

Each game subsystem, custom tool, data conversion/build pipeline tools should be addressed in their own Brief. There should be additional briefs for game specific features such as AI, character progression, etc. There should be a brief explanation justifying tech choices, demonstrating both an understanding of the technology and the team's cost-benefit analysis of it.

All Tech Briefs should include:

   ✓ Existing tech.

   ✓ Modified / re-tooled existing tech.

   ✓ Licensed tech.

   ✓ New tech.

Mandatory Technology Briefs are:

✓ **Rendering Brief**

   ✓ 3D Rendering

   ✓ World/terrain scene graphing + CPU sorting/clipping/culling

   ✓ Character & object rendering & animation

   ✓ Geometry and texture compression

✓ **Movie / Video playback Brief**

✓ **Physics / Collision Brief**

✓ **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Brief**

✓ **Audio Playback / Compression Brief**

✓ **Networking / Internet Brief**

✓ **Tools / Build Pipelines Brief**

   ✓ Has any data validation been planned for the pipeline? What will be verified?

   ✓ Is a previous build available for artists? How do we get this?

   ✓ Who will be the main contact engineering for art builds?

   ✓ What is the turn-around times on viewing the various art assets in a build?

   ✓ Is there any time planned to reduce turn-around times on building and viewing art?

   ✓ Is Engineer time available in production to support art builds? How will this work?

- ✓ **Preview / Edit Tools Brief**

  - ✓ Art Preview (on actual hardware, on PC, etc.)
  - ✓ World / level editor (including terrain, surface type assignment, object placement, event triggers, area tagging, AI/path nodes, audio associations, etc.)

  - ✓ Are there any previewing tools for art assets? What are they?
  - ✓ Have we sourced or created documentation explaining the original art creation methods used by source team? What are they? Each asset to be created or edited should be represented here.

  - ✓ What are the translators used and which are the correct versions for development?
  - ✓ Have all the tools and translators required for art production been edited to run (if required) in the product development environment and integrated into Art Distribution Tools?
  - ✓ Do we have in game metrics to guide reduction/creation decisions? Where are they? What are the conclusions from these? E.g. cost benefit.
  - ✓ Are wireless test kits planned for previewing? How many are available for the art team?

Production Development Plan Briefs:

Development Briefs (1 brief per Dev Planned Tech, Tools, Features, Innovation, …)

A list of key development briefs should be generated to reflect an understanding and comprehensive plan to deliver the game as it has been designed. It should minimally cover planned tech, tools, features, innovation, schedules, resources, and more…

Mandatory Development Briefs are:

- ✓ **Current Top Risks Brief**

  This brief should include Major Risks, Risks, and Concerns the game team recognizes should be watched until mitigated.

  Each Risk should include:

  - ✓ Fallback / contingency plan/s
  - ✓ Test case/s or proof/s to validate / invalidate the risk early on?

- ✓ **Performance Targets Defined Per Milestone**

  There must be planned Average and Low Frame rate targets, Load Time targets (Boot-FE, FE-BE, BE-FE), and Memory Usage + Fragmentation (how much / if any fragmentation is allowed, including detection / mitigation plans) for each milestone. These will be used as Test For Completion (TFC) deliverables by QA. What are they?

✓ **Test Plan**

A detailed Test Plan should be provided for each milestone, explaining how each milestone item can be validated by QA.

✓ **Proofs Timeline Brief**

This brief should be a list of key Proofs needed for the game, their target dates / milestones for completion. Some development plans might have their proofs occur before Production begins and others might include it within their Production milestones. There may be several of each Proof type - and recurring at later milestones.

Example of valid Proofs are:

✓ Proof of Workflow (for each external dependency)

✓ Proof of Time Estimates (for each work area including integration time – nothing is done until it's in the game)

✓ Proof of Visual Target (Look & Feel / Design Review)

✓ Proof of Concept / Playable (for any new feature, or function)

✓ Proof of Technology (for all new tech.)

✓ Proof of "X" (a major milestone to prove the big picture game design works)

✓ Proof of Performance (metrics for memory & media use and speed)

✓ Proof of Art Workflow (for each art asset created or edited, level design, etc.)

✓ Proof of Down Resolution & Depth / LOD & FE from high resolution assets to target platform(s) potentially lower resolution assets – and to fit within their memory & speed capabilities.

✓ Proof of Up Resolution & Depth / LOD & FE from low resolution assets to target platform(s) or for marketing use

✓ Proof of cross-platform builds across target platform(s), demonstrating tools and code are truly shareable.

✓ **Asset List Brief (type/quantity - art, audio, levels, …)**

This brief should identify all assets - that will be required to complete the game, who will deliver them, and when they are needed.

✓ What is the overview of how assets work together to deliver the game visuals?

✓ What assets require editing or creation? What are they? What tools do the content authors need? E.G. Master asset list defining all the assets to be created or edited and their details for the entire game (poly counts, texture sizes, pixel & vertex shaders, vertex lighting, etc. – you get the idea)

✓ What are the game team approved budgets for the assets listed above?

✓ After reviewing the workflow plans and map, are there any outstanding tools that need to be created that have come to light? If so, what are they?

✓ Is there a better way of approaching the work? If so, what are the risks associated with this new approach? …or – what the risks – by staying with the old approach?

- ✓ Do we have an art development/creative brief for all of the art & audio asset types that have been highlighted above? Where are these documents found? Where are the Audio and Visual Targets to be seen?

- ✓ Do we have access to the appropriate versions of all assets from the source team? Where can the original assets be found – are they stored in the same version control as the main software, or in a separate Version Control depot?

- ✓ What are the formats of the source files? And what tools are required to use and view them?

- ✓ Where will the original source files be backed up to for future use?

- ✓ Have these source art assets and art tools been integrated into version control?

- ✓ Have all of the folder structures below the main branches been determined and remain consistent throughout all of them? List the structure.

- ✓ Are the assets to be converted to other art tools, or are assets to be converted into interim formats potentially for development viewing, editing, etc.

- ✓ What is the process by which all textures will be reduced? What is the LOD and Mipmap plan? Does this allow for selective reductions based on art input? Or is it done entirely by engineering – tools, pipelines, other…?

- ✓ What features will have parameters exposed through real-time, runtime tools interfacing directly with the software – for content creators? …so - they can see content in-software, in real-time – thereby, expediting and improving the iterative, refinement, and polishing process.

- ✓ Will code and art assets - can be acquired from another 'currently under development' software title – it may be during their pre-production or even production (may be - in parallel development)? What code and assets can be leveraged and shared between the products?

- ✓ Who is responsible for acquiring and integrating leveraged, shared code and assets?

- ✓ What is the process for acquiring assets from console during production?

- ✓ How many drops are expected? When will these take place? How will their security and quality be monitored?

- ✓ What contingency plans are in place for late/missed deliveries?   …or even get canceled?

- ✓ **Localization – Internationalization Brief**

  There should be a plan for localization, supporting Unicode, UTF8, or other multi-byte character encoding process as well as identifying key graphics or speech voice files that will need to be translated for different markets.

  - ✓ Text, incl. culture changes - numbers, dates, money symbols, etc., and all formatting routed through common functions

  - ✓ Text Art / Graphics identified (none if possible)

  - ✓ Video, including subtitles (at least for instructional spoken content)

  - ✓ Speech, incl. lists, subtitles (at least for instructional V.O.)

  - ✓ Stitching, including grammar & syntax language variations for runtime stitched speech & text

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✓ Multiplayer inter-territory play, including LAN, Internet, Adhoc, & Online in terms of sorted menus / user-selectable lists

✓ Local vs. Server provided text, including proper font & character set availability and Account & Terms of Service (TOS) language support.

✓ Cultural Localization Considerations / Issues and solution/s defined.

✓ Font Types, Font Sizes, Character Sets, & Upper/Lower case defined according to platform display hardware (LCD, TV, HDTV), display dimensions & depth/s, and target regions / languages

✓ Localization Specification Document completed (according to Loc. provided template)

✓ Localization Group and Game Team have mutually agreed Loc. Roadmap & Plan, including deliverables, dates, and owners during Pre-Pro, Production, and Finaling

✓ Saved-Game support

✓ Sufficient Memory available to worst-case font size and character count - and fitting within the screen real-estate; my experience – use German text on screens as a rule-of-thumb – to be confident the text will fit within the screen real estate, text box, area, etc.

✓ **External Dependencies Brief**

Provide a list of all external group dependencies, identifying what they will provide, delivery date/s, content integrity verification plan, and integration plan.

✓ Central Art Services

✓ Player Art Department – for creating things like bipeds or quadrupeds… things that people might be familiar with. And – these same artistic creations – could be used for the Player to 'be' – as their avatar - during gameplay.

✓ 2D Art

  ✓ Reference material clear of Legal encumbrance

✓ 3D Art (Models, textures, animation)

  ✓ Reference material clear of Legal encumbrance

✓ Worlds / levels - layout, creation, etc.

✓ Technical Art Group

✓ Tools required

  ✓ Iteration and Prototyping Tools

✓ Training needed

✓ Central Interface Services

- ✓ Interface Design / Art

- ✓ Reference material clear of Legal encumbrance

- ✓ Interface Engineering (Front End, Back End, HUD)

- ✓ Central Audio Services

  - ✓ Sound Effects (resident and streamed)

  - ✓ Music (sequenced like MIDI or digital, recorded)

  - ✓ Voice Overs

- ✓ Central or External Technology Services (with specified target versions, and compatibility concerns)

  - ✓ Shared, Leveraged Tools & Libraries

  - ✓ Online / Networking

  - ✓ Licensed middleware

  - ✓ Open Source

- ✓ Motion Capture

- ✓ Video Production / Acquisition

- ✓ Licensed content (content acquisition, approval, and rights)

  - ✓ List of required licenses

  - ✓ License Requirements (Per Item):

    - ✓ Contact/s

    - ✓ Submission Date/s

    - ✓ Required Licensor Approval Date/s

    - ✓ Risks involving License

    - ✓ Contingency Plan (if failed License)

  - ✓ Has Business Affairs been involved?

    - ✓ Who is working with the Production team?

- ✓ Quality Assurance (QA) – from Production Milestone 1 onward

- ✓ Servers for hosting Internet / Online gaming

✓ Contracted Services-art, video, voice, script/writing, motion capture, documentation, etc.

✓ **Media Image Creation and Submission Dates Planned**

There must be planned submission dates for each territory or region – and to the respective approval agencies for platform(s), device(s), content age appropriateness approval.

What are the regions, target platforms or devices, dates, and minimum customer age?

Production Development Plan Schedule Briefs:

✓ **Is the development schedule completed and documented?**

The entire schedule should be in written form, in such a state of completion that a new manager could understand the project plan, dependencies, dates & deliverables, hand-off points, etc. within 1 week without any support from the team. If this Schedule Acid test cannot be passed, the project does not have a good plan – and should fail its TDR and DPR reviews.

✓ **Is there a standard schedule package (e.g. MS Project)?**

If not MS Project… is there other task- schedule tracking software used? E.g. Excel? Or Jira? Make sure everyone on the team – can use it effectively.

✓ **What is the capacity planning for this project? E.g. link to the capacity plan document**

✓ **What is the bug fixing capacity for the art team? Engineering capacity?**

✓ **What are the milestone dates for this project? E.g. link to the Milestone Themes document?**

✓ **Are there monthly milestones?**

Milestones greater than a month tend to be vaguely defined and include too many steps that can be missed or glossed over during scheduling. Targeting monthly milestones is generally a good goal unless there is explicit justification for otherwise. Most managers compromised with me – on six week milestones – minimum for them, maximum for me.

✓ **Are there clear testable deliverables for each milestone?**

High-level buckets of TFC's must be defined before entering First Production, and fully completed to Final before leaving Pre-Production

✓ What TFC's will be TD approved? E.g. Tech. Briefs, Technology proofs, underlying subsystems without user visibility, memory & media utilization, performance & timing, tech. / related prototypes, QA non-verifiables that are technical in nature, etc.

✓ What TFC's will be the CG Supervisor approved? E.g. Art tools, artist workflows, animation budgets used to deliver Look & Feel targets, etc.

✓ What TFC's will be Production approved? E.g. Creative Briefs, Feature Specs, Playable tests, features, quality, etc.

✓ What TFC's will be QA approved? E.g. Playable tests, features, functionality (not necessarily quality), etc.

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✓ **What is the schedule/timeline for art asset creation and editing? What and When. All assets being touched should be represented here.**

✓ **What are the "tests for completion" for art assets for feature related work?**

✓ **What are the "tests for completion" for non-feature related work? Who is tracking this?**

✓ **What is the review and sign-off process for art assets? Who owns the sign off for what and when?**

✓ **Has time For meetings and management been factored?**

✓ **Leads need time outside of coding to attend meetings, mentor, assist in scheduling, firefight, etc., so don't schedule them to 100%. I recommend 80% at most – ideally, down to 50% of Leads time should be scheduled.**

✓ **Is there team buy-in?**

✓ **Each team member should have seen and agreed to the schedule…. Especially for their own work, and dependencies to complete their work.**

✓ **Is no task less than half a day or greater than 5 days? Again – I recommend ½ to 3 days as a target, the shorter the better. 5 days should be an outlier estimate…**

✓ **If a task takes less than a day, group it with other smaller tasks that roll up into a bigger task. Don't track any task grouping smaller than half a day. Tasks exceeding 5 days should be broken into smaller tasks… even if they are being done by the same person, or group.**

✓ **Is a 6-hour productive day, 5-day week scheduled for?**

✓ **Planning on more time than a 6-hour, 5-day a week productive schedule isn't realistic. People can use the extra time to polish their work and catch up for unexpected delays. Crunch should be outside of schedule time.**

✓ **Has the Art Lead or Any Leads been scheduled to more than 50%? If so what is the reasoning?**

The leads will have numerous tasks that arise throughout production that will compete greatly for their time. It is not realistic to schedule beyond the upward bounds of 50% capacity.

✓ **Is vacation / time-off scheduled and allowed for?**

While the precise time for each employee's vacation is not always known, the total time off should be included at the back end (or at the most likely times) of the schedule. This time should be scheduled like any other task, and not be taken from the contingency time. Vacations and Time Off should be scheduled.

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✓ **Are major events and pre-work (and absent people) considered in the schedule?**

   ✓ Localization Verifiable Build/s (LVBs)

   ✓ Convention Demos – e.g. Electronic Entertainment Exposition (E3)

   ✓ Marketing & Public Relations (PR) Events

   ✓ Licensor/s Submission/Approval

   ✓ Software and Game Developer's Conference (GDC)

   ✓ Release/Magazine Demos (requires Technical Requirement Checklists / TRC approval)

   ✓ Technical Requirement Checklists (TRC's); Memory Card flow, display Safe Area, …

✓ **Is the overall dev. team capacity at or below 85%?**

No game should enter Tech. Alpha or Dev. Review with greater than 85% capacity; the 15% is critical contingency time to deal with unexpected issues and problems.

Contingency time should not be borrowed against - willfully. It is a buffer intended to address unknown and unexpected risks [which always happen].

Bug fixing time should not be planned as part of the 85% 'allocatable' development capacity - as this is intended for unknowns - or for unexpected, especially hard to fix bugs - that took longer than anticipated.

✓ **Is a buffer margin factored appropriately for complex tasks and inexperienced staff?**

For all new or complex tasks and inexperienced [in the tech. domain] an appropriate buffer margin must be appended to allow for unexpected issues. This buffer is intended to address known risks that require further analysis or discovery.

✓ **Are individuals assigned tasks on the schedule?**

Without one specific person assigned to each task, it's hard to identify who is delivering on target and who's not; this can help identify who needs help or training.

✓ **Is superstar performance used on the schedule?**

Although superstars on your team can work twice as fast as anyone else and do it with fewer bugs, avoid planning for their extraordinary speed & accuracy so they can mentor/help others who might otherwise fall behind. Planning for their high performance leaves your schedule in jeopardy if they should leave the project (quit/transferred, injured, etc.).

✓ **Are dependencies linked between tasks and milestones?**

Dependencies should be established between tasks and milestones. Never hard-code start/end dates. Human error can lead to misinformation and very wrong schedules. There may ultimately be half a dozen to even a dozen dependencies on some tasks, but it's a lot easier to do it up front than to remember it all yourself.

✓ **Are licensor dependencies included (and who is responsible)?**

Licensor dependencies should be tasks on the schedule just like any other dependency, e.g. Licensor review & approval milestones, ESRB, Manufacturer TRC/review/approval, etc. Also, who will be responsible for these approvals and relationships?

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- **What are the major dependencies between art and engineering that will need to be synchronized? E.g. new feature requiring art for testing, conversion of assets for new system implementation etc.**

- **Are external dependencies included?**

   External dependencies should be tasks on the schedule like any other dependency. Examples of these dependencies

   are:

   - service groups (art, audio, interfaces, …)
   - Other Studios or Groups (source code/data, support, tools, …)
   - Contractors / Contracted Services (Motion Capture, Training, etc.)
   - Hardware/Software/Equipment - everything needs to be on the schedule - right down to when a computer arrives.

- **Is there a Schedule Revision milestone?**

   It is important to plan for the development schedule to be revised due to feature/design changes, unexpected events, technology discoveries / conclusions, etc. By planning for an updated schedule, management won't be surprised… even if you show up – potentially - with revised major dates - and deliverables.

- **Are there pre-alpha, alpha, pre-beta, beta, final milestones?**

   Plan for an "internal" test run for Alpha prior to the official Alpha milestone; this is the team's dry run for a real Alpha.. to protect their reputation, and be more efficient. Make sure your team knows what is expected for each major milestone, especially since these milestones vary in definition from company to company – even from Studio to Studio.

- **Are there sustained frame rate checkpoints in the schedule?**

- **Are there load time checkpoints in the schedule?**

- **Are performance analysis checkpoints in the schedule?**

   Some platform publishers may provide code and performance evaluation services. They should be taken advantage of and planned for… if they exist.

- **Is a postmortem in the schedule?**

   A Postmortem should be required before the final milestone can be approved.

   Postmortems are critical to identify lessons learned and provide insight on how our development process, tools, and the game itself should be modified in the future… as well as – any technical debt – that may need to be paid.

- **When will - each and every - work order – docket - with detailed deliverables be delivered for central, shared, or external groups? What dockets exist – and will be created for or by external groups? When will they be available? Again – everything must be scheduled.**

- **Are all staff/resources fully utilized and verified with Resource Usage?**

   It is important to verify all staff/resources are fully utilized throughout the project.

While it may be necessary for response-oriented roles to be called-out with 0-day time allocations at the top of the project with a Task Note explaining why they are under/over utilized, most staff members are task-driven.

Task-driven resources should be checked in Resource Usage for being red-lined (over-tasked) and checked to see that they have no gaps in assignments.

Final'ing and Finishing – Hopefully Without a Needing Help – From a Product Fixer:

There is an entire discussion on the Final'ing, Finishing a product or service for release…

And – that is another deeper dive…

. . .

I hope the Pre-Production and Production Reviews get you to the point…that you can finish your product … without

needing a PRODUCT FIXER!

. . .

May your product development shine with great success…

E272 EXAMPLES OF TECH AREAS TO REVIEW

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E272 Technology Review - Examples of Tech Areas to Review.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uvp9-e272-technology-review-examples-of-tech-areas-to-review.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/RpK90v-TXBY

Description:
The Value of Raw Technical and Development Plan Reviews.

Examples of tech areas to review…

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Raw Technical and Development Plan Review Checklist

The Value of Raw Technical and Development Plan Review Lists:

Let's talk about a raw technical and development plan review checklist… This episode is an ever deeper detail tech episode – and is a compliment to the earlier Technical and Development Review Episodes…

Examples of tech areas to review include:

- ✓ **Proofs in software in lieu of Technical Design Documents only if proofs are product shippable & long-term code quality.**

  - ✓ Prototypes are not substitutions for production-ready code, but are important to pre-pro to prove ideas & capability.

- ✓ **Tech. design documents (if not implemented) w/ estimates, dependencies, risks & mitigations, measures of success.**

- ✓ **Asset & Code Budgets, Profiling Instrumentation, and Reporting/Visualization.**

- ✓ **Workflows, data pipelines, profiling, and optimization plan proven or time scheduled to deliver early during production.**

- ✓ **Technical Art Review (TAR) completed (as below)**

- ✓ **Original, Licensed, Purchased Tech & Tools approved by organization, Legal and Corporate Affairs, and Tech Leadership.**

- ✓ **Version Control (tracking, branching, mainline, integration) for code, tools, geo, textures, anim, lighting, tags), audio, video.**

- ✓ **Config & Build Management (automated pipelines, distributed builds, daily/nightly/…, caching, backups, media layout, …)**

- ✓ **Software design & architecture (code, pipeline, and module interfaces, containment, dependencies, concurrency, …)**

- ✓ **Directory file-folder layout & naming convention – core game, tools, shared libs, art/asset plugins, content, …**

- ✓ **Code quality (guidelines, reviews, verification tools)**

- ✓ **Functional testing (unit testing, test plans, regression & verification process, open for testing maps, Bug Database … ensuring coordination with all teams and QA)**

- ✓ **Profiling & Analytics (CPU/GPU/BUS: debugging tools, instrumented & automated collection, automated/drift analysis, …)**

- ✓ **Automation (Builds, Load & Functional Testing, UI crawlers & captures, Telemetry, …)**

- ✓ **Data conditioning, authoring, iteration, preview, & tuning tools including real-time hot-swappable/loadable caps.**

- ✓ **Script engine and exposed native & script functions & data between script & native code.**

- ✓ **Network / Server topology, interfaces, & insulation model for backend replacement & patch updates (dev & retail env.)**

- ✓ **Network traffic requirements and emulation to define & validate unique users & bandwidth/latency targets.**

- ✓ **Network tech (client, server, protocols, packet latency/loss/variability compensating, Database, determinism – client vs server arbitrated, state synchronicity)**

- ✓ **Database technology, schema, versioning, and segmentation (client and online)**

- ✓ **Object management, communication, and partitioning (levels, layout, characters, gear/pickups, actors, …)**

- ✓ **Rendering (scene, object, inter-object), display list, buffering, shaders, particles, shadows/lighting, full-screen & post effects.**

- ✓ **Scene graphing, streaming, and management.**

- ✓ **Physics (rigid body, Inverse Kinematics ala Rag Doll Physics)**

- ✓ **Animation, blending, and state management. …and product logic tied to animation.**

- ✓ **Font system.**

- ✓ **Localization DB & multi-byte/Unicode capable.**

- ✓ **Dynamic content (published and user generated: posting, propagation, discovery, cataloging, vote/rating, downloading, and banning, …)**

- ✓ **Input & controls including controllers, peripherals, and remote/multiplayer management. Is there dead reckoning or other latency-lag compensation – for remote users?**

- ✓ **Replay System (input/event + timestamp recording/playback, determinism vs. state management, …)**

- ✓ **Saved Game UI & Tech.**

- ✓ **TCR, CERTIFICATION Compliance**

- ✓ **Age Rating (ESRB, PEGI, USK, …) Approved**

- ✓ **User Interface / Frontend tech & integration including backend & script tie-ins**

- ✓ **File System, Compression, Concatenation, and grouped data including concurrent file open & access**

- ✓ **Downloadable Content and Unlocks (single DLC and multi-DLC concurrent use supported)**

- ✓ **Server-driven content in "static shipped game" including data replacement, incremental data, and selection choices**

- ✓ **Memory system, allocator models, & tracking + debugging**

- ✓ **Audio systems (sound, music, speech - static & dynamic/stitched + analysis, lip sync), incl. localization support. Even MIDI – or otherwise synthesized audio.**

- ✓ **Video systems (playback, decoding, encoding, CODECs), incl. localization and subtitle support… and – potentially – audio voice dubbed language audio track selection.**

- ✓ **Art tool plugins**

- ✓ **Preview tools and runtime hot-swappable asset loading – for audio, art, levels, anything**

- ✓ **Art Data pipelines & distributed asset builds**

- ✓ **Workflow analysis & optimization**

✓ **Prior version postmortem learning integration, re-factoring, & mainline integration, as appropriate**

Hopefully There Were Nuggets of Value in This Raw Deep Dive Checklist:

And – once more – you have made it through another deep dive episode.

Well – that concludes the raw deep dive checklist. I hope there were some nuggets of value for you.

Coming up – service and analytics deep dive…

E273 SERVICE AND ANALYTICS DEEP DIVE REVIEW

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E273 Service and Analytics Deep Dive Review.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uvvw-e273-service-and-analytics-deep-dive-review.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/PTHB5ddKoN4

Description:
Service and Telemetry & Analytics Plan Review.

Perpetual Looping Five Stages of Telemetry and Analytics.

Analytics Engineering Review Deep Dive.

Analyst Review Deep Dive.

Service Engineering Review Deep Dive.

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Service and Telemetry & Analytics Plan Review Checklist

Perpetual Looping Five Stages of Telemetry and Analytics:

I have often recommended what I call –

The Perpetual Looping Five Stages of Services & Analytics Engagement and Course Correction.

The Five Stages are –

1. Data Collection   (w/ dimensional context)

2. Raw Data Storage – Individual-PII/Aggregate   (warehousing, replication)

3. Data Map Reduction   (rules reduction; derived dimensions; DB joining; Reduced Data)

4. Visualization   (dashboards, interactive data, DB analyst interpretation)

5. Act on Insight   (tuning, content, A-B testing, targeted offers, release timing, Pricing)

- And then Loop Back to #1 (perpetual loop – of course-correcting product development)

Analytics Engineering Review Deep Dive:

✓ **Analytics Overview?**

  ✓ What do you want to know from your consumers?

  ✓ Legal and Privacy compliant?

  ✓ Cross-title, cross-device?

  ✓ Scalable?

  ✓ 100% data collection drawn (vs. sampled) – from its target market regions or individuals?

  ✓ Bandwidth throttle-able?

  ✓ Kill-switch support? …to completely disable, kill the product…or a feature? Or to stop collecting telemetry?

✓ **Consumer Managed Telemetry?**

  ✓ Consumers should be able to opt-out of location aware telemetry, and further opt-out of telemetry altogether?

  ✓ Telemetry can be disabled for pay-for-bandwidth connections?

✓ **Telemetry Data Collection & Schema?**

  ✓ Collect 100% baseline, genre, cross-title, and game-specific contextual telemetry on all devices (Console, Mobile, Tablet, PC)?

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- ✓ Telemetry Data has formal schema and is versioned to supported revised schemas ongoing without data repository resets?

- ✓ All telemetry is time stamped, associated with a user, and is securely transmitted to a collector service?

- ✓ Telemetry Data includes feature/mode buoys as well as bespoke event triggered collection?

    - ✓ Telemetry Data captures events, interval samples, other?

- ✓ Common Statistics (standard platform / user hardware information, user information, etc.) are collected?

- ✓ Bespoke Telemetry Data is formally defined with actionable purpose (not just collecting in hopes of emergent discovered value)?

- ✓ Telemetry can be client compressed via operators such as Min/Max, Accumulation during local collection?

- ✓ Telemetry includes dimensional contextual data?

- ✓ **Telemetry Data Storage?**
    - ✓ Store formatted raw data from clients in scalable database(s) in common data center, using forward hashed user ID's for privacy?

    - ✓ What is the database solution – SQL, Vertica, Azure/SQL?

    - ✓ Storage solution is scalable and secure?

    - ✓ All telemetry is stored in a secure data repository in raw form for map reduction, and is replicated in a quick-access location?

    - ✓ Flush() or equivalent telemetry function exists and is called at key user flow locations to minimize losing any telemetry data

    - ✓ Telemetry is stored offline for products that may operate unconnected, and transmitted upon next connection

- ✓ **Map / Reduced Data?**
    - ✓ Reduce raw data for analysis and join with other DB's, using common tools and servers?

    - ✓ Analysts, designers, user research, and development define questions to be answered to drive telemetry, joining, and reduction?

    - ✓ Store reduced data on fast DB's for rapid interactive visualization and real-time reporting – Vertica, SQL

- ✓ **Visualization?**
    - ✓ Analysts interactively analyze data and create web reports for real-time tracking and viewing by others?

    - ✓ Dynamic editable game variables associated with telemetry via web pages?

    - ✓ Web views for designers, engineers, business analysts, producers, and executives using Tableau / Power View?

- ✓ **Act on Insight?**
    - ✓ Tune content according to player interests & behavior, including A-B tests?

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✓ Surface telemetry in games to consumers in meaningful ways via hosted services?

✓ Communicate directly with users in-game?

✓ Determine ideal release timing, pricing, and marketing plans?

Analyst Review Deep Dive:

✓ **Top responsibilities for Analyst to add value to product/business?**

   ✓ Define, drive, and Join data from business intelligence, target segmentation, market & user research, and product telemetry & platform telemetry data to unified relevant single DB repository?

   ✓ Provide analysis, recommendations, and distilled interpretation of market research & segmentation, product concept quant & qual research, product & platform UR & telemetry insight, etc.?

   ✓ Track and report product usage, consumer behavior & trends, and comparable product performance?

   ✓ Drive and guide product telemetry requirements individual and in aggregate?

   ✓ Engage Studios Analytics Teams to harvest & share best practices and tools?

✓ **Top skills required by an Analyst?**

   ✓ Ability to directly use and manipulate complex databases from various sources, selectively join data sets & schemas, and interface with analysts, IT, and management teams to secure relevant access and information?

   ✓ Understanding of various research mediums, formats, analysis, distillation, and presentation to deliver executive reports, summaries & interpretation walks, and deep data repository and sharing?

   ✓ Expertise deriving key information from complex databases & schemas and developing dashboards – digital (Tableau, Power View) and documents (decks & docs)?

   ✓ Operational leadership and project management ability to guide & wrangle telemetry requirements, adapt to video game real-time analytics vs. web/click-through traditional digital analytics, document, drive, & influence adoption & integration for individual product and common aggregate telemetry?

   ✓ Adaptability to politically engage across multiple organizations as a partner to inspire collaboration, sharing, and evangelize best practices & tools for analytics? …and – its adoption.

Service Engineering Review Deep Dive:

✓ **Formal Software, Tools, and Organization Structure for Operations & Consumer Support?**

   ✓ Documented Roles & Responsibilities, on-call resources, response / run books, and automated recovery / restart systems?

   ✓ WSLL/KSI's and KPI's measuring multiple interval tool, site, and product success – uptime, transactions per second, lag, load/access times, …

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✓ **Formal Documented Service Lifecycle and Strategy – Roadmap, Customer Satisfaction Surveys, Feedback, & Communication Systems?**

✓ **Live / Production Site and Release Management**

   ✓ Virtual Machine (VM) isolation and replication ability to dynamic throttle service instances to accommodate load & control costs?

   ✓ Dedicated separate machine and human resources supporting Live Production Sites?

   ✓ Log data collected, enabling trouble shooting issue origins and replicating environment/state to enable reproducing issue & fixing?

   ✓ Code & Content Modular to support automated component & full system deployment, rollback, inter-dependency versioning & verification?

   ✓ Release Management Process and Release Manager formally assigned to oversee all release candidates for test, inter-operability, and quality?

      ✓ Unit Tests & Service Exercise Test Beds & Harnesses in place to test service and updates in Live Production & Staging Environments?

   ✓ "Kill Switch" available to terminate features/services

   ✓ Staging Site readiness prior to Live Deployment?

      ✓ Staging and Live Production sites & services may be location agnostic – or not? So – you may need to deploy remote servers, or integrate in-software network 'problem simulation'

      ✓ Production & Staging Site environments and URL's resolved according to separate Domain Name Servers (DNS), and not manually configured with static IP/Port/URL:Path?

      ✓ Client and Service URL's configured from one master re-mapping URL?

✓ **Service Health & Availability**

   ✓ Automated Monitoring of holistic service (farm, cloud, geo-locations), machines/VM's, individual service modules/components?

   ✓ Automated Monitoring of Quality of Service (QoS) & Op-Status and Response Systems, including Call-To-Action e-mails/texts/calls to support staff?

      ✓ Documented QoS KPIs, Operating Status, Trend Tracking, and Predictive Analysis & Reporting in place with supporting Tech Systems?

         ✓ QoS includes holistic operating service from client/consumer perspective, not just server uptime?

         ✓ QoS includes Mean Time to Detection (MTTD) and Mean Time to Recovery (MTTR) from incidents & faults?

✓ Internal/External and Multi-tier QoS and Monitored Status Dashboards, Reports, and DB's available?

✓ Service Level Objectives Defined and Service Level Agreements in place with supporting resources & infrastructure for clients/partners?

✓ Documented KPI's for Quality of Service

✓ Service Resilience is fault tolerant, including power outage, system/machine/VM/sub-service failure, entire data center failure?

✓ Disaster Recoverability includes regular full site, service, & data backup and ability to rapidly recover and re-deploy? Even – changing the data centers hosting the services.

✓ **Data Management**

✓ All Private and Identifiable Information securely transmitted such as via HTTPS and protected (encrypted, hashed, stored) in secure location throughout data lifecycle (creation, transmission, storage, and backup/retention) across all service modules?

✓ All client/user data is validated for appropriate format, content, size under/overruns, etc. to prevent exploits and hacks?

✓ Telemetry / User Data Raw Data Storage, Safe Access Area Replication, and DB Joining?

✓ Load Balancing in place to support large scale concurrent connections, distributing load demand across multiple machines and data centers?

✓ Data Read vs. Write Coherency integrated in peer-service/server and client access design, including semaphore modeling where critical?

✓ Privacy Management and Identify Obfuscation / Hash enabling direct targeting/communication without identification association?

✓ Personal Identifiable Information (PII) stored in secure separate location from bulk data, with obfuscated indexing into bulk data?

✓ Formalized audit for PII isolation, hack & ingestion exploit defensibility?

✓ "Kill Switch" available to terminate internal/external system access to Data/PII?

✓ Ability to block specific user, account, IP/IP:Port, Product from accessing any level of data – individual, product, group, …?

✓ **Service Business Model (ROI pragmatism)**

✓ Product "Purchase" vs. Subscription Modeling and Expense:Revenue Model Solvency?

✓ Feature/System Designs & Resources and Decisions Based on Data not "Gut" or intuition?

✓ Capital Expenses & Operational Expenses appropriate for Service (Maintenance, CDN/Cloud Storage, Bandwidth, & Processing, Resources)?

✓ End-to-End costs fully understood, including CapEx, OpEx?

✓ Storage, Bandwidth, Processing Req'mnts, Concurrent Users/Connections, Transactions Per Second (TPS) known, measured, and forecast?

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- ✓ Load Testing & Account Management Tools exist and used to validate service stability overall and across all service locations and warehouses?

- ✓ **Accessibility and Usability**

  - ✓ Consumer and Relevant Product User Interfaces accommodate users with disabilities or handicaps, including adherence to Territory Laws?

  - ✓ Service has required Age, Gender, Location Access Management / Restrictions in compliance with target territory laws? Though it may feel wrong – it is necessary for age & gender & location restrictions to release software throughout the world; some countries allow 14-year old boys to do something, whereas a 14-year old girl may not.

  - ✓ Accessibility/usability service aspects fully tested to ensure there are no exploits or data issues (as these are often under-managed areas)?

  - ✓ Internationalization / Localization exists for relevant service modules & components? Everything should be localized.

- ✓ **Monetization**

  - ✓ Monetization and Charging Solutions are appropriate per territory and backed by established Banking Institutions?

  - ✓ Credit Card and Bank Information properly managed, secured, and stored in compliance with territory laws?

  - ✓ Content offerings have appropriate Territory & Global Distribution, Sale, and Licensing Rights?

  - ✓ Marketplace offerings are tied to territories and regions vs. global offerings?

  - ✓ A-B Testing available for Marketplace offerings?

  - ✓ User Rating System exists for content & offerings, and automated revocation systems in place as well as moderators to approve/reject content?

- ✓ **Service Engineering Agility**

  - ✓ Time, process, tools, and workflow to make, test, & deploy a change to service tech, feature, capability?

  - ✓ All service module interfaces and library Abstract Program Interfaces (API's) properly isolate internal implementation from client engineers to allow internal code modifications and wholesale re-architecture / replacement without impact?

    - ✓ Abstractions exist for all API's and module interfaces to allow complete engine replacement, so products can develop for years to come with same software dependencies.

  - ✓ Planned Release Cadence, Release Versioning (Major.Minor.Patch), and Release Communication (FAQ/Notes, Push vs. Pull Updates)?

  - ✓ Product's Quality of Service (QoS) and Uptime Tracking & Visibility (internal/external) sites, dashboards, tools?

  - ✓ Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) architecture that supports inter-operable services and real-time modular updates?

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- ✓ Partial vs. Whole Binary Update capability?

- ✓ Consistency, Availability, and Partition (CAP) Tolerance integrated in Service and Module Architecture, with formal module interfaces defined?

- ✓ Version Control & Release Revision Tools & Process + Label & Snapshots for Code, Data, Schemas?

- ✓ Concurrent automated builds with automatic e-mail/communicated breaks and issues?

- ✓ Labeled Builds, Last Known Good (LKG), Ship Ready, and Shipped Builds for code & data maintained?

- ✓ Unit Tests, Automated Extent/Limit Tests, and Test Harness/Test Beds to facilitate development & validation prior to deployment?

- ✓ Debugging Tools and Environment/State Reproduction capability?

- ✓ **Engineering & Tool Debt**

  - ✓ Known deferred work obligations?

  - ✓ Correction / Fixes to existing tools, tech, process(es)?

All About Code Optimization:

I hope – once more – there has been one or more nuggets of useful insight… for you. And – that it might help you in your career…

E274 DATA OPTIMIZATION IS KING

Data Optimization is King

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E274 Data Optimization is King.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uvt2-e274-data-optimization-is-king.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/P5HfjuU5HTI

Description:
All About Data Design and Optimization Secrets.
Follow The Data to Know Everything.
Unwinding The Ball of Code Yarn – Using Data.
Optimization – What It Is and Why It Is Important.
Data Optimization is the King and Code Optimization is the Queen Optimization.
Data Design is HUGE.
Data Design – Use Smallest Data Possible.
Data Design – Arrange Data in Close Proximity to Related Data.
Data Design – Align Data on Native Processor Fetch Size and Cache Lines.
Data Design – Direct Memory Access (DMA) Data Copies.

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All About Data Design and Optimization Secrets

All About Code Optimization:

Well – we have covered a lot of my – potentially 'old school' tech & software development and management ideas…

We have a few more 'techie' episodes remaining… before we can resume more storytelling tales of my adventures…

So…

In this episode – let's talk about data design and optimizing data.

Follow The Data to Know Everything:

So - let's talk about data… and what data tells us – about – everything…

Much like – in business, who say "follow the money… to know the business… to know what's really going on…"

Here – in tech land – we say… 'Follow The Data…'

> Follow the Data… to know what's really going on in software.

> Follow the Data… to know – everything!

This is true for engineering, programming, hacking, cracking, …all things tech. they are all the same…

> Follow the Data… Follow the Data… it will tell you – everything!

Unwinding The Ball of Code Yarn – Using Data:

Diving into code – can be overwhelming. Where do you start…? …if you have not been an author in that code?

Like a ball of yarn… find an end (or start) 'of data'… and start unspooling, unthreading it… follow the data. It will lead you through the code and everywhere that matters – to it.

As a hacker and cracker… there was always 'the Star Wars-like Force' that relied on vast knowledge and intuition… I would pull the end of the ball of yarn… and follow its thread – weaving in & out – throughout the knotted yarn ball…

> Eventually – the knotted ball of yarn… is straightened and understood.

You will have unwound the ball of Code Yarn - using data to do so… as your map.

And – like the yarn's end –

- following the data – through the morass of knotted, tangled code…
- the data – will lead you through the valley of darkness…
- and - the data will reveal what the code actually does… what it is.

I say again –

Follow the Data, to Know the Code.

Optimization – What It Is and Why It Is Importantr:

Well…

Let's Talk about – Optimization – Baby…
Let's Talk about – Optimization – Baby…

Alright – I am not a singer… but I tried.

Seriously – Optimization is an incredibly valuable thing to do… no matter how fast your computational power is – or how vast your data storage capacity is…

Before delving deep into this… Warning to the listener… This will – well – be intense (even at its high level)…much like the other 'techie' episodes.

So… with that disclaimer… On 'All Things Optimization…"

Optimization makes everything faster – smaller – better… So, let's get going…

Data Optimization is the King and Code Optimization is the Queen Optimization:

Data Optimization is the King – whereas Code Optimization is the Queen – of Optimization.

As mentioned – this episode will focus on The King – on Data Optimization. The NEXT episode – will focus on The Queen – Code Optimization. And fear not – there will be yet be two more 'techie' episodes following The Queen of Optimization…

. . .

Products can be made substantially faster through profiling and code refactoring and refinement – and we will talk about that too…

…but Data Design can make or break PERFORMANCE in any & every situation…

So – let's talk about Data Optimization…

Data Design is HUGE:

Data Optimization is King:

- Data Design is HUGE
    - Data Design affects client and server software, it affects –
        - Memory & Storage Requirements
        - Processor Performance
        - Network & Internet Performance – Latency & Bandwidth

Data Design – Use Smallest Data Possible:

- Smaller data – means less memory required – less data to move – which means faster operation on leaner platforms.

  o Design your data structures to be the smallest possible – thereby - reducing the amount of data that must be physically read, written, manipulated, and likely re-written and re-read countless times…

  o The less data that must be operated on and loaded and stored… will make local machines and network traffic and cloud operations – each and every one – faster…

  o Data packing can include combing literal 'BITs' of data into nibbles (AKA half a data BYTE) into full data BYTES…and likely into 16-bit WORDs or 32-bit DOUBLE-WORDs / LONGs – or 64-bit DOUBLE-LONGs…or… You get the idea…

    ▪ Smash as much data in the smallest data elements and structures – possible. It will yield remarkable value and results.

Data Design – Arrange Data in Close Proximity to Related Data:

- Data Proximity – means related data is stored physically nearby – which improves performance from utilizing processor read-ahead buffers and caches.

  o Data Proximity can become very difficult with Class and Object Inheritance – but it can be done. You can – at least – control structures that you create and use within your tight loops or recurring operations.

    ▪ You can even copy data from Classes or structures you do not have control over – into your own new - tight, packed - structures – and use it within your tight loops.

  o Minimally – related data - within the context of a Class - should be stored near each other – in the local (or inherited) Class Data Structure.

    ▪ This will allow – the processor to load all 'related data' in a SINGLE Read…because the target data and surrounding data will be read at once by the processor read-ahead cache line. It makes the other data 'free' to read…for the processor.

    ▪ Note: There are different 'LEVELS' of Caches…

      • Immediate Processor 'Registers'

      • Processor internal high-speed 'cached lines of RAM'

      • Memory Transit BUS caches – there numerous BUS architectures as well (which we'll skip in this episode, as we're focusing simply… on the importance of leverage BUS caches)

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- Read and Transfer Buffers – these are not specifically 'caches' – but they are often high speed storage areas – between devices and chips – that can be maximize if the specific hardware is understood…

Data Design – Align Data on Native Processor Fetch Size and Cache Lines:

- Data Alignment – aligning data according to native processor fetch size and cache lines – translates to less data fetches by processor pipelines – thereby, maximizing processor read-ahead instruction & data cache lines… and operate on ability that – therefore- has already been read – and is in memory already.

  o It may be necessary to even pad data structures with miscellaneous [filler] data…or even leave it wasted [unused]… to increase the speed of operation on the cache-aligned data.

  o Minimally – identify structures that are re-used in rapid succession - such as inside a loop or frequent recursive call – and pack & align – data that they use – so the data structure is processor cache-friendly memory alignment.

Data Design – Direct Memory Access (DMA) Data Copies:

- Direct Memory Access (DMA) – uses special hardware operations to mass replicate blocks of memory – often from one 'memory space' to another 'memory space'.

  o DMA data copies operate independent of normal processor operator & operand fetches… DMA moves HUGE BLOCKS OF MEMORY AT ONE TIME!

  o DMA – alone – is not the 'magic bullet' it sounds like… It may sound 'free' – but it's just another powerful tool in the tool belt … of 'low level' and firmware engineers.

  o To maximize – DMA benefits – organize data in DMA-friendly block sizes and memory address alignment… it can make an incredible difference in performance…

  o An example of DMA between 'Memory Spaces' might a Direct Memory Access Transfer from CPU Random Access Memory (RAM) to GPU Video RAM (VRAM)… or from an interim memory blocks – like network data packet buffers or DVD Read buffers…

Data Design – A Lot to Grok – Hopefully Technobabble Offered Some Useful Ideas:

There is so much… to optimizing data. And – talking to it – in a Podcast… is undoubtedly extraordinarily hard to grok.

My hope… is that all this – technobabble – offered some useful ideas for optimizing data.

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E275 CODE OPTIMIZATION IS QUEEN

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E275 Code Optimization is Queen.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uw2z-e275-code-optimization-is-queen.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/2GNsowbft2w

Description:
All About Code Optimization Secrets.

Code Optimization is Queen – Good Data Design Depends on Good Code Design.

Code Optimization is HUGE (Code & Data Go Hand-in-Hand - as King & Queen).

Consider How Many Fingers Are in Your Code – Our Code Can Be Better.

Code Optimization – Profile Your Code.

Code Optimization – Things To Look For…

Since we've already - talked about Data Optimization - let's get into…

…Code Optimization!

Consider How Many Fingers Are in Your Code – Our Code Can Be Better:

- consider how many fingers are in your code – that may have a bug –

  - many people may have worked on the team's code…

  - is middleware used – and how its integrated?

  - Is there inherited code – potentially - even from opaque - binary libraries - of pre-compiled files?

  - in subsystems like file & memory management -

    - There could be multiple memory heaps to control fragmentation – plausibly for –

      - presumed faster allocation/release…

      - and – instant 'free' of entire categories of allocations from a given a memory heap

  - with so many sources of code in software – I strongly recommend humility – and acknowledge -

    'Our code can be 'better'…

    Let's make sure – it is as good as we can make it – within our resources and time. Our customers and our code – our integrity as engineers – depends on it.

Code Optimization – Profile Your Code:

- Profile your code – everywhere – and make no assumptions – until you have real profile numbers to analyze.

- Wrap every major code subsystem and loops and recurring calls to functions and algorithms… with Profiler Start & End Time Stamps.

  - You want to know precisely – what each section and area of the code takes in TIME and MEMORY to operate.'

  - Keep drilling down – into areas – profiling more and more inner loops… until you have found clear 'slow or fat' areas of the code.

Code Optimization – Things To Look For:

- Optimizing the code – MAY MEAN OPTIMIZING ITS DATA (as detailed earlier)

  - However – optimizing code – may mean… optimizing code in key areas…

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Code Optimization – Revise Existing Algorithms:

- revise existing algorithms.

  - Sometimes – algorithms can be 'better' – use less data, make some assumptions, or can be narrowed to a more bespoke functionality (and thusly – lost unnecessary operations & data)

  - Often a 'swiss army knife' solution – jack of all trades – do everything – code… is less efficient… than dedicated code.

Code Optimization – Use Switch or Case or Event Branches Where Possible:

- use Switch or Case or Event branches where possible.

  - And - Avoid relentless #if - #else statements… especially in inner-loops.

  - Consider indirect function calling through tables or lookups – potentially requiring code mutable declarations.

  - Consider self-modifying code – to re-write where functions and data… are stored.

  - Consider de-coupling embedded – combined functions…. so - they can be called separately – even not-in-lockstep – so the rest of the code can operate…even when one portion of the code must wait.

Code Optimization – Unpack Costly Tight Iterative Loops:

- unpack costly tight iterative loops – into a single massive series of operations (no or far fewer loops – to save/reduce the cost of looping, and may further benefit from read-ahead cache lines)

Code Optimization – Try An Entirely Different Approach:

- try an entirely different approach.

  - Sometimes – the very idea and implementation – is suboptimal… and should just be abandoned – and something else done… maybe an entirely different approach.

  - Avoid being married to previous data, algorithm, or code designs.

    o Architecture can be re-architected. Remember that.

Code Optimization – Maximize Concurrency- Avoid BUS Contention, Processor Stalls:

- maximize concurrency and avoid processor stalls & Memory BUS Contention – thru poor code design for code threading, co-processor utilization, and multiple processors (CPU, GPU, VPU, …to name a few) – most with many internal Cores as well.

Code Optimization – Use Semaphores – Critical Sections – But Beware Stalls:

- Use Semaphores / Critical Sections to put handshake 'waits' between simultaneously operating functions…

  o This protects against any specific operation thread or Core - from proceeding - without its dependent data -available to it – even if that dependent data was generated by another parallel function (making it wait, stall if the data was not available on demand).

  o But – try to minimize 'wait' stalls on Semaphores or Critical Sections…

    ▪ use profiling to know – precisely – how many processor cycles are being burned spinning – in wait – for a dependent parallel process to finish…. So that the Semaphore would be satisfied – to unlock the code to proceed…finally!

Code Optimization – Add 'Load' to Underutilized Processors or Threads:

  o Add 'load' (AKA more functions) to any underutilized processor… it's 'free' processing horsepower – so use it! Or it's wasted…

    ▪ Don't be a wasteful engineer!

Code Optimization – Be Wary of Interrupts & Callbacks Conflicting Concurrency:

  o Hardware & Software & Operating System Callbacks – can be used to drive concurrency… but – they can also - conflict with your own Concurrency Architecture…

    ▪ Sure - Leverage 'System Callbacks' where you can…

    ▪ but - be cautious of unexpected – out of your control – 'system overhead' behavior and performance hiccups… including unexpected Memory BUS Contention.

Code Optimization – Be Wary of Memory BUS Contention:

- Be cautious of concurrent operations trying to access data on the same Memory BUS – especially – from separate 'threads' or 'processors' – that repeatedly - rapidly - access data - from the same memory space (via the same Memory BUS)

  o When two different processors - or parallel operations - attempt to access the same bank of memory – through its Memory BUS… things need to be planned for.

    ▪ So – a few things…

- only one processor or operaiton will be served at a time…by the Memory BUS

- asking a Memory BUS to serve another processor – while it is busy serving another… creates what is known as –

  BUS CONTENTION!

- BUS Contention – often results in a storm of access request rejections, and access request retries, and more rejections…

  - And – while these access request rejections are happening… the original processor – that was being served data – is stalled… just - spinning – waiting for the Memory BUS to properly reject its ever-insistent 'OTHER PROCESSOR' requests for memory… so that it might return and serve the original [now stalled] processor.

Code Optimization – Use a Job Dispatch Manager for Concurrency:

- Use a Job Dispatch Manager Model for Concurrency.

  - Whether your software, will have - hardware or operating system - callbacks or interrupts - code threading or semaphores – or the like… it is important to use a Job Dispatch Manager model.

  - Job Dispatch Managers … or just Job Managers… are simple schedulers for 'batches of work to be executed'.

  - I have only used a few types of Job Managers…

    - Hard-Coded – Functionality

      - On-Demand Function Invocation – where Job Manager calls request a specific function be called on-demand.

      - Hard-coded functions that were just be a State or Index – indicating what job should be executed.

      - Hard-coded functions that used dark & scary self-modifying code … or modified the address & data pointed to for otherwise static code.

    - Encapsulated Job – Functionality
      - Snippets of code & data are either copied to – or pointed at – for the Job Manager to execute.

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- Local Machine, Network, or Cloud – all benefit from job managers.

That Was A Lot About Code & Data Optimization:

That was a lot of information about code and data optimization.

I hope there were some nuggets there… for you… in your career – in engineering – and management.

E276 PROFILING HARNESSES, NETWORK HANDLERS
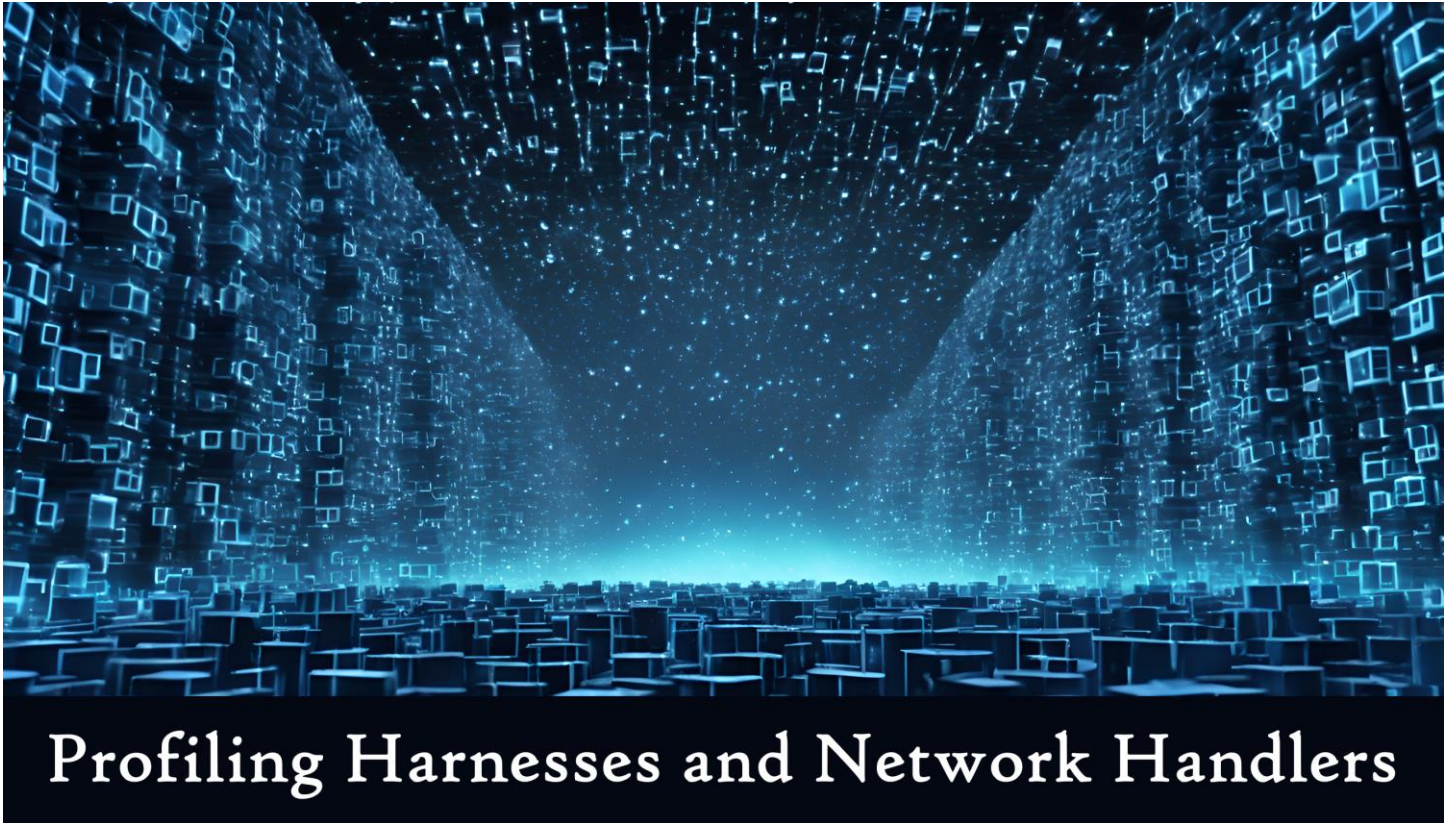
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.\LibertyBooksVideos\E276 Profiling Harnesses and Network Handers.mp4

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https://rumble.com/v55uw86-e276-profiling-harnesses-and-network-handers.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/LuaFjgGs7cM

Description:
Defined Targets and Goals – Local & Cloud Storage, Memory, Performance.
Profiling From a Baseline – Identify Where to Optimize For Greatest Impact.
Continuous Monitoring and Response.
Performance Harnesses and Test Bots.
Optimizing Code Has Its Place – Focus on High-Use and High-Time-Use Algorithms.
Optimizing For Latency, Lag, and Lost Data Packets + Dead-Reckoning Prediction.
Polling Listeners vs Message Event Handlers – Reactors.

Test & Profiling Harnesses, Event Handlers, and Networking

Let's Talk About Test and Profiling Harnesses and Optimizing Networking Code:

In this episode – let's talk about another techie topic… let's talk about Test and Profiling Harnesses and ways to optimize networking code.

Defined Targets and Goals – Local & Cloud Storage, Memory, Performance, …:

All of the above optimization techniques – are useless… without knowing your targets and goals.

You need to know –

- What your baseline is – and where you want to go.

- What memory storage and performance is expected – for the holistic experience, and areas & functions?

- What network or cloud operation performance and storage is expected?

- What concurrency and semaphore stalls might exist – and what is max acceptable stall? Are there underutilized processors… that should have something operating in them?

Profiling From a Baseline – Identify Where to Optimize For Greatest Impact:

Just like profiling gives an initial baseline… Profiling also provides continuous snapshots and insight on how the product is performing and improving.

Continuous Monitoring and Response:

Continuously monitor – using automated profiling… Ideally – you can track profiles over time… to see how areas are trending, ideally improving… or – unfortunately - worsening.

Performance Harnesses and Test Bots:

Use automated testing - and use test & performance harnesses – and use test bots – wherever possible.

- Use automated Testing with 'Bots'.

- Use 'recorded Play' Key/Gamepad/Network Inputs for Playback.

- Use scriptable Performance and Test Harnesses.

    o Forceable arbitrary lags and semaphore stalls and high-processing-dense areas (like in a racing game – driving into a dense urban area…)

- Exercise low & high performance areas – to monitor spikes & recovery.

- Force 'extreme load' and 'conditions' – to see how your software responds – and ensure it does not soft-lock – like a crash…

Optimizing Code Has Its Place – Focus on High-Use and High-Time-Use Algorithms:

Reminder – Focus optimization on data, then on code…. Focus on high-time, high-frequency functions, and algorithms.

Optimizing For Latency, Lag, and Lost Data Packets + Dead-Reckoning Prediction:

When optimizing real-time actions over a network – especially over the Internet – latency, lag, packet loss, mis-ordered packets, and outright lost data packets in network or Internet transit.

Network performance problems can be HUGE, MASSIVE problems for software.

Of course – be able to recover from a lost or extremely late or damaged data packet. You do not want to have any soft-lock or bizarre stalls for the user.

Also – you might consider - a separate network Send-Receive Packet Manager…to minimize network transmission/reception delays.

But, also – consider local 'client' software solutions to 'hide' lag…

- You could just show some kind of 'loading bar' or 'loading spinner'… but that just tells the customer – SHUT UP, AND WAIT!

- You could implement anticipatory client activity … that is corrected whenever the remote server arbitrates and tells the client 'What really happened'.

    o In weird cases – things might 'pop' if the anticipated client activity does not match the server's 'DECIDED ACTIVITY'

        ▪ But – even in 'popping' situations – at least all customers will perceive the same thing… even if 'playing' in the same sandbox.

    o An example of anticipatory activity – might be 'dead reckoning' prediction of a vehicle driving down a game's road, and while the player turns left…the server did not relay the turn until 'later'… and so the vehicle 'pops' into a new position 'suddenly, out of nowhere… due to network latency, lag.'

        ▪ The concept is to make client software arbitrate low-impact actions, while the server arbitrates high-impact actions. And the client predicts and 'plays out' its local 'high impact actions' – but is corrected if it does not match the server…

            • Techniques to correct mismatched client & server states often include fast-forward, rewind, teleporting… and so forth.

Polling Listeners vs Message Event Handlers - Reactors :

There is one universal truth for performance programming on any network or cloud…

Polling – Listening – Waiting… for something to happen is inefficient.

- Literally – the code sits there - spinning in circles – in wait that some variable or state has been set… The code does nothing – but wait until something else has happened.

Reacting to messages [via an Event Handler] – is very efficient.

- Code can do anything it wants… while network packets arrive and are queued for processing. And – when a message comes in – like a telephone – only then – it answers the phone… and stores it for future processing – when the local software is ready to do it. (and it never – stalled, sitting around…doing nothing).

The bottom-line –

- Write Event Handlers to process incoming messages - and parse them in batches when ready – allowing executing other local operations while awaiting messages.

- Avoid writing code that loops – awaiting a message or input or external 'command'.

UDP or TCP – Not Much of a Question – Games Create Their Own 'Reliable UDP':

On the Internet –

- UDP – a very popular communication protocol on the Internet… likely – because it is very fast though it does not guarantee delivery at all – or the order of packets sent matching the order of packets received.

- TCP - the most popular communication underlying protocol on the… likely – because it guarantees the data packet will arrive at its destination – and in the order of packets it was sent.

- Games typically create their own 'Reliable UDP'… making a more efficient 'TCP-Lite' – that is tailored to specific game requirements.

Well – it's just another area… to optimize. UDP is much faster… even with client software ordering and re-send overhead.

Use TCP when network speed does not matter…

Otherwise… when Internet speed does matter – use UDP (or make a Reliable UDP).

May Profiling Harnesses and Event Handlers and Network Optimization Offer Value:

Well… with all that technobabble...

Thank you for … sifting for gold 'optimization nuggets'… with me.

I hope there was a nugget - in there –

- In Test & Profiling Harnesses.

- In Event Handlers.

- In Network Optimization.

I hope a nugget found its way into your toolbox.

E277 CULLED DATA, SCENE GRAPHS, AND SEARCH

Culled Data, Scene Graphs, and Search

Local File:
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uw7h-e277-culling-data-scene-graphs-search-algorithms.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/lwN9N2BpxsM

Description:
All About Culling Data, Using Scene Graphs, Search Algorithms, and Open Source.
Optimizing Authored Data – Cull Never/Rarely Seen Content.
Optimizing Authored Data – Group Data for Better Cullin.
Optimizing Authored Data – Scene Graphing.
Optimizing Authored Data – Search Algorithms – A*/Whatever – Search Both Ends.
Open Source and Blackhole Binaries – Libraries, Tools, and Runtime Modules.

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Culling Data, Using Scene Graphs, and Search Algorithms

All About Culling Data, Using Scene Graphs, Search Algorithms, and Open Source:

We have been through a lot of techie episodes… and – this will be – the last of the techie episodes… at least – the last of the deep dive techie episodes…

In this episode – let's talk about culling data, using scene graphs, possible search algorithms, and leveraging Open Source.

Optimizing Authored Data – Cull Never/Rarely Seen Content:

Sometimes –

- Optimizing can be REMOVING things. This is called – CULLING them.

  - It is Culling Data.

- It can be DELETING things.

- It can be discarding partial or entire processing of data; doing so – is an obvious 'win' for performance optimization.

  - Not doing something… is faster… than doing something.

- A powerful way to reduce active data from being processed – is to cull it from the 'process list'.

- Identify things that can be ignored for any given 'update' refresh cycle – and cull them from the update process… save processor cycles (and maybe… even memory).

Optimizing Authored Data – Group Data for Better Culling:

Another way to cull data is to group it – into blocks that should be processed – only when they are 'in view' or 'are active'.

- Data can be grouped into sections – so only specific sections need be processed at any given time.

- Grouped Data is a better way to cull data.

Optimizing Authored Data – Scene Graphing:

Finally – Organizing data into large areas or sections - that can entirely be ignored (not just culled in real-time, at runtime) – WILL SAVE INSANE AMOUNTS OF PERFORMANCE AND MEMORY!

- An example of scene graphing might be a car racing game…

  - The racing car 'track' is broken into many sections of 'street & building' model meshes & textures.

    - Based on where the player 'camera' view is… the 'street & building' sections in front, to the left, and to the right… will be processed.

- But the rest of the huge world 'racing track' does not need to be processed at all. It may not even need to be in memory.

- Scene Graphing and Culling offer immense performance savings.

- As an aside – let's talk about Hiding Scene Graph Section Loading… for areas that are not in memory… when you need them.

  o I have seen and used occlusion – as a way to 'buy time' - to asynchronously load levels and assets 'behind-the-scenes'… so the player had no idea things were loading in anticipation of where the player was headed towards.

  o Even popular games like World of Warcraft… used big 'entry ways' for castles and new areas…so the player would enter a big tunnel – that required the player moving around an occluding wall or cliff…before they could see the new area – that they were about to enter.

    - And the game loaded the new area… while they were in the 'air lock' transition corridor tunnel…

- Airlock occluded asynchronous scene graphing is an invaluable way to make the world seem entirely seamless – and never need a 'loading screen' – at least not during gameplay.

- I have found two scene graph methods the best –

  o a simple 2-Dimensional array – like a cartesian plane on graph paper – representing 'area' section blocks of the world map… each map square 'node' or 'section' contains lists that point to relevant 'level-section data blocks'.

    - This assumes each 'area' represents an equal 'physical space size' ala a simple 2D 'cartesian map' grid.

  o or – an octree with 'section' lists - likewise – pointing to the 'level-section data blocks.

    - The octree is to support varying density areas – so each 'area' does not have to be an equal 'space size' ala the simple 2D 'cartesian map' grid method.

Optimizing Authored Data – Scene Graph Large Areas – Ala Octree Grid Content:

Finally – Organizing data into large areas or sections - that can entirely be ignored (not just culled in real-time, at runtime) – WILL SAVE INSANE AMOUNTS OF PERFORMANCE AND MEMORY!

Optimizing Authored Data – Search Algorithms – A*/Whatever – Search Both Ends:

There are many 'Search & Find' and Maze Traversal algorithms and approaches.

Search algorithms can take a long time… and they can seriously adversely affect your product's performance. Search algorithms are not all created equal… and different situations may justify different algorithms.

I will just say –

- Starting from Point A to Find Point B…is slow.

- Startingfrom Point A to Find Point B – While ALSO starting from Point B to find Point A – is faster.

- The idea is that each search has a probability of incorrect maze traversals – that require backtracking…

  o Therefore – two searches should - more often than not – result in fewer backtracking incidents…

  o And thus – searching from both the start and end of the maze…should be faster.

- Searching from both the start and the end… is an established Search Algorithm – called A*. (A-STAR).

Of course – there are always canned, pre-recorded paths… but that's pretty script limited…

Use A*…

Open Source and Blackhole Binaries – Libraries, Tools, and Runtime Modules:

Ever since working with large corporations… Open Source became a thorn in everyone's side.

- Open Source leverages the world of engineers and innovators.

  o It sounds like an awesome and great idea – and it is – in the right situation.

- Open Source provides free progress and capabilities.

- Open Source includes bugs and problems.

- Open Source has constrictive licensing.

- Open Source may not include "ALL SOURCE" – being blackhole binaries

  o Could be buggy.

  o Could contain a virus.

  o Could have unacceptable memory or performance demands.

So Much More to Optimization – Hope This Helps Spark Some Ideas:

Well – that was the last episode on Optimization. I hope – once again – there were some nuggets of value to you and your projects.

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E278 LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND GLOBAL TOUR

Local File:
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YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/Dbn8NyjMtOI

Description:
Hear tales from Richard's Adventure at EA Switzerland.

Leader Point, Emerging Leaders, and EA Switzerland – Leadership Training Course.
Leadership is More About Thinking Than Doing, and Acting on Sufficient Knowledge:
You Don't Know Why Someone is Behaving Poorly – e.g. Dog Died, Spouse Left:

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

__Leader Point, Emerging Leaders, and EA Switzerland__

Leadership Training:

Well – We have covered a lot of techie stuff in the last several episodes. Let's shift the focus – more towards leadership - and – of course - more wild adventures!

. . .

I was fortunate - to have had the opportunity - to attend several leadership training courses – while working for Electronic Arts and Microsoft.

I'd like to share a few of the top experiences and insights I recall.

Leader Point Leadership Course:

One course - taught by a now defunct group - then called Leader Point – stood out to me for a few reasons –

1. Half the course was in the lens of the U.S. Military and its command & control structure. They used an old U.S. Army Propaganda film as a study reference – Twelve O'clock High.

2. The other half of the course was about abstract ideas – like, what if Robin Hood was running a business called The Merry Men… and he had to pay, house, clothe, and feed everyone. What would his 'business' look like, and how might he improve it? Could he delegate to other sub 'Robin Hoods'? …like franchises?

3. They offered 'homework' to read about historical failure and success stories – that they provided to review

   a. One example was – empowering nurses in a clinic to make decisions, versus always waiting for a doctor to make every decision. When nurses feel 'equal to doctors' - in terms of their responsibility…even if they are not practicing as doctors - their performance goes up significantly. …and – the clinic's profitability likewise goes up.

      i. This idea is used frequently – like 'employee owned' business, or 'games by gamers for gamers', etc.

Leadership is More About Thinking Than Doing, and Acting on Sufficient Knowledge:

4. The culmination of the course – were two epiphanies –

   a. Leadership is more about THINKING than it is about DOING.

   b. Leadership is the willingness to act on 'incomplete, but sufficient knowledge' – on 'just enough information'.

You Don't Know Why Someone is Behaving Poorly – e.g. Dog Died, Spouse Left:

Another leadership course - offered a great insight for me.

- The instructor asked the class to react to a 'scene'

- He declared that he would play the role of 'The Boss'

- He 'volun-told' one of the classmates – to play the role of 'The Employee'

  o I always joked about being 'volun-told' to do something…

  o Like those questions, "How would you like to clean up that pile of dog poo?"

    ♦ Now – who would *want* to clean up dog poo? The question is – rhetorical. It is – effectively – a directive, a command…

    ♦ Asking a question like 'Do you want to clean up a mess?' is being 'volun-told'

    ♦ Therefore - You 'volunteered' because you were told to volunteer; you were 'volun-told'

- He left the room, and entered… And he gruffly scoffed at 'The Employee', and scowls…and leaves the room.

- The instructor returned once more… and asked, "What was going on with 'The Boss'?"

All the answers people proposed – to explain why The Boss was a jerk - and so rude to The Employee… were wrong. …or so the instructor said.

He explained 'The Boss' had his dog run over by a car that morning, so his 'attitude' had nothing to do with The Employee. And the employee's reaction, taking it personally…was entirely misplaced.

The instructor suggested – things could be worse yet, what if the boss just lost a child or was going through a nasty divorce.

He emphasized – you never know what's going on with anyone, even people you work with every day. You should always challenge your assumptions about other people – about what they're thinking – and what they are possibly going to do.

The lesson was simple –

- take your time to understand what's going on with projects and people, alike

- and - assume good intent, and offer compassion… before casting judgment or being defensive

Emerging Leaders Training and Global Tour – EA Switzerland:

I went on a five-week EA Global Tour for what they called Emerging Leaders. It was a pre-requisite to becoming a Vice President within EA, and so it was an honor to be selected for it.

The goal was to visit at least one EA Studio in each major region throughout the world.

I am going to share the tale of EA Switzerland… because it was, by far, the most 'different' EA Studio…in the world.

Stupid Expensive Hot Dogs – Thankfully Reimbursed by the Company:

I was cautioned ahead of time – that Switzerland was going to be pricey, notably more expensive than anywhere I'd been in the U.S. or U.K.

But – it was 'the cost of doing business' – so expense whatever I paid…to get reimbursed by the company.

A streetside vendor was selling hot dogs – and I thought to have one, after my long trip…

The hot dog was stupid expensive… it cost $20 USD! And – that did not include a drink!

The 'Hot Dog Price' Metric Was a Clear Indicator of Local Cost of Living:

I had a new barometer, a metric to gauge the cost of living in an area – the price of a Hot Dog.

> Yep – the 'Hot Dog Price' Metric was a clear indicator of the local cost of living.

Well – 'The Hot Dog Price' Metric proved to be extraordinarily accurate.

> EVERYTHING WAS STUPID EXPENSIVE!

Retail Shops Were Open – But 'By Appointment Only':

There were many retail shops – all around Electronic Arts (Switzerland)'s building. But – virtually all of them were 'effectively closed' – to us, to me…

They had signs in the windows, "By Appointment Only".

And yet – there were people doing absolutely nothing inside, just sitting or standing around…chatting with each other. There were no customers inside…

And – in every shop, there was at least one security guard.

Later – I learned from an EA Switzerland employee – that the shops are so upscale – they run a background and credit check, before you are allowed to enter and browse… much less buy something.

Yea – Switzerland retailers were *THAT ELITIST*.

I had never witnessed –

- that level of a 'cast' system

- such total rejection of the middle-class

- and – immense disdain for the poor

It was surreal.

Electronic Arts (EA) Switzerland Operated Out of an Old Bank:

I was surprised to learn that Electronic Arts (EA) Switzerland… operated out of an old bank.

It was posh… It made the excessive EA Canada Worldwide Studios living tree growing up through the middle of its skyscraper building… look, pedestrian…not so special.

EA Switzerland… screamed… MONEY!!! AND SUCCESS!!! AND MORE MONEY!!!

Spent Much Time in EA's Bank Vault 'Oceans 12' Conference Room:

EA used the bank's massive vault… as a huge conference room – that they named, "Oceans 12" - at the time - in homage to the Movie called *Oceans 11*.

> I suspect they did not anticipate there would be so many sequels…that will surpass their imagined 'sequel' of *Oceans 12*.

Even with the vault's massive door bolted open to the wall… it was intimidating - going inside the vault - and having its 'normal' doors (that were later, added in lieu of the massive vault door) close shut. It felt… claustrophobic… to say the least.

But – it was cool.

I spent most of my time in EA Switzerland – down in the Vault.

EA Switzerland Was Hub of EA European Finances and Marketing and Sales:

EA Switzerland did not have a development arm within its studio. It was a Marketing, Sales, and Distribution Command Center for EA.

EA Switzerland was the hub of EA European finances and marketing and sales.

EA Switzerland was flush with cash…

Next Episode – Lessons Learned Down in the Vault:

Well… this feels like a natural place – to end this episode… so – in the next episode - we can focus on the lessons learned down in the Vault…

E279 THE POWER AND DEPENDENCE ON BRANDS

Power and Dependence on Brands

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E279 The Power and Dependence on Brands - Hasbro, Ducati, Evian.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uwjv-e279-the-power-and-dependence-on-brands-hasbro-ducati-evian.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/o6eEZOpei4Q

Description:
Leadership with Ducati, Evian, Hasbro + Farewell EA Switzerland.
All About Brands in Business.
Tale of Ducati Motorcycles.
Tale of Evian Bottled Water.
Tale of Hasbro and the Littlest Pet Shop.
Dinner in The Wine Cellar – No Recording Devices - A Safe Place to Say Anything.
Swiss Farewell Cruise –Circles Around a Lake.
Extravagance and Excess.

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Leadership with Ducati, Evian, Hasbro + Farewell EA Switzerland

Real Work and Things To Learn At EA Emerging Leaders Global Leadership Tour:

As I attended the Electronic Arts Global Emerging Leaders Program's Worldwide Studio Tour – there was real work - and there were hings to learn…

All About Brands in Business:

My experience at EA Switzerland – presumed that everyone attending *including me* could deliver anything we conceived - provided the business model could fund it and generate a 20-40% margin…lots of profit!

And so –
- we were to learn the ideological and practical outlook and process – of choosing and marketing a product.

- And – how to help the company and its staff… transition to the new product and ensure its success.

Tale of Ducati Motorcycles:

Our first 'brand' to investigate was the floundering motorcycle brand, Ducati.

The bike was unreliable, it leaked oil regularly, and was generally not… a good motorcycle.

However – to resurrect the motorcycle brand, many things were done –

Inspire Staff:

- Ducati motorcycles were loaned or sold cheap to staff – to inspire them 'feel' and 'believe' in the product they built & sold

  o They had to capture the hearts of their employees…before they could capture the hearts of their customers

Inspire Core Demographic:

- Ducati bikes were portrayed as sexy, Italian lovers… which 'real men' would be honored to 'ride'… all night long.

  o They sought to inspire their primary demographic - of masculine, sexualized men… to want their own - Ducati Italian lover.

Spin-Doctored 'Bad' as 'Good':

- Ducati's 'unique' bad, failing attributes were evangelized as 'strengths'

  o Its whining engine – was a 'signature' of the bike

  o Its leaking oil – meant its engine was bursting with so much power – that it could not be contained, and so leaked some oil…no big deal, for a 'man'

'Looking Like a Winner' was equivalent to Being a Winner – With Proven Credibility:

- And – Ducati had to compete in races, to prove it was a 'real racing motorcycle'.

    o But – it just had to 'look cool' and have 'active followers' and 'groupies'… the Ducati did not have to *WIN* the races…

    o Ducati just had to *look awesome* at the races.

    o There it was – appearances and presentation were more important than winning – more important than skill and talent. Looking like a winner - was equivalent - to being a proven winner - with proven credibility.

The lesson was clear –

- You need to capture the hearts of your staff and customers – to make a product into a 'Brand' that people 'feel'… and can 'love'. …so they may decide to purchase it.

- You need to look like a winner… even if you are not.

    o Presentation and Perception are key to product performance.

- You need to 'spin' weaknesses as strengths…

    o In my opinion - ignoring weaknesses, problems is not a good choice … people will provide their own 'narrative' about problems… if you have not given people a 'better wat to look at, and perceive them'.

    o

Tale of Evian Bottled Water:

The next product we were presented with was Evian bottled water.

They explained how Evian conceived –

- there was a desperate need in the world to 'be healthy'

- and - 'water was pure, and healthy'

- therefore – they needed a way to package and sell 'water' in a medium that screamed - 'convenience, good for your health!'

- Amazingly – Evian proved they could sell individual portion sized bottles of water… for more than soft drinks or coffee or tea. They – literally – bottled money.

The lesson was simple –

- Evian realized there was a huge consumer demand for 'clean, healthy, portable' water… and no one offered a solution for it

- Evian created a market – from nothing – by fanning the consumer flames of 'hoping to be healthy' – and offering the solution, a clean, all natural, healthy bottle of water.

- Evian had established itself as THE BRAND with the purest, cleanest of water… thereby, being the best product to fulfill the need for clean, portable, bottled water…

Tale of Hasbro and the Littlest Pet Shop:

The last product we look at was – Hasbro's Littlest Pet Shop.

Hasbro had developed numerous toys, dolls, and games over the decades…

But – they were struggling to compete with the digital revolution of entertainment.

They still wanted to sell traditional, classic 'toys'… but – kids and parents did not want to buy them – alone - anymore. They were not against physical toys… but digital had overtaken traditional toys… Hasbro was in trouble…

Hasbro conceived – to make simple web games that were unlocked by text 'codes' typed in on the keyboard, on the web site. Some of the games – offered further unlockables, like more pets and pet toys.

Kids obtained the 'unlock codes' from 'dog tags' – that were attached to the collars of physical stuffed animal toys.

So – parents would buy a stuffed animal toy for their child, and the child could open the dog tag… and type its 'dog tag letters' into the Littlest Pet Shop web site… and voila! The kid was able to play a game or do something – related to the stuffed animal toy they just received.

Hasbro's quasi-move to go digital while still being physical… was hugely successful.

Hasbro had created an entirely new business and brand… and was handsomely rewarded for it.

Dinner in The Wine Cellar – No Recording Devices - A Safe Place to Say Anything:

One of our early dinners – was out in a local restaurant, but down in its wine cellar.

We were informed – the wine cellar had no microphones, or any recording devices at all. It was completely cut-off from the rest of the world. It was a safe place… to talk about anything, top secret…whatever.

It seemed an odd thing… to declare. But – so be it. We were in safe place…

Insane Food and Wine Bill:

The topics and particulars of the dinner… are not important. What stood out for me… was the about $20,000 dinner bill!

TWENTY-THOUSAND DOLLARS for a dinner!

Sure…

- it was in a dedicated wine cellar, made temporarily into a conference dining room

- the group was about fourteen people

- and - there was no shortage of wine (presumably, expensive wine)

But… each person's dinner and drinks represented over $1,400.

I suppose – a $1400 fancy dinner is on par with a $20 cheap hot dog…

Swiss Farewell Cruise –Circles Around a Lake:

Finally – our last night in Switzerland was upon us. It was also – our last night for the EA World Emerging Leaders World Tour.

We were treated to a dinner aboard a lake ferry – that cruised around the lake, in circles. Round and round – went the Ferry boat – in the Swiss Lake.

Honestly – it seemed like a silly experience, sitting in a small cruise ship, eating dinner, while it burned fuel puttering around the lake in circles.

With that… the cruise ended, and the next day… I returned to Vancouver, Canada…to resume my normal life and job.

Extravagance and Excess:

It was clear – EA senior executives (especially those in marketing) enjoyed extravagance and excess.

They traveled to exotic locales, dined on insanely expensive meals, drank ludicrously high priced wine, and had posh facilities in high-end real estate districts. And their décor was over-the-top… And - undoubtedly, very costly.

I did learn from my Leadership training. I also learned companies waste a lot of money.

However – that waste – is apparently – necessary – to earn – even more money.

E280 CURSE OF BAD MANAGERS, TARNIE WILLIAMS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E280 Curse of Bad Managers - Tarnie Williams.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uwk6-e280-curse-of-bad-managers-tarnie-williams.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/NbkGnvpkamw

Description:
Hear how EA Fusion was dying and how Richard had to deal with a terrible 'bad manager'.

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Last Man Standing – As the Fusion Ship Sank

Electronic Arts (EA) Fusion – Things Were Not Looking Good + Anti-Poaching Deals:

There came a time… that… Things did not look good for Electronic Arts (EA) Fusion…

- EA Fusion's success was so good – EA Canada competing executives wanted to take it over.

- And - During a corporate political time – EA Fusion had an unfortunate exodus of both its Canadian and Worldwide executive champions – all leaving for 'greener pastures and opportunities. And one – had outright retired…

  o In fact – their exodus was viral. One left, and poached another, and so forth.

  o It became so bad – EA began threatening developers, publishers… even video game platform manufacturers… all to cease & desist poaching its staff. Ultimately – EA forged formal anti-poaching deals with their competitors.

    - Companies agreed not to reach out to anyone, but if people reached out to them…they could proceed to interview them.

    - Less noble companies used 3rd Party Recruiters to solicit and poach – on their behalf – rendering the 'deal' worthless and irrelevant… though it did slow down the more honest people.

    - I always wondered –

      why not give everyone good work and good pay, and they will stay…

      … rather than destroy their opportunities to go elsewhere?

- It was becoming clear - I likely needed a job…. if I intended to be happy at work. And, Yes – I intended to be happy at work.

- But – it was unclear if the anti-poaching threats were at-play with me, or if they did not want to poach me.

  o And so – I waited to see how things played out… alongside a few other stalwart allies… like a great game designer named Shyang Kong

  o As an aside – Shyang Kong was the driver of Design Deconstruction teaching sessions at EA Fusion. He was an invaluable ally and partner for me – at EA Fusion. And – he was an incredible game designer, critical thinker, and communicator. He went on to found his own company, and made it into a huge success. Shyang Kong was a great ally, a friend, and an innovator. I am fortunate to have worked with Shyang. I definitely – learned – from Shyang.

EA Fusion Founder and Worldwide Executive, Warren Wall, Was Long Gone:

EA Fusion's Founder and Worldwide Executive – its biggest direct champion – had retired from video games… and work entirely… years earlier.

EA Fusion Co-Founder, Tonly Lam, Left EA as Venture Capitalist with Paul Lee:

One of Fusion's co-founders - and my mentor – had likewise - long since left EA - to follow his own mentor… another EA Worldwide Executive that left EA – Paul Lee.

Paul left EA to start a Venture Capital (VC) group.

And, so - Tony followed him, and joined Paul's VC group.

EA Fusion VP, Dave McCarthy, Left EA to Join Microsoft Xbox Under John Schappert:

EA Fusion's Vice President, Dave McCarthy, left Electronic Arts to join Microsoft Xbox – to follow his prior 'boss' – John Schappert.

John was most recently the head of Electronic Arts in Canada…but - he had just taken a position with Microsoft to lead all of Xbox Studios.

Presumably – Dave reached out to John - and thusly - secured an interview with him at Microsoft Xbox.

The outcome -

- John Schappert hired Dave McCarthy to

    o run all of Xbox Live Arcade (XBLA)

    o and form a new division to create Xbox First Party games for Kids & Lifestyle and Entertainment

        - KALE acronym – the group was to be the healthy, leafy food…that people loved to hate. We did not want to be hated – but we did choose that as our internal studio name.

And Then There Were None – Just Me Left Standing As The Last Founder:

And then – there were no EA Fusion founders left standing… but me.

I was the last of the original founders…

Of course – there were still allies and leaders in Fusion, just not the original founders.

But… even they… were leaving… slowly… but steadily…

Fusion Was Dying – It Was a Matter of Time Until It Was Dead:

It was a matter of time, until EA Fusion would be no more… It may still hold the name 'Fusion' – but without its founders and leaders… it was 'dying.

Fusion… would soon… be dead.

Again – it was just a matter of time…

The Curse of Tarnie Williams – Bogus Interview for a Crony Hire to Destroy Fusion:

And – enter 'Tarnie Williams'. The EA Canada CEO, Pauline Moller, having replaced John Schappert, always wanted to 'own Fusion'…if not destroy it. And – her minion underling - Moira Dang – followed Pauline's direction reliably.

They hired a crony of their past – and anointed him Head of Fusion.

Of course – no one from Fusion recommended he be hired, but that did not matter.

The interview was a pretense – to justify hiring their 'friend'… so he could destroy Fusion from within… and they – could take it over.

The Death knell of Tarnie Williams – 'Idiots Asking Idiots What to Do' Bad Strategy:

I had suffered a heart attack a few months prior to Tarnie Williams being appointed Head of Fusion, and thusly – my reporting to him.

We were in a meeting – where Tarnie went to the whiteboard and drew a big circle – wherein, he wrote a big '?' Question Mark.

He asked, "What should our next product be? Let's brainstorm…"

I asked back, "Are there are any parameters, or guidelines, or anything we should consider…?"

Tarnie snapped back, "No! This is BRAINSTORMING! EVERYTHING IS ON THE TABLE!"

Well – all of us in the room – looked at each other. We knew – there was a direction, something executives wanted… and it would help shape our direction. And – budget and timelines and teams sizes and experts – all would change what we came up with.

I challenged, "There must be something to go off of. We have a million ideas. We could go over our backlog of concept and feature and tech ideation? We could review our postmortems… But this – random, show up without an agenda…to brainstorm where the business should go?"

I was… admittedly… very likely… offensive… to Tarnie.

But – he was offensive to us, and wasting everyone's time.

. . .

I asked, "What is your recommendation? We can start from there."

We were flabbergasted – Tarnie's answer was to 'Hire an outside group to determine what opportunities existed, and recommend which ones we should pursue."

Umm – yea – Tarnie's answer was to 'outsource his job'.

When Your Business Strategy and Direction is Outsourced… It is Time to Go:

In my opinion – asking people to tell you want to do… is… a bad idea.

It is outright madness – to empower an idiot - to ask other idiots - to tell proven veterans what to do.

When your business strategy and direction is outsourced… it is time to go.

I knew – right then - it was time…

- I had to leave EA Canada

- I had to leave EA Fusion

- I had to let Fusion go – and – let it fail - under Tarnie's idiotic 'lack-of' leadership

Waiting For Idiot Tarnie Williams To Stop Talking – Using Blackberry PDAs:

We all sat around the conference table – while Tarnie Williams droned on about nothing, as if it *WAS* SOMETHING.

But… idiots cannot see how little they know, or how stupid they appear to others.

Becoming immensely bored and – admittedly rudely impatient – we, one and all, began reading emails on our company provided Blackberry 'phones'.

But – Tarnie lost it. He raged, "You do not respect me! None of you do!"

No One Respect Tarnie – He Was Seen as An Ignorant, Nepotistic Buffon:

Tarnie was right – that none of us respected him. He was seen as an ignorant, nepotistic buffoon… with a power trip.

He declared the meeting was over…

…and so we all left the conference room.

Chased and Badgered and Harassed into Heart Attack 2.0:

Tarnie was not content on banishing us from the conference room, however. He chased after me, and demanded that I listen to him… and seemed to believe that badgering me was an effective way of obtaining compliance.

I had only been weeks, maybe a month or so, after my heart attack. The doctors had approved my not returning to work still. But – I was a workaholic, and I wanted Fusion to succeed.

However – Tarnie's bad leadership and badgering and harassing me…was too much.

My heart went into a seizure…that required company medical attention.

My heart incident with Tarnie was my sign from above…

I definitely had to leave EA.

E281 LEAVING EA CANADA FOR MICROSOFT XBOX STUDIOS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E281 Leaving EA Canada Electronic Arts for Microsoft Xbox Studios in Washington State.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uwn7-e281-leaving-ea-canada-electronic-arts-for-microsoft-xbox-studios-in-washin.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/K9VUkI0bNm4

Description:
Fled Trouble at EA Canada Fusion for Opportunity in Xbox Studios.
Secured Director of Product Development Job in Xbox Studios for Dave McCarthy.
Joined Xbox Studios to Oversee Xbox Live Arcade (XBLA) + Kids & Lifestyle Games.
Products: Nike+ Kinect, NatGeo, Sesame Street, Sentient AI, Analytics, Xbox Fitness.
Leaving Electronic Arts (EA) Fusion – As It Was Pillaged by EA Canada'.
I Was Hired Into Microsoft Xbox as Director of Product Development.

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Fled Trouble at EA Canada Fusion for Opportunity in Xbox Studios

Secured Director of Product Development Job in Xbox Studios for Dave McCarthy:

After concluding that my time at Electronic Arts (EA) Canada Fusion were over… I decided to make a call to my prior 'boss', Dave McCarthy… who had gone to Xbox Studios to work for his prior boss – John Schappert… John was the new head of all Xbox.

The next day… I called.

Dave was previously a Vice President and Head of EA Fusion - but had just joined John Schappert at Microsoft Xbox. I imagined – if Dave did not have a position for me… he might know someone at Microsoft that did.

It was awesome… Dave explained that the anti-poaching agreement prevented him from contacting me, but now that I had reached out to him… he could set up interviews.

And – he did just that. Promptly.

I interviewed - with nearly a dozen people – spanning a full day and late night dinner.

It was apparent – the goal was to HIRE or NO HIRE decide by the next morning.

And yay – by the end - they decided – TO HIRE ME!

They offered me the job of 'Director of Product Development' at Microsoft Xbox Studios.

Joined Xbox Studios to Oversee Xbox Live Arcade (XBLA) + Kids & Lifestyle Games:

Although there are many details leading up to the interview, the job offer, and my first day… let's focus on the way forward, and less on all that minutia.

So yea – I WAS HIRED as Director of Product Development at a new group within Microsoft, in Xbox Studios… working in Dave McCarthy's group - overseeing Xbox Live Arcade (XBLA) and Kids and Lifestyle Entertainment (KALE).

Products: Nike+ Kinect, NatGeo, Sesame Street, Sentient AI, Analytics, Xbox Fitness:

The first KALE project - was to be Nike+ Kinect Training… with products like National Geographic and Sesame Street following.

Which later – evolved to include - Xbox Fitness, Kinesis & Emotion Engines, Sentient AI and Analytics, Play Fit, and more.

Leaving Electronic Arts (EA) Fusion – As It Was Pillaged by EA Canada':

After I left EA Fusion… you may wonder what happened? Tarnie Williams continued to fail miserably at continuing EA Fusion's success.

In fact – he drove the business into the ground, to the point the division was dismantled and parted out across EA – staff, tools, tech, pipelines, products, even documented processes and workflows.

EA Fusion was dismantled entirely. Even its 'stolen' tech and tools…were re-branded with new group and division names; they wanted to make sure 'Fusion' was a forgotten blip in the history of Electronic Arts.

In the end – EA Fusion was pillaged by EA Canada and EA Worldwide.

. . .

The rapid fall of Fusion – showed me – how pivotal leaders and founders – and their views and ideologies – are critical to success.

Saved by Canadian License Plate – in Washington State, USA:

A funny side tale…

I drove to my interview in Redmond, Washington…where Microsoft and Xbox Studios were located.

Following apparently successful interviews all day… they offered to take me to dinner with Dave's leadership team. …seemingly a final 'confirmation' that I would 'fit in' beyond just being able to do the work of the job.

Well… on my way from Xbox Studios where I interviewed… I was off to a fancy restaurant in a nearby city called Bellevue… a police officer pulled me over.

. . .

The officer noted my license was Canadian, as was my license plate. He informed me that I was driving unsafe speeds for the drizzling rain conditions…and that I was also driving 10 Miles Per Hour (MPH) over the speed limit.

He smiled and sent me on my way – saying writing up a Canadian for a minor ticket was a lot of work, so I should get going with a serious warning.

Well – I took my warning, and got to my dinner a bit late.

Ironically – my 'Saved By Having a Canadian License Plate' Story went over well. It gave a funny topic to riff over… during dinner.

I Was Hired Into Microsoft Xbox as Director of Product Development:

In conclusion – I was hired into Microsoft Xbox as a Director of Product Development…

I was the one and only person - in a 200,000 person company - with that job title… of Director of Product Development.

E282 MICROSOFT 'OLD GUARD' DESPISED EA VETS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E282 Microsoft 'Old Guard' Despised EA Veterans and New Hires.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uwp8-e282-microsoft-old-guard-despised-ea-veterans-and-new-hires.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/C6fH6TIGiHU

Description:
'Old School' Microsoft Staff Hated 'EA' Hires Because They Brought EA Culture Too.

Bottom-Line: 'Old School Microsoft Staff' Viewed EA Hires As Enemies of the State.

Microsoft Fought EA – and EA Won.

Microsoft 'Old Guard' Vs Electronic Arts Veteran Invasion

Microsoft Xbox Studios – 'EA People Stink', Director Product Development Bad Title:

During my first week – at Microsoft Xbox – I was asked to meet with a train of people. I had a list of names, a computer, and a phone. The rest was up to me.

'Old School' Microsoft Staff Hated 'EA' Hires Because They Brought EA Culture Too:

There were two common themes –

- Microsoftees *HATED EA PEOPLE* - EA was invading MICROSOFT, THROUGH THE TROJAN HORSE CALLED 'XBOX STUDIOS'

  - Specifically – 'Old School' Microsoft people - that generally preceded Xbox or at least predated Xbox 360 – were adamantly opposed to Electronic Arts people being hired into Xbox… much less Microsoft 'PROPER'.

- And then – there was my 'unique' job title of 'Director of Product Development', which has never and will never again be used in Microsoft – because of me.

  - Except, of course, for me… which – advertised loudly with a megaphone – that I was *THAT* *DANG* *SPECIAL*!!! …or was a quirky oddball that somehow got a weird job title

  - As an aside – there were several times Microsoft 'PROPER' demanded Xbox staff conform the corporate Microsoft titles.

    - And so, it was –

    - every employee's title became 'corporate'…entirely alien to every other game development company title, and was not consistent with many enterprise corporations outside Microsoft either

      - I believe firmly – Microsoft caused unnecessary emotional suffering to its staff frequently…forcing arbitrary job title changes – that did not even reflect the job they did precisely, as their prior 'game industry' titles did.

        - But – in the name of standardization across all of Microsoft – they were justified – in removing individuality from Xbox and its development staff.

        - Microsoft Enterprise and Cloud divisions often treated game developers in the same way Atari Corp's Jack Tramiel did, back in the day – like simple towel designers…
        - Of course – Atari Corp's game developers revolted against Atari Corp and resigned on masse. Microsoft Xbox staff…just took it.

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- o Unfortunately - The Right Thing was usually whatever corporate executives wanted the 'right thing' to be at the time. And in these cases – it was generic job titles across the company.

      …BECAUSE! BECAUSE THEY DECREED IT SO!

- The Consequence –

  - o Culture Clashes erupted between Corporate Enterprise Developers and Xbox Game Developers

    - And there were further culture clashes between Electronic Arts (EA) hires into Xbox - bringing EA culture with them. Clashes raged between existing Xbox Microsoft Culture and Imported EA Culture

  - o Title changes lowered productivity -

    - engineers were forced into partial management roles

    - managers were forced to write code, as a job requirement

    - game designers, artists, musicians, sound designers… all became oddballs with two titles – the standard corporate one in the company database, and another they just operated under despite their formal job title)

    - Generally – everyone had to learn new skills and adapt their existing skills - to fit into the Microsoft Corporate Enterprise 'standard team structure with matching job titles'

  - o Simply – forcing random job title changes - was a bad idea - that did not help anyone or the company.
    - And yet – some executive somewhere must have been pleased with themselves…no doubt, satisfying some other person that did not like anyone being different than them…

Bottom-Line: 'Old School Microsoft Staff' Viewed EA Hires As Enemies of the State:

No matter the impact… let me get back to my story of Microsoft vs Electronic Arts culture clash…

The message was abundantly clear –

      EA People Stink, and true Microsoftees wish all EA People *GONE*

EA Hires were 'enemies of the state' – as far as they were concerned.

Principal Software Engineering Developer Tony Cox Was a Rude, Arse-Wipe:

Let me share a pointed personal experience that underscores what I have described.

The most pointed and aggressively hostile person of all… was a Principal Software Development Engineer… named Tony Cox.

For some background –

- a 'Principal' level Developer is like a hands-on engineering architect director…and only for a pure technologist

- vs a Program Manager (PM) – which is more like a project manager. They are often an engineer - transitioned to senior management. Generally – Microsoft favored engineers in most roles.

So – this Principal Developer - Tony Cox – was a rude, offensive, total arse-wipe.

He asserted right off –

- Who the heck do you think you are, having a unique title in Microsoft!?

- You are from EA, and anyone from EA has a big "EA" stamped on their forehead…like crosshairs, for any true Microsoftee 'to target'.

He echoed the 'Hate on EA' theme… but was especially aggressive about it.

He even ranted, "How dare I ask him to come to my office…to meet me!? I should have come to visit him… period!"

Curiously – there was never any discussion on where to meet, he just agreed to meet me… and set an appointment, and met me.

But… I guess – somehow, it was my fault he did all that.

Just like – it was my 'fault' that I was given a unique title in Microsoft.

Well… obviously… none of that was my doing, or fault.

That guy… Tony Cox… left. I saw little of him again… Microsoft had over 50,000 employees in the greater Seattle-Redmond area, so seeing him… was unlikely without a reason. …And I had no desire to see him again. He was an arse…

Microsoft Fought EA – and EA Won:

It is an interesting conclusion to the 'true Microsoftees hate EA people' tale…

Well –

- If EA Fought Microsoft, EA Won…

- Xbox Studios became infused with Electronic Arts (EA) culture and veteran developers, designers, producers, and managers

- Many EA practices and philosophies became foundational to Xbox Studios

- In fact – Xbox Studios formed two groups in Vancouver, Canada…that were virtually entirely staffed by former EA people

- Yea – Xbox Studios and EA are difficult to differentiate in terms of how they make games

Tony Cox Would Have Been Wiser to Partner and Unite EA-Microsoft…but He Failed:

Tony Cox… would have been much wiser – had he approached me as an ally, and sought to merge the two cultures of 'old' Microsoft Xbox Studios and the 'new' Microsoft-EA Xbox Studios.

Instead – Tony Cox failed to be productive and strategic. He let his attitude and jealously and hatred interfere with his – and many other people's – futures. He was an arse…

Tony Cox Could Have Learned A Lot About Me – There Is Much On the Internet:

When I reflect on how Tony Cox greeted me as a new hire at Microsoft with such hostility, I wonder why he did not try to get to know me before casting judgment.

He did not even bother to search the Internet to learn what is easily found about me.

He could have learned a lot about me…

Tony Cox Should Have Sought to Understand What Value I Might Be to Him:

I believe firmly that Tony Cox should have sought to understand what value I might be to him and his goals, rather than create a hostile relationship on Day One meet & greet.

But – fools are often ruled by the emotions, not the minds…even people otherwise smart and in lofty, high corporate positions.

And – Tony Cox appeared to qualify as an 'intelligent fool'.

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E283 DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM!?

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E283 Do You Know Who I Am.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uws4-e283-do-you-know-who-i-am.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/Eexjvviavw0

Description:
"Do You Know Who I Am!?"

Richard Has Been Described as Video Game Industry Luminary, Founder, and Innovator.

Many interviews have been published about Richard; he even appeared on TV.

Richard's Career Was Long and Storied.

P.S. For the record and annals of history – Escape from Hell used no code or anything from a game called Wasteland of the era…

Do You Know Who I Am!?

Written+TV Interviews, Articles+Videos About Me, My Games, Even Pirate Sites:

In the previous episode – I shared a tale of a Principal Engineer named Tony Cox – that hated everyone from Electronic Arts – that was hired into Xbox at Microsoft.

I mentioned – that he made no effort to know who I was before meeting with me – and yet formed hostile, judgmental views of me…entirely from his own imagination.

Well… Let's get back to what - Tony Cox - could easily be learned about me…

There is so much on the Internet about me.

For example, that Tony Cox at Microsoft needed only type my name – Richard Seaborne - into 'Google Search'… and he would have seen–

- written and broadcast TV interviews I've done

- videos about games I've made…

- gameplay videos of my games

- even where to pirate and download many of my older games

  o of course – its not 'piracy' because they are positioned as retro games, or classics… and publishers tend not to care, so there they are downloaded for free…usually running in a software retrogamer emulator of some sort.

  o Well – let's be honest… it *IS* 'piracy'…but I am fine with my old games being enjoyed by as many people as possible.

    - And I am glad most publishers share my view on keeping old games alive.

I Have Been Described as Video Game Industry Luminary, Founder, and Innovator:

I have been described as a video game industry luminary, founder, and innovator.

Two Challenged Games – Escape from Hell and Awesome Possum:

Admittedly – I have also been challenged as a plagiarist – of design, if not tech.

Two games with controversy come to mind…

- Escape from Hell on the Personal Computer (PC), and

- Awesome Possum on the Sega Genesis

Escape from Hell had ZERO Code, Tech, or Design from Wasteland Computer Game:

About Escape from Hell…

1. The Gamer Community would allege that I used the computer game *Wasteland's* engine and design… to make my game *Escape from Hell*.

- Well – I did not. I created the tech and design entirely independently.

- I *WAS* given user interface direction by the same Executive Producer that oversaw Wasteland.

- So – there were similarities in the User Interface … because direction came from the same Executive Producer, from the same company – Electronic Arts.

- Germany banned Escape from Hell because it had Nazi Swastikas visible in Hell

   o … until we replaced Nazi Swastikas… because we ignorantly put Nazis in Hell.

   o Well, really… it turns out there is a law that bans showing a Swastika in any product).

- And there were the death threats – Escape from Hell inspired religious radicals to target Electronic Arts and me…for our sacrilege. Me and Salmon Rushdie apparently share some similar hatred … just from different sects.

Awesome Possum Talked Too Much and Was 'Too Greenie' For the Era:

About Awesome Possum…

2. The Gamer Community and Many Reviewers –
3.
- extolled the amazing amount of unique sound and spoken voice in the Sega Genesis game, where the protagonist main character – Awesome Possum – spewed verbose phrases everywhere, almost feeling constant…

- conversely – there were people and reviewers that found –

   o the relentless chatter annoying and offensive at times.

   o They complained the game was not animate as smoothly as the renowned scripted Sega Sonic or Nintendo Mario animations.

   o They did not like the 'protect the environment' theme – especially with the game's tie-in with World Wildlife Federation and like organizations.

      - Even Robin Williams declined to be the voice for the game…despite his apparent belief in protecting the environment.

- In the end –

  - Awesome Possum had the most spoken voice and music and sound effects than any other Sega game of the era.

  - It had many levels and themed areas to explore and bad guys to vanquish.

  - It was a competitive game for the era – that polarized people's perceptions of it

  - Awesome Possum touched a lot of people's hearts – he became the mascot for Atari Games consumer division – Tengen. Christmas cards, mailers, advertisements, buttons, and so much more… all made to celebrate and promote The Possum.

  - And there was the lawsuit – where Awesome Possum was unjustly challenged as stealing the idea for the game and characters from a third grade Midwest school teacher. The suit was eventually summarily dismissed as BS!!! But… it was another 'challenge' for Awesome Possum…

My Career Was Long and Storied:

My career has been long and storied. Hopefully – many of my tales have been captured in this retelling of my life's journey.

There are a few easy places to find information about me on the web –

- Gaming Historian YouTube Video of The History of Awesome Possum and Role as Atari Games Consumer Division Tengen's Mascot

  - https://youtu.be/3sQpWt4eZW8

- Role Playing Game (RPG) Codex Interview: 30-Years of Making Games and RPGs

  - https://rpgcodex.net/content.php?id=9744

- Computer Chronicles TV Interview –Tower of Myraglen and Stereo Sound

  - https://youtu.be/fOOByoo4wAI?t=536

- IMDB – Recognition for Games with cinematic connections or deep written script

  - https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1995462/

- Moby Games – Large List - Albeit Incomplete – of games I've developed

  - Richard L. Seaborne video game credits and biography - MobyGames

- Linked-In Professional Network with Over 1,000 High Profile Connections –

  - Corporate Executives – CEOs, CTO's, Executive Vice Presidents, VP's

- o Leaders - Directors, Producers, Managers, 'Defacto Shop Stewards'

- o Individual Industry Stars & Innovators

- o https://www.linkedin.com/in/richard-seaborne-3a532514?trk=people-guest_people_search-card

- Multitudes of game play videos from games that I developed.

- Truth Social, as Rick Liberty, with Nearly 2,000 followers (and rising everyday)

  - o https://truthsocial.com/

- And vast arrays of reviews, my games on magazine covers, and so much more…

Tony Cox Was Not The Only Lazy Person Unwilling To Research My Background:

My experience in Microsoft would show –

- Tony Cox was the 'top dog of the Old Guard Microsoft idiotic hostile reception.'

- And - there were many within Microsoft that hated Electronic Arts coming in with influence…

- There were some people within Microsoft that outright hated the idea that Microsoft made games at all…

  - o and - they felt Xbox was an abomination to Microsoft 'PROPER'.

- Somehow – I represented - all that the Microsoft 'Old Guard' - despised.

- It seemed like Microsoft threw unnecessary barriers to success – by allowing such hostilities to exist, much less be unloaded on masse onto new hires.

In the end…

I wish Microsoft 'Old Guard' were a little less 'Evil Empire'… and a little more 'Team Spirited'

E284 XBOX FITNESS ON DAY ONE XBOX ONE LAUNCH

Local File:
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uwx7-e284-xbox-fitness-launch-day-one-with-xbox-one-release-date.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/1kjIsmeZOMQ

Description:
Optical Heart Rate, Sentient Network Analytics, Kinesis Engine.
Mindscape, Electronic Arts, and Microsoft – ChessNet, NetCore, Sentient Skynet.
Microsoft Xbox Fitness – A Long Journey but Delivered A Lot of Features.
Optical Heart Rate, Kinesis Engine, Cat-Dog-Object-Biped Detection, Video CODECs.
Long Journeys Require Commitment – Even if You Adjust Course as You Go.
Xbox Fitness Day One Release with Xbox One Launch.
No One Believed Xbox Fitness Could Launch Day One Alongside the Xbox One.
Reviewed All Bugs and Issues Personally – And Coded Where Possible.
Xbox Fitness Was a Day One Release with Xbox One Launch.

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Optical Heart Rate, Sentient Network Analytics, Kinesis Engine

Mindscape, Electronic Arts, and Microsoft – ChessNet, NetCore, Sentient Skynet:

I have many stories of my innovating and evolving network play and matchmaking technology at Mindscape, Electronic Arts, and Microsoft Xbox.

Unfortunately – much of the technology remains secret, and so I cannot discuss a raft of details and concepts.

And so –

I will generalize that across these companies –

- I pioneered a cloud-based cluster network – that was operated by a master Artificial Intelligence (AI) supervisor - that monitored all services and player activity – and issued commands to subordinate systems.

- Game and Player data was collected and sent as telemetry to the Cloud, to be processed at a future date.

- Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and Payment Instruments (PIs) were 256-bit forward hash encrypted, and securely kept in isolated storage from lower security game or video data.

- The Master AI interfaced with subordinate 'listeners', 'services', and 'bots' to monitor, manage, and control the services and bots. Some people viewed the Master AI as a mini Skynet – given its range of powers and awareness.

- Matchmaking lobbies, chat, connection quality, etc. were standardized for all games – though it could be 're-skinned' to look visually like the game the tech and its user interface was being used in.

- The tech was so impressive – it was adopted and used across each company, as both a gold standard of how to create shareable technology but critically as a huge time and money and quality benefiting solution…

  - …everyone adopted ChessNet, NetCore, and Sentient…

Microsoft Xbox Fitness – A Long Journey, But Delivered A Lot of Features:

More confidentiality stuff – alas…

But – let me describe the accomplishment.

Optical Heart Rate, Kinesis Engine, Cat-Dog-Object-Biped Detection, Video CODECs:

It was a long journey…but my Xbox Fitness group managed to develop –

- Optical Heart Rate detection using the Kinect Red-Green-Blue (RGB) and 3D Depth Cameras…

  - it could tell a person's heart rate up to ten feet away, within a few Beats Per Minute (BPM)

- Fluid and Fitness-Kinesis Motion and Pose Tracking and Detection using Kinect

- Cat and Dog vs human biped vs object (chairs, tables, waste baskets, …) Kinect detection

- Original and translated workout videos 'for tracking' and 'for scoring' – videos like P90X, Jillian Michaels, and so much more.

- Recommendation engine for new content and experiences – driven by the AI Supervisor rolling through every player to assess their performance and what they should be guided to do next… in order to achieve their self-stated fitness goals.

- Encrypted Video CODECs to support streaming 'trackable' fitness videos

- Test, Staging, and Production sandboxes for development to publishing lifecycle

- Real-time analytics and visualizations

Long Journeys Require Commitment – Even if You Adjust Course As You Go:

I could detail so much about the journey to deliver on so much innovative technology and product features…

But – I think the most important insight here… is recognizing it takes unwavering commitment to stay the course over adversity and opposition. Long Journeys require serious, total commitment… even if you adjust course – as you go.

Xbox Fitness Day One Release with Xbox One Launch

No One Believed Xbox Fitness Could Launch Day One Alongside the Xbox One:

I recall everyone on my team as well as the contracted development team in Sheffield, United Kingdom (UK)… …did not believe Xbox Fitness could be finished on time.

It seemed that I was the only person that *BELIEVED*. I *KNEW* we could finish the game… and so - I flew to the UK and stayed in Sheffield to work alongside the developers for a few weeks, as we neared our point of success or point of no return.

Reviewed All Bugs and Issues Personally – And Coded Where Possible:

As I have always rolled up my sleeves and dove head first into problems, I did so again.

Every night I stayed up to the wee hours reviewing every single reported bug, and determined if it needed to be fixed, if there was an alternative approach to bypass it, or if it could be deferred in a future digital patch.

I even wrote code, despite formally no longer being a coder… apparently, executives don't code…

And I exercised and worked out to the game… despite not being in the best shape.

There was nothing to ensure Xbox Fitness would ship on time…that I did not do.

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To this day – I think people remain in dismay that the Studio Director got so involved and had the hands-on skills to ensure the team and product crossed the finish line with a quality product… …and had a digital patch ready ASAP for anything we 'tolerated' to ship on time.

Xbox Fitness Was a Day One Release with Xbox One Launch:

And in the end… In conclusion…

We managed to release Xbox Fitness on Day One of the Xbox One release.

We were one of the very few games that were able to get finished on time - and it was there on Day One… alongside the Xbox One launch.

E285 BAFTA AND I DON'T BELONG IN THE WHITEHOUSE
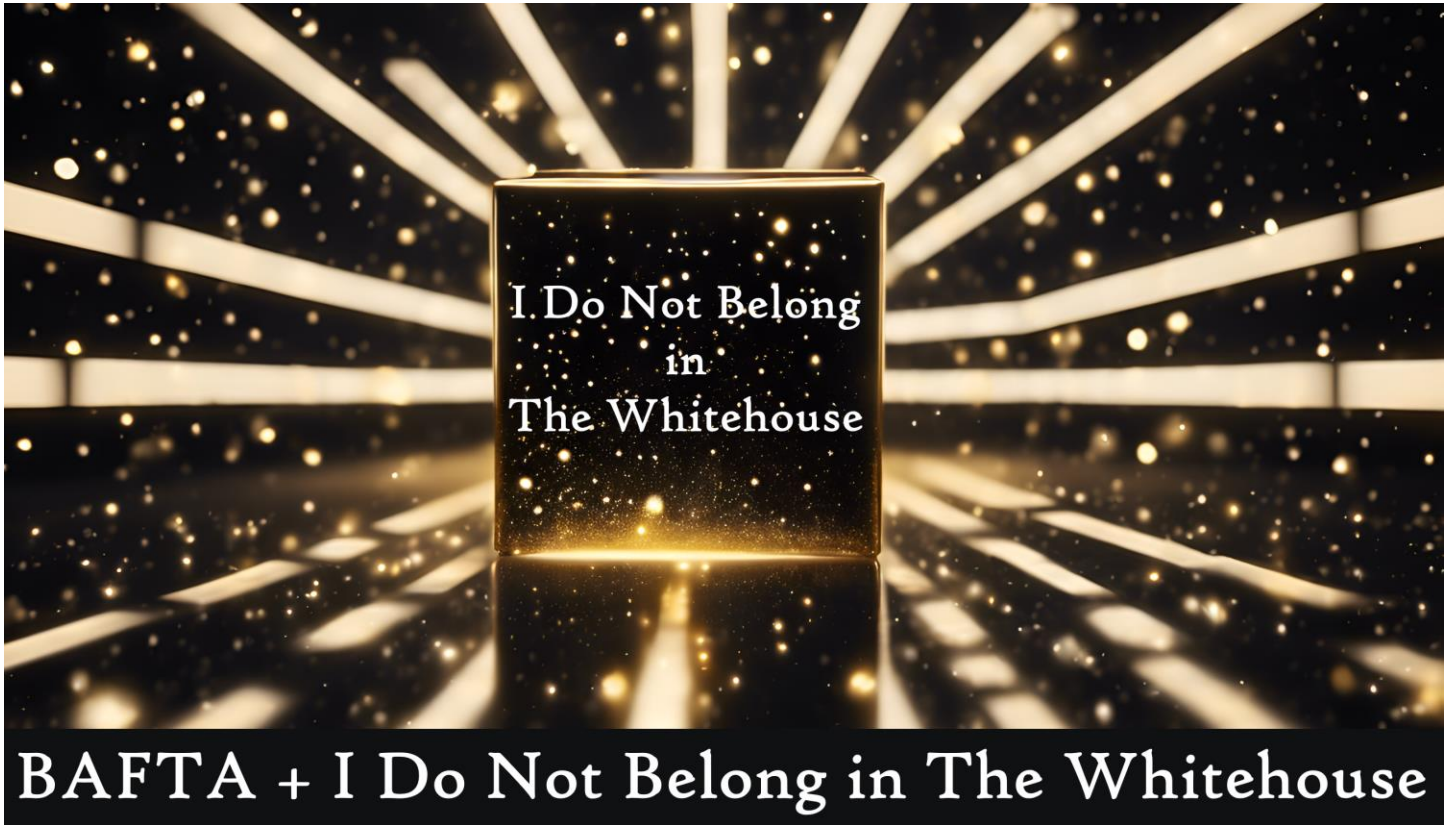
Local File:
   .\LibertyBooksVideos\E285 BAFTA and I Don't Belong in the Whitehouse.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
   https://rumble.com/v55ux0t-e285-bafta-and-i-dont-belong-in-the-whitehouse.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
   https://youtu.be/knm2y-oV5Aw

Description:
   BAFTA stands for the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.
   I Should Lose Weight and Get Fit – to be Face of Microsoft, Xbox Fitness.
   I Do Not Belong in the White House.
   I was Honest, Straight Shooter with Unwillingness to lie… Which Was a Problem.
   Congressional Review of Xbox Fitness and Kinect + Identity & Child Security.
   Xbox Fitness Presented to China Government with BesTV for Chinese Launch.
   NASDAQ New Year Ring in By Xbox Fitness.
   BAFTA for Nike+ Kinect Training 'in the Whitehouse' (Unplanned, Unexpected).
   Taxis and Tuxedos – Preparing to Go to the Whitehouse (AKA BAFTA).
   International Man of Mystery – In Photos.
   I Am Glad to Be On The Wall, and Not in the Whitehouse.

<p align="center">*I Don't Belong in The Whitehouse – Or at BAFTA*</p>

BAFTA stands for the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

What is BAFTA? It is an acronym…

- BAFTA stands for the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

- BAFTA presents recognition and trophies – for movies, television, and video games.

- BAFTA considerers video games – right on par – with movies and TV…

Nike+ Kinect Training and Xbox Playfit were out… I was to attend BAFTA.

I Should Lose Weight and Get Fit – to be Face of Microsoft, Xbox Fitness:

Well… we'll get into BAFTA shortly… let's talk about how unusual it was… for me to attend an event like BATFA…to begin with.

Xbox Fitness was running smoothly, with new content releasing regularly without incident.

The team was exploring what our next products or experiences might be.

Things should have been easier… but my chance at an easier time was foiled by a finance partner coming to me –

- and declaring that I should lose weight and get more fit…

- and that I could never be promoted or represent the team or its products… unless I lost weight and got more fit to look the part of an athlete

I was offended!

I Made Xbox Fitness. How could anyone suggest that my physical shape has any influence on my ability to lead the team or product!? Proof was long in – IT DOES NOT!

   My success has been entirely independent of my physicality or even health.

Anyway – I complained to the division vice president, going so far as to saying I should seek a different role if I had to 'look the fitness part' to do my job. The VP dismissed it - as an overzealous finance partner… 'ignore her' he advised.

I Do Not Belong in the White House:

On another topic…

You may recall a movie called, *A Few Good Men,* where –

- A colonel declares that 'the people need him on the wall' even if they do not want him in the Whitehouse.

- He says that he is needed on the wall to keep the evil away from the people – he suggests the wall separates civility from brutality.

- He suggests people sleep well at night – on the side of safe civilization - because he is protecting them - ON THE WALL – from the brutal real world.

- He declares 'THEY NEED HIM ON THE WALL!'

That movie, *A Few Good Men,* has been used to describe me… as the colnel they want on the Wall but not in the Whitehouse.

Publishers very much wanted me on the team, running development, but they did not want me in the Whitehouse.

In other words – they want me to make games in the back room, while they strut and prance on stage and take credit for my and the team's work.

I was Honest, Straight Shooter With Unwillingness to lie… Which Was A Problem:

They contended – that I was honest, a straight shooter, unwilling to bend the truth (AKA lie)… and that was a problem.

Unless I was prepared to parrot the messages assigned to me, blindly follow a teleprompter… I was not allowed to be in the proverbial Whitehouse.

Congressional Review of Xbox Fitness and Kinect + Identity & Child Security:

A little related tale…

A great example of my being excluded from the proverbial Whitehouse…was close to the REAL WHITEHOUSE.

Xbox Fitness was to appear before Congress to –

- explain security measures taken to protect identity and children from Kinect

- explain security measures taken to protect Personal Identifiable Information (PII)

So – I prepared everything, and other people went to Washington, D.C. to present.

Everything was fine, and approved. …of course.

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Xbox Fitness Presented to China Government with BesTV for Chinese Launch:

Though it came later – we had to likewise present to China's government…to release Xbox Fitness in China. Interestingly – China demanded to host Xbox Fitness servers and Chinese consumer data in China, by a company called BesTV.

Although it was complicated – Xbox Fitness was also an Xbox One Day One Launch for China as well.

NASDAQ New Year Ring In By Xbox Fitness:

Another example of my 'not belong in the Whitehouse' was Xbox Fitness ringing in the New Year with Nasdaq's New Year Opening Bell.

Marketing and photogenic 'pretty people' were sent to represent Xbox Fitness, while I remained with the team that made the game… …and we celebrated our success… on our own.

BAFTA for Nike+ Kinect Training 'in the Whitehouse' (Unplanned, Unexpected):

Although there were recurring efforts to bypass or prevent me from 'going to the Whitehouse'… there came… an unexpected event.

I was at the Nike+ Kinect Training contract developer's studio - based in Sheffield, England (the same company that would develop Xbox Fitness later).

While there - they received a late notice that they were confirmed as a nominee for the British Academy of Film and Television Art (BAFTA) awards.

And – there were no other Marketing or 'Whitehouse Appropriate' people from Microsoft in England that could attend on behalf of Microsoft.

And surprise! Whoa! *I* was asked to attend BAFTA, on behalf of Microsoft and Xbox… for Nike+ Kinect Training.

Sure – it was my product. But *they* never want me to attend formal social events, like BAFTA.

But – when put into a corner, a technologist – an engineer – suddenly seems 'OKAY' to represent the company… in lieu of the polished Marketing and Public Relations evangelists and spokespeople.

Taxis and Tuxedos – Preparing to Go to the Whitehouse (AKA BAFTA):

I had to take a taxi to get fitted and later pick up a tuxedo (I certainly never wear a tux or anything formal…almost ever).

The number of times I took taxis to get things needed for BAFTA…was ridiculous.

Taxis and Tuxedos… That was my introduction to 'going to the Whitehouse'.

International Man of Mystery – In Photos:

People saw photos of me after the event – wearing a tux – and they said I looked like an International Man of Mystery. I was a 'James Bond' to them…

Combine that with my regularly transporting hard discs or prototype hardware - like with Canadian customs – when they thought the original Xbox prototype was a bomb – and detained me…

Yea – given my Interpol tracking, transporting mysterious items, and looking like James Bond in my tuxedo… I guess, I was an International Man of Mystery!

Excess, Over-the-Top, Hyped BAFTA:

I suppose that I did not realize that BAFTA was apparently a big deal – like the Oscars or Emmys.

Well – I was not impressed.

In fact – I was annoyed that I had to 'get dressed up' for the event.

It was all… simply excess, over-the-top, hype… from the drop-off, to the red carpet and entry walk, and photo shoot… to overly zealous servers and ubiquitous decorations and adornments.

It was posh. It was excessive. It was 'not my kind of scene'. I have always preferred 'under the radar', 'never see you coming', 'get stuff done' behind-the-scenes. And this… was all about hype and image, nothing real. It was a – huge - façade…

I Do Not [Want] To Belong in The Whitehouse:

To me – it was like they tried too hard to be special. It was just a bunch of people that got together to celebrate each other and their work. That's cool! …by itself.

 But… the ritzy excess did not feel right to me. It never has…

And so – I guess they are right, "I Do Not [WANT] To Belong in the Whitehouse".

Some People Live for The Whitehouse –Receptionist/Office Manager Was in Heaven:

While I was not impressed with all the glitz and glamour, most everyone attending appeared to be enamored with the extravagance… and the stars – they saw – all around them.

Sumo Digital, the company we contracted with to develop Nike+ Kinect Training, had taken their front desk receptionist / office manager to BAFTA with them.

She was a short, thin, long platinum blond haired, waif. And she was dressed to impress – white, subtly shiny 'appropriate' mini dress and silver colored jewelry. Her makeup seemed extreme – hiding her real face – to promote her 'projected face'. It was her own – BAFTA façade.

It was very clear – she wanted to be seen… and, ideally, *desired*… by the stars attending BAFTA.

She was – the opposite of me. She was in heaven! She saw stars and celebrities…in real life. She tried to meet them, one and all. I lost track of her, as she was off and about…with seemingly everyone.

I imagine – if nothing else – she had a night to remember for the rest of her life.

I Am Glad To Be On The Wall, and Not in the Whitehouse:

I am glad she and others appreciate the limelight. I am glad there are people that like the stiff, formal Whitehouse 'style'.

I guess… I am glad… to be on the Wall, and not in the Whitehouse.

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E286 SNOWMAGEDDON 3 AT LONDON ENGLAND

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E286 Snowmageddon 3 in London, England.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55ux2u-e286-snowmageddon-3-in-london-england.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/GReXolktHDg

Description:
Snowmageddon 3.0 (The BIG Sequel) – London, Heathrow (UK).
Airlines Canceled All Flights; Trains and Taxis Stopped Running.
Parking Lot Parkades Were Converted to Shelters with Space Heaters+.
Trapped, Wandering Heathrow Airport, Luggage in Tow.
British Government Declared It Was Unsafe for Taxis to Service the Airport.
Bribed Taxi Driver to Pick Up Team at Street Adjacent to The Airport.
Thankful to be Slough – Even if It Was Infested with Mobsters and Criminals.
Microsoft Vice Presidents had Mistresses, and Wives Accepted for Wealthy Lifestyle.
A Bottle or Two A Day Keeps the Stress at Bay.
Alcohol Masked Disability – A Bottle or Two Keeps the Stress at Bay.

Snowmageddon III – London, Heathrow (United Kingdom)

Snowmageddon 3.0 (The BIG Sequel) – London, Heathrow (UK):

Most everyone encounters snow – even snow-ins, that trap them where they are snowbound – cannot go anywhere – until the snow melts. Or – just enough freeze and snow to make roadways black-ice, no-friction, skid dangerous… And then – there's everyone else on the road – that may not be 'as good a driver' as you are… they could hit, even kill you or some pedestrian walking in the frigid cold.

And – most people – those that have taken airplanes - have experienced flight delays, even outright cancelations. Some people – rarely – are forced to stay overnight – until an alternate flight was available; airlines sometimes comp'ed – paid for – meals and hotel fees – since it was often their responsibility – because their actions resulting in the cancellation.

However – there are natural causes for flight cancellations… and – they are rarely covered by the airlines - or compensated for.

Well – I have shared a tale of Snowmageddon in a previous episode – a powerful event in Canada. I had another 'mini Snowmageddon' later – in Washington State – while at Microsoft.

But – let me share – now – my biggest SNOWMAGEDDON TALE!

Let's get going on – Snowmageddon 3.0 – THE BIG SEQUEL!

Snowmageddon 3 (The Sequel) – London, Heathrow (UK):

I thought I had experienced the last Snowmageddon - after returning to the States from my stint working in Vancouver, Canada for Electronic Arts.

However – during one of trips to the Xbox Fitness developer in Sheffield, England… it snowed… and kept snowing… and seemed like it would never stop snowing.

Although my team and I managed to get to London Heathrow International Airport, and book rooms in the Sofitel Hotel adjoined to the airport… it kept snowing!

It was becoming clear… We were in – SNOWMAGEDDON 3!   The *BIG* Sequel…

Airlines Canceled All Flights; Trains and Taxis Stopped Running:

All of the airlines shutdown, and canceled every single flight.

Trains and Taxis stopped running. We called everywhere…

We even tried to see if we could take a train under the channel to France, and fly from there. But – it, too, was shutdown.

There was no way out of England… We were trapped.

Parking Lot Parkades Were Converted to Shelters with Space Heaters+:

There were so many people stranded in the airport, that the parking lot parkade for cars was converted into makeshift shelters with space heaters and blankets.

They brought in the British military … to provide assistance – and to attempt to clear the tarmac and runways…

It was insane!!!

Don't Expect First World Affluent Countries to Have Makeshift Hovels and Worse:

You don't expect makeshift hovels – in parking structures – with people worried about food and warmth and blankets – in an alleged First World affluent country.

  Mother Nature and God can shut down – anything, anyone, any country…anywhere…

We Were Comfortable in Sofitel Hotel – Due to Timing and Reservations:

And while the throngs of people were cold and hungry, and stranded… we had our individual Sofitel Hotel rooms with room service.

It was… such an insane division and separation, entirely based on timing and reservations.
And Then There Was No Sofitel – We Were Banished into the Cold with The Throngs:

And then… there was no Sofitel Hotel room or food for us – anymore.

Our reservations had expired, and the long wait-listed people were clamoring to take occupancy. We had lost our haven - and were banished into the cold with the throngs we previously pitied.

Trapped, Wandering Heathrow Airport, Luggage in Tow:

With luggage in tow, and no where to go… the team and I wandered the airport, looking for some place to 'make camp'… like all the other 'homeless' travelers.

But I had an idea… I declared that if the team watched my luggage, I would venture out into the snowy storm and see if there were options beyond what we knew of from the Airport venue.

Flagged Down and Bribed Taxi to Take us To a Slough City Hotel:

And yes! I discovered that there were taxis that would take people along ploughed clear freeways only. Well… they refused to enter or support the airport, or anyone from the airport.

British Government Declared It Was Unsafe for Taxis to Service the Airport:

Apparently – the British government had declared it was unsafe for taxis to engage with or service the airport or anyone from it – and so it was illegal to help people in need.

I struggle to believe it was the intended outcome… to trap people by taking away their only means of escape. But… it is what happened.

Bribed Taxi Driver to Pick Up Team at Street Adjacent to The Airport :

The taxi driver was not going to break the rules, much less the law. But he agreed that he could transport us from the highway onramp to a nearby city where there was a hotel with vacancies – to a city named Slough.

Well – I explained it might be difficult for my team and I to carry our luggage all the way to an onramp. And so – I offered him One Hundred British Pounds (I'd guess $150 USD) to drive down to the closest street adjacent the airport, where he would pick us all up.

The taxi driver smiled - and agreed. He pocketed the 'extreme tip'. And he and I drove down to the airport nearby street. I trusted him to wait – and he did – as I retrieved the team and my luggage.

We were off to Slough!

Thankful to be Slough – Even if It Was Infested With Mobsters and Criminals:

There is little to describe Slough. The hotel was evidently once upscale and posh; however, it had devolved over age with decrepitude taking over.

Curiously – we learned that the hotel operated as a 'business center' for local criminals and their 'goings on'. It appeared to be infested with mobsters and criminals.

How do we know this? Other than seeing a multitude of unsavory characters…

Well… A server informed us at dinner in the hotel restaurant - that it's best to focus on our table and meal - and stop looking at other people in the hotel or restaurant or bar.

He indicated that someone had complained we were spying on them… And… it is not good to be noticed for spying on people.

It was clear – we had better mind our own business… or else. And so – we did.

In conclusion – other than the mobster criminal element of Slough… it was a fine, old hotel.

And it kept us out of Snowmageddon 3.

We were thankful to be in Slough… even if – with the syndicate.

Failure to Launch Flights – Several Times:

One other point of drama during Snowmageddon 3… Some of us would get a call that a flight was available, and they had to get there within two hours to board. Well – I was not one of those people with a Golden Ticket; I was to wait in the hotel.

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The 'lucky' individuals that had the Golden Ticket gleefully endured the nightmare of getting to the airport. And they checked in, and boarded… Hooray!

And they were happy to sit on the tarmac – for six hours – while awaiting their escape from Snowmageddon 3.

But…

Then it happened… The plane had sat so long, it froze over so much that it could no longer be defrosted for flight. It was grounded. And everyone's flight… was cancelled…again.

They returned to the hotel… using the same taxi streetside bribe 'method'… defeated.

A similar Failure to Launch happened again and again…for two other people.

Snowmageddon was a cruel mistress… it offered hope, only to dash it and take it away.

We Escaped Snowmageddon 2's Clutches A Week Later After Christmas Day:

After a week of being trapped – right through Christmas Eve and Day – the snow stopped.

And the British Army cleared the runways.

And we all escaped Snowmageddon 3's clutches… Finally!

Team members with families and children were sad to miss Christmas Day at home.

But… it was another price we paid to make sure Xbox Fitness would ship on time and be of high quality.

Microsoft Vice Presidents had Mistresses, and Wives Accepted for Wealthy Lifestyle:

I recall during one trip – a team mate was intoxicated – and she began regaling tales of Microsoft of Old… and of how it has grown up.

She drifted from topic to topic, meandering from idea to idea…

One thing she said stuck with me…

Most Microsoft Vice Presidents and above… cheat on their spouses.

There it was…

She explained that their spouses know they have a good deal going – benefiting from the VP's high income, bonuses, and retirement packages… extravagant vacations. All they had to do was stay married to their Microsoft executive.

It was disgusting… She basically told me that many spouses were no better than prostitutes.

But she furthered –

- they rarely have sex with their husbands, because they have mistresses.

- the wives are…more…homemakers, child caretakers, and life detail managers.

- they were not really caretakers though…as they hired nannies for that.

- they rarely clean house…as they hire housekeepers for that.

It was… apparently… a function of valuing money over principles… or so I concluded.

A Bottle or Two A Day Keeps the Stress at Bay:

I had become a heavy alcohol drinker over my years in game development. I had known MANY, MANY colleagues who did the same.

It surprised me at Microsoft – I was told explicitly that drinking one to two bottles of wine a day… was normal.

Drinking was how people worked long and stressful hours, weeks on end without a day off. It was how people endured, how the survived.

In retrospect, I should have realized that we were all self-medicating in some way or another by drinking so much alcohol.

Alcohol Masked Disability – A Bottle or Two Keeps The Stress At Bay:

I wonder sometimes if my drinking alcohol masked otherwise potential bipolar episodes.

If so – it might suggest that I always had some level of 'mental divergence' – being just different than the 'typical person'.

And I controlled it by 'drinking my divergence away'…so I would resume the next day 'in control'.

In any case –

A Bottle or Two A Day … Keeps The Stress At Bay.

A Bottle or Two A Day … Keeps The Stress At Bay.

E287 ADVENTURES IN PARIS AT QUANTIC DREAM
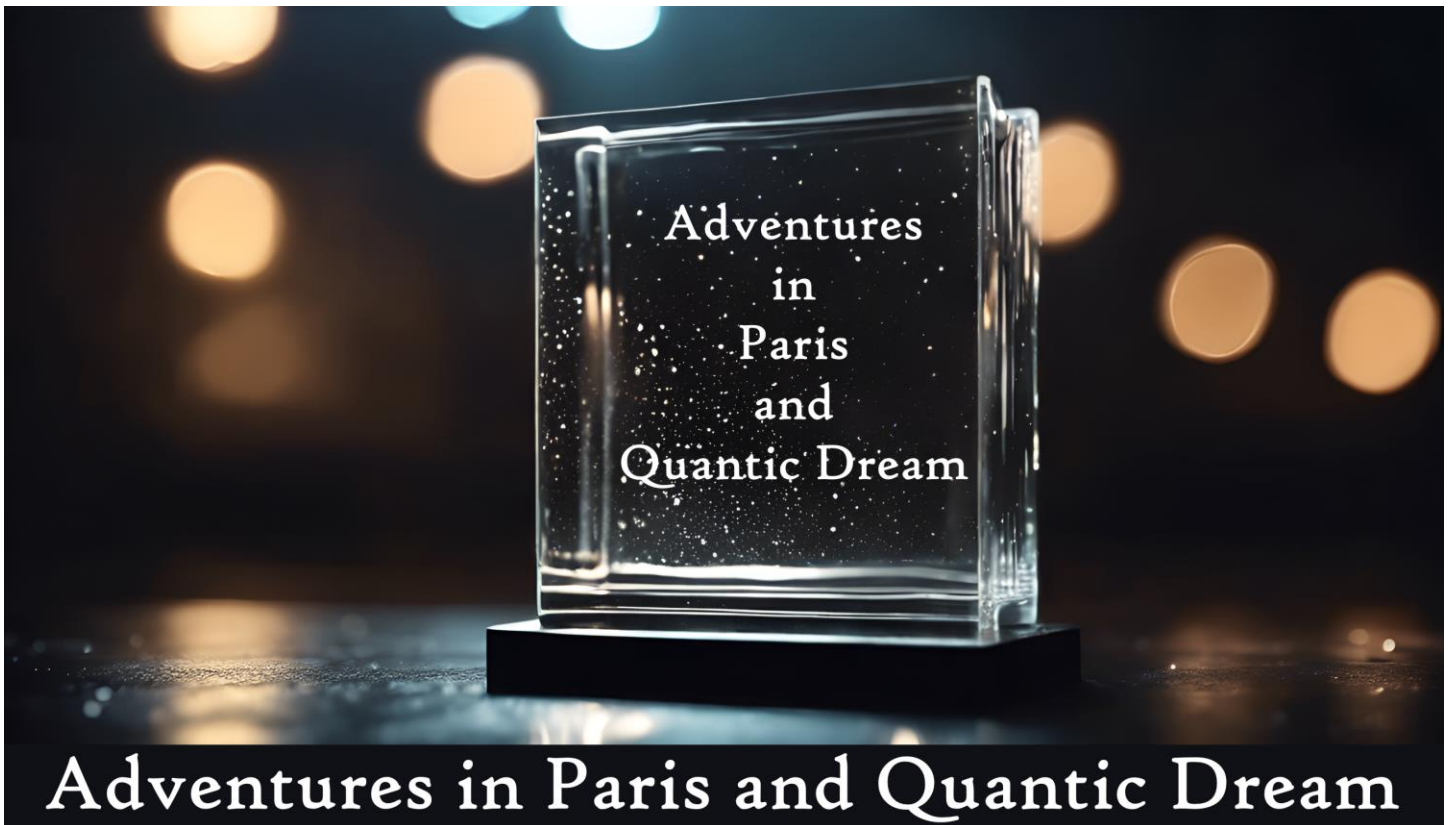
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uxaa-e287-adventures-in-paris-and-quantic-dream.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/4UtnYa4wGBI

Description:
Quantic Dream in Paris, Tour De France, Hookers in The Forest, and More.
Developers and Ideas Were Everywhere Throughout the World.
I Traveled A Lot – Reviewing Many Developers and Their Work and Progress.
Ability to Make Something from an Idea Is Extraordinary – Conceiving Ideas Is Not.
Planned to Train from The United Kingdom (UK) to Paris Through the Chunnel.
Cesspool Of Destitution and Desperation – At Chunnel Train Station.
Pigeon Poo 'Welcome to Paris' Greeting During Lunch.
BDSM 'Barbie Doll' In Toy Store on Promotional Shelves by Streetside Window.
Paris Felt 'VERY ADULT RATED' – Given the Pigeon Poo Bombing & Bondage Barbie.
Eifel Tower Tourist-y and Crowded – Not the 'Magic' Advertised or Imagined.
Planned Months-Long French Vacation Times.

Quantic Dream in Paris, Tour De France, Hookers in The Forest, …

I Traveled A Lot – All Over The World – For My Job in Video Game Development:

As it may be apparent – I have traveled – often – and all over the world – for my job – in video game development.

The World – Everywhere- Loves Entertainment and Video Games:

And I have seen…

The world – everywhere – without exception - loves entertainment.

And - the world - loves video games.

Developers and Ideas Were Everywhere Throughout The World:

There seemed to be – no place – anywhere in the world – you could not find video game developers or people teeming with ideas to pitch at anyone that would listen.

I Traveled A Lot – Reviewing Many Developers and Their Work and Progress:

Consequently – I traveled a lot… to review developers and their work… and their progress.

- I performed due diligence to assess who we should (or should not) hire or work with… or sign a licensing agreement with.

- I reviewed companies – for organization, staff, product, tech & project management plans.

- I reviewed Product Roadmaps to Retail

- I reviewed Product individual milestones - and plans to

    o address any unfinished, unpolished deliverable overhang or technical debt into the next milestone.

    o and - how the team will finish subsequent milestones – with progressively less detail - up through Alpha - to Final - and to Release to Public in Retail.

- I deep-dive reviewed –

    o Experience design, User Interfaces, Content Breadth & Depth (total scope)

    o Product quality assessment

    o Code, tools, pipelines, and architecture.

    o Telemetry & Analytics plans.

- Schedules, plans, & bug databases.

- Risk, threat, & mitigation plans.

- Open Source and Licensed Middleware & Content Review

- Innovation and copyright/patent opportunity/infringement review.

- Finance, business, & legal affairs.

- You get the idea… I did…pretty much… everything that had to do with finding, assessing, hiring, and working with developers… all the way from concept to released retail product… to business and legal.

  - And – in the cases of service experiences that have online components… I worked with those developers for years…

Ability to Make Something From an Idea Is Extraordinary – Conceiving Ideas Is Not:

I cannot repeat this enough… so bear with me…

As I have said before –

- The magic - is being able to create an experience - not just conceiving of it.

- The ability to conceive an idea is – well – not that special. Everyone seems to have good ideas…but most have no idea what to do with them… or - how to create them.

- Therefore - the ability to make something into reality – that is extraordinary… that is special.

- Summarized – the ability to make something from an idea is extraordinary; conceiving ideas is not…

  - Now – for those that have grand ideas – but have no idea how to make them… LEARN HOW TO MAKE THEM! LEARN HOW TO MAKE YOUR DEAMS A REALITY! Learn how to be part of a team – that can make them!

    - There is a role for you… and there are no limits for you! …that you do not place on yourself.

Planned to Train from The United Kingdom (UK) to Paris Through the Chunnel:

Let's get back to one of my world adventures…

I had finished visiting a developer in Sheffield, England (a few hours – train ride – north of London)… and was about to finish visiting another developer based in Brighton Beach, UK.

Why does it matter – that I was in the UK?

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Well… my NEXT developer stop… was in Paris, France.

And, so – I planned to take a train to a 'Chunnel' station.

That is to say – there is a train that runs under the English Channel – connecting England and France – below the ocean water above.

Heading to Quantic Dream – Train Delayed with Track Suicide:

Perhaps it was a portent of wild my adventure to come… but my train to the Chunnel station was delayed.

Apparently – a man sought to commit suicide, by laying across train tracks. And – apparently – he was successful - he was hit by the train… and…splat! He died! Big mess!

And so – there was no clear time – when the tracks would be clean – of his blood and gore – and the trains would run once more across them.

To Feel Sad for The Suicide Victim or For Blown Itinerary:

It is always an odd thing –

- Do you feel sad for the death of the man, and why he felt suicide was his only way out?

- Or – do you feel annoyed - that this random man – whom you never knew - whose life he declared himself was not valuable – was messing your travel itinerary?

Well – I think I felt both… I felt sad for the dead guy, and felt sad for my blown itinerary… and the impacts, thereof.

Hours Long Alternate Trains:

Well – it turned out – there was an alternative train route… that could get me to the Chunnel.

It took hours of going the wrong way – but – the route eventually looped back – where a connecting train would get to the Chunnel.

. . .

Like I pondered – was all this trouble a portent of things to come… in Paris, France?

Heading to Quantic Dream – Through the Chunnel from the UK After Trains & Taxis:

First Class passage was very little more money than Standard Passage… for the Chunnel train.

So – I booked First Class!

Once I was on board the Chunnel train… in First Class… it was… NICE!

Each seat was big, plush…each had its own TV, luxurious seat & table, and international power plugs… and they frequently served snacks & drinks service.
The ride was nice – calm – and short.

It may be – that my Chunnel First Class train ride – was the best part - of my Paris, France trip - as you will see…

Indeed – I was fortunate to be First Class Chunnel – all the way… Luxurious Seat & Table, 'TV', snacks & drinks, … So nice after the 'London Tube' and so many trains and taxis…

Cesspool Of Destitution and Desperation – At Chunnel Train Station:

Upon deboarding the train – and entering Paris… it was 'dark'.

I don't mean… it was dark outside – like it was dusk or evening.

No – it was 'dystopian dark'.

- My first impression – coming off First Class Chunnel Train Service – was that I had entered a cesspool of destitution and the desperation of humanity.

- Trash and debris were strewn everywhere.

- Bums and homeless lined the streets.

- Panhandlers barked from every corner and alley.

- It felt – as if – anything unwatched – would be stolen – in the blink of an eye.

- Lines of people queued for taxis – to escape the hellscape they had been dropped off in.

It felt – honestly – like California Los Angeles (LA) or San Francisco, California… with homeless and crime rampant everywhere…

So – my first impression of Paris… was *not great*.

But hey – it was – a train station… They're not known for being posh or fancy…

> …so, I kept a positive open mind on the rest of my adventure.

Fancy Hotel Was Decrepit 'With Style':

When arriving at the Hotel – it was supposed to be elegant and posh.

And – in a way – it was elegant and posh. It – certainly – USED TO BE ELEGANT AND POSH – BACK IN ITS DAY!

Now –

- The hotel must be a 'landmark' because everything about it was old – antique.

- The bathtub and in-room appointments – were from the 1920's… 'antique'.

- Walls and rails – and doors – were dinged & dented…

- Paint was worn and faded…with occasional visible long scratches.

- The hotel was well clean and generally maintained… it was just old…and had 'old' charm…

   - …that is – 'charming' if you were into that sort of thing. (I was not...)

Pigeon Poo 'Welcome to Paris' Greeting During Lunch:

I was to rendezvous with my colleagues – at a little streetside restaurant, near the hotel… where they were also staying.

There's little to note during our uneventful Arrival Dinner…

. . .

However – as I picked up a slice of pizza, from the mini pizza that I had ordered…

- A silvery-white goopy sauce fell on my pizza… from the heavens!

- And – immediately following the 'bonus, extra pizza sauce topping'… another silver-white goopy sauce glop landed on my shoulder and forehead.

- I was angry – and I wondered – who the heck was throwing sauce around!?

- Well … there was no one throwing food around.

- The silver-white 'sauce' was pigeon poop.

- Apparently – a pigeon timed it perfectly to fly over and poop down on my pizza, my shoulder, and my arm. …and – on absolutely – no one – or anything – else.

   - The pigeon surgically targeted and bombed me – with great accuracy!

Bottom-line: My 'Welcome to Paris' greeting … was a poo storm, erm… bombing.

BDSM 'Barbie Doll' In Toy Store on Promotional Shelves by Streetside Window:

I recall walking early evening – back to the hotel – and my co-workers and I eyed a toy store across the street.

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Many of us collected toys and games and all sorts of 'collectibles'… Anyway… we all thought – hey, let's go over and see what kinds of toys they sell….

Across the street – we strolled.

And up to the toy store we went.

And, oh my!

The toy store had a display window – with shelves of toys, dolls, and collectibles.

ONE SHELF – HOWEVER – HAD A SINGLE BARBIE ON IT.

But – this Barbie… was no ordinary barbie.

This Barbie… was BDSM BARBIE!

- Bondage, Dominatrix Barbie…!

- Barbie wore leather leggings, skirt, and corset… and donned knee-high spiked boots… as she held a black whip.

Paris Felt 'VERY ADULT RATED' – Given The Pigeon Poo Bombing & Bondage Barbie:

From the Pigeon Poo Bombing - to Dominatrix Bondage Barbie - I was getting the impression… that

Paris… was "VERY ADULT RATED".

Eifel Tower Tourist-y and Crowded – Not the 'Magic' Advertised, or Imagined:

I managed to slip out one day – to visit the Eifel Tower.

I would like to share – how glorious and magnificent it was… but… well – it was immensely 'Tourist-y' and crowded.

I did not feel any of the 'magic' that had been advertised… or that I had imagined.

Alas – the Eifel Tower – for me – proved to be an expensive excursion… with little reward to me, personally.

Tour De France Interfered With Normal Sightseeing:

Whenever I visited foreign locales – I would take my DSLR digital camera and zoom lens with me… and walk about – into the 'real neighborhoods' and 'real backwoods' of the places I went to.

This trip – however – it did not work out.

Apparently –

- The Tour De France was racing when I would have been able to go on my walkabout photo safari adventure…

- They closed down roads and many areas – to support the Tour De France race route.

- And, so – the Tour De France prevented me from seeing more of Paris.

  - My colleagues – were excited – and preferred to see the Tour De France…

    - Well… 'good for them.' …not so good – for me.

Hookers in The Forest – On The Way To Dinner:

One evening – the developer we were visiting – took us to a fancy restaurant for dinner.

The restaurant and the people – were all great. Everything was excellent.

. . .

Let's talk about the drive – to the restaurant… before our excellent dining experience.

The way to the restaurant – wound through a curvy tree-laden forest road.

Lined on both sides of the road – like forest dryads amidst the trees – were… women.

There were dozens…perhaps hundreds…of women… all amongst the forest trees, on either side of the road.

The ladies were… provocatively dressed… from skirts to corsets, nylons to straps, sheer to leather… and makeup you could see thirty away.

. . .

- We drove through the Forest of Dryad Prostitutes.

- And - we escaped the Hookers of the Forest.

It is an interesting thing – how that area – apparently – had become the 'pickup place' for prostitution…

And – according to our driver…

…everyone knows where to go for an escort…

Outstanding Motion Capture and Pre & Post Production Capabilities:

When we finally visited the developer – Quantic Dream – I was impressed.

Quantic Dream was the developer of the game Heavy Rain… which was a story-driven movie-like game that used a lot of Motion Capture for animation.

- Quantic Dream had impressive Motion Capture and Set Building capabilities.

- They had outstanding pre & post-production editing and processing capabilities.

- They used structured pre-planning processes – and were cost conscious.

- The team was motivated – and passionate.

Yea – I was impressed with Quantic Dream.

Planned Months-Long French Vacation Times:

Although laws and country policies change… when we were engaging with Quantic Dream… we had to take into account French vacation laws…

Yea – their vacation laws… were a real consideration for us.

France has a minimum of 30 days of vacation per year… And many people take up to two months of time off.

And – France soft-pressures people to take 30 days (or more) during July and August.

July and August – are apparently – the best time to be outdoors in France… and the country could prioritize two months of downtime for businesses… by encouraging July & August across the country.

. . .

Great! And – no problem!

BUT –

- Project Managers need to plan for potentially very different working schedules – and dependencies – when working with people based in France.

Positive Assessment - Recommended Working With Quantic Dream:

While there were dicey beginnings… I was positive about Quanitic Dream – and that they would be a good partner to work with.   And yea – I cannot recall any business trip that was not 'AN ADVENTURE'!

E288 JOINING HOLOLENS AND EARLY ADOPTERS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E288 Joining HoloLens and Enterprise Early Adopters.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uxbv-e288-joining-hololens-and-enterprise-early-adopters.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/qEfsKR8QN-c

Description:
Xbox Fitness Joining HoloLens.

Microsoft's Ever-Shifting Priorities and Products and Services Drove Reorganization.
Xbox Fitness Was Last Bastion of Health and Wellness.
Microsoft HoloLens Was Not Games – Focus on HoloLens Tech and Experiences.
What is HoloLens and What is Augmented Reality.
HoloLens Was All About Innovation and Exploration – to Promote the Device.
Future is Today (FIT) Was Our HoloLens + Xbox Fitness Team Name.
HoloLens Teams Held Contempt for Our Future is Today Group.

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Xbox Fitness Joining HoloLens

Microsoft's Ever-Shifting Priorities and Products and Services Drove Reorganization:

I was working on Xbox Fitness and Kids & Lifestyle Entertainment products at Microsoft Xbox.

At the time - Microsoft was undergoing another of its many reorganizations of its staff and teams to accommodate its ever-shifting *seemingly fickle* priorities and thusly products and services.

Reorganizations of staff and teams did not mean people were losing their jobs…per say.

It meant people were losing the jobs they currently were in, and were –

- to be transferred to a new group and team without any choice or input,

- or elect to 'interview' within or outside Microsoft to find a better suited job,

- or resign and accept a minimalist severance package – called a "Voluntary Severance Agreement" (VSA). They usually included some kind of gag order or agreement – as the company wanted something – for its small extra severance money. Yea – nothing is free… even losing your job!

Xbox Fitness Was Last Bastion of Health and Wellness:

It was apparent that Kinect was losing luster within Xbox, and Xbox Fitness largely ran itself with a minimalist team keeping content fresh and ensuring it operated without issues. However – Kinect dying – directly translated to – Xbox Fitness dying… it could not operate with Kinect. Kinect was its magic – for motion tracking and heart rate detection…

- Our Nike+ Kinect Training was long in the rear view mirror.

- Our PlayFit experience had run its course.

- Xbox Fitness was on auto-pilot, requiring maintenance and fresh content

Xbox Re-Org'ed Into HoloLens:

Although there are tales of drama and intrigue surrounding how Xbox Fitness became part of the HoloLens organization… I am going to cover what little I can…that is not confidential.

Microsoft HoloLens Was Not Games – Focus On HoloLens Tech and Experiences:

During the latest Microsoft re-organization Xbox Fitness and I were transferred into the HoloLens Augmented Reality division.

Critically – I was no longer in games, at all.

Although I was allowed to keep Xbox Fitness running as a service, it was to be on maintenance mode…just keep it running. Do not invest in innovation.

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Instead – focus innovation on HoloLens technology and experiences.

What is HoloLens and What is Augmented Reality:

Well… a lot of people have never heard of HoloLens or Augmented Reality.

MANY PEOPLE have heard of Virtual Reality (VR)…

- you know, VR is where you wear goggles that blind you from the rest of the world – so you can immerse yourself in a digital world presented to you with your head-tracking audio-video virtual reality goggles.

- In VR – people hold 'wands' or 'controllers' so they can interact with things in the 'digital world'.

Few People have heard of Augmented Reality (AR)…

- Augmented Reality first came into vogue when people held phones or tablets up and saw digital objects or critters or Pokemon in the real world…through their phones or tablets.

    o Their 'reality' was augmented with digital objects and things and critters

- There have been numerous companies pursuing Augmented Reality… and that merits its own discussion (which we won't do here)

- Microsoft HoloLens was a VR-like wearable pair of goggles – but it had transparent lens you could look through to see the real world…like looking through construction safety glasses.

    o But HoloLens could add objects, animals, critters, even people…into the scene… overlaid on top of the real world

    o Augmented Reality (AR) through HoloLens let people see things 'that were not there' for real...

Bizarre Journey Moving from Role Playing Games to HoloLens Experiences:

I love games. But I was officially not 'in games' anymore. Weird!

It was bizarre how I ended up moving over my career from inspirational role playing games to action games to sports games to fitness 'games'… and now to augmented reality 'experiences' – not games.

Decided to Give HoloLens a Sincere Try – Believing Could Always Return to Games:

I imagined… I would give it a sincere try, and if it did not work out… return to pure video game making once more.

HoloLens Was All About Innovation and Exploration – to Promote The Device:

The HoloLens group was focused on innovation – and thusly – in exploration and discovery… to find experiences that would promote the HoloLens device as extraordinary and valuable.

The HoloLens device was actively being developed, so software and hardware guided each other's design and engineering.

It was a great opportunity to shine in creativity and inspiration.

Everyone working on HoloLens shared the same mission – find great experiences on HoloLens that will showcase to the world how fantastic augmented reality is using HoloLens.

Future is Today (FIT) Was Our HoloLens+Xbox Fitness Team Name:

We were to name our transferred group, and so we conceived to call ourselves 'F.I.T.'

We said –

>   The Future is Today!

>   The acronym for Future Is Today… is F.I.T. …or simply, FIT!

To make the name more fun, we put a flying car next the Future is Today text.

And of course – FIT was perfect to reflect our owning Xbox Fitness within HoloLens.

HoloLens Teams Held Contempt for Our Future is Today Group:

But people were not thrilled with our homage to fitness… even if it was part of group.

HoloLens people saw our 'game studio' as outcasts and 'not belonging'.

Some people went so far as to openly challenge why we were allowed to even continue Xbox Fitness…

I never understood why ostensibly allied teams – competed and judged… and even aggressive hated us - a peer team.

From hatred of Electronic Arts hired-in people… to hated of Xbox Fitness and Game Developers in HoloLens… to hatred of our HoloLens success against their own meandering, wasted explorative prototypes. It made succeeding in Microsoft that much harder.

>   . . .

I wish that people would just work collaboratively together – and shine as good as they can according to their talents…

>   …and not feel they must reduce others … to boost themselves.

E289 RECRUITING WOMEN AT GRACE HOPPERS

Local File:
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uxer-e289-recruiting-women-at-grace-hopper-conference.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/qLTHJJJ-cYM

Description:
Hear Richad's tale of attending the Grace Hopper all-women-in-technology conference, in hopes of recruiting women into technology at Microsoft.

Listen to the story of Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella offending women at the conference during a panel discussion.

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

Recruiting Women into Technology At Grace Hoppers Conference

New to HoloLens – Asked to Recruit Women At Grace Hopper's Women In Tech:

I had transferred into the HoloLens Division – leaving Xbox.

In one of my first 'Directors of HoloLens' meetings… the vice president (VP) in charge turned to me – and asked – with a leading question – 'If I would like to go to the Grace Hopper's Women in Technology Conference'?

It was obvious –

- the VP thought he was foisting a 'crap job' onto me… no one – apparently – wanted to go to a 'women in tech' conference – much less try and recruit women at the conference.

My Team Was 40% Female Already – Expanding to 50% Would Be Great:

I surprised everyone, I answered -

- My team is comprised of 40% women already. I would love to get to a 50-50 male-female split.

- I have always hired female over male… when they otherwise have equivalent qualifications.

- I would love to attend the Grace Hopper's Women in Technology Conference.

Surprised People to Happily Volunteer To Recruit Women At Grace Hoppers:

Well – my peer Group Directors – were surprised that I did not have to be 'volun-told' (as apparently, they would have had to been told).

They were dismayed – that I volunteered happily… without needing to be directed by the VP.

I guess – I was a gift horse… and they felt – GREAT, SOLD, IT'S ALL YOURS!

And, so - they threw their hot potato - of recruiting women into tech - in my lap…

Satya Nadella 'Foot-in-Mouth' Implied Women To Blame – Not Owning Career:

I was there – when newly appointed Microsoft Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Satya Nadella… spoke at Grace Hopper's Women in Tech Conference…

And – he – put his foot in his mouth. Unfortunately…

He told an otherwise inspirational story of pushing hard to climb upward in corporations and technology.

He described that people (including women) should not ask for raises or promotions… Instead – they should just work hard – and have faith in the right thing happening – and being recognized for your talent and value.

<u>Satya Nadella Says 'Have Faith That the System Will Give You The Right Raises':</u>

I believe his exact 'bad quote' was –

> "It's not really about asking for the raise - but knowing and having faith that the system will actually give you the right raises as you go along."

> "That's good karma. It will come back. That's the kind of person that I want to trust, that I want to give more responsibility to."

. . .

<u>Satya Nadella Ignored Challenges For Women Being Employed Much Less In Tech:</u>

Well – you can see… Satya seemed to ignore –

- women faced glass ceilings.

- women were paid less than men – on average – for similar work.

- Male-dominated hiring managers – often hired 'men' in preference to 'women'

    o Unofficial reasons for reluctance to hire women –

        - maternity leave.

        - childcare.

        - home maker.

        - Potential feminist - could 'rock-the-boat'

        - 'emotional'

        - 'not as technical'

    o Now – Let me stay… EVERY ONE OF THOSE COULD BE A MAN TOO!

        - The only change is 'maternity leave' to 'paternity leave'

- Another *choice* male-dominated hiring makes… is to hire women into 'trial' or 'starter' roles… which forever starts them on a rung or two below…their equivalent talented male colleague.

    o As you can see – there are really insidious ways – that people suppress women's opportunity or rate of progression and promotion advancement.

<u>Satya Nadella Seemed to Discount That Gender May Play a Role in Opportunity:</u>

Anyway – Satya gave no airtime to the notion that gender played a role in recognition and opportunity.

<u>Women Must Overcome Gender Dominance in Meetings and Companies:</u>

Although some women – may feel empowered – being one of a few women in an ocean of men… in big tech companies. …because they have been so male – dominated for decades…. Seemingly – forever.

Imagine – being the only woman in a meeting of a dozen or more people. Or – being the only woman in a group meeting of fifty or more people?

There are all sorts of – subtle – but emotional things – bearing down on us – all the time…

And – being a minority –

- can feel threatening.

- can be harder to speak up.

- can be hard to take a stand, and challenge someone else.

In fact – that emotional fear – can further make someone – less inclined – to ask for a raise, or even a different assignment.

. . .

I sincerely doubt – that most people – think about the extra challenges facing women in tech… just do the job. …never mind fair compensation – and opportunities.

<u>Related To Being in Ocean of 'Opposite Gender' People – At Grace Hoppers:</u>

Perhaps – the only time – in my life - that I felt like the extreme minority – was at the Grace Hopper's Women in Technology Conference.

There may have been a few dozen men…amidst *THOUSANDS* of women…at Grace Hoppers Conference. There could have been *TENS OF THOUSANDS* of women at the conference.

I recall –

- riding an escalator…and seeing below ONLY-WOMEN.

- and - riding down and up the escalator – ONLY-WOMEN.

- in conference sessions – ONLY-WOMEN.

- in concession lines for snacks & lunch – ONLY-WOMEN.

Alright – there were – like I said – a few dozen men throughout the conference.

So – there were SOMETIMES … not 'ONLY-WOMEN'.

In that case - then… it was 'VIRTUALLY ONLY-WOMEN!'

. . .

I was surprised… to feel… a little weird… being in an ocean of 'NO MEN'…

It was not bad… It was not good… It just was…

Never have I, ever - felt…so much in an ocean that felt 'off'.

I suppose – I could relate to how it might be … to be a woman in technology… working in 'oceans of men' – much like I was presenting and interviewing at Grace Hoppers' 'oceans of women'

In the end - there should be – both – women and men… in work and home. Period.

Many Women Joined Microsoft As Interns and Some Full-Time Employees:

I have shared some stories during my visit at the Grace Hopper's Women in Tech Conference…

So – let me share the results from the conference.

The few of us that attended the conference – managed to hire over a dozen women.

- A few hires went straight to full-time employment.

- But - Most of our hires were interns… with a plan to convert to full-time employment when they graduated… because they were still in school.

Hired Impassioned Female Engineer As Intern – Inspired At Conference By Me:

One engineer we hired, Hailey – joined our team as an intern – and later – upon graduation – she joined our team as a full-time employee.

She was a phenomenal engineer – and someone that proved me right - once again – that women can be - absolutely - awesome in technology and video game development!

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E290 MINECRAFT HOLOBUILDER ON HOLOLENS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E290 Minecraft HoloBuilder on HoloLens at E3.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uxfw-e290-minecraft-holobuilder-on-hololens-at-e3.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/idVGgtjyldE

Description:
Richard recounts how he could not stay away from games – even when working on Enterprise HoloLens.

Although delivering enterprise concepts and demonstration proof of concepts for numerous corporate, enterprise, and military applications, Richard's connection and bond to games was too great to ignore.

He developed Minecraft Holobuilder for HoloLens, showing augmented reality in an interactive fun way.

Richard shares moments interacting with Minecraft creator and his company, Mojang.

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Minecraft on HoloLens ; Early Enterprise Adopters

Could Not Stay Away From Games – Even if Ordered Not To:

Let me tell some stories of my working on HoloLens…

Well… we saw an opportunity with Microsoft acquiring Minecraft. It was a way to be 'in games' while working on enterprise HoloLens.

Made Minecraft HoloBuilder on HoloLens:

Well… I saw an opportunity when Microsoft was acquiring Minecraft.

We made a Minecraft demo on HoloLens…called Minecraft Holobuilder.

While there are confidential things behind the scenes here… I am going to detail what I can.

Mojang Founder and Minecraft Creator Praised our HoloLens Minecraft:

I was thrilled to have Mojang, the founder of Mojang and original creator of Minecraft, say our Minecraft on HoloLens demo was exceptional!

- It's especially notable that he loved our Minecraft Holobuilder so much… because another group was trying to make their own Minecraft demo to usurp our demo.

- It was a dog-eat-dog competitive bake-off, and we won IN A BIG WAY!

    o I never understood why people would compete against their own company… and certainly how naïve they are to compete against me!?

Bottom-line:
Mojang approved our Minecraft Holobuilder to be shown to the public – which was a huge deal.

We were able to offer demo sessions and even showcase it at shows like Entertainment, Electronics, Exposition Show (E3).

Minecraft HoloBuilder Showcased Additive and Subtractive Augmented Reality:

One thing Minecraft highlighted well… was the ability to 'cut holes' in reality using saturating digital blending.

Imagine –

- Placing four sticks of Minecraft dynamite on your real wall

- Exploding them

- And – you see 'behind the exploded wall', lava and caverns as far as you can see

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- HoloLens added 'black and gray' to the scene to create the 'hole in the wall'

- HoloLens added bright lava beams and pools within the dark 'hole in the wall'

- Moving your head around, shifted the perspective…so you could see – in parallax - into the wall at different angles, and see different things and more lava and pools flowing everywhere… as far as you could see.

- Now – imagine, at your feet are running around little Minecraft sheep.

- You step on the sheep, and it screeches!

- The world around you was… ALIVE!

In these ways – HoloLens added and subtracted things from reality.

- It removed the wall and replaced it with a hole that exposed lava columns and pools behind the walls.

- It added 'living' sheep and objects on and running about the floors and tables

The demo did A LOT more… but I think showcasing interactive additive and subtractive reality for Augmented Reality was … really cool, innovative - and awesome!

Enterprise Early Adopter Program Was Responsibility – Games Were Opportunistic:

Although we worked on game things and demos wherever we could… we were officially responsible for the 'Enterprise Early Adopter Program' for HoloLens.

Any game development or game-like experiences were opportunistic… and - of my creation.

Cool Prototypes and Demos – That Will Be Lost to Time:

Our team developed software and hardware prototypes… which will be lost to time. And – I cannot speak to any of them - unless the demos or tech were made public.

Examples of what I can talk about –

- Our team developed HoloLens tech showing total city infrastructure control by one person wearing the HoloLens (for an Arabic Country)

- We developed a demo that motivated the Australian Military to adopt HoloLens

- And some really amazing things… that, well, you will just have to take my word for it… amazing, awesome stuff… they were – transformative – of the world.

I'd say if you find yourself wondering what's out there… the Internet will expose so much more than I can recall…or believe I am allowed to share.

<u>Wrong to Gag the Truth – Respect Confidentiality – Where It Applies:</u>

I sincerely believe that is wrong to gag the truth.

Literally – when someone leaves a company, they are left wondering what is public knowledge… and what is not public knowledge.

You are left to wonder –

- can I talk about this?

- is there a statute of limitations – where after so-many years I can talk about things?

- Is this even a company secret?

- How much – of what the company claims it has rights over – is true?

- Do I have personal rights to secrets – especially those - that I conceived outside company time, and without company resources?

In the end – we can all just do our best – to do the right thing… and respect confidentiality – where it applies.

And that's it… nothing else to say or do… on that. Most notably – Halo on HoloLens.

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E291 HALO ON HOLOLENS AT E3

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E291 Halo on HoloLens at E3.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uxjx-e291-halo-on-hololens-at-e3.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/b-NPArvJ0js

Description:

Richard's inability to stay away from games, even when working on enterprise HoloLens, led to the most awards and impressions than any other product, franchise, or technology in its history.

He developed Halo on HoloLens for E3, earning the most awards of any experience received both at E3 and for Microsoft.

Learn how the exhibit required advanced massive hidden Faraday Cages encasing the entire demonstration faux spaceships that people entered and interacted with.

Richard recounts his suffering a hernia while his team was forced to move itself within Microsoft…

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Halo on HoloLens at Electronics Entertainment Exposition (E3)

Halo on HoloLens – Approved for E3 Demo by Halo Head Bonnie Ross:

Halo was going big with Halo 5's upcoming release. Microsoft and Xbox were looking for ways to get Halo noticed – bigger than ever before.

We managed to convince the head of Halo, Bonnie Ross, to let us create a Electronics Entertainment Exposition (E3) demo using Halo.

She agreed. We went big!

$5 Million Dollar Two-Wing Halo UNSC Battlecruiser on E3 Floor:

Well… we saw an opportunity with Halo as a stratospheric brand – that would make HoloLens and our team – shine.

We went to town – as they say – building a United Nations Space Command (UNSC) Battle Cruiser right on the E3 floor.

We had two operational wings – for conference goers to board the Battlecruiser.

As people entered the battleship doors – they were greeted by lab coat wearing scientists – who promptly asked the attendee to sit and be fitted with a HoloLens.

- Attendees were treated as Spartan Warriors, preparing for combat.

- The real world was a multi-million dollar built 'space craft'… on the E3 floor.

- The augmented world had Cortana, a woman, talking to and guiding the attendee… through the actual physical space.

- Cortana escorted each attendee to a command room - through a corridor – to where a real world table was. But augmented reality objects and data and animations were all atop and above and around the physical, real-world table. Fictional and Real things … were blended into one human perception…with both eyes & ears tricked by HoloLens.

- The attendee is joined by other attendees… and six of them, together, are briefed in augmented reality about Halo 5 and the mission they will play soon… so it was all real – to all of them – at the same time. They could see and talk about what they saw…it was a 100% common shared experience – what they saw, heard, and when they did… was common - the same – for everyone.

- And – when the command table demo overlaid visuals faded away… Cortana escorts the attendees to a room filled with Xboxes ready to play – the soon-to-be-released - Halo 5.

Most Awards Any Microsoft Product Ever Received:

Halo on HoloLens at E3 received the most recognition and awards of any Microsoft product ever garnered.

Halo on HoloLens was a HIT!

Even Steven Spielberg Was Impressed:

So many famous people – celebrities and politicians alike – came to experience Halo on HoloLens.

I remember one highlight… Steven Spielberg came in and looked at the physical 'set' we built for the show floor, and he declared it was better and more believable than many of his movie sets.

He declared it was impressive.

What No One Saw – Radio Storms Were Everywhere – Interferes With Transceivers:

Few people realized what a true challenge it was to have HoloLens operate on the E3 floor at all – never mind the Halo experience we made.

With thousands, tens of thousands, of people in close proximity…all carrying and possibly actively using cell phones… the radio frequencies were 'busy'…if not jammed by the nature of just too much radio 'noise' causing storms of transmission failures and retries on top of initial transmission attempts.

In other words – Big Show Conference Floors, like E3, have A LOT of radio noise that can make cell phones and most radio signals spotty or outright fail.

The technical perspective is this –

- A device – like a cell phone - transmits data.

- The data may be lost amidst 1,000's of other devices transmitting at the same time.

- The device times-out and transmits its data again… this time it goes through.

    o But other people's data did not go through, and so they retry sending.

    o The endless cycle of devices failing to transmit, retrying to transmit, etc. results in even more radio noise than if every phone could just transmit without interference.

- And Show Exhibitors have a lot of wireless devices running too… just adding to radio noise.

HoloLens Uses Standard Wireless WiFi:

HoloLens uses standard wireless WiFi.

We used WiFi networking to interconnect HoloLens users to synchronize their experiences and track for any anomalies in their experience – so we could address it 'live'.

We likewise made a Tablet App that was skinned to look like a Halo device of the future… the tablet was used to configure, and even debug on-the-go HoloLens devices.

The Tablet App also used WiFi to network with HoloLens devices.

HoloLens Vulnerable to WiFi Storms:

HoloLens used WiFi for networking to connect dozens of tablets with hundreds of HoloLens devices.

Yea, By the way – we had most of the world's HoloLens devices there at E3.

Simulating low to medium radio congestion for an E3 show floor… indicated we often lost connection - and the experience would become unpredictable.

No one wants to spend $5 Million for an unpredictable experience…

Because there was such dependence on wireless connectivity… we had a problem.

HoloLens was vulnerable to showroom floor radio interference. HoloLens was vulnerable to WiFi Storms.

Crazy Idea – Faraday Cage 'Wallpaper':

A Faraday Cage is no more than a 'cage' built of a wire mesh – usually copper. The copper mesh causes radio signals to bounce around it and get absorbed or reflected or diffused. The result of a Faraday Cage is radio isolation INSIDE and OUTSIDE the cage.

In other words –

- anything inside the Faraday Cage can talk to each other.

- anything outside the Faraday Cage can talk to each other.

- Nothing inside can talk to anything outside the Faraday Cage.

- Nothing outside can talk to anything inside the Faraday Cage.

Well –

We found a company in Germany that manufactured Faraday Wallpaper.

That's right – they made wallpaper that had Faraday Copper Meshes woven throughout the fabric.

We literally installed wallpaper between our E3 Showroom Floor exhibit walls, floors, and ceilings.

Halo on HoloLens at E3 operated in the biggest Faraday Cage ever!

Halo on HoloLens at E3 operated in the biggest Faraday Cage ever!

Office Spaces and Planning:

At one point – we were asked if we consider moving to an underground top secret HoloLens Lab area. It felt a bit like being exiled to the dungeon… but it was autonomy and was 'much more cool than corporate Microsoft traditional facilities'

We appointed Space Captains and their supporting Space Cadets…to drive the new seating plan and our move.

Oddly – Microsoft did not offer movers for this move… as they usually did. It was 'on us'.

Well – we did, as directed. We moved ourselves.

Hernia X3 For Me:

Well – that move resulted in my suffering THREE HERNIAS… well, I had to have surgery to have a tri-mesh repair for the hernia.

I should have pushed against Microsoft making an older man move himself and the team. But I have always done what it took to succeed, and they asked me to hurt myself…to succeed.

>   And so – I hurt myself, following their directions.

Microsoft Did Not Care About My Suffering – As I Attended Meeting Post Surgery:

As an aside –

I later went to a big conference meeting at Microsoft – because it was supposedly very important. It was right after my surgery… and I was in so much pain… I had to sit in the back of the meeting – and cry. I could not control my tears… there was too much pain.

And – no one – NO ONE – from Microsoft even asked me about my crying or situation. No one – seemed – to care.

HoloLens Was A Strange Experience:

I could go on about my experience in HoloLens at Microsoft…

- how they used my time away for surgery and recovery – because they made me move myself and our team despite my age and health

- how they showed no compassion – or care – for my suffering and tears

- and – worse of all – how they used my away time to declare I should receive ZERO BONUS or RAISE for the entire year…despite my accomplishments. Even Human Resources called it wrong, unjust, and a travesty…

- Microsoft pushed me out – using my injury they caused – as an excuse to allege lower productivity…

- I sought attorney consultation – but they said – no law firm will go up against Microsoft for an individual employee… they have legions of lawyers – and enough money to never lose… they will drag things out until litigants give up.

HoloLens Was A Strange Experience:

I had some insights while working on HoloLens -

- HoloLens tech had high potential – but it was squandered.

- HoloLens had no business direction or strategy – but made cool–looking things… and the rest would follow. They hoped to inspire more investment and others to make software on HoloLens.

    o They often used the phrase, "Fake it Until You Make It".

    o Well – I refuse to fake anything…period.

    o What a pathetic excuse – for not owning responsibility of doing something that is real, and genuinely useful and valuable…

    o Why not MAKE IT!? And NOT FAKE IT!? Faking it – is deception. It is a form of lying.

- HoloLens was the most unprofessional organization I have ever worked in… under a vice president named Kudo Tsunoda.

- HoloLens prototype tech was not easy to make work – but we made it look polished and great.

- HoloLens was led by a conceited, idiot of a man – Kudo.

- I gave HoloLens major awareness boosts by making Minecraft and Halo on HoloLens

- I innovated new enterprise and military experiences on HoloLens

HoloLens Likely End as A Blip in Pioneering Augmented Reality:

But – in the end – HoloLens was a blip in time – that paved the way – no doubt – for some other company succeeding in Augmented Reality…

… because I predict Microsoft will abandon HoloLens – like they have done with so many other hardware endeavors.

And that was HoloLens…

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E292 PARENTS ABUSED IN SUNSET YEARS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E292 Parents Abused in Sunset Years in San Martin California.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uxlp-e292-parents-abused-in-sunset-years-in-san-martin-california.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/7gSqEKKOUM0

Description:
Richard tells the tale of his mother's health decline, Open Heart surgery, and Coma.

He shares how he and his wife lived in the hospital parking lot, in an RV, to be with Richard's mother every single morning, day, and night.

When his mother was finally home, compromised, her children turned on each other and Richard's parents – to ensure they received the majority if not all of any inheritance that may result from Richard's mother's seemingly near-to-mid-term death.

Richard's mother was a victim of elder abuse and legal undue influence.

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

Evil Lives in San Martin

Sharing Tales of Family and Woe – The Evil Within San Martin:

We have had quite a few episodes about development and tech and scheduling and management and products… and training. We have covered - a lot - of 'professional' life topics and insights…

Let's focus – for a while – on 'personal' life topics… Some a great, good times… And, some – are consistent with a *Hell Difficulty* life.

. . .

By now – you have learned much of my journey from childhood to veteran video game industry luminary…

So, now – let me share some of tales of my family and some more 'texture' of San Martin…

Let me tell my San Martin tales of woe…

There has always been something 'not right' in San Martin…

Hellscape San Martin - Black Widows, Psychopaths, Violence, Theft, Pollution, …:

I have told the tale of San Martin and many of its woes, so bear with me as I recap some of those and note a few more that come to mind –

- On Day One of moving into San Martin –

  o The prior owner of the house was apparently a county deputy… which we learned after buying the house… he had some 'job issues' that resulted in his leaving the sheriff's department and selling his house… apparently, under a dark cloud.

    • we never knew what those 'issues' might have been.

    • The neighbors called him 'Mr. Useless', evidently because his name was 'Mr. Usetess' or something like that… and because of his 'public failings'... they branded him 'Mr. Useless'.

  o Well – a few examples of Mr. Useless' carelessness were things he left behind

    • I found a drawer with pistol and rifle bullets, even hollow tipped and blue tipped incendiary rounds.

    • And - I found a pistol holster. …but no gun.

    • I discovered an old scythe (like the one Death wields, as he takes the souls of the recently deceased) … and a hand-scythe called a sickle.

- And – there was a hole in the ground, that went very deep into the earth. It was an uncapped, uncovered well. Yea – real safe. A super deep hole in the ground… with no signage, no fences, no warnings… nothing.

    - Yes – we covered it up.

- Septic tanks covered in dirt, sealed in long-rotted wood… allowing a person or a horse (as happened to us) to break the boards and fall into the septic tank.

    o Coming in contact with septic tank 'material' can be a potentially life-threatening experience from falling into it… and critically from potentially contracting sepsis (which can kill you).

- There was the terror of its tunnels filled with black widows.

- There were tens of thousands of bees – in a hive – inside the house wall.

- We lived in fear of my eldest sister's drug-damaged, addled brain driving her to psychotic violent episodes, delusions, and even hallucinations. After all – she did stab her boyfriend - and go to prison for it – albeit, for a brief window – short stay.

- Neighborhood kids shot firearms willy-nilly; one incident struck a woman in her face, rendering life-altering damage the rest of her life.
- Teenagers drove motorcycles and dune buggies (like Honda Odysseys) around the rural streets and spaced-out neighborhoods – usually to visit or pickup friends.

    o Some rowdy teenagers would take to the busier neighborhoods or even schools… and drive wildly – revving their engines loudly, racing against each other, and driving in 'donuts' / circles in school and church parking lots.

    o And – there were the late night 'cruisers'. They tended to meander the streets at night – collecting their 'crew' – and then head to nearby city Gilroy or San Jose to 'cruise the streets' looking for something to do…or flirt with other 'cruisers' of the opposite gender.

    o Either of these activities would be fine – were they not putting other people and property in danger, and otherwise congesting roadways and burning fuel (for nothing…but the chance to flirt with crime and girls)

- Undocumented Immigrants and 'The Cowboys' were constantly fighting – everyone carried knives, or even guns.

    o I – named the Little Professor - even carried a knife (even, to school!)

    o I often wore that 'Mr. Useless' pistol holster with a CO_2 pellet pistol whenever I traveled deep into the wilds, mountains, and valleys.

        - It's worth noting that I did not carry a real firearm (especially in California)… yes – I had a real pistol.

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- Real guns stayed home.

- Pellet pistols (even if they looked real) could travel with me, especially holstered.

  o Things became so bad –

  - the Junior High and High School eventually installed metal detectors.

  - they placed inspectors like at airport security for arriving students.

  - and - they installed prison-like cyclone fences enclosing the campus.

  - few people think of a rural area as so… dangerous. But San Martin was just that – dangerous.

- One High School student's head was cracked in a school fight (of which there were many).

- Vandalism and theft were everywhere.

- The water was tainted by flare-manufacturing chemicals – but everyone drank it and bathed in it

  o The tainted water was a known serious health harm… but… such is life. Live with it!

  o people had no alternative; bottled water for everything was impractical, and too expensive!

- Everything was old – the furnace, the stove, refrigerator, …everything. And they all broke…and got fixed…and broke again…and so on. The consequence – my mother saved old refrigerators and appliances – in the backyard – because – they were spare parts – for when the next appliance breaks.

- brutal 'raw' life & death environment – for animals, and sometimes for people

- Family fights and conflicts – so bad – that I was given a firearm, my windows curtained to hide visibility, and my room door deadbolted.

  o you never knew when my psychotic sister or one of her druggy friends might decide to enter the house or my room… or even assault me or someone in the home.

  o Let me repeat that. That's right… I had a nightstand by my bed, and inside that nightstand…was a pistol. …just in case.

- And – we had no money. We were poor. It is very likely the reason… that we lived in San Martin – it was poor, like we were.

  o In fact – we were poorer than most people in San Martin. But my parents took a loan out for the Apple][computer…which made us appear well off to others… even if untrue.

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- But – wow – did I take advantage of their buying the Apple computer… it was key to my entire life and career.

  - Never underestimate what decisions and things can impact your entire life

There are certainly an unending list of the challenges of the Hellscape San Martin… but let this overview be sufficient… so we can carry on to more recent events related to San Martin and my Family there.

We Do Not Choose Our Origin Story – But We Do Live and Rise Through It:

As children –

- We do not choose our families.

  - We do not choose our parents, siblings, or relatives.

- We do not choose where we live.

- We do not choose what school we attend.

- We do not choose how wealthy or poor we are.

- We do not choose our innate talents, vulnerabilities, strengths, and weaknesses.

  - We do not choose our DNA.

- We do not choose our Origin Story.

Children have very little choices in their lives… in the beginning.

Again – we do not choose our Origin Story… but we do live and rise through it!

All of the challenges – that we face in life – are part of who we are, and thus - are our 'Origin Story'.

Mother's Open-Heart Surgery:

Let's jump forward a lot… to a time when my mother was in her 80's, and she was suffering from a failing heart.

She had delayed dealing with her flagging heart so long… that the doctors concluded she would soon die unless she had open-heart surgery.

It was tragic and scary. Perhaps – the grave surgery could have been avoided – said the doctors – had she listened to them – and taken action sooner.

Off to Help My Mother in Our 'Dragon Wagon' RV – Us and Our Four Cats:

Katherine and I loaded our Recreational Vehicle (RV) with our four cats…with kitty condos built atop the driver's cab.

We dubbed our RV – 'The Dragon Wagon'. Because it was cool…and because it was going to 'drag' the kitties around…with us.

Dulcinea, Desdemona, Daenerys, and Dagny were all had their dedicated kitty condo…and free range of the RV.

I tended to stay in the back of the RV, and often Daenerys or Dagny (or both) would come and ride along with me on our long drive.

We were off… we drove from Mesquite, Nevada to San Martin, California.

Arriving At San Martin – RV Locked Inside Cyclone Fenced Area:

It felt a bit extreme on our arrival in San Martin. We were directed to park inside a cyclone fenced off area… which was then locked with a padlock (of which we did not have a key initially!).

Apparently – vandalism and theft was so prevalent, that even when were inside the RV we had to worry someone might invade or steal something.

Wow – it appeared San Martin had become even worse off than it was in my era growing up there.

Cynthia Attempt to Turn Me Against Joleen So She Gets More Inheritance:

After an afternoon of greetings and welcome discussion with my parents… my eldest sister, Cynthia (the sibling that suffered brain damage from a drug overdose), came to me.

Cynthia asked that I go with her to talk privately.

I was reluctant… Cynthia was unstable and crazy, from all I had seen over the last decades… ever since her drug overdose.

. . .

Well – I went with her.

And it was horrifying… She expressed concern that my mother might die, and if she did… my step-sister did not deserve money from my mother's death.

In other words – My eldest sister was concerned that she should get more money – and my step sister get no money - because my sister was the biological daughter of my mother…and my step-sister by not being 'blood' had no claim on her money.

It was outlandish!

- My mother was not dead, and we should not be planning on her money being used for anything but her well-being.

- Joleen, my step sister, was just as much a part of the family as anyone else… so whatever inheritance there might be… she should be equally participating.

- And ultimately - Even if my mother did not survive surgery… she has a husband, whom would legally inherit her wealth and property

I could only inform Cynthia that we had to focus on my mother living and being cared for after her Open Heart Surgery.

And… if she did pass… then let things go to her husband, and eventually fall equally to all children (biological or through marriage).

Cynthia was not happy with my response…

Katherine scared by Cynthia's "Demon Eyes" [insane variant of Silver's 'Wolf Eyes']:

I don't recall the circumstance, but there was a 'conflict' with Cynthia with the household during our visit.

Katherine, my wife, decided she would try and be a peacekeeper and offer Cynthia support and see if there was anything she could do mediate the situation.

However – Cynthia greeted Katherine with "Demon Eyes". She was wild and crazy!

She was spiraling, decompensating, out of control!

Katherine – literally fearing for her well-being, if not life – disengaged and fled back to the RV for safety.

We did have a registered legal firearm in the RV… should anything bad happen.

I knew – in San Martin – that it could become possible – to need a firearm.

Vowed to Never Return to San Martin Because of Cynthia's 'Demon Eyes':

I think Cynthia's "Demon Eyes" moment made Katherine realize - Cynthia was… truly insane.

She saw how Cynthia could flip out in a heartbeat - from seemingly normal to a raging mad hatter!

Katherine was justifiably afraid, if not terrorized by Cynthia.

She asked that we leave San Martin that night – immediately. She feared Cynthia might act on her crazy 'Demon Eyes'.

And – we vowed to never return to San Martin… because of Cynthia and her 'Demon Eyes'.

· · ·

In the end –

Evil Lives in San Martin.

E293 MOTHER'S OPEN HEART SURGERY AND COMA

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E293 Mother's Open Heart Surgery and Coma.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uxp8-e293-mothers-open-heart-surgery-and-coma.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/oOidMkwYjS4

Description: .

Richard shares details of his mother's Open Heart surgery

He laments how bad the medical care industry had become.

He shares how seniors and disabled people – are left in terrible unsanitary 3rd World care facilities – in California!

Richard concludes that medical care in America is not necessarily good…

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

Mother's Open Heart Surgery Challenges

Mother's Open-Heart Surgery – "I Don't Want To Die":

In this episode – I will share my mother's journey from Open Heart Surgery – to returning to San Martin…

My mother was in Kaiser Permanente Hospital in South San Jose, California… awaiting her Open Heart Surgery.

We were all there…at her bedside. We all offered moral support, and we prayed for her.

As she was wheeled off to surgery - she said desperately, "I don't want to die…"

. . .

I wondered if those would be the last words that I would ever hear from my mother…

"I Don't Want To Die…"

I could only reply, "I love you too…"

Mother's Does Not Wake Up - Comatose:

The surgery was over…

- But my mother did not wake up.

- She was in a coma.

- The doctors explained it was not normal to be in a coma following her surgery. They suggested she might wake any moment…

- But after a few days passed… the doctors explained she was now less likely to recover and wake up…but they would give her time.

- She had over thirty separate drugs fed into her with IV's.

- She had oxygen intubation – so a machine made her breathe.

- She had excrement removal 'tubes' and devices.

- Her arms were strapped to the sides of the hospital bed – to stop involuntary convulsions interfering with her oxygen or IV tubes.

It was so sad and heartbreaking… to see and know my mother – was in the state, in the situation.

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Morning to Noon to Late Night – I Was There:

I took advantage of our having our RV parked in a remote Kaiser hospital parking lot… I was at my mother's bedside for all visitor hours except when my siblings visited (to avoid conflict).

Had to Make Visitation Schedule To Avoid Sibling Conflict:

In fact – we had to make a visitation schedule – to avoid even seeing siblings, as there was too much animosity and hate.

There was no place for that hatred…when my mother was on death's door… or so I felt.

Hospital Drama – David Banned, Cynthia Kicked Out:

With emotions and fears flying high… and the animosity between Cynthia & her children against Joleen and me… it was apparent – each 'group' would operate independent of the other.

While we were able to stay clear of my siblings…

>   …they were unable to stay out of trouble anyway.

Cynthia and her son were visiting my mother, and there was some kind of incident.

- I recall Cynthia allegedly refused or repeatedly forgot to use the sanitizing lotion and gowns provided.

- When challenged by medical staff to comply… she exploded emotionally so much, that she was banned from visiting my mother in the hospital.

    - Her son, David, was likewise banned from visiting my mother.

- Neither Cynthia nor David were pleased with their being banned… and they blamed me. They insisted that I was responsible for their situation.

- David impersonated me to see my mother during one visit – as reported to me by a nurse, that recognized me…and knew David *WAS NOT ME*!

You get the idea… Cynthia and her son, David, were emotionally unstable and did not care about protocol or rules or safety.

>   They only seemed to care about themselves… and what they wanted.

Read Her Father's Inspiration Notes F/ When His Wife Was Dying & Died F/ Cancer:

Back to my vigilant visitation with my comatose mother…

I read several pages from my mother's father (my grandfather) that he wrote when his wife was dying of cancer, and what he wrote after she died of it.

My grandfather wrote mostly of Christian and Catholic Hope and Faith. They were hallmarks for how he offered love to his dying wife, and how he coped with her passing.

Recounted Her Life's Journey and Career:

I recounted my mother's life journey and how she paved the way for women to be engineers and not be limited by shallow appearances or social expectations.

I regaled her triumph in life – overcoming so much adversity.

Did It Make A Difference:

A nurse came to me one day - and told me that he had never seen such a committed loving son before. He said that my devotion was so clear, that my love was so obvious…

He wished my mother the best, and told me to hold out. He offered hope – sometimes people just need more time… to wake up.

Delirium Even If She Wakes Up:

A neurologist informed me that my mother may have suffered hypoxia – a series of small strokes across her brain… often caused by oxygen deprivation.

She furthered that my mother had blood across her brain – which is normal as people age, apparently…

But my mother had more blood on her brain than was typical… even for her age.

The neurologist concluded that it was very likely that should my mother wake up from her coma – she would suffer Delirium for months to even years.

She explained Delirium can become permanent dementia…or can recover.

In any scenario – she said my mother should make no major decisions or actions for a few years…should she wake up.

So – my mother was either lost to a coma or was going to wake up without her mind intact.

It was horrific… I had no idea how to help… or what to do…

My Mother Woke Up From Her Coma - 'Sort Of':

My mother woke up from her coma! …sort of.

She was not 'there' really. But she was able to function without the intubation ventilator… and she was progressively on fewer IV drugs.

Eventually – she could stand. Her legs and body had atrophied from so long in the hospital.

My mother was to be transferred to a Recovery Home… when she was able to slightly walk about.

Morgan Hill Recovery Home like Third-World Nation:

The closest Recovery Home with decent reviews was in Morgan Hill, California. Morgan Hill was adjacent to San Martin.

The idea was – that my siblings from San Martin could visit and check in on my mother…for as long as she might need to be in Recovery.

. . .

Unfortunately – the Recovery Home felt like a 3rd World Nation.

- Beds were futons on the floor.

  o I suppose people could not fall far…

- Everything was dirty – dust, grime, …just unclean.

- They were way understaffed.

- They had few 'doctors' – as most everyone was on 'bed pan', linen, and 'watch' duties

Medical In America Is Not Necessarily Good:

I had a few big takeaways from my mother's journey – from open heart surgery to coma to home…

- Be proactive about your health – especially serious health conditions – before it's too late… and things escalate to a life-threatening state.

  o My mother delayed a low-risk heart valve operation – called TAVR I think – to the point it was no longer viable.

  o Her heart valves weakened so much…she may not survive the surgery.

  o And so – my mother ended up needing open heart surgery – which led to her coma – and so much more life-damning maladies.

- Medical Healthcare in America is not necessarily good.

  o In fact – American Healthcare can be downright bad - like a 3rd World Nation

  o Medicare pays for the bare minimum in Recovery Care or Hospice

  o American Healthcare focuses on function – and dismisses psychology and mental acuity

  - My mother could barely standup and could not communicate meaningfully… but they punted her at first opportunity to a 3rd World Quality Recovery Home

  - And – no one ever cared about my mother's mental faculties or competence. From days to years after her discharge – returning to her home.

Mother's Open Heart Surgery – Pretty Much Ended Her Life:

Nope – my mother's open heart surgery… pretty much – ended my mother's life.

- She now sits every day in a wooden chair – in her kitchen – reading the newspaper from front-to-back over-and-over. She cannot recall what she read, so it's always a new article…no matter how many times she reads the paper.

- She does not go outside – but maybe once a month goes with her daughter to a nearby grocery store.

- She has no social life.

- She cannot recall her past.

    o She does not even know – that she bought and owns the house she lives in – as she expresses appreciation for 'someone' - letting her stay there free of charge.

    o She cannot maintain two topics in her head at a time… any new topic, supplants and replaces the prior topic.

    o She no longer values the knotty-pine wooden walls of her house… something she loved so much - that she joked she should be buried in a coffin made of them.

        - Of course – she has stated she really wants her body donated to science.

    o She uses a calendar to know when she should call someone – like for a birthday.

- She … waits for the day … that she will die.

- It is all … very sad.

I wish that my mother had been proactive – and had the TAVR Heart Valve surgery… when it was an option.

Her delaying – out of fear – ruined her life.

E294 UNDUE INFLUENCE AND ABUSE OF SENIORS
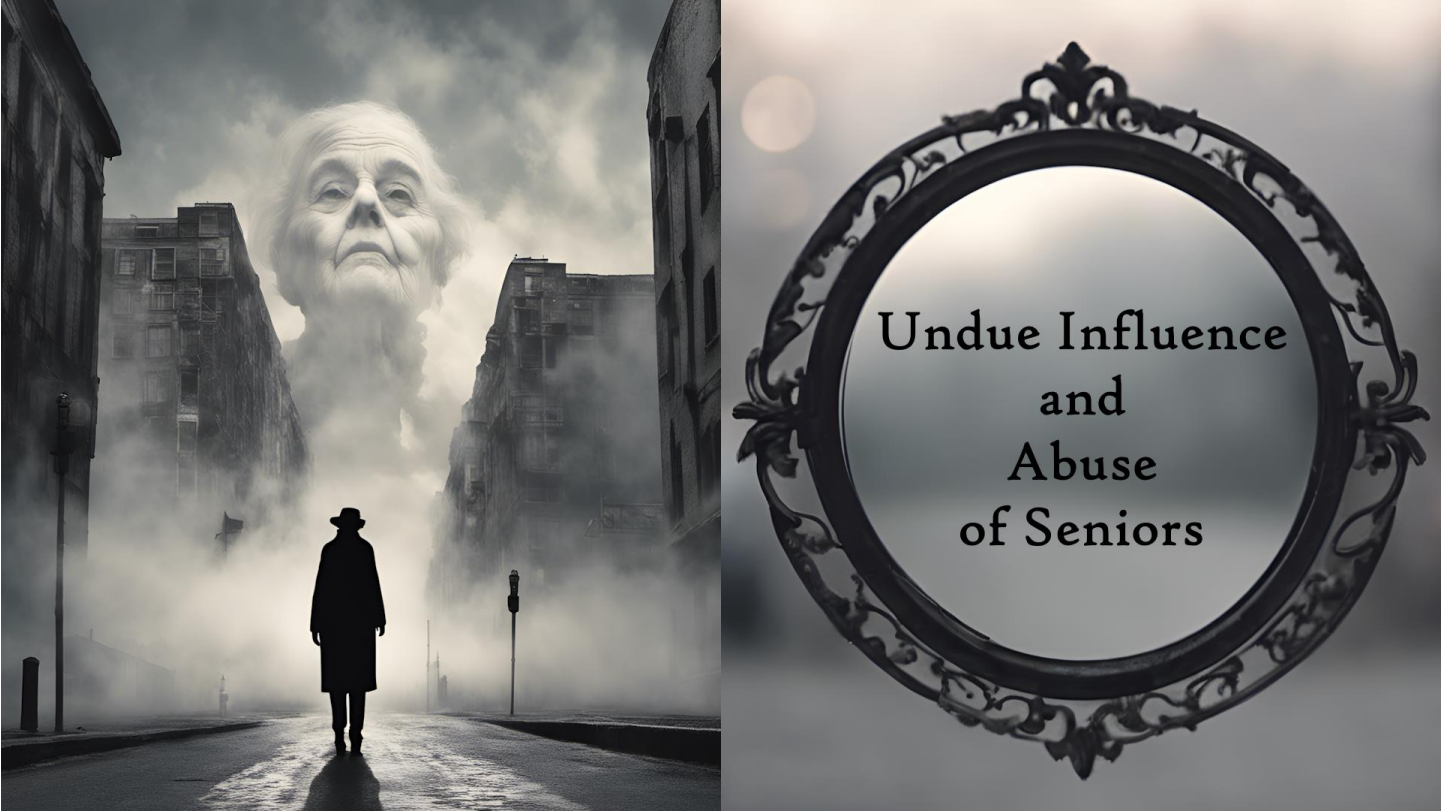
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uxys-e294-undue-influence-and-abuse-on-seniors-and-on-my-parents.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
CENSORED ON YOUTUBE: https://youtu.be/Nlhs-FaCLKc

Description:
Richard expands on Legal Undue Influence and Senior Abuse.

He provides details about his own experience with his siblings exerting Undue Influence on his mother, so they could greedily be the primary if not sole beneficiaries of her estate after she dies.

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Undue Influence AND Abuse of Vulnerable Seniors

Mother Returns to San Martin – Refuses Delirium Diagnosis – Says I Am Not Crazy:

My mother had recovered enough from her open heart surgery and coma – that returned to her home in San Martin.

She refused outright the idea that she might not be thinking clearly. She rejected the neurologist diagnosis of Delirium with potential of permanent Dementia. My mother declared that she was not demented – she was not crazy! She did not understand - and was not willing to understand – that being demented is not the same as medical dementia or delirium (which is a catchall – for the brain is not working right).

Well… it was obvious that she was struggling to be coherent consistently, but she had hour runs where she seemed 'normal'.

In the end – my mother survived Open Heart Surgery, even if her mind was not back [we hoped…yet].

Amanda Discovers Big Cash Purchases and Vacations by Unemployed David:

My daughter, Amanda, discovered Cynthia's son – David – was posting on Facebook all sorts of big ticket - EXPENSIVE – purchases and vacations… and expensive drug-oriented 'partying'.

It was both inconsistent with his prior postings (and presumed behavior)… and seemed impossible given he had no job or source of income.

Step-Father Sam With Dementia Declares 'They Are Stealing The Money!':

When I called to query about the matter – my Step Father – Sam, husband to my mother – exclaimed,

> "They're stealing the money!"

Mother and Step-Father Lost to Dementia – No Rational thought or Critical Thinking:

But no one in San Martin listened; they dismissed it as ravings of an old man with dementia. Admittedly – Sam did suffer from serious dementia…

Sam saw his wife as "Mother Prime", and had conceived a wild backstory of how she controlled the universe… and has done so for thousands of years.

The problem was… that with Sam being 'out there' and my mother 'not there'… they no longer had rational thought or critical thinking skills between them.

Digging Into The Situation – David Was Stealing Money:

Digging into the situation revealed that Cynthia's son – David – had been stealing money from my parents ever since she was in a coma in the hospital.

He admitted to taking money from my mother, declaring –

- it's expensive to live in California and he deserved it – after all – he was a relative.

- my mother would have paid for his survival.

- and he deserved it (just because)

. . .

I disagree with David's selfish BS rationalization – for stealing from his own family – from his grandmother… from my mother!

Even if David's arguments were valid…and my mother would have given him money… She would not have given him so much money… that he would party with illicit drugs, gamble wildly in Las Vegas, buy designer clothing and shoes, and more.

My mother never gave anyone money for much of anything, much less that kind of bad behavior.

No – David was stealing from my mother, the moment she was in a coma.

David was greedy and evil!

Undue Influence - Changed Will in Extreme Favor of Cynthia and David:

Months after my mother had returned home from her Open Heart Surgery, she informed me on the phone that she was generously leaving me $14,000 in an investment account in her Will.

That was weird. I was Executor of her and my step-father's Last Will and Testament, and it was long recorded for DECADES!

I discovered that Cynthia and David had convinced Sam and my mother that their Will was no longer valid, that it had old ideas that did not apply anymore.

They insisted that my parents Will should be changed… IN THEIR BENEFIT.

- They would get $1.5 Million in investments & cash

- They would get the house and property

- I would get $14,000

And – Cynthia and David – were now Executors of the Will.

. . .

Due to my success in life – I did not need the money or inheritance.

However – it was WRONG and EVIL for my siblings to manipulate and con my parents into effectively giving their wealth to them… only.

And worse – they were taking money from Sam and my mother – and their ability to enjoy their end days… of life.

Vilifying Me and Declaring Katherine Stupid Sheep:

Worse – Cynthia and David badmouthed and vilified me to my mother and Sam.

Apparently – they had portrayed me as wanting all their money and their house… and the only way to stop my powerful 'Lawyer Dome' forces from succeeding, was to change the will…

David and Cynthia Found Lawyer To Change Will for Dementia Addled Seniors:

Over the months… they managed to beguile and confuse my parents. Just like the grand canyon – they dripped and dripped negativity – to eventually establish a new 'truth' in my parents minds.

And so they went to a lawyer that David and Cynthia found that would draft a new Will for two seniors that suffered and were addled from Dementia.

Letter to the Sherriff – David's Taking Money From Parents and Con Games:

Rather than recounting the insanity of the situation further… I am going to read the 'Letter to the Sherriff' of Santa Clara County (which oversaw San Martin) that we wrote and provided to Law Enforcement.

And - prepare for a tragic tale…

The Letter Reads as Follows…

> ### Who are We and Why We are Here Today
>
> My name is Richard Seaborne. My wife Katherine and I live in Mesquite, NV. We are in town from March 8 to March 15 to see my parents **Sam and Nancy Schulenburg**.
>
> We are contacting the Sheriff's department in advance of our visit to my elderly parents' home as we are concerned for both our safety and my parents' safety and wellbeing.
>
> We think we need Sheriff's Department counsel and support to help ensure everything goes as smoothly as possible as we try to work though some very difficult and emotionally charged family matters. I briefly outline the situation below and have provided detailed information on the pages to follow.
>
> ### Why My Visit to My Parents is Problematic:
>
> - There are five other family members who live on my parents' property. There are numerous incident reports on file with your department regarding this address and these individuals
>
>   1. Cynthia Seaborne (sister)
>   2. David Seaborne (nephew)
>   3. Alex Seaborne (nephew)
>   4. Ray Seaborne (nephew)
>   5. Sabrina St. Clair (David's girlfriend)
>
> - I suspect that while Cynthia does provide some caretaking support to my mother, she and David are exerting undue influence on my mother and are pressuring her to take actions contrary to her own best interests
>
> - My visit will expose financial and legal irregularities that Cynthia and David are trying to hide
>
> - Cynthia and David consider me a threat as they know I will expose any abusive, neglectful or criminal actions

- I have made plans with my parents to see an attorney on March 12th in San Jose, Cynthia and David are actively trying to prevent this from happening

- Cynthia and David aggressively monitor my parents' emails and phone calls (with me and others) and they are aware of my intentions and will try to block my access to my parents and their home
- Cynthia and David monitor visits from Sam's daughter Joleen McIntyre, to the point of verbally intimidating her and videotaping her

- Cynthia has threatened to "get me" and has threatened to "burn down the property"

- Both Cynthia and David have felony domestic violence convictions

Why We Need Sheriff's Department Support:

- I expect Cynthia and David will try to intimidate me as they do my step-sister Joleen

- I expect Cynthia and David will try to block my entry to my parents' home (a separate dwelling from theirs) – even when my parents want to see me

- I expect Cynthia and David to try to intimidate or pressure my parents to say they do not want to see me and that they do not want to go to the attorney appointment with me (though they both previously agreed)

- I expect Cynthia and David will take extreme measures to prevent me from taking my parents to the March 12th attorney appointment

- Because I will not be intimidated, I anticipate Cynthia and David will escalate, though I cannot predict how

- Cynthia is mentally unstable and aggressive, she will not listen to reason

- David is a hot-head who thinks he is entitled to speak for my mother and manage her money

- My parents are elderly and frail and do not need the stress of a family confrontation in their home

Why it is Important to Visit My Parents Now:

- We are concerned for their wellbeing and suspect elder abuse and neglect

- We want see in-person their situation and help assess their need for additional support. They seem to be struggling with managing their affairs both medically, financially, and perhaps even legally

- My mother Nancy is demonstrating symptoms of dementia and has numerous other health issues

- My step-father Sam has Parkinson's with dementia. His doctor said he has about 4 months to live

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- Both parents have had repeated falls and other preventable 911 calls and emergency room visits

- Sam has numerous 911 calls because he was confused or feeling threatened

- Very large sums of money from investment accounts have either gone unaccounted for, or are being spent in ways that are extremely inconsistent with my parent's past practices (at least $65K)

- My mother has put her oldest grandson (who has a criminal record) on her checking account

- The family is fighting over the terms of my parent's Will & Trust and my mother admits she is being pressured to change it

- I want to take my parents to an attorney on Tuesday, March 12th so they can hear for themselves their rights and responsibilities regarding their Trust and any potential changes

- At this time, my mother is refusing to see the attorney (even though she agreed even before the appointment was made). I believe she is being unduly influenced by Cynthia and David

- I need to see my mother in person to help her understand why seeing a qualified attorney is in her best interest (and the potential consequences if she does not agree)

What You Need to Know about Me:

Although I was a highly successful video game development executive for 35 years (most recently a GM Studio Manager at Microsoft and a CTO at Electronics Arts, I am now a medically retired 50-year-old man who suffers from a severe, yet-to-be diagnosed, neurological medical condition that is greatly aggravated by this kind of stress. My medical issues can present as severe anxiety and pseudobulbar affect/emotional lability.

I suffer from episodes of involuntary crying and during these episodes I cannot speak or follow commands. I rely on my wife to help me through these episodes when we are in public. Law enforcement needs to be aware of this condition so that should I have an episode in their presence, it is not mistaken as some sort of psychiatric issue or lack of compliance with officer commands.

What is Our Best Course of Action to Ensure a Safe Visit?

My goal is to have a safe visit with my parents to work out these concerning issues regarding their wellbeing. I absolutely want to avoid distressing my parents with unnecessary family drama. I do not want confrontation with any other family members residing on their property. In fact, I prefer not to see or engage with them at all (I'm just not sure how I can make that happen).

What can the Sheriff's Department do to help us?

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Richard Seaborne

More Background

Sam Schulenburg (Stepfather)

Sam Schulenburg has advanced Parkinson's Disease with Dementia. His doctor says he has about four months left to live. On numerous occasions, Sam has claimed that people are "stealing the money" (described in greater detail below). He has said this to me and to his daughter (my stepsister) Joleen McIntyre on multiple occasions.

On separate and numerous occasions, Sam has told me, Joleen, and my mother, that he wants me to handle their finances. My mother has refused to agree, completely disregarding his wishes to secure their financial situation.

Sam and Cynthia Seaborne do not get along and regularly have confrontations. Sam has also said multiple times that he feels intimidated and threatened by David Seaborne. In addition, Sam has suffered numerous injuries from falls, has been found by neighbors wandering and disoriented, and has also been hospitalized for dehydration (all of which have occurred in the last six months). There have been numerous 911 calls as well. I have been told that Sam has been locked in the house at night.

Despite all these issues, Sam is very loyal to his wife Nancy and is very reluctant to speak with authorities on the above matters nor advocate for his own needs and concerns. We believe he is being neglected to the point of Elder Abuse.

Nancy Schulenburg (Mother)

Nancy Schulenburg is my mother; I am her youngest child and only son. My mother underwent Open Heart Surgery in June of 2018. She was in a coma for three weeks, awoke with severe delirium, and has had a very slow recovery (physically and cognitively). She has faced numerous complications (with ER visits and another hospitalization) and continues to struggle with her recovery from surgery and overall wellness. I suspect, she too is dealing with dementia (she was diagnosed in June with small vascular disease, a known cause). My mother has undergone personality changes, has significant memory lapses, and multiple cognitive and problem-solving challenges.

Cynthia Seaborne and Her Adult Children

Cynthia Seaborne is my oldest sister and lives on my mother's property. Her three adult sons also live on my parent's property. They are David Seaborne, Alex Seaborne and Ray Seaborne. David's on again, off again girlfriend also lives my parent's property.

Cynthia and I do not get along (never have). She is one hundred percent dependent on my mother for financial support. Cynthia lost her job in January of 2018 due to a conflict with her supervisor (not to provide care to my mother as she now claims.) To Cynthia's credit however, she has provided some caretaking for my mother since her surgery last June; providing help with meals and transportation. However, Cynthia only helps Sam when my mother directly asks.

Cynthia's three adult children (and David's girlfriend) do not pay rent or expenses, and almost daily solicit my mother for cash for any number of reasons – anything from cat food, to gas money, to groceries, to major car repairs. She has even provided financial assistance to David's girlfriend Sabrina by paying her cell phone bill, buying her shoes, etc.

As one might expect, this level of financial dependence on my mother has in-residence relatives very concerned about their financial futures as my mother's health does not seem to be improving. I suspect my mother is being

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manipulated, coerced, conned and/or pressured to sell stock and spend/distribute money unwisely, and very much in contrast to how she managed her finances before her surgery.

The Finances

To address Sam's concern about people "stealing the money", Sam's daughter Joleen and I have reviewed what limited access we have to Sam and Nancy's financial accounts. Best we can tell, there has been at least $65,000 worth of stock/401K sales since my mother's surgery last June.

I am certain these stock sales are not to pay for routine expenses as my mother and Sam receive pension, Social Security, and required minimum distribution income that sufficiently covers their medical and household expenses (including the cash given to dependent relatives as described above). Nor do these stock sales appear to be in support of her or Sam's wellbeing or happiness such as travel, entertainment, hobbies, home improvement, etc. There is nothing to show that these funds were used to benefit Sam or my mother.

Conversely, there is evidence that some of these stock sale proceeds were used for large-ticket items for Cynthia Seaborne and David Seaborne. Cynthia stated to me that our mother very recently bought Cynthia a car for $5,000, and my parent's joint checking account shows that another check was written to Cynthia in the amount of $5,000 with the note "in case of moving". Cynthia said to me that this $5,000 check was to set her up with an emergency fund from her share of the Trust (which isn't a legitimate use of the Trust and could even possibly be controverting the Trust). We suspect there are more dubious transactions that are over and above what is reasonable for a live-in caretaking family member. And most certainly exceeds what is considered a Gift under the tax code.

My mother also paid $11,000 in December to bail David Seaborne (Cynthia's oldest son) out of jail following a third domestic violence arrest involving Sabrina as the victim. In addition, my mother regularly "loans" money to David via a PayPal account for "car parts". We find these transactions to be highly suspicious and quite possibly used for illegal purposes (perhaps money laundering or dealing in stolen parts). There is no indication that David has ever paid her back (or intends to).

Furthermore, my mother has just recently added David to her checking account. This is something she would have never done in the past for both financial security and legal liability reasons. She did not trust him to handle money (that's why they set up the above-mentioned PayPal account). In fact, in Spring of 2018, she appeared in court to petition to evict David from her property. Now David boasts that he is the only person qualified to manage Nancy's money.

In the past, my mother routinely managed the family finances herself and kept a very tight reign on spending. She even insisted that Sam have his own checking account for his incidentals, so as maximize her control over their finances. This zealous control over family finances is a direct result of her bad experience with her ex-husband, my biological father, Silver Seaborne who squandered away every dollar they had. Giving David access to her checking is contrary to this very ingrained practice of financial prudence.

Furthermore, my mother has only ever sold stock as a very last resort. She was immensely proud of her nest egg and sought to preserve it. Even though she could afford to pay cash, my mother actively chose to finance high-dollar purchases, such as a new car or walk-in bath tub, to avoid selling off her investments. And, she is still carrying balances on these purchases. My mother's stock sales and large cash dispersions since her surgery are highly uncharacteristic and if left unchecked can result in catastrophic depletion of their financial resources.

When I ask my mother about these stock sales, especially a particularly large one of $45,000 in October 2018, she told me she did not do it and denies it ever happened. Yet, there is hard evidence via a brokerage firm statement (provided to me by my mother last month) that the sale was indeed made in Q3 of 2018. Furthermore, neither

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Joleen nor I can find a corresponding transfer of these funds into my mother's or Sam's checking accounts. This is very concerning on multiple levels.

My Relationship with My Parents

Prior to her surgery, my mother and I have always had a very positive relationship. We spoke on the phone almost every weekend for as long as I can remember. She would call me as often as I would call her. We talked openly and candidly on all topics from work, to current events, to family relationships and even our personal finances. We didn't always see eye-to-eye, but always had respect for each other's opinions.

My mother and Sam have always seen me as successful, responsible and level headed. Demonstrating their trust in me, they even named me as executor of their estate, Alternate Trustee, and intended durable power of attorney. Now my mother interacts with me as if I am her "warden" (her word), someone she thinks she must deceive and avoid. Even the vocabulary she uses is more like Cynthia's or David's, not hers.

The Will and Trust

Prior to her surgery in June, my mother stated to me and Kaiser hospital administrators that she was happy with the state of both her health care directive and the Schulenburg Family Will and Trust. However, over the last six months, my mother has expressed to me her concern for how Cynthia and her children will survive after her death. She has said to me on multiple occasions that Cynthia wants her to change her Will and Trust so that Cynthia can stay on the San Martin property and have enough money to live there with her adult children for the rest of their days.

I have tried to explain to my mother on multiple occasions that this is not a viable option. The Will and Trust she and Sam created in 2003 stipulated that their estate (and all the community property contained therein) is to be divided equally among their four children. My sister Sandra died several years ago and since she had no descendants, her share of the estate is to be equally shared among the surviving beneficiaries: Cynthia Seaborne, Joleen McIntyre and me. Furthermore, I explained to her that her and Sam's estate is not large enough to provide for this option due to the high cost of living in the bay area. I have even prepared some Excel spreadsheets to demonstrate this to her when I see her.

Obviously, if both my mother and Sam are competent, they can change the Trust however they want. Yet, it is clear Sam is not legally competent and cannot change his half of the trust. Even if he could legally do so, he would not want to as he repeatedly says he wants the Trust to be fair to everyone. When he was legally competent, Sam agreed that equal distribution among their children was fair and he still thinks this is true.

However, since my mother's competency is yet to be determined, it is possible that she can change her 50 percent portion of the trust. She cannot change Sam's portion, despite her assertions to the contrary. Erroneously, she thinks she has 100 percent financial control and can do whatever she pleases with the entirety of the Trust/estate funds in the present and in the future. This including naming Cynthia, David, Alex and Ray as beneficiaries on certain investment accounts, regardless of Sam's wishes and the letter and intent of the original Trust. She refuses to listen to me or accept the realities of the Trust stipulations, community property laws and her legal limitations as co-trustee.

The March 12th Attorney Meeting

In early February, I suggested to my mother and Sam that we should see an attorney together so they can hear for themselves what their legal options are regarding their Trust. I explained that I wanted them both to hear directly from an attorney what can and cannot be done under the terms of the Trust they established in 2003 when they were both still working and of sound mind. I told my mother I want to help her find a way to help Cynthia and her children while at the same time honoring the intention of the Trust and Sam's wishes (even if that meant I give up a portion of my inheritance to do so).

Both Sam and my mother were receptive to my suggestion and agreed to see the attorney. I arranged a meeting with a San Jose attorney (Kai Wessels) for 10 am on March 12th. Immediately after making the appointment, I informed my mother of the date to ensure her calendar was clear. She again said she will attend the meeting.

However, on February 27th and again on March 3rd my mother said she refuses to see the attorney. I believe this refusal is direct result of the undue influence exerted by Cynthia Seaborne and David Seaborne, who regularly tell my mother that I am out to get them both and rob them of their inheritance (though David is not a named beneficiary).

Sam whole heartedly supports this meeting with the attorney, as does his daughter Joleen. Both Sam and Joleen plan to attend. I am still hoping I can persuade my mother to attend, but I need to do it face-to-face.

My Planned Visit with My Parents

Is my intent to spend time with my mother and Sam sometime between March 9th and March 11th (before the attorney meeting). I am concerned that Cynthia and David will try to interfere with me seeing my parents and impede my ability to assess their wellbeing and need for support.

I do know that I have Sam's permission to come into their house and am confident my mother will want to see me (provided Cynthia and David do not create a scene).

I can't say for certain Cynthia or David will physically block me from visiting my parents, but I can't be confident they won't (both have had domestic violence convictions). Further, Cynthia has a history mental instability and aggressive behavior. She has threatened to "get me" and has even threatened to burn down the property as recently as last June saying, "if I can't have it, nobody can". When my mother was in a coma last summer, Cynthia made it a point to steal all my parents' investment documents and hide them, even from Sam.

As both Cynthia and David regularly eavesdrop on my telephone conversations with my parents and read my emails to them, they are aware of my intentions to fully investigate my parents' physical, mental, financial and legal wellbeing.

It is clear Cynthia and David feel threatened by me and the potential consequences to them of anything I might discover, as evidenced by a recent telephone shouting match (mostly Cynthia) on February 27th and all my other past interactions with them.

Why I Feel Unsafe Going to My Parents' Home

My presence at my parent's home will surely inflame Cynthia and David even more than they already are. I have made it clear, both over the phone and in writing, that I will do whatever it takes to get to the truth of the situation and take appropriate legal action to ensure my parents' wellbeing on all fronts.

If there is evidence of criminal elder abuse, I will seek press charges and I will also seek to enact the contravening provisions (and penalties) of the Will and Trust. Cynthia and David have said they do not want me involved in my parents' affairs and will do anything they can to stop me. I have tried to be civil with them and explain my position and concerns on multiple occasions since my mother's surgery, but they refuse to hear me out or cooperate.

If my mother cannot be reasoned with and will not agree to see an attorney in her own best interest and hear for herself what her rights are, then I will be forced to pursue incompetency declarations. I do not want this, but I cannot in good conscience let matters continue. My threats to Cynthia and David have only ever been legal ones

Due to all this conflict and Cynthia and David's violent pasts, threats and confrontational dispositions towards me, I do not feel safe going to my parents' house. Not even for just a short visit, much less an extended visit to

have some necessary, but very difficult conversations with my mother. It is quite possible I may benefit from the support/escort of a Sheriff's deputy to ensure a safe visit for all parties.

In Conclusion
I welcome your feedback on the best strategy for arranging safe home visits with my parents (minimizing both stress and threats) and suggestions for how I can help ensure my elderly and vulnerable parents are cared for properly and are not being abused financially or neglected.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Law Enforcement and California Protective Services *DID NOTHING*:

California Law Enforcement and Protective Services *DID NOTHING* for my mother. They seemed more focused on physical abuse…

…and so – there was nothing wrong with my mother's situation – in the eyes of California.

Lacked Standing to Defend Parents Legally in California:

With no recourse – we hired a Family Law attorney that specialized in senior abuse and undue influence.

However – in our first in-person session, we learned that California decrees –

- You have no legal standing to pursue legal matters for any parent or their wealth or inheritance… unless you prove they are totally incompetent (which they detailed is nearly impossible if they can communicate at all)

- You have no legal standing to protect a parent from being abused – you just call the police (or Protective Services to ineffectively check in once in a while)

- In the end – children can do nothing to protect their parents from abuse

Sam Dies from Infection after Multitude of Falls and Hospitalizations:

My step-father Sam died within a year of my mother's Open Heart surgery, leaving my vulturous siblings Cynthia and David to wait for my mother to die… to claim her wealth entirely for themselves.

Rich Albert Decides Mother Is Better Abused if Happy than Unhappily Fight:

My mother had granted a close friend – a man named Rich Albert - Power of Attorney on her behalf.

When I reached out to request he help resolve the legal undue influence and abuse of my mother… He declined. He refused.

He was adamant that if my mother was not overtly unhappy, things were fine.

He did not care if her money was being drained away…he believed she would unlikely live long enough to benefit from it anyway. And so – if I pressed to help her, I was hurting her more than her thieving children. …which he did not believe were thieving, for the record. It turned out – Cynthia – spent many lunches with Rich Albert…to vilify me. She – apparently - had been planning her evil actions for a while…

Rich Albert – I learned – had been fed lies about me for years, preparing for this Redistribution of My Mother's Wealth for a long time… to Cynthia and David.

Although I felt Rich Albert was evil and wicked – for leaving my mother at the hands of Cynthia and David…

I could see my mother was emotionally suffering from all the family conflicts…

And since I did not need the money – I sacrificed my principles…

…and have let my mother live out her last days in ignorance of the evil, selfishness surrounding her.

There it was –

It was better - to be abused and happy - than to be protected and miserable.

Joleen Dies, David and Cynthia Celebrate:

Joleen, Sam's Daughter, died not long after Sam died.

She had received a Covid-19 mRNA vaccine…and died within the week.

There is little more to say… about what is called a 'coincidence'.

. . .

But true colors were shown on her demise – David and Cynthia were happy, and seemed to celebrate her death. There would be more inheritance… for them.

And Life Continues in San Martin:

Whatever the tale… one thing remains… Troubled life continues - in the Hellscape – called San Martin…

E295 WASHINGTON TO NEVADA TO TEXAS PART 1

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E295 Moving from Washington to Nevada to Texas - PART 1.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uxx2-e295-moving-from-washington-to-nevada-to-texas-part-1.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
CENSORED ON YOUTUBE: https://youtu.be/rClR6T88WX4

Description:
Richard tells the tale of his leaving Microsoft.

He recounts the drama and manipulation in selling his Washington State house to a foreign Chinese man that would be working in Washington. He declares you cannot trust anyone – even when they are under contract.

Richard details he and his wife's move to Mesquite, Nevada in a 55+ Retirement Community.

Chinese House Purchase Manipulation Con

Free of Microsoft and Abusive, Oppressive, Irrational, Whimsical Executives:

I had left Microsoft… I was free… from the abusive, oppressive leadership of HoloLens… I was free - of the HoloLens divisions' executive irrational, whimsical, greedy, unaccountable 'fake it until you make it' - bad business decisions…

I was free of the abusive, oppressive, irrational, whimsical, greedy, unaccountable executives.

Put House Up for Sale in Sammamish, Washington - Following Exit from Microsoft:

Following my exit from Microsoft, we put our house up for sale.

It was a beautiful 2-story house in a city called Sammamish, up on a hilltop with the backyard facing a greenbelt and a distant lake. The view from the backside of the house… was what made the house impressive and special for us.

Katherine had a 'solarium' glass office that overlooked the backside view. Even the tile floor to her glass office was heated, for the cold months.

But – without a job in the area and given the high property tax and local cost of living… we had to sell the house.

. . .

I will spare the relentless details in preparing the house for sale – fixup, cleanup, stage, and be ready on a moment's notice to get ourselves and our cats out of the house… if a prospective buyer wanted to come see it…

Sold House At Asking Price - Quickly:

We were excited to receive fairly quickly an offer at our Asking Price – yep, FULL PRICE!

Of course – we wondered if perhaps the asking price was too low, if we received such a good offer so quickly.

However – despite consternation that perhaps we were undercutting ourselves, we agreed to sell the house to a Chinese man that extended the offer to purchase the house at Asking Price.

Chinese Con Offer To Buy House:

Well – it proved to be too good to be true.

We had moved out, purchased our new home in Mesquite, Nevada… and then got the crazy news.

The Buyer declared an inspection revealed water damage - below the master bedroom's bathtub - and so the price would need to come down $80,000 to cover repairs and potential future issues.

The original offer WAS A SCAM! IT WAS A CON!

It turned out there was a tiny drip leak once upon a time – from the bathtub drain.

There was no material or significant water damage! We had never even seen anything.

The Buyer made a FULL PRICE offer… so we would accept it, take the house off the market, lose time awaiting inspections/financing/etc., and then… SURPRISE!

What could we do?

- The Chinese Buyer MADE-UP A FICTIONAL INSPECTION PROBLEM… TO MANIPULATE US INTO ACCEPTING A LOWER OFFER… THAT WE WOULD HAVE NEVER AGREED TO AT THE START!

- Well… We had to decide to restart the experience… or sell to cut our losses and move on…

- I worried –

  - we would pay property taxes, utilities, insurance, and maintenance … losing money while we waited to sell the house.

  - would the next offer be more than the manipulated lower price? And cover the lost money – waiting for the next offer?

  - could I handle the stress and worry for potentially - many more months?

- Katherine was reluctant to sell at the reduced price… she did not want to accept the con man's offer…

  - I believe Katherine leaned towards declining the offer and restarting the process.

  - However – she saw how hard it was on me… and she accepted losing a lot of money… just so I could be happier

    - And who knows – she may have saved my life; the immense stress felt like it was literally killing me.

    - My inability to handle and process the stress of the situation – was unlike me… it was very likely an early sign of my advancing neurodegeneration.

We reluctantly agreed to the reduce price… and moved on.

CANNOT TRUST ANYONE – EVEN IN CONTRACT:

The lesson here was clear – you cannot trust anyone – even if in legal contract.

People will craft traps and plans to manipulate you – to your loss, and to their gain.

- Cliché as it is – trust no one!

- Or – at most - Trust but verify!

Living in Mesquite, Nevada – 55+ Community

Purchased House in Mesquite, Nevada – 55+ Community Named Sun City:

Following my leaving Microsoft and putting our house in Washington, State up for sale… we purchased a house in Mesquite, Nevada… in a 55+ Retirement Community called Sun City.

Sun City And Our House Were Great:

Sun City and our House were great –

- Nice, quiet neighbors.

- Modern, contemporary house and amenities.

- A full-size swimming pool.

- We did a lot of upgrades and improvements – before we moved in

- No State Income Tax and Low Cost of Living.

There were some drawbacks –

- Mesquite was a city in the middle of nowhere – about an hour north of Las Vegas, bordering Utah.

- Mesquite was in the desert – and hit temperatures as high as 118F.

  o And it was dry hot for about ten months out of the year.

- There were scorpions! A LOT OF SCORPIONS!

  o We had a pest service… but it was not enough…

  o I would go on Scorpion Hunts every few nights – with a blacklight flashlight in one hand, a rubber mallet in the other hand, and a bag of pesticides and tools like screwdrivers should a scorpion retreat into a rocky hole or crevice.

  o I killed 187 scorpions in one year alone! There were a lot scorpions.

- We lived in 'Retirement Prison' – there was nothing to do outside… in the middle of nowhere with potentially deadly temperatures outside…

  o We could do ANYTHING inside…

  o Or go on trips…

    - And so - we bought our Recreational Vehicle (RV) to give us opportunities to do something outside our home … which we customized to accommodate our four cats and solar power on-the-go.

The Future Is Unpredictable – Roll with the Punches:

I suppose there were some lessons from buying our house in Mesquite, Nevada.

- Although we imagined it would be the house - we would live out are remaining years in… it was not.

- It can be imprudent to 'over invest' in a property… especially in the first few years, before you know confidently you will remain the home for a very long time – justifying the expenditure of time and life and money upheaval for 'upgrades.'

- Politics and culture – in the area you move into – is a big deal.

  o Apparently – the government now proactively interferes with our lives, and wants to control us.

  o Consequently – it is important to move to a place that shares your ideology and values.

- And – don't get attached to where you live, so you can uproot without emotional duress.

I deeply liked our home in Mesquite, Nevada.

Unfortunately – the Devil came after us…from California and Covid-19…

Making us want to flee – what appeared to be - another rising Hell.

E296 MOVING TO TEXAS AND HARDSHIPS

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E296 Moving to Texas and Hardships - PART 2.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uy4s-e296-moving-to-texas-and-hardships-part-2.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
CENSORED ON YOUTUBE: https://youtu.be/8WQI_Bwpi2k

Description:
Hear how the Covid Pandemic lockdowns and threat of mandatory vaccination in Nevada drove Richard and his wife to sell their Nevada home and move to Texas, believing their individual rights would more likely be protected in Texas.

He recounts how he was pressured and harassed at every turn to get a Covid vaccination shot, which smacked to him as 'an agenda' versus 'earnest effort to help'.

Learn how Richard and his wife traveled in an RV to find the best place for them to live in Texas.

Hear how the RV Richard and his wife used to travel to Texas to find the best place for them to live in, was vandalized with its catalytic converter stolen.

LIVING IN HELOTES, TEXAS – HILL COUNTRY
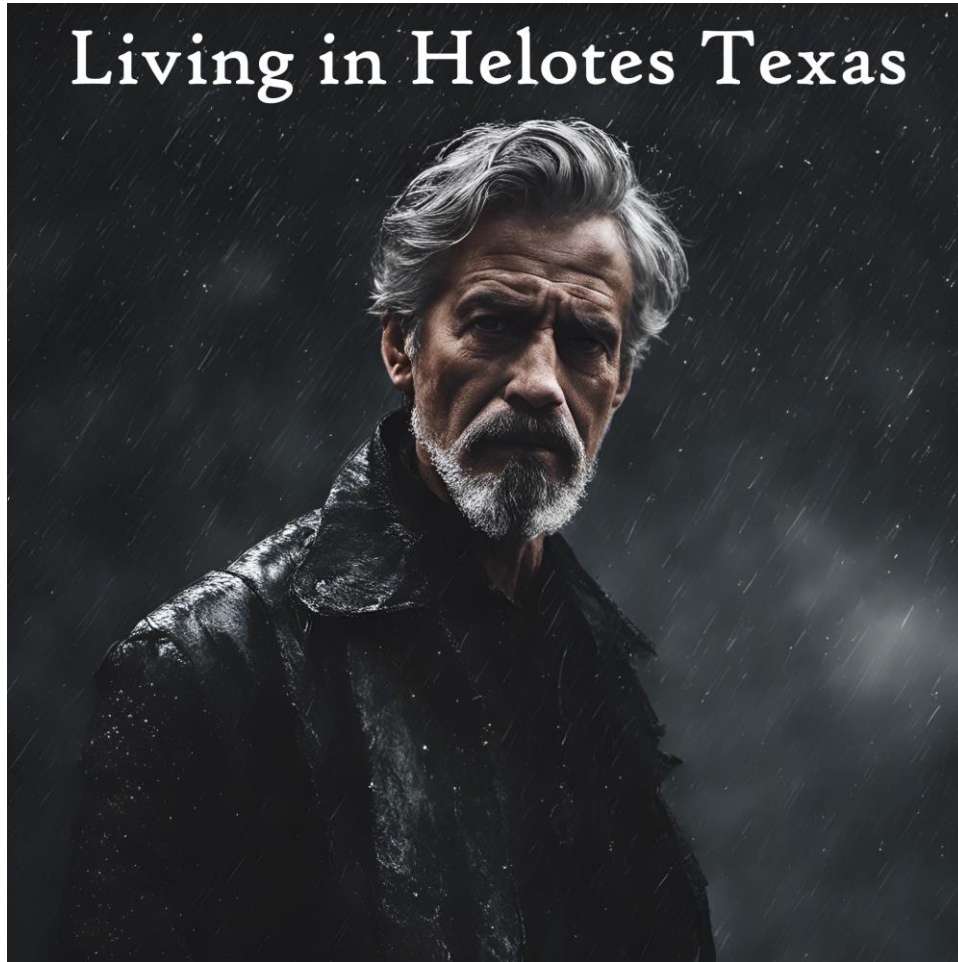
Covid-19 Pandemic Made Isolation in Mesquite, Nevada MORE EXTREME:

We had been living in Mesquite, Nevada for several years. ~~And the Covid-19 Pandemic hit…~~

Things became even MORE CLAUSTROPHIC and ISOLATED… in the 55+ Retirement Community, in the middle of nowhere out in the desert.

On a related tangent –

- Previously – we could go most places – without worry of virus *at the time – we did not know it was propaganda – a manufactured lie of a crisis – to lockdown and control everyone.

- And – to inflict 'death jabs' and economic woe – to reduce the world's population – no matter the human loss and suffering…

- Yea – I am a *strong* disbeliever in the Covid Pandemic lies, and –

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- o   its *death jab* rushed so-called 'vaccines' – that mess up your immune system - and induces DNA damage - which causes cancer and other problems.

- Well – enough of that… let's get to – hopefully - more positive – things…

. . .

But – let me share – the final drivers – that motivated us to uproot – from our – intended *forever home*.

We saw Nevada becoming more fascist and liberal extreme – like a mini California. We feared – how long – before Nevada – became 'FULL-BLOWN CALIFORNIA' – and lost whatever 'mini' it had of California's disease and woke infection.

Medical Professionals Harassed Me to Get Covid-19 Experimental Vaccines:

Even medical professionals harassed me about getting Covid-19 Vaccine shots…despite my constant refusal. I did not believe in injecting my immunocompromised self with an experimental so-called 'vaccine'.

We Wanted To Leave Woke Liberal 'Mini California' Nevada:

We had never conceived that Nevada was 'Mini California'…

And the more Californians that moved to Nevada (usually Las Vegas) - the more the Nevada culture shifted to Woke Liberalism.

In fact – rural Nevada was largely conservative, whereas urban Nevada was largely liberal… but – there are for more people that live in a dense urban area – than in rural areas.

It was clear to us – we would be better off somewhere more aligned to our values, and more likely to protect us and our property.

We wanted to leave woke liberal 'mini California', Nevada.

Explored Areas to Live in Recreational Vehicle (RV) – Texas, Florida Leaning:

We decided to take trips in our Recreational Vehicle (RV) to areas… where we might want to live.

We planned to explore different states and cities…

Although we were open to most anywhere - we leaned heavily towards either Texas or Florida. They seemed – most likely – to protect our rights.

Stolen RV Catalytic Converter:

But – our start was ill fated…

When we went to ready our RV for one of treks – the engine roared immensely loudly!

It sounded like a jet engine… it was deafening! It was not normal…

Investigation revealed the catalytic converter had been stolen.

The catalytic converter was cut out with a saw – and just gone. Completely missing.

Without it connecting the engine to the muffler… the massive engine had no silencing or spark arrest control… at all.

We learned that catalytic converter theft was a big problem – and especially during the Pandemic when people were not out and about as much… and courts stopped enforcing most non-felony or non-violent crime laws. The laws were no longer relevant – they were selectively enforced. Without consequences – criminality rose and flourished…

We had to presume – if someone stole the catalytic converter once…they might return, and do it again.

It was stupid expensive – to buy a jumbo sized RV catalytic converter… and install an anti-theft harness around the new catalytic converter… in hopes – to discourage another – future – theft.

Well – with our RV repaired, we made our treks… in search of possible new home.

Purchased House in Helotes, Texas – Hill Country:

Fast-Forward… and we bought a house in Helotes, Texas… in Texas Hill Country.

The house was located at the peak of a hilltop - and had a spectacular view for miles from its backside patio, deck, and most of the house. It was truly one-of-a-kind awe inspiring.

Then Came The Flood:

We had just moved into our house and set everything up…

And all Hell broke loose!

- I awoke at around 2am… to step out of the bed – to go to the restroom – and my foot splashed in water!

- There was water everywhere! Half the house was covered in 1 to 2 inches of water!

- I declared, "We have a problem!" It was an understatement… "We have a problem…"

- Like the fated Apollo 13 space launch to the moon – had reported - to NASA ground space control… 'Houston, we've had a problem…"

    o Oh – and yea – I subconsciously – ignorantly - sort of – misquoted - the Apollo 13 message - like most people…

    o The actual quote was not the Hollywood film's version of 'Houston, we have a problem…" it was 'Houston, we've had a problem…" Basically – same thing – just trivia. Apparently – Hollywood felt their revised 'line' was more impactful - than reality. *which is not – too surprising* for an industry founded on fiction…

- Katherine and I scrambled to turn off the water… but the watermain valve lever – BROKE! It broke in my hand! There was no way to turn off the water! We tried tools – nothing worked. It was rusted solid – fused as a single piece of metal.

- We tried to turn water off at the water heaters and everywhere there was a valve. But nothing seemed to work.

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- We called 911. We spoke with a Sheriff, the fire department, the water company… No one could or would help. It was nuts!

- We were on our own! Well… we managed to find a combination of water valves and levers that slowed the water…until the watermain could be shut off with a tool (that apparently police and fire departments do not have).

- In the meantime – Katherine and I shoved water with brooms out the door and into the shower… four hours and hours! Until dawn! …and beyond!

When The Flood Was Done – Devil Struck Us With Kitec Plumbing:

The Devil had struck us HARD with that flood.

It turned out the house was built with a modern plumbing system – called Kitec (the predecessor to a plumbing tech called PEX).

Well – Kitec and PEX were basically hoses, connected with metal fittings.

- Rodents like to eat Kitec and PEX…which can cause leaks and holes.

- Kitec and PEX breakdown under Ultra Violet light. Sunlight disintegrates the hosing.

- Kitec and PEX fittings … vary in vulnerability.

    o Kitec fittings were discontinued because they corroded and would leak, and eventually break.

    o Hot Water accelerated the corrosion of Kitec fittings

- Our house had what's known as a recirculation pump for a Water Heater, so there was always hot water immediately at any faucet in the house.

    o Recirculation Pumps are great… they keep water moving in the plumbing, so the heated water is constantly moving throughout the pipes (or hoses).

        - you always have hot water, immediately.

    o Well – Kitec Fittings are vulnerable to Hot Water, and our house continuously pushed Maximally Hot Water every day, every year… since the house was built.

    o The combination of a Water Heater + Recirculation Pump + Kitec Plumbing WAS BAD!

- A central Kitec junction in the house – where the hot water was recirculated year -round…broke.

    o It completely broke off, and the water flowed…into the walls, into the foundation, everywhere! …even into floor electrical conduits!

    o We would later learn that there were five other Kitec fittings so corroded… they would likely break off any month as well.

        - We were living in a water timebomb!

- Nearly 90% of the house was underwater before it was over.

- The cats fled and stood atop a toilet and any high perch…to avoid being drenched and standing in water. They caterwauled in horror.

- The damage was extensive… the repairs took the better part of a year.

- We lived in a Hotel for many months…

- Our lives were turned upside down… The stress was palpable…

Eventually – we were able to return to our house, much poorer…and worn…and stressed…

But – we were finally 'HOME' (again)!

Then Came the Hail and Hard Freezes:

I will spare the deeper details here… but let me summarize a few more 'Devil Sent Torments' as we returned to our house after the flood damage was mostly repaired.

- Apparently – while we were living in the hotel – while our house was being repaired from the flood damage… there was a hail storm, that rained golf to baseball sized rocks of hail down onto our house.

  o The hail left dents and penetrations in virtually every panel of the house's 50-year Steel Roof

  o Yea – the roof was not going to last 50 years anymore… it was smited by hail!

  o And so – the entire roof HAD TO REPLACED TOO!

  o There seemed to be no end of trouble and torment for us…

    - We wondered if the 'do-nothing' life in the 55+ Mesquite, Nevada Community was not so bad after all.. boring might be good…

- Two times there were Hard Freezes so bad that we suffered property damage…

  o Our RV's water heater internal parts cracked

  o Our RV's paint cracked and peeled off – after dirty debris rained on it, dried on it, froze on it, thawed on it, and then cracked and peeled…

  o Our RV suffered numerous other freeze-related smaller breaks

  o Despite 'Water Spigot Insulation Bibs' – one of the spigots burst, with water flowing everywhere… thankfully, it was outside – this time.

  o A Water Line feeding the swimming pool burst – in TWO PLACES!

o The water filtration and pump system – froze solid; needing minor repairs.

Leaving a Problem Does Not Always Result in Immediate Benefits:

I suppose…

- We were leaving what we considered a problem – a boring, homebound life ~~in a woke liberal area…~~

- We were going to an opportunity – a conservative, Faithful, rights protecting home where we could enjoy the outdoors and life more…

- We *did* finally – end up – in a house – in a home – where we could restart our lives.

- We did achieve both of those goals; however, the journey to get there… has been…

  HELL DIFFICULTY!

E297 INVESTING IN THINGS YOU ENJOY

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E297 Investing In Things You Like, Not In What Other People Tell You To Invest In.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uy5o-e297-investing-in-things-you-like-not-in-what-other-people-tell-you-to-inve.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/EfevaVCuR6c

Description:
Hear Richard's philosophy on investing your time and money on things you enjoy.

He emphasizes the importance of not letting others pressure you into hobbies or activities or even jobs that you dislike.

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<u>*Spending Time On Things That Matter – And Hobbies*</u>

Challenged: Do I Pursue Things I Am Good at - and Avoid Things Not Good At:

A friend of mine, Alban Wood, once challenged me… that perhaps I avoided things I was not good at…to my detriment.

He asserted that I could quickly become good at something that I was merely inexperienced or ignorant of. He said that my innate skills and focus would expedite my becoming proficient in most anything I engaged with.

Avoided Skiing Because Did Not Enjoy It – Not Because Poor Skiing Skills:

As an example –

Alban argued that I was not a good skier (which was true)… he said my poor skiing was the result of my not investing the time and effort needed to get good at it. He suggested things – like snowboarding – maybe that was easier. It was not – for me.

He argued that I would spend sufficient time to become good at other things… why not skiing?

Alban surmised –

- I avoided skiing - because I was not good at it.

- And I would not get good at skiing - because I avoided it.

- Further - I was missing out on fun hobbies and experiences – like skiing – because I would not spend the time to get good at them… and thus would avoid them.

While Alban was flattering that I *could* learn to become a good skier, his point was made.

- He was probably right – that I could become a good skier…

  - If I truly cared enough to become a good skier, then I would invest the time to become a skiing expert.

  - Therefore – I did not care enough about investing time becoming a better skier.

- He was probably wrong – that I was missing out on something fun [to me]

  - If it was fun [to me] – I would have spent the time to be good at it.

  - I found more enjoyment in other things – and so spent my precious time on them.

    - I did not waste my time on things important to other people…

What Things Have I Missed Out Because I Avoided Spending The Time With Them:

Alban insisted in his musing –

what things or activities might I have enjoyed in life - that I missed out on - because I did not spend the time… to get good 'enough' at them… and - consequently - avoided them…?

What joy did I exclude from my life, he wondered…?

Avoiding Things You Don't Prioritize In Life Is Maximizing Your Time On Earth:

Well… All that said…

I think Alban had very solid reasoning and arguments. His intentions were genuinely about my life's happiness.

However, I have an additional view…

- Recognize my position that I did not invest time or effort - in skiing - because I did not enjoy it.

    o That is true.

- Now – my choices were…

    o I *could* invest time and effort to become 'good enough' at skiing to make it a part of my life, and certainly ever-improve my skiing skills.

    o Or, I *could* be mediocre or even bad at skiing… and invest the same time and effort on something else that I enjoyed - or in my work - or with my wife or children…

        - In other words – I could choose to invest my time and effort where I saw the most value, or where others thought I should spend my time

        - I choose what *I* value and enjoy when it came to investing in my life

Pontificating and Musing Were Hallmarks to Alban and My Relationship:

Alban was certainly well intentioned with his insight - that day atop snowcapped Whistler - where I demonstrated my 'bad at skiing' skills… it was those poor skills that prompted the entire conversation.

I think these kinds of discussions and musings were a kind of hallmark to Alban and my pontificating relationship. Yea – Pontificating and musing were hallmarks to Alban and my relationship.

Invested In Things I Enjoyed And In Things That Mattered:

Back to the reason I did not invest time to become good at skiing…

I am not so sure I avoided skiing because I was not good at it…as Alban mused.

It's true – that I do not like being 'bad at something'… but it's not the reason I avoided skiing.

I did not enjoy skiing. I only went skiing for other people – to support their passion of skiing or snowboarding.

Ergo – I was not going to waste the rest of my life - getting good at something that did not matter to me - and that only mattered to other people - every few years – when they might ask me to go skiing.

Yea – I was willing to look 'bad' skiing, to reclaim the time for things I cared about.

Topic: closed.

E298 FINDING MY SOULMATE AND ANGEL

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E298 Finding my Soulmate and Angel.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uy7e-e298-finding-my-soulmate-and-angel.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/iFM8SWEfQUc

Description:
Richards shares the story of how he met his wife, and how sometimes there are blessings even in a life filled with 'Hell Difficulty' events and challenges.

He recounts how they immediately connected and how their early days forged their relationship into a lifelong bond.

And – Richard tells the story of Mafioso The Pelican…

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Meeting Katherine

Not Everything Was 'Hell Difficulty':

Although much of my tale has been filled with woe and sorrow – of loss and hardships….

It is worth bearing in mind that - not all times - and not all things - were 'Hell Difficulty'.

There were wonderful times, events, and people throughout my life…

    that gave me hope and strength…

        to carry on…

           to quest onward…

                to believe there were good people in the world…

                    and that good things could happen…

    no matter how hard or difficult things may have been…or may yet again be challenging.

I would like to share some good, fun times… especially those with my beloved wife, Katherine.

Wild Ride Across Countries and States with Katherine:

We had some wild rides of employment and unemployment.

From California, we moved to Canada. And from there back to the States, to Washington. And then - to Nevada. And finally – to Texas.

Met in The Tumbleweed Dive Bar in Huntington Beach, California:

Katherine and I met in a dive bar, located about half a mile from the Huntington Beach Pier… in Huntington Beach (of course – per its namesake) – in Southern California.

I had entered the classic 'dive bar' – The Tumbleweed - that was literally adjacent to the condominium complex I lived in at the time… which was about a also half mile from the beach.

It was a weekday night – it was a night when the 'party scene' was generally not present. It was a more mature crowd, and regulars.

I observed a lovely, pretty woman, seated at the bar. I approached her – she smiled - and quipped, "You couldn't possibly be alone…?"

She had one ear jutting from her long hair – which reminded me of a fantasy elf's ear protruding characteristically from their hair – outward so it was cute and 'unique' and 'special'. She had 'elfin ear'…

The attractive woman smiled wider, and admitted that - she *might* be alone…   And our conversation went from there…

In that dive bar, I met my future wife – Katherine.

She would prove – to be the most generous, loving, loyal, considerate, compassionate, and sacrificing person I would ever know. And – she is strong; she has the willpower and determination – to overcome everything that has come her way – in her own – Hell Difficulty life…

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Katherine and I Were A Lot Alike:

Katherine – like me -

- had been burned in relationships. We were a bit jaded, and perhaps a bit guarded.

- we had both seen horrible relationships abusive people.

- we had both been divorced, and both had children. Albeit – her son was older than my daughters.

- we – both - held belief there could yet be someone – a soulmate – out there… despite seeing the opposite… in our past troubled relationships.

Walks in the Bolsa Chica Wetlands (AKA Conservation 'Mud Fields'):

There was an area nearby - in Irvine - that had wooden walkways - atop swampy 'mud fields'… in an area named the Bolsa Chica Wetlands. It was – technically – in Huntington Beach.

It was some kind of protected conservation area. Katherine and I would go there and walk along the walkways, around the swampy wetland mud fields… and talk.

We would see birds of all sorts as we strolled… Since we were next to the ocean, there were pelicans and seagulls plus pigeons and all forms of wild birds.

Mafioso The Pelican – 'He Likes You. You Like Him. WTF!?' – Trust Your Feelings:

With so many shared core values – and shared perspectives – even shared dreams and goals - things seemed too good to be true… for both of us.

I had the idea – an Epiphone – to give Katherine 'a sign' that she should give me a shot as a serious relationship.

I conceived to get stuffed animal Pelican and put sunglasses on him - as if it was from the nearby Huntington Beach, near the Conservation Fields.

I dubbed the Pelican, 'Mafioso'.

Katherine found Mafioso the Pelican on her doorstep.

Mafioso the Pelican - wearing his sunglasses - had a note which read,

"He likes you. You like him. WTF!?"

The message was simple… a bit blunt, if not vulgar.

But the message was clear –

trust your feelings. Give me a chance.

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<u>Katherine and I Shared Many Core Values and Perspectives:</u>

Mafioso's words rung true to Katherine – as they did to me – that we should – give it a chance.

> We should give each other – a chance – to prove ourselves – worthy of *each other*.

Our relationship blossomed and we grew ever closer… even through hardships.

> . . .

Admittedly – we have face *MANY HARDSHIPS* through our united 'Hell Difficulty' journey together… but – they are – perhaps – what forged our relationship even stronger… so that we might – triumph together – and show the world that *WE WILL NOT BE DEFEATED*!

> Hellfire – only – makes us – stronger!

<u>Katherine *IS* My Soul Mate, True Love, My Angel, and All I Could Dream For:</u>

Katherine is – my soulmate – my true love – my angel – and all I could dream for – in a spouse and life partner.

- Although everyone – has problems. Everyone – struggles. And – most people – succumb to greed and selfishness and pride and hubris… at the expense of others.

- Some people are pretty on the outside – but ugly on the inside… Some people are kind and compassionate – but have other integrity shortcomings.

- People – generally – are flawed. And – we live with each other – despite our failings.

- Katherine – is different. She is not like that… she is not like – most people…

- Katherine is beautiful and kind – on the outside, and on the inside.

- Katherine is the paragon of human virtue – and 'goodness'. She holds integrity in the highest regard.

- Katherine is the most moral and ethical person – that I have ever known.

- I respect – and I love – Katherine.

- In the end – there are no words to describe how 'perfect for me' Katherine is… So – let me just say – she is – genuinely – my savior and angel – my soul mate - and the love of my life.

- There – simply – are no better – people – in the world… from what I have seen.

No matter the struggles -

> May we – Katherine and I - continue our love and unity – in the afterlife – and beyond.

E299 DVD INTERCTIVE VIDEO GAMES AND AYAT!?

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E299 DVD Interactive DVDi Video Games and AYAT Are You All That.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uyba-e299-dvd-interactive-dvdi-video-games-and-ayat-are-you-all-that.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/htlFH1UHLWg

Description:
Richard details he and his wife's journey developing and trying to sell or license their DVD Interactive technology, or sign a publishing contract for interactive DVD games.

He explains how they were ripped off by Hasbro, Mattel, and Leap Frog, and Disney – each replicated their idea, tech functionality, and made their own games. Richard and Katherine were left with nothing – but the loss of their time and invested money.

Hear the tale of how Katherine's son likewise sought to make interactive DVD games, but suffered similar fates in being unable to get published.

Learn how Richard and his wife's first DVD Interactive game was ultimately published… but languished without marketing.

DVD INTERACTIVE AND 'ARE YOU ALL THAT' WITH KATHERINE

DVD Interactive and 'Are You All That' – A Long Journey – And Theft from Us:

Unable to just 'enjoy life' as it was… Katherine and I turned our attention to improving our lives… while were living in – Huntington Beach, California.

We sought to pioneer interactive DVD games.

You may recall making DVD Interactive games from earlier… so this is a more intimate tale of Katherine and my journey together, striving to make a better future for ourselves by working hard towards our dreams…

Well… Katherine and I determined - Everyone in the world seemed to have a DVD Video Player…and so if we could make games on DVD Video Players, the market potential was HUGE!

Even selling to a fraction of a percentage of DVD Video Player owners… would be massively profitable.

It was a wild idea…and it was a thing we could do together. And it could be hugely successful.

'Are You All That' (AYAT) Did Not Sell Well – Had No Marketing or Advertising:

We did succeed in making and publishing our game – *Are You All That!?* (or AYAT for short).

Are You All That!? Was published through Digital Leisure – a Canadian DVD Video Publisher.

AYAT did not sell a lot of copies… it had no marketing or advertising budget, as we were expecting from Digital Leisure.

DVD Interactive Tech Cloned, Stolen by Mattel, Hasbro, LeapFrog, and Disney:

The tech we developed was cloned and stolen by Mattel and Hasbro, LeapFrog, and Disney.

Financial Reward for DVD Interactive and AYAT Was Lacking:

You would right to conclude the financial reward was far lacking for DVD Interactive, its Demos, and its Retail Product *Are You All That!?*

Consider the effort to –

- form a company called DVD Interactive.

- build technology for multiplayer gaming on standard DVD Players.

- make demos of the DVD Interactive Tech –

    o Learning to Read & Count with Winnie The Pooh and Tigger game demo

    o Trivial Pursuit 4-Player DVD game demo

    o Saving the Magic Kingdom 4-Player Trivia DVD game demo

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- visit Mattel, Hasbro, Leapfrog, and Buena Vista / Disney Interactive to share and show our interactive DVD technology and tools and demos

  - Again – they asked about our copyrights and patents, and immediately set off to clone and replicate our tech and tools…

  - We showed multiplayer interactive DVD gaming was possible, and they did not want to pay us for it… so they stole it from us.

- As noted – without a publisher in sight - we decided to make AYAT - a finished retail 4-player interactive trivia game for DVD Players

It was a lot of work … to make DVD Interactive and its demos and its retail product.

- We lost money and time … forming DVD Interactive.

- We lost money and time … making DVD Interactive Demos.

- We lost money and time … making, traveling, presenting pitch & tech materials.

- We lost money and time … making the retail game *Are You All That!?*

DVD Interactive and 'Are You All That' – Good Times Working Together:

Although the game and technology proved materially unsuccessful… it was spiritually important for Katherine and my forging a deep bond together.

- Katherine and my working long hours towards a shared dream was awesome.

- Katherine and my fighting alongside each other united us further.

- Katherine and I learned we could trust each other – no matter what.

Sad Few People Will Know Katherine and I Pioneered Interactive DVD Tech:

It is sad - that so few people will ever know that Katherine and I were behind interactive DVD Video technology or have ever seen first interactive DVD trivia game, *Are You All That!?*

Yea – it is sad that few people will ever know that Katherine and I pioneered interactive DVD technology and games.

DVD Interactive and 'Are You All That' – A Time if Hope and Aspiration:

I think that DVD Interactive and *Are You All That!?* - even all the DVD Interactive Demos – all point to a time when Katherine and I had high hopes and aspirations.

It was a time of high adventure and excitement … even if it made our future a bit scary.

There were good times making *Are You All That!?* with Katherine!

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Stickleroo Too:

Katherine's son was excited about interactive DVD gaming too, and he had his own company make an interactive DVD game called Stickleroo.

It was an excellent game with compelling presentation and music.

I will not go into any details on Stickleroo - as that is not my story to tell.

A Venture Worth The Journey – Even with an Unprofitable End:

Our journey with DVD Interactive and making *Are You All That!?* was a mixed tale – of triumph, rejection, and defeat.

- We pioneered world-unique technology, proof-of-concept demos, and a retail product.

- We spent time and effort.

- We lost money.

- Our dreams and aspirations were dashed.

- But - Katherine and I deepened our relationship.

In the end –

- Not every venture works out.

- You cannot gain what you do not risk

- You must be prepared to fail – in order to strive to succeed

- You must forgive yourself – when things do not work out, even fail completely…
    o Because – you tried. That is more than most people – will ever do – to try…

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

E300 GETTING MARRIED IN THE WEST INDIES
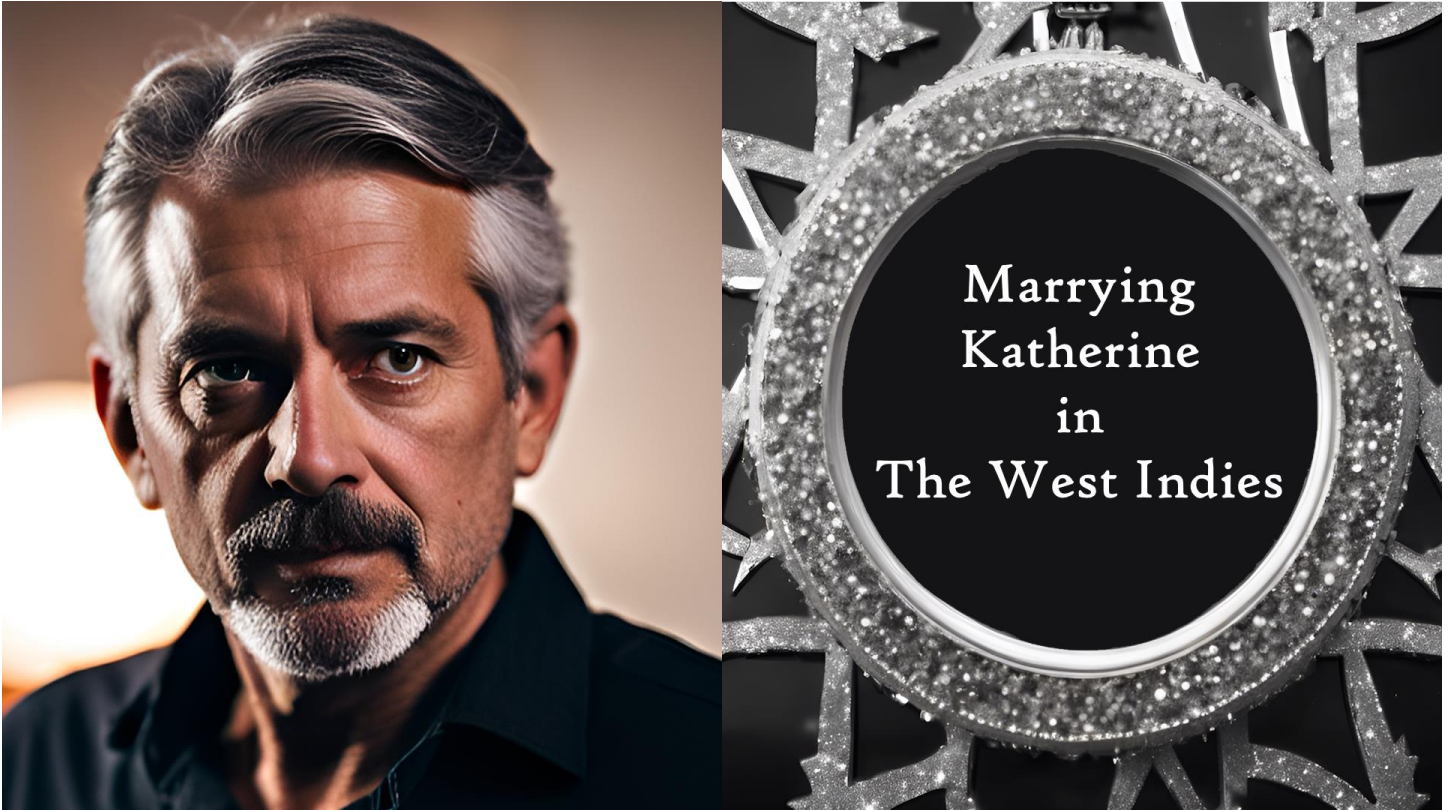
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E300 Getting Married in the West Indies.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uyh7-e300-getting-married-in-the-west-indies.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/QeCU1Wy7Dow

Description:
Richard tells the story of he and his wife eloping to get married in the West Indies, on an island called Antigua.

Hear the wild adventure from the States to Florida to Antigua.

Discover details about Oprah Winfrey's house and reversed waterfall.

Learn how even getting married required engaging with corrupt officials and bribes.

Richard shares unusual moments – like a human litterbox on the side of the road…

Marrying Katherine in Antigua, West Indies

Eloped To Be Married in Antigua, West Indies:

Katherine and I decided to get married.

We were not wealthy, but we wanted our marriage to be special.

We managed to secure travel to a remote island in the West Indies (adjacent the Caribbean), called Antigua.

We did not have enough money to pay for guests to our wedding, and did not want people to feel obliged to attend such a remote (and expensive to get to) wedding. And so – we effectively eloped to Antigua to get married.

Journey to Antigua Had A Challenging Start:

Our journey to Antigua had a challenging start… actually – it had two notable challenges.

1. Katherine's dress – tailored to her - was not ready to be picked up from the seamstress… until the last day… before our flight.

   - And – Katherine was racing against work deadlines – so she could relax and enjoy her Wedding-Moon (where we would be married and honeymoon in the same Antigua resort).

   - Things were looking dire – as the day came and evening was fast approaching.

   - I managed to get a hold of the dry-cleaning shop – that also did custom tailoring – before they closed… and obtained contact information for the seamstress.

   - With a few tries – I was able to reach the seamstress by phone – and explain that we had a flight to Antgua…and we very much needed my fiance's wedding dress – if at all possible – before we were to leave (that night!).

   - Well – the seamstress gave me her home address. I was able to pick up the dress directly from her! Thank you. Crisis averted!

2. We had our takeoff time wrong – by a few hours – for our flight to Antigua.

   - There were very few flights to Antigua – out of Florida… And so – missing a flight to Florida meant missing nearly a week…to catch the next flight to Antigua.

   - By the time we arrived at the airport – we were horrified – to learn that we were wrong about our flight time.

     o I am not sure how we were wrong … perhaps we looked at the Landing Time (offset by the 3-hour time zone change from California to Florida). Whatever the reason – we had the wrong time for our flight.

     o There were huge, long lines…just to check-in and get through security.

     o It was apparent – we were not going to make it to our flight on time! Which meant – we would miss our Antigua trip by days to a week! Our wedding was seriously at-risk!

     o Desperate and solution-minded – I rudely left the check-in line, and went straight towards check-in.

       - I was intercepted by an airport security 'marshal' – whom directed me to return to the queue.

- I explained our dire situation – that were to be married – and missing our flight – meant missing our wedding in the West Indies due to limited connecting flights.

- The woman took pity on me – on us.

- She smiled in support – and escorted Katherine and me to check-in and through security – all the way to the flight's gate… and up to the boarding doorway.

- We made it to our flight! As they closed the boarding doors behind us!

  - I wonder – if they called ahead – to make sure the plane was waiting for us… after we had checked-in, given our tragic tale of maybe missing our wedding.

In the end –

- We made it to Antigua on schedule – as originally planned!

- One might wonder if there was a subconscious effort on either Katherine or my (or both) part… to slow down, or not get married at all.' …but I don't believe that.

- It was - just - a series of challenges and mistakes - reinforcing my life of Hell Difficulty… right up to getting married… to my angel – to my beloved Katherine.

Landed 737 On Shortest Landing Strip – EVER!:

Some interesting details – We flew to Antigua on a 737 Jet – a pretty big jetliner.

But – Antigua had a tiny airport with a matching tiny – SHORT- takeoff-landing strip.

Its runway was not an appropriate length for a 737 to land…

Well, the Landing was 'alarming –

- the plane landed and braked insanely hard… It was loud – friction full – and incredibly forward leaning.

- You could hear the immense friction and tires narrowly skipping on the paved landing strip…

- And – it approached a cliff – as if it would career off it – down to the ocean below.

- But – evidently out of practice – the jet turned as it slowed… And after a full 180-degree turn – taxied back to the airport… where disembarked.

Cats Everywhere – Natural Rodent Control:

Another interesting detail – The airport was mostly open. There was little security.

And - The airport was inundated by cats! Cats were everywhere!

Apparently – cats are nature's natural rodent control.

The cats kept the airport clean of rodents and their droppings and disease.

Cats were a blessing – for Antigua.

And – it was cool for us (being cat lovers) – to see so many cats free roaming inside an airport.

Oprah Winfrey Had Mansion With Reverse Waterfall In Antigua:

A random - also interesting - detail –

- Oprah Winfrey owned a mansion on a smaller island, just off Antigua's main island.

- Insanely – Oprah's house had a REVERSE WATERFALL. It had pumps that hurled water UP into a higher water pool – looking like a waterfall that flowed upward – defying gravity.

  `
    - That was – VERY VISIBLE, FLAUNTED, EXCESS WEALTH!

5-Star Resort More Like 3-Star Resort – Adjusted Expectations for a Great Time:

Antigua was not what we expected. We envisioned a 5-Star Resort experience.

However – it turns out 5-Star Resorts are more like 3-Star Resorts when you are on a remote island in the West Indies.

We 'adjusted our expectations' – and had a great time!

Yea – sometimes you must adjust your expectations to have a great, or even good time.

Bribing Magistrates For Approval to Be Married:

It turned out to be married in Antigua, you must have the local law enforcement magistrate's formal approval.

And – it turns out…that formal approval requires fees to be paid for it.

There was the official fee… and – as our guide informed us – there was the unofficial fee (AKA bribe). We were told… it's just the way it is. We were given an envelop - to put the 'bribe' money in - and handed it to the magistrate when he clearly insinuated he had to consider the approval…and paused… uncomfortably – waiting for something to happen – to receive his envelop.

He took the envelope - and stamped the marriage approval form.

Well – it seemed odd. We had to bribe a magistrate to secure approval to be married.

Oh well…

> Despite the weird experience…

>> We were approved to get married… in Antigua.

Married On Antigua's Beach - Vowed To "Keep Do" - Always and Forever:

Katherine was so pretty, so beautiful… as she walked to the beach, where the waves crashed majestically… and the world witness our Union – forged to last forever more.

We were married on the beach of Antigua, in the West Indies.

Katherine's walk to the beach was magical. She wore a traditional white gown. Her hair was styled – up and regal. Her smile was wide - and genuine. She carried a bouquet of roses. Her eyes glistened in the beach sunlight.

Katherine was the very picture of perfection – as I've said - she was 'perfect for me'.

After we exchanged our vows on the beach…

- We exchanged our vows – symbolizing our love and commitment to each other.

    - We vowed to always love and cherish each other that day.

    - We vowed to be each other's beloved partner and soulmate…for the rest of time.

    - We vowed to always and forever, "Keep Do".

    - We exchanged rings.

- "Keep Do" was the phrase we adopted as our 'Go To' –

    - as a reminder that we always have good intentions.

    - that we will keep doing all we can for each other… no matter what.

    - that we will keep doing what we can to make each other's lives as good as they can be… hopefully – full of joy.

Cut Cake, Toasted Marriage with Champagne, Signed Antigua Marriage Certificate:

Following our picturesque - beach ceremony - and exchanging of vows… we walked to a nearby beachside gazebo… right against the beach.

Within the Gazebo –

- We cut a ceremonial wedding cake – symbolizing our shared life together.

- Toasted to our marriage – and drank ceremonial champagne – symbolizing celebrating life together - forever more.

- And – we signed the Marriage Certificate – symbolizing our social and legal bond.

- And - We were married – husband and wife.

Reinforcing Commitment With Simple, Powerful Phrases:

I believe all relationships should have special moments in life – or simple, easy to recall, powerful phrases – to remind and reinforce the commitment and love between the people.

I would reinforce – ongoing – to Katherine

- Say – Daily – how much I love and care for Katherine

- Write "I-HEART-U-INFINITELY - EXCLAMATION POINT – UNDERSCORE" – all over

- If we ever had a boat… we imagined that we would call it - 'The Keep Do'.

- "Keep Do" was 'our thing'.

<u>Disney's Mickey Mouse Human Litterbox – Disney Was Associated with Poo & Pee:</u>

On one of our exploration days in Antigua, we encountered a bizarre thing – a human litterbox!

Yea – next to a sidewalk, adjacent to a fence… was a pit of sand. A picture of Disney's Mickey Mouse was painted on the fence next to the sand pit. And there was writing – in English – that said, "Pea & Poo Here" - with an arrow pointing down to the sand.

Literally – we discovered - Disney's Micky Mouse - Human Litterbox in Antigua. I guess – Disney – really does – manage crap…

. . .

Who would have imagined –

- Disney, Mickey Mouse, and a Human litterbox all belong together… in the West Indies.

- Disney was – apparently – associated the poo & pee.

- Oh – and I doubt they licensed Mickey Mouse – so I am confident it was a fun – unofficial human litter box. Likely – making fun – with a real problem – public pooping and urination.

<u>Sinking Dingy, Stranded on an Island, and Being Wet Cats on a Catamaran:</u>

During one of our adventurous excursions in Antigua…

We went on an all-day catamaran trip. The catamaran was huge – able to carry two dozen people. And it hand its own dingy – to allow shore trips without grounding the massive Catamaran.

. . .

Well – we had been sailing for a few hours when we came upon a small island, where we were to take the dingy to its shore and enjoy lunch. And – upon finishing our food – we were to return to the catamaran.

The dingy made several trips – to ferry people from the big catamaran to the island.

. . .

When Katherine and I had our turn at going ashore in the dingy…

Well… it sank!

Yea – on our honeymoon cruise on a catamaran, our dingy sunk going ashore to a small island for lunch!

We managed to get the dingy to shallow enough water for us to stand, and drag its sunken remnants to the shore.

We were stranded - on a tiny island in the West Indies!

And there were no other dingy or way to get back, out to the catamaran.

While we had no idea how we were going to be rescued or get off the tiny island – we did have Rum & Punch and sandwiches and chips… that were planned for the lunch.

We joked and tried to make the best of an absurd situation…

And then – it rained. It rained down so hard – cats & dogs hard – as the saying goes.

Eventually – we saw another tour boat come near the island, and we all waved our hands and screamed for rescue.

They saw us – and sent a dingy to rescue us. They ferried us back to our homebase catamaran.

We were wet from the sunken dingy – and from rain that had begun to pour down on us – like cats & dogs.

Indeed – we had become two - cold, very wet cats on a catamaran.

That was one 'highlight' from our honeymoon in Antigua.

. . .

Although it may have sounded like a horrible experience… and it was – in many ways – distressing.

However –

- Hell Difficulty the experience may be been…

- But - it was high adventure, and became a unique memory…

- It weas just another 'a little bit - larger than [ordinary] life' - tale.

Showed How We Focused on Adventure & Triumph – Not Trial & Troubles:

I guess it goes to show you – you can focus on the trials & tribulations & troubles thrown at you… or you can embrace the adventure of it, and celebrate your overcoming them.

Our challenges showed how we focused on adventure and triumph – not on trials & troubles.

I Am My Beloved's, And My Beloved Is Mine:

Two things that have been important to hold close – each and every day –

1. The Hebrew phrase - "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine". It underscores our relationship - and reinforces my love for my wife, angel, and darling Katherine.

2. "Assume Good Intentions" – we all do and say things we do not intend, or that are misunderstood… or misinterpreted.

   - It is important to not judge harshly your partner – instead, assume it is a misunderstanding… and get to the heart of the matter, forgiving and moving on… avoid and accommodate - hurt feelings.

I will always be Katherine's - dedicated, True Knight - even if I may be a Worn, True Knight…

E301 VACATIONING IN HAWAII
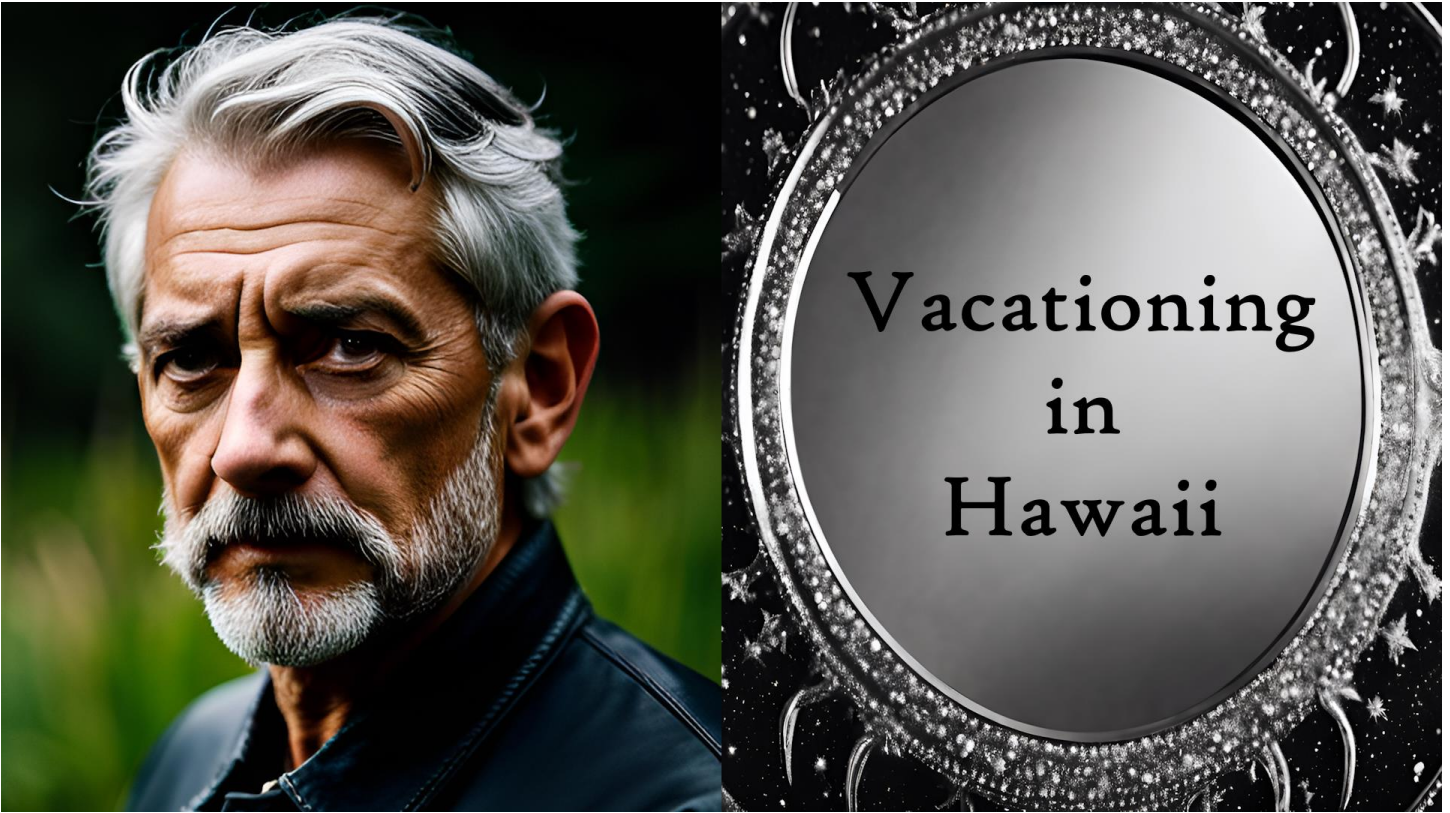
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Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uyhw-e301-vacationing-in-hawaii.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/UA-Vxd44-Bw

Description:
Richard recaps a Hawaiian vacation with his wife.

He shares their march into lava tubes, and of a helicopter descent into the a volcano.

Hear about inner tube treks through caves and underground waterways.

Learn how Richard was attacked by a sea turtle, and almost drowned.

Richard explains the thrill and danger of walking on a 'lava cliff' frozen atop the ocean and its waves.

He concludes that 'Hell Difficulty' cannot be allowed to prevent fun and enjoyment in life.

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

Hawaiian Adventures with Katherine

Grand, High Adventure With Katherine – Only A Little Bit Hell Difficulty:

Katherine and I were able to go on a few adventures – GRAND, HIGH ADVENTURES – together!

I will tell the tale of a few of our vacations – of our ventures into the world for fun!

Descent into a Volcano, Lava Tubes, Turtle Attacks, Sugar Cane Tubin', Drowning:

On one of our vacations…

We scheduled a two week tour of four Hawaii islands – Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and The Big Island Kona.

- We flew between the Hawaiian Islands on inter-island 'jump jets.'

  o The little jets carried a handful of passengers – and, being jets, they barely reached altitude - and immediately began their descent.
    - But… they were fast to travel between islands.

  o And – as one would expect with a life set to 'Hell Difficulty' – somehow, one of those little jump jets managed to lose our luggage.

    - Literally – they loaded our luggage on a jet next to ours. Simple mistake… but with so few passengers and so little luggage… how!?

    - Like I said – 'Hell Difficulty'…

What did we do on our 4-Island Adventure?

- We walked on many beaches - and snorkeled along their shores.

Attacked By a Sea Turtle:

  o Although my name is 'Seaborne'… the sea generally has not shown me much love.

  o On one of our beach snorkeling ventures – I was ATTACKED! I was assaulted by a sea turtle! It swam straight at me – as if to slam into my snorkel visor. I reacted – and swam away… that was it. Well… I *WAS* attacked by a sea turtle.

Rip Tide Out To Sea:

  o On another beach venture – Katherine and I decided to stay near the shore, and thus not need our life vests.

    - Katherine got caught in a rip tide, and was being pulled out to sea… without a life vest!

    - I had to save her! I jumped out to her – grabbed her – and shoved her towards the shore. She was able to escape the rip tide – and get to shore safely.

    - But – the very force that pushed her towards the shore – with elastic collision physics – my pushing Katherine towards the shore - pushed me AWAY FROM THE SHORE…and further into the rip tide – that had previously been pulling Katherine out to sea.

- Now - *I* was being pulled out to sea. Like Katherine – I did not have a life vest on. I was panicking…

- I saw a native Hawaiian nearby – and I called for help. He saw me… and dismissed my pleas, and just returned to shore and left the beach. He did not care if I drowned…amazing, how indifferent, evil random people can be…

- I swam and swam…and but made no progress, while I was losing energy.

- I had no idea – that I SHOULD HAVE swam horizontally - to the rip tide - to get to a different area – where I might be able to swim effectively.

- Randomly – I managed to swim horizontally a bit – where the rip tide was weaker… and I was able to get to shore!

- But – my heart was racing so fast. I suffer from Prinzmetal's Angina – it is a spasmatic heart – that can outright seize for a while and stop pumping blood. Literally – it can spasm and kink veins and arteries like a garden hose, stopping flow…

- It felt like I was about to have a heart attack. And – since I have had a heart attack before… I know – very much – what it feels like. And – I *WAS* very close to a heart attack… from the insane stress and exertion and adrenaline.

- It finally ended – and I recovered.

`
Waterfalls, Picturesque Locales, Lava Tubes, Road to HANA, Underground Tubin':

- We hiked to waterfalls and picturesque locales. And took photographs – of course.

- We descended into ancient lava tubes. It was surreal to see Katherine glowing red in the eerie lit lava passages.

- We drove the scenic, long, winding Road to HANA of Maui.

- We rode inner tubes - underground - through old irrigation tunnels – that were once used for the - now long-gone - sugar cane plantations - of Kauai Island.

Protected Chickens of Kauai:

During our time on Hawaii's Kauai island… we saw chickens. HUNDREDS -IF NOT THOUSANDS – of wild, feral chickens.

The History of Kauai's feral chickens –

- The feral chickens prevalent on Kauai Island.

- The Kauai Chickens originated with the original Polynesian settlers who brought them to the island as a food source.

- In 1992, Hurricane Iniki destroyed chicken farms and unleashed the farm chickens into the wild where they mixed with the Polynesian chickens.

- Today's Kauai Chickens are a unique genetic mix of the old and new chickens, with many exhibiting the colorful features of the original "red junglefowl" Polynesian chickens.

And – what is going on with Kauai's chickens now?

- Kauai Chickens are considered a threat to Kauai.

- Some feral chickens aggressively charge, and attack…to steal food.

  o They are transitioning into a menace to the food ecosystem and tourism

- Tourists often tell tales of the chickens when they return home. They are an attraction…

- Tourists say one of the first things they do when returning to Kauai – is to look for feral chickens.

- There's even a retail shop dedicated to Kauai Chickens, with shirts, hats and accessories. They say things like - 'the chickens steal our fries - but they also steal our hearts'.

- Kauai's feral chickens are gradually being seen as threats… and Hawaii is moving towards legislation to eradicate the bulk of the feral chicken population – within five years.

- Prior to this proposed legislation – the chickens of Kauai were considered a protect animal – making it illegal to trap, remove, or eat them.

Jet Ski-Snorkeling, Lava Sea-Shelf, and Sailing Excursions:

- We went on a jet ski-snorkeling tour.

- We went on a day-long (sea-sick inducing) sailing excursion.

- We walked on a massive lava sea-shelf, formed atop the violent ocean below.

  o For miles and miles were - lifeless, solidified, suspended-in-time - rivers and lakes of lava.

  o Signs warned of toxic fumes where we were – due to volcanic activity.

Helicopter Ride into The Volcano and Beyond:

- We flew in a tiny helicopter into the caldera of Kilauea volcano. We flew into a Volcano!

  o The helicopter was small…

    - The 'chopper was a 2-person helicopter!

    - And there were three of us – Little Katherine, Big Me (Richard), and Medium Build Pilot

    - The pilot sat in the pilot's seat, on the left side of the 'chopper.

    - I sat on the right side of the 'chopper.

- Katherine squeezed herself between the pilot and me – in the middle of the 'chopper.

- Now… we did not all… actually fit… inside the helicopter.

- My right foot rested on the landing bar, with my right butt cheek hanging off the seat out of the doorless helicopter!

- Yea – did I mention that? The helicopter had no doors! It was doorless – so we had an unobstructed view. Nice… but scary.

- Anyway - I had both a seatbelt and a cross-chest harness keeping me inside the helicopter…even if my butt, leg, and foot were literally outside the helicopter… above a lava-filled volcano.

- There was a single release pin freed all constraints – as a safety precaution – should you need to get out of the 'chopper fast.

- But - I imagined - the pin somehow releasing me unintentionally - and sending me plummeting - right-butt cheek first – down to my demise… into the hellfire – lava – below.

o Have butt-cheek and camera will travel!

- We flew onward – and I had my DSLR Camera in-hand with a long range zoom lens.

o We were off – our first stop… the volcano!

o Lava erupted and flowed everywhere below us – within the caldera. It was Alive!

o As we descended - we could feel the searing heat from the active lava

o As we got deeper into the Volcanic pit – my anxiety became too great to bear…

- I had to peer through my camera lens – to somehow remove myself - from the intimidating (if not terrorizing) situation… that I chose to do – for fun.

o Eventually – the excitement within the volcano was over… and we flew back with some more sightseeing by air.

- We flew over a huge black scorched range of land… which was apparently once a residential area – that had been enveloped by a volcanic eruption that sent lava over it … burning everything to a cinder as it did.

- We flew over and along a river – approaching a waterfall.

- We flew over marinas and moored boats.

Hell Difficulty Cannot Prevent Fun In Life:

Although there were challenges in most of our vacations and adventures…

- They were all greatly valued - and appreciated.

- It is imperative – to not let Hell Difficulty or any troubles - take away opportunities for enjoyment and fun.

- And – celebrate every fun time and activity. They are what we live for…

E302 HIGH ADVENTURES WITH KATHERINE

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E302 High Adventures with Katherine.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uyrh-e302-high-adventures-with-katherine.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/QVVNYX55pR4

Description:
Richard recaps adventure highlights with his wife.

He tells stories of visiting St. Helens Volcano in Washington, Grouse Mountain, Capilano, and Kamloops in Canada, and scary suspension bridges, Whistler ski resort, Tulip Fields, Caribbean adventures, and so much more.

Adventures in the States

St. Helens Volcanic Hike:

While we lived in Sammamish, Washington - when I worked for Microsoft – we made a day trip of driving to Mount St. Helens for sightseeing and a hike.

It is amazing how far the destruction of St. Helens' volcanic eruption reached – and how absolutely devastating it was.

Not only was there lava that flowed and burned – over a vast distance… but the volcano blew out an entire section of its caldera… and sent concussive fiery winds that both uprooted or bent trees it struck – and left them behind as burned crisps.

Ash was sent so high into the air – that it rained down well over ten miles away. And – winds carried ash for over a hundred miles – raining down far, far away from the eruption.

It was an awe inspiring place to see.

It really demonstrated how powerful Mother Nature - and God - can be…

Kamloops, Canada – "No Room for You!":

Katherine and I decided one weekend to explore the inner area of British Columbia.

We decided to go to a place called Kamloops, in BC Canada.

It was a surreal drive – seeing snowcapped mountains as we drove. They looked 'too perfect' – like an artist rendered them without any flaws. They did not seem real…

Like I said – it was a surreal drive…

. . .

We reached our destination – Kamloops!

We had no reservations – as we thought a hotel in the middle of nowhere would have a vacancy.

Well… We walked into the hotel lobby – and asked for a room.

However – the woman looked at me – and looked at my Mercedes Convertible… and her faced looked disgusted.

She snarled, "We have no rooms."

I felt like she was really saying, "We have no rooms… FOR YOU!"

. . .

I asked if there were other hotels in the area… to which she barked, "There are no hotels you can stay at." Yea – she emphasized 'no hotels *for you*'… it felt - personal…

Again – her choice of words… was aggressive, and offensive.

But… we had our answer… there was no place in Kamloops for us.

We turned around – and drove back into the wee hours – to return home… aborting our plan to stay in Kamloops.

Well – we did get to our destination… It was a lot of driving though…

And – I cannot say that Canadians in Kamloops are particularly friendly… eh!

Grouse Mountain and The Grouse Grind – and Its Gondola:

We lived near a small ski resort – at the top of a place called Grouse Mountain.

During summer months – people would hike from the base to the ski resort… on a trail known as the 'Grouse Grind'. I only met one person that extolled their ability to complete the grind from bottom to top. I never tried…so I cannot attest how hard or not…the 'grind' was.

The biggest attraction to me – was that Grouse Mountain had a gondola that transported people from the base to the ski resort.

It was cool to ride the gondola – especially when it was snowcapped. The view was amazing – even if intimidating scary.

Vancouver Capilano Tree Top Walks and Ravine Suspension Bridge:

Below Grouse Mountain – not far from where we lived in Vancouver – there was a park named Capilano.

There were First Nations (original native Canadians) historical items and locations in Capilano.

But – the coolest things by far were –

- Tree Top Walkways – connecting huge trees to other trees, forming an entire above-ground walkway among the treetops

- A huge Suspension Bridge over a deep chasm

Deep Cove Suspension Bridge:

Another area Katherine and I would go - to hike – was a place called Deep Cove. It was a quaint area – with lots of forest and waterways all around.

There was a long suspension bridge in Deep Cove…not as long as the Capilano Suspension Bridge…but it was MUCH SCARIER because it was old, rickety, and did not feel well maintained… if maintained - at all.

It swayed as you traversed it… definitely making you feel you could actually fall to your death. It also had no material safety guards – just a hand rail…

Snowed in Mercedes SLK Convertible Driving to Whistler-Blackcomb Ski Resort:

On another weekend trip – Katherine and I – decided to drive to the Whistler-Blackcomb Ski Resort. We imagined we would make a same-day trip of it…

Well… It was a sunny day – albeit very cold.

So… I opened the roof of our Mercedes SLK convertible… and cranked the heater up.

. . .

As we drove – the sky turned a bit overcast, but still clear enough.

. . .

And then… hail, and then snow…

It was an insane… amazing… miraculous… wild moment… the skies were clear – but it was raining and hailing down upon us.

- It was snowing over our car – as we drove – like a wind tunnel moved the snow up and over us…and down the back of the car…to the ground behind us.

- But – we eventually slowed for traffic, and then… the snow fell inside the car, and on us.

- We could see people's dismay as they observed the madness of a couple in an open convertible – driving as it snowed on them.

- Well – we closed the convertible, and eventually turned back. We did not want to get stuck in the snow…

Whistler Ski Resort and The Snowheart:

On a ski trip at Whistler –

- Katherine sometimes skied on her own … because I was not competent enough to ski where she could… Admittedly – I was bad at skiing.

- She came across a mountain lion on one of her solo ski runs, and while I would find that alarming…she thought it was miraculous and a blessing to see such a majestic creature in the wild.

  o Well – I am glad she just saw it, appreciated it, and kept on skiing…

- While Katherine solo skiied – and when I was not in a ski class or puttering around on mostly-flat snow patches – I played in the snow… like a kid.

  o I pressed, shaped, and carved the snow into shapes…

  o I presented Katherine with - my snowy gift – of a Snow Heart.

    - I would collect 'natural hearts' ongoing – leaves and rocks and sticks…anything that formed a heart. And honor Katherine with them.

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Washington Tulip Fields:

When we lived in Washington State – we went several times to the Tulip Fields, especially during the month-long event in April - each year - called the Tulip Festival.

It was always heartwarming to see Katherine's eyes widen and glow – like a little kid – wandering and smiling – inside the oceans of tulips.

. . .

It was because of her love tulips…

- that we bought a tulip auger that could dig deep holes – to plant tulip bulbs.

- each year – we planted hundreds of tulips – of all colors… even black… so that Katherine – I hoped – would smile – and be happy.

Vacationed Every Few Years – Meaningful Adventures vs 'Forgettable Adventures:

Katherine and I preferred beach destination vacations – if we had more than a weekend available to us.

We tended to go on a vacation every few years – trying to make them meaningful vs. a lot of little forgettable excursions.

Although we have gone to Mexico – Cabo and the Mexican Riviera … The Caribbean became our Main Get-Away vacation destination…

But, first – let me share some tales of Cabo and the Mexico Riviera.

Broken Neck Older Woman, Soldiers At Snorkeling, Searched Tour Bus, and Tanks:

Let's talk about some Mexico 'highlight' adventures…

- Near our resort – a woman waded into the beach waves – and somehow – had a wave crash on her – and knock her over… Well – she broke her neck – and I believe – died.

- When – at a snorkeling trip – where Katherine went on the tour…and I stayed behind – supporting her adventure – but saving me from exacerbating cuts that developed on my feet from swimming flippers – earlier in our vacation… armed soldiers with assault rifles, marched along the beach and on by…

    o The tour operators explained – the military was practicing rescuing civilians from a hotel – as if taken over by a cartel.

    o Yep – Mexico – was apparently so unsafe – that the military practiced rescuing tourists from invaded, captured hotels. Wow…!

- During one of our trips – we were surprised – to be stopped by the local 'Policia' (the Mexican police).

    o The 'Policia' were looking for drug smugglers… and they searched – everyone – on the bus… except a few of us. We were told – to remain on the bus.

- o They never explained why we were 'spared' – and our possessions were not strewn out on the side of the road – like everyone else - for inspection – or why we were not patted down and searched.

- o I learned later – our resort 'armband' – that identified us as belong to a specific resort – was a 'symbol' that we were 'protected tourists'.

- o Mexico – even cartels – NEEDS TOURISM. And so – they make sure – apparently – to not harass or extort 'valuable, nice-resort tourists'. They needed them to come back.

- o The hotel even advised that we wear the arm band visibly – on the beach – because they are public…and people need to know – not to harass *us*.

- o With that – we were off – and returned to our 'safe' & 'protected' resort.

- There were some cool things –

  - We visited coastal Mayan ruins – in a beach ruin called Tulum.

  - We saw Chichen Itza – Mayan pyramid.

  - We saw majestic underground, or semi-open cisterns – full of water – called cenotes. In many – people were allowed to enter and swim. Locals dove from on-high – hoping for tips from tourists.

  - We saw monkeys and wildlife – Katherine even had a 'trained monkey' sit on her shoulder… she is such an adventurer!

Details about our St. Lucia, Bahamas, Jamacia, Cabo, Mexican Riviera Adventures:

Let's talk about the Caribbean adventures…

- We went to St. Lucia, the Bahamas, and Jamaica in the Caribbean.

- We went to Cabo San Lucas and The Mexican Riviera.

- We've driven dune buggies, jet skis, and segways. All awesome!

- Katherine parasailed from a powerboat – and was almost dragged into the mast of another boat… but she loved the adventure and experience of it!

- We went on excursions – boating, snorkeling, and the like.

- Katherine played with a monkey!

- We ate authentic 'jerk chicken'

- Of course – we went on sightseeing expeditions too.

- Oh – and I had a few incidents on our adventures…

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- o once I became so ill – that I had to go to a resort doctor for medications and treatment.

- o another time –I was maliciously drugged – and, consequently, collapsed – and ended up in the hospital – receiving IV fluids and more.

- We also encountered a cliché 'crazy taxi driver'… his taxi was on the edge of breaking down…and he knew it. He assured us…not to worry – he had a tool bag in the back, and he knew how to fix the taxi. …it was all part of the 'color' and 'texture' of our adventures

- In St. Lucia – I recall a big billboard sign, as we approached the resort – of a group of men holding shotguns. It had text saying, "When you need protection, you know who to call…" Yep – St. Lucia had a 'rough' side. It was obvious…

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E303 AMANDA AND TUSHAR GET MARRIED

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E303 Amanda and Tushar Get Married.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v55uyrn-e303-amanda-and-tushar-get-married.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtu.be/3n8uv-_IwTg

Description:
Hear the immense challenges of getting to Richard's daughter's wedding in California, from Texas.

Learn how despite hardships getting to and preparing for his daughter's wedding, it was beautiful and wonderful.

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We Attended My Daughter Amanda's Wedding in Santa Barbara, California:

We were able to attend my daughter Amanda's wedding in Santa Barbara, California… where she married her husband – Tushar Hedge.

Traveled to California from Texas in our Dragon Wagon RV – Cats in Tow:

We were traveling from Texas to California… in our recreational vehicle (RV) – which we called the Dragon Wagon… because we loved dragons and we dragged our four cats everywhere we went inside the RV 'wagon'.

Like I said previously – the over-cab area was converted to an all-kitty area

- Four separate enclosed safety belted kitty condos – all in a row

- Scratching Pad and Scratching Post

- Mini Kitty Tower

- Two open-area kitty beds

- Thick kitty-paw friendly blankets – both to protect the RV from 'kitty messes' – and to give the cats traction should they move when we're in motion.

Sure – it could have been called 'The Kitty Wagon'… but 'Dragon Wagon' just sounds cooler.

RV Inverter and Generator Failed – in 118F Desert Blazing Heat:

Well – as we drove the great distance from Texas to California… we were driving through a very hot desert…

And – it was so hot – at 118 degrees Fahrenheit - that our Generator failed… and immediately – in response – our Electrical Inverter failed (it hard shutdown to protect itself – apparently).

Bottom-line –

- Without the Generator, we had no power for the RV's roof Air Conditioner.

- Without the Inverter, we had no battery power to run fans or any device.

- The driver's, front cab Air Conditioning… was not sufficient to cool the RV.

Tried to Drive Through the Hot Desert – To No Avail:

The situation was dire –

- We tried to drive through the hot desert, but to no avail.

- The desert and its infernal heat… stretched on… seemingly forever.

- The cats were panting – they were getting dangerously hot.

- As we drove – I placed iced, wet towels across the kitties, trying to cool them.

    o The refrigerator, ironically, could run off propane (which was working) – our food and ice were okay…

    o The iced, watery towels was not cutting it… not for the long haul.

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    o   We had to find a solution… We had to cool ourselves and the cats off.

Pulled Off Freeway In Middle Of Desert – at 118F Degrees Fahrenheit:

We pulled off the freeway in the middle of the desert – in that 118F Degrees Fahrenheit hellish, infernal heat.

I had to try and fix the generator, or at least the Inverter.

Researched Generator and Inverter Potential Solutions on Phone Internet:

I had an Internet connection through my phone – even in the middle of the desert.

I researched possible problems and solutions for the Inverter and the Generator…

The Generator answer was easy to find –

- the Generator cannot reliably operate in environments over 115F Degrees Fahrenheit.

- we had been driving in sustained 118F Fahrenheit heat for hours.

- the generator was not going to work… while we were in the blazing desert.

The Inverter answer was harder to find, but I found it -

- I had verified things about the Inverter –

  o   the normal reset did not work.

  o   its circuit breaker was not thrown.

  o   its master fuse was intact.

  o   the battery terminals were attached.

  o   I had an electrical multimeter that can measure voltage – and so - I verified the battery terminals had power.

Resetting the Electrical Inverter From a HARD SHUTDOWN – NOT EASY:

- My research revealed that in extreme circumstances – when the Inverter has no idea why it is failing – it executes a HARD SHUTDOWN.

  o   The only way to restart the Inverter after a HARD SHUTDOWN… is to cut all power to it.

  o   It is not so easy to cut power to our RV's Inverter – because it is hardwired to two massive caterpillar tractor batteries and merged with the RV's 'standard' 'House Batteries' (as they call the batteries that power the inside lights, doorstep, etc.)

  o   I had a tool bag full of gadgets, gear, and tools… in the back of the RV.

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- Like having the electrical multimeter – I had a range of crescent wrenches, pliers, screwdrivers as well. I even had a battery terminal cleaner.

  o Well – to reboot the Inverter from its HARD SHUTDOWN state… I had to disconnect the dual caterpillar batteries with live power - from the Inverter… to kill its power.

    - Donning multiple layers of Costco rubber gloves (normally for cleaning) – and wearing thick cloth-leather 'tool' gloves around them… I set to disconnect the battery terminals on the caterpillar battery that connected directly to the inverter (albeit – through a huge fuse).

    - ARC! ZAP! Electricity zapped from the crescent wrench to the battery terminal to the side of RV. I must have accidentally made a connection with the wrench to the RV…and POWER – ELECTRICITY – ARC'ED ALL OVER! …it was scary!

Too Hot To Reset The Inverter – On First Attempt:

- I was stressed… Adrenaline was pumping. It was insanely hot! And - I had exerted myself a lot – bending over, doing all the work – leaning into an outside side cabinet of the RV – where the Inverter and one of the batteries were housed.

  - I retreated to the RV – where I collapsed on the floor… my heart raced so fast, so hard… I felt that I could die…obviously – here I am. I did not die.

  - Katherine poured iced water on my forehead – as I had done for the cats.

  - The RV's engine still ran – enabling the Front Cab Air Conditioning to at least blow some cool air…

  - With maybe five minutes of cooling in the insane heat… I resume my effort to disconnect the battery – and reset the Inverter.

Successfully Reset The Inverter – On Second Attempt ; Back On The Road:

  o With my second attempt – I managed to disconnect the Caterpillar battery from the Inverter.

    - And voila! The Inverter was able to be Reset!

    - The Generator would not run… so we still had no Air Conditioning.

    - But – we did have FANS! They were life savers… perhaps – literally.

    - With the Cab Air Conditioning and Fans… we got through the hell hot desert

We were back on the road… It was hot… but with fans… we endured.

Arrived At Amanda's Wedding – Amanda Was Stressed – We Offered Help:

Another fast-forward…

We arrived at Amanda's wedding.

But - Amanda was stressed…

- a number of people canceled at the last minute.

- and decorations were behind schedule.

- she had an injured foot – following a recent surgery – making things even harder to do.

Katherine and I jumped into action – offering to help wherever - and however - we could.

Beautiful, Picture-Perfect Wedding:

I am sure everyone speaks highly of their child's wedding. And so – I will not consume time extolling how lovely, beautiful, and picture-perfect Amanda & Tushar's wedding was.

A Stand-Out Moment For Me Was Giving A Speech At Amanda's Wedding:

A stand-out moment for me at Amanda's wedding – was the opportunity to speak.

Here's what I had to say –

Message #1:

Congratulations on Your Marriage!

Amanda Seaborne + Tushar Hedge

May Your Love and Marriage… Be…
∞ **Always and Forever** ∞

Message #2:

Some Thoughts on Keeping Marriage Strong…

Unconditional, No Limits, Forever Bond, Selfless, Loving and Loyal

∞ **Always and Forever** ∞

Message #3:

Marriage is…

Unconditional

We all make mistakes, disappoint

Plan on disappointment, frustration, and distress

Forgive yourself and your partner – no room for resentment

Celebrate triumphs, accomplishments, and life milestones

<u>MOST OF ALL:</u>
Remain United As One – TOGETHER ACHIEVING GREATNESS

∞ Always and Forever ∞

Message #4:

Marriage is…

Without Limits

Dreams and Potential Have No Limits

Hearts, Souls, and Minds Intertwined

Infinite imagination, Potential

Greater Together

Inspiring, Aspiring, Motivating

Unbounded with Soulmate

∞ Always and Forever ∞

Message #5:

Marriage is…

Forever Bond

Make Your Marriage Unbreakable

Shared Goals and Dreams

Ever Compromising – Partner Gets Something Too

Compassionate, Understanding – Assume Good Intent

Unbreakable

∞ Always and Forever ∞

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Message #6:

Marriage is…

Selfless

Dreams and Loyalty Have No Limits

Relentless Giving

Sacrificing

Respectful

Shared Resources

Being ONE with Partner

∞ Always and Forever ∞

Message #7:

Marriage is…

Loving and Loyal

Intangible Unwavering Eternal Commitment

True Love

Unwavering

Eternal

Committed

Unconditional, No Limits, Forever Bond, Selfless, Loving and Loyal

∞ Always and Forever ∞

Message #8:

What I Have Seen…

Giving, Sacrificing, Supportive

Caring for each other's interests

United in face of world instability

Coping with inflation and threats to goals

Endured The Pandemic and all its madness

Tushar Transiting Amanda to class, work, appointments

<u>MOST OF ALL:</u>
Tushar has shown to be Chivalrous and a Champion to Amanda

Tushar has empowered Amanda to pursue her lifelong dream of becoming a Doctor and Psychiatrist.

I believe they will defend each other fiercely.

I am confident they will make exemplary spouses.

∞ Always and Forever ∞

It was a privilege and honor – to attend and speak at Amanda and Tushar's wedding.

<u>Fortunate and Blessed to See Daughter Get Married [to Tushar Hedge]:</u>

In the end – I feel fortunate to have been able to see my daughter Amanda get married to her now-husband, Tushar Hedge.
. . .
There are certainly many parents – that never see their children marry…

And – blessed to still be alive – I was able to see my daughter, Amanda, get married.

<u>Again - Hell Difficulty Cannot Prevent Fun In Life:</u>

Although we have experienced trials, tribulations, and troubles in our adventures…

- They were greatly appreciated.
- We strove to reject Hell Difficulty problems – and just overdome them – and focus on opportunities for fun and enjoyment.
- We celebrated every fun time and activity. They were highlights of our time together…

And – may – many more – fun adventures lay ahead for us – in our future.

"NOT THE END"

Judge Ye the Fulcrum, as the Fulcrum Shall Judge Thee

End of *Hell Difficulty – MEMORIES [FOR NOW]*:

And thus ends the complete saga of *Hell Difficulty* and Richard's journey through it.

May it inspire introspection and the pursuit of righteousness.

Ride, too, in your own Quixotic stirrups…

>…and experience MORE MISADVENTURES!

And – Checkout the Trailers, Teasers, Excerpts, and AI Demystified...

<u>YOUTUBE AND RUMBLE CHANNELS:</u>

WARNING - YouTube Censorship BLOCKS Specific Narrated Episodes & Content

(Censored Missing Videos Can Be Found on Rumble)

Rumble Channel:
    @RickLiberty
    https://rumble.com/search/all?q=%40RickLiberty

YouTube Channel:
    @HellDifficulty   (CrispyHeart)
    https://www.youtube.com/@HellDifficulty

Description:
    The Hell Difficulty Saga is the woeful tale of a man - Richard Seaborne – in his sunset years – suffering from dementia. He is locked away in a psychiatric prison for the criminally insane, but believes it is unjust. Richard is losing faith in the world and humanity, but sees himself as a modern-day Quixotic hero – named Rick Liberty – whom alone - can restore the world to morality and righteousness.   He must be free of the Ward to save the world.

    Richard recounts his life from childhood to retirement, to a panel of psychiatrists - in this fictional story – in hopes of being freed. He weaves elements of the real Richard Seaborne's autobiography, into his epic fantastical Quixotic adventure, where he fights the Devil, the Devil's Cult of Bael, and the Seven Princes of Hell's Puppets here on mortal earth (including the World Economic Forum / WEF, Gates, and Soros).

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MORE ADVENTURES + THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY
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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

BOOK 1: BECOMING RICK LIBERTY
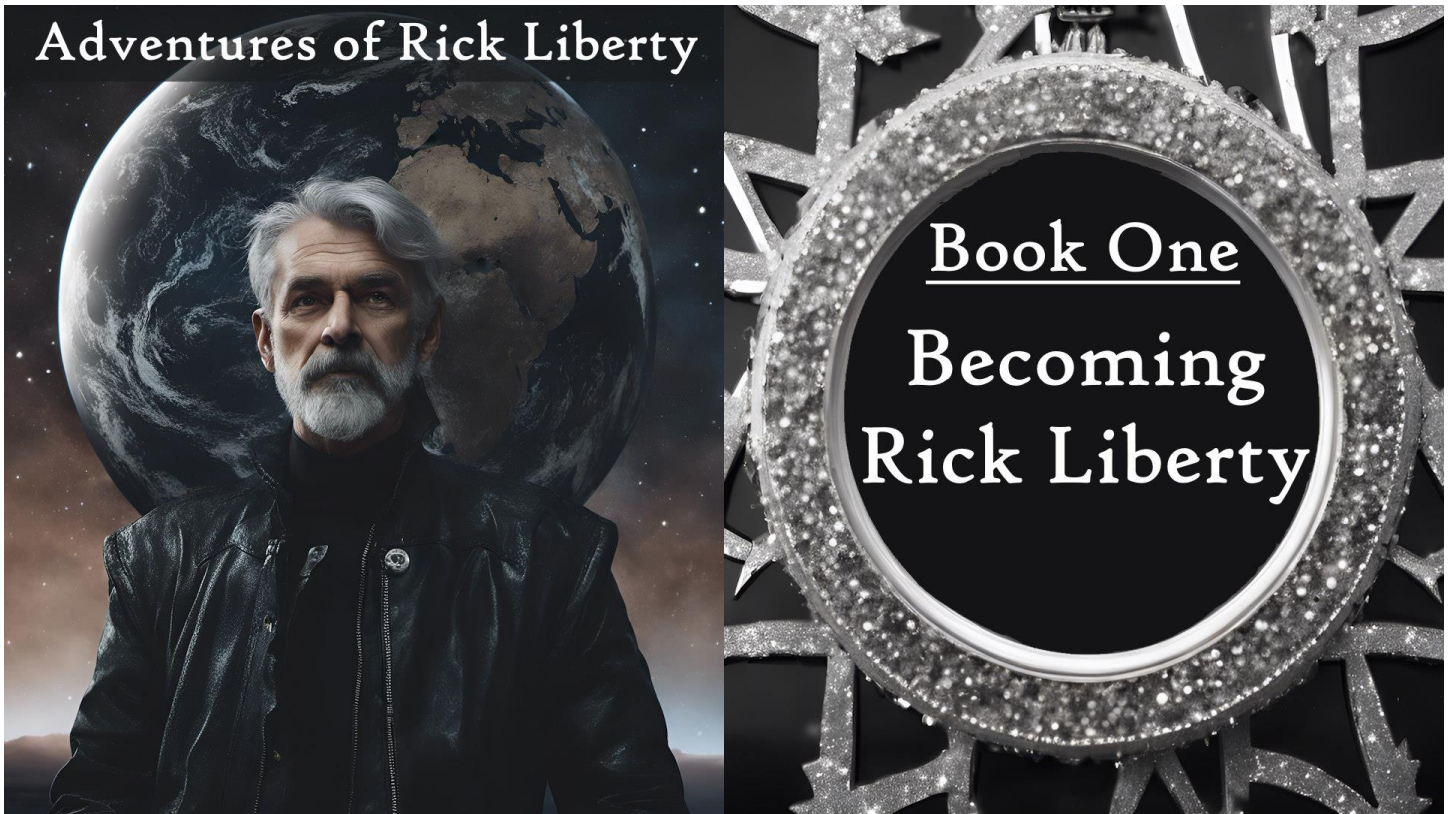
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E000 Rick000 Book01 Trailer Teaser Blast Splash Hell Difficulty Saga Adventures of Rick Liberty Tech Zone AI Demystified.mp4

Rumble Playlist:
https://rumble.com/playlists/Fcg6cYZLKC8

YouTube Playlist
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Ov-xrXhB_FScsVpOn9Ywc3QzYPOfaDR

Description:

Richard's world turns upside down, as he grapples with a series of life-shattering and life-defining events. He must pick up the pieces and learn how his enigmatic past is dramatically shaping his world - and altering his perception of it.

Combating his life's turmoil, Richard befriends strangers to comfort and aid him– in his mysterious journey that seems more like a fantastical Quixotic misadventure.

Richard and his new friends seek answers from the ancient order of the Knights Templar. But things are challenging for the team, as they discover and engage with the Devil's Cult of Bael.

Ultimately – Richard solidifies his Faith in God. Richard becomes Rick Liberty, God's Champion.

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BOOK 2: RICK LIBERTY AND BAEL GATES TO HELL
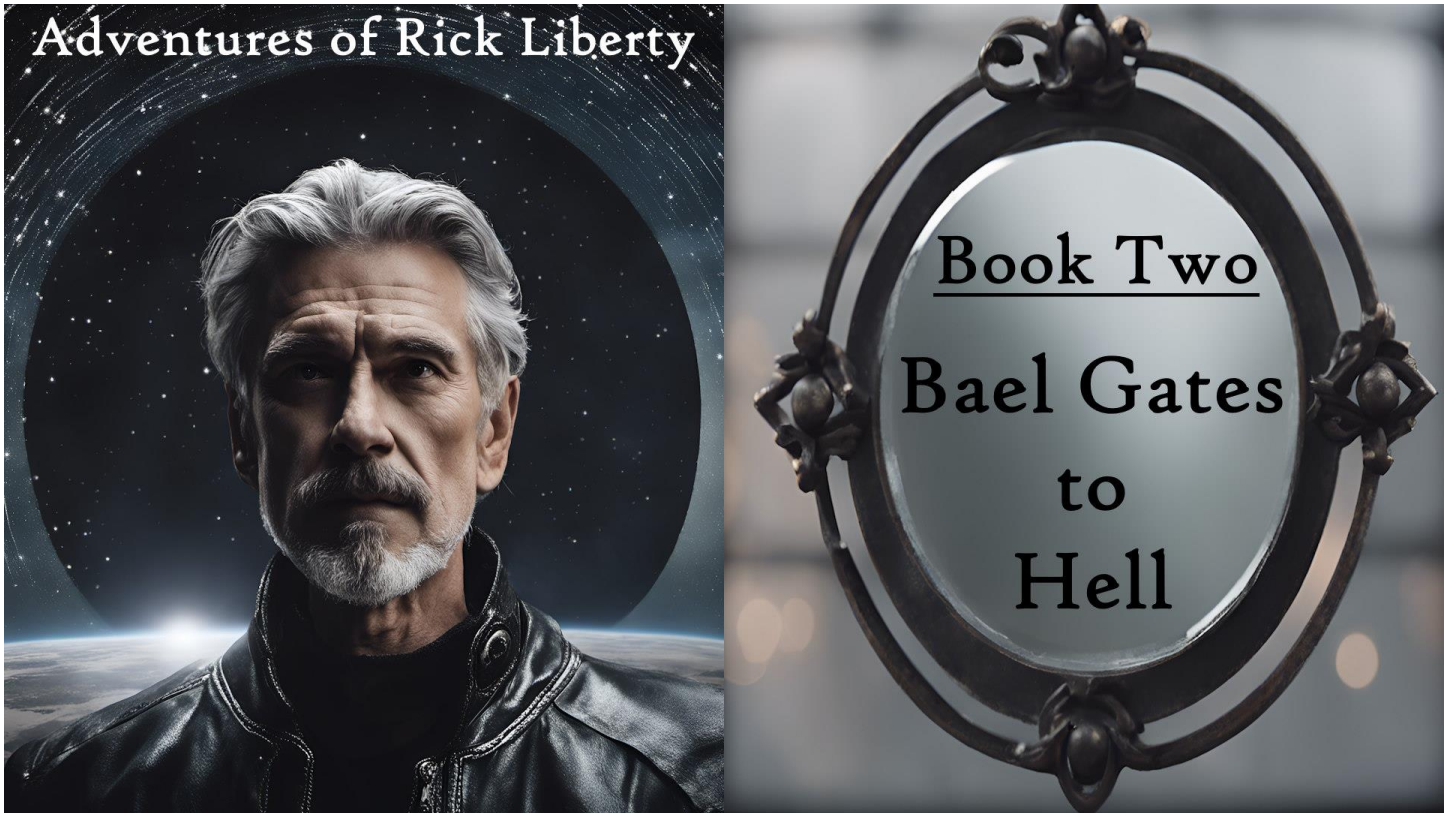
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E000 Rick000 Book02 Trailer Teaser Blast Splash Hell Difficulty Saga Adventures of Rick Liberty Tech Zone AI Demystified.mp4

Rumble Playlist:
https://rumble.com/playlists/EOciM3gbUY8

YouTube Playlist:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Ov-xrXhB_Hid_dxrI4Zu-qqpVaXB72U

Description:

The Team and Richard – as Rick Liberty of the Knights Templar must stop Bael Gates from punching a hole between the celestial planes of Hell and Mortality, thereby opening a portal from Hell to the Mortal plane and unleashing Hell on Earth.. Rick and the team – must stop The Devil's Puppets from world domination.

Richard must stop Bael Gates from deploying his trifecta of World Controlling Technologies – Human DNA Editing, Human Brain Control Implants, and Controlled critical industries - Energy, Healthcare, Food, Waste Management, Shipping and Transport, …

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

BOOK 3: RICK LIBERTY WANTED IN NEW YORK CITY OF DIS
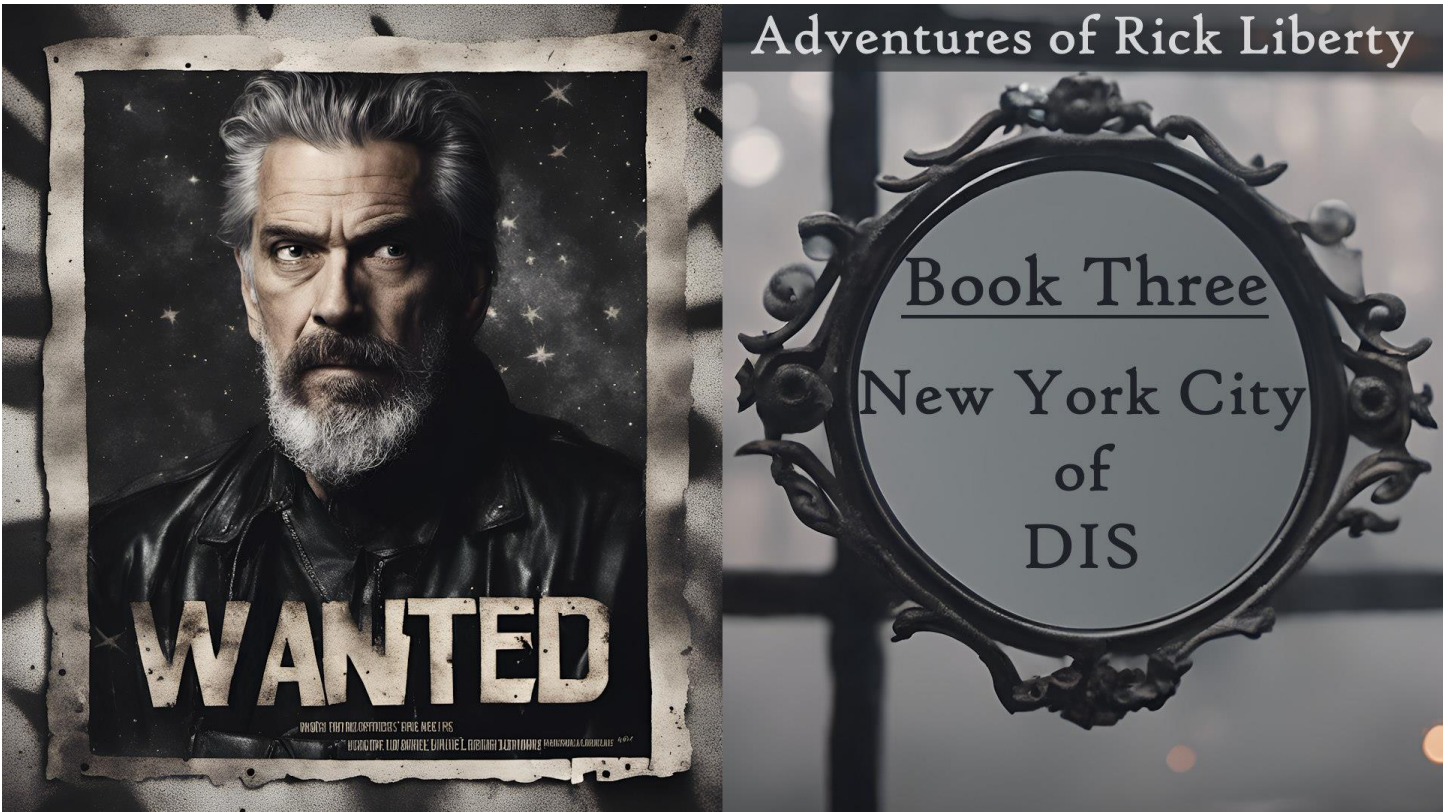
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E000 Rick000 Book03 Trailer Teaser Blast Splash Hell Difficulty Saga Adventures of Rick Liberty Tech Zone AI Demystified.mp4

Rumble Playlist:
https://rumble.com/playlists/JNWDhyJWufI

YouTube Playlist:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Ov-xrXhB_EncJjfWbFmLgNKvbZa4wz4

Description:

Richard – a Psychiatric Prison Escapee - flees to New York City, where he – as Rick Liberty - and with the G-Team (God's Team) seeks to stop the Puppet of Hell, Soros, from opening a portal to Hell with the devil's Tapestry and Crown of Bael.

The G-Team engages and fights against the chaos and madness, in the degenerate New York City of DIS. They operate above and below board so they might succeed in stopping Soros. Extreme events blur reality and fantasy.

The team encounters a dystopian New York - Organized crime and system corruption, Human trafficking, Organ Harvesting, and soul-draining nightmares…all inflicted on countless victims.

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

BOOK 4: THE LIBERTY ZONE SHORT STORIES

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E000 Rick000 Book04 Trailer Teaser Blast Splash Hell Difficulty Saga Adventures of Rick Liberty Tech Zone AI Demystified.mp4

Rumble Playlist:
https://rumble.com/playlists/Q-5wriJH5Qk

YouTube Playlist:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Ov-xrXhB_G5KDtTQvnEUaKLr2y5Fh8z

Description:

Witness the Succubus Demon Watcher Messengers report to Hell the progress of the Seven Deadly Sins against Humankind, and how it appears – Hell is Winning. Learn how Angels and Succubi observe the mortal world and report back what they see - to Hell and Heaven. Hear the Seven Succubi Messengers of Hell report their assessment and judgment of "people's" sin', and how they devalue or disbelieve in their souls, and most are freely willing to sell their souls to the Seven Princes of Hell for little in return.

Mitzi Ballard's life crumbled around her, leaving her with little to anchor her to sanity or social conformity. Wickedness and cruelty befell Mitzi and her family, with such devastating evil inflicted on her and losing everything she loved… Mitzi Ballard became a Vigilante. See "what it took to radicalize Mitzi into a Vigilante."

Experience and Remember The Holocaust through Memories and Poems written by Holocaust Survivors.

BOOK 5: LIFE AND THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY
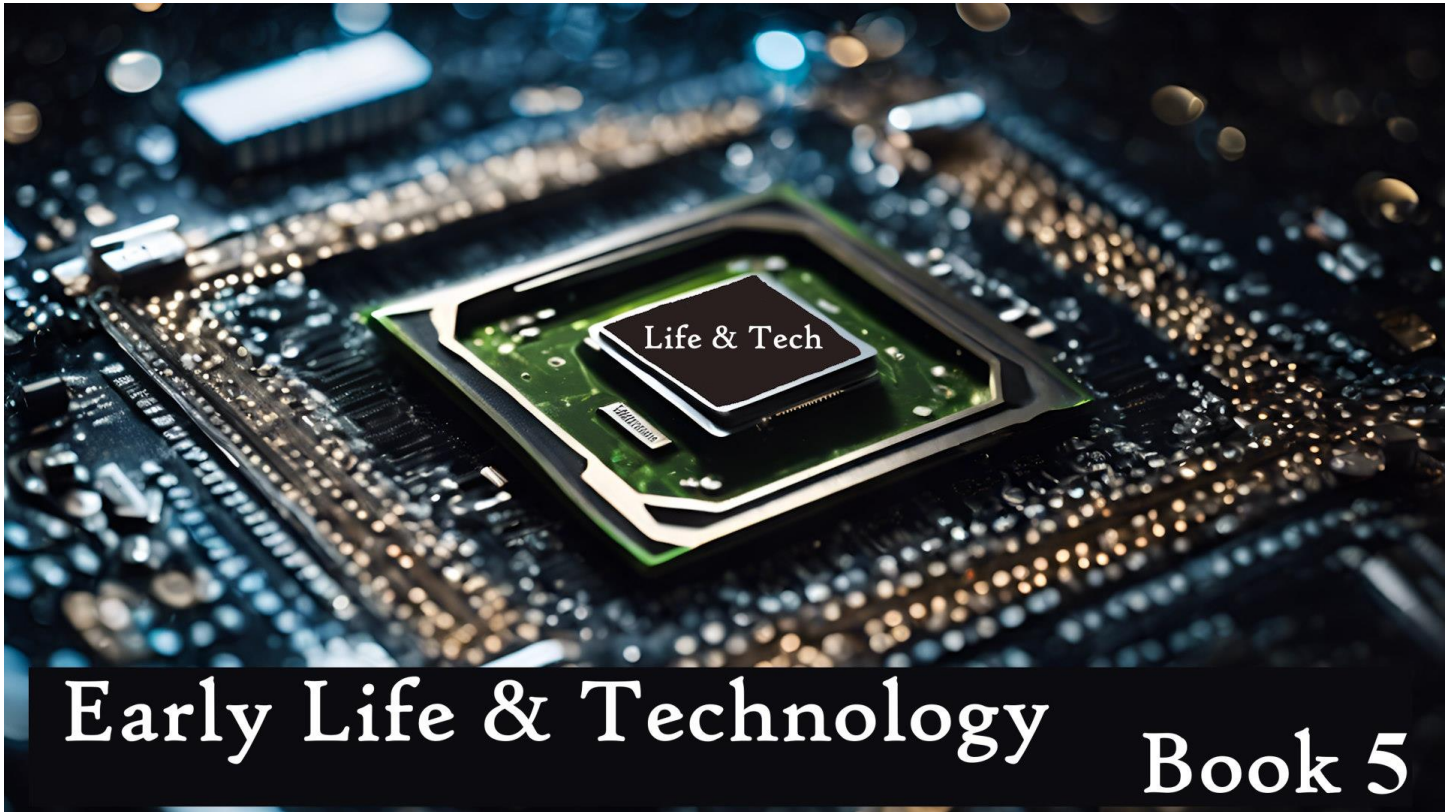
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E000 Rick000 Book05 Trailer Teaser Blast Splash Hell Difficulty Saga Adventures of Rick Liberty Tech Zone AI Demystified.mp4

Rumble Playlist:
https://rumble.com/playlists/dK8qrv8V_to

YouTube Playlist:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Ov-xrXhB_HdVKiNSAcdAxL_-F8wARQg

Description:

The Hell Difficulty Saga is the woeful tale of a man - Richard Seaborne – in his sunset years – suffering from dementia. He is locked away in a psychiatric prison for the criminally insane, but believes it is unjust. Richard is losing faith in the world and humanity, but sees himself as a modern-day Quixotic hero – named Rick Liberty – whom alone - can restore the world to morality and righteousness. He must be free of the Ward to save the world.

Richard recounts his life from childhood to retirement, to a panel of psychiatrists - in this fictional story – in hopes of being freed. He weaves elements of the real Richard Seaborne's autobiography, into his epic fantastical Quixotic adventure, where he fights the Devil, the Devil's Cult of Bael, and the Seven Princes of Hell's Puppets here on mortal earth (including the World Economic Forum / WEF, Gates, and Soros).

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BOOK 6: THE TECH ZONE AND LIFE ADVENTURES

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E000 Rick000 Book06 Trailer Teaser Blast Splash Hell Difficulty Saga Adventures of Rick Liberty Tech Zone AI Demystified.mp4

Rumble Playlist:
https://rumble.com/playlists/M1oZhnxax-E

YouTube Playlist:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Ov-xrXhB_GlwcNOGJgS5TMb2U8jAM6H

Description:

Tales from the Video Game Industry is a collection of stories and insights from my real-world adventures and experiences working in the Video Game Industry for over thirty years. I tell stories and anecdotes. I provide concrete examples, techniques, and methods to successfully operate and deliver software and video games in corporations dedicated to entertainment and creativity (and profit). Learn deep, dark, hidden secrets and many sordid tales in the shadows of the Video Game Industry's brilliance, innovation, independence, and stardom.

Lessons and Insights from the Video Game Industry is a collection of real-world stories, concepts, techniques, and methods I used while working in the Video Game Industry over thirty years. I explain detailed techniques, and methods to successfully operate and deliver software and video games in corporations that are dedicated to entertainment and creativity (and profit).

AI Demystified explains Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) – from its origin to its world-changing state today. See how A.I. works – sees the world – and learns and makes decisions. Understand how A.I. is trained and its 'values' shaped – with and without human supervision. Witness A.I.'s applications and real-world manifestations - and experience the cautionary tales of science fiction.

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BOOK 7: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) DEMYSTFIED
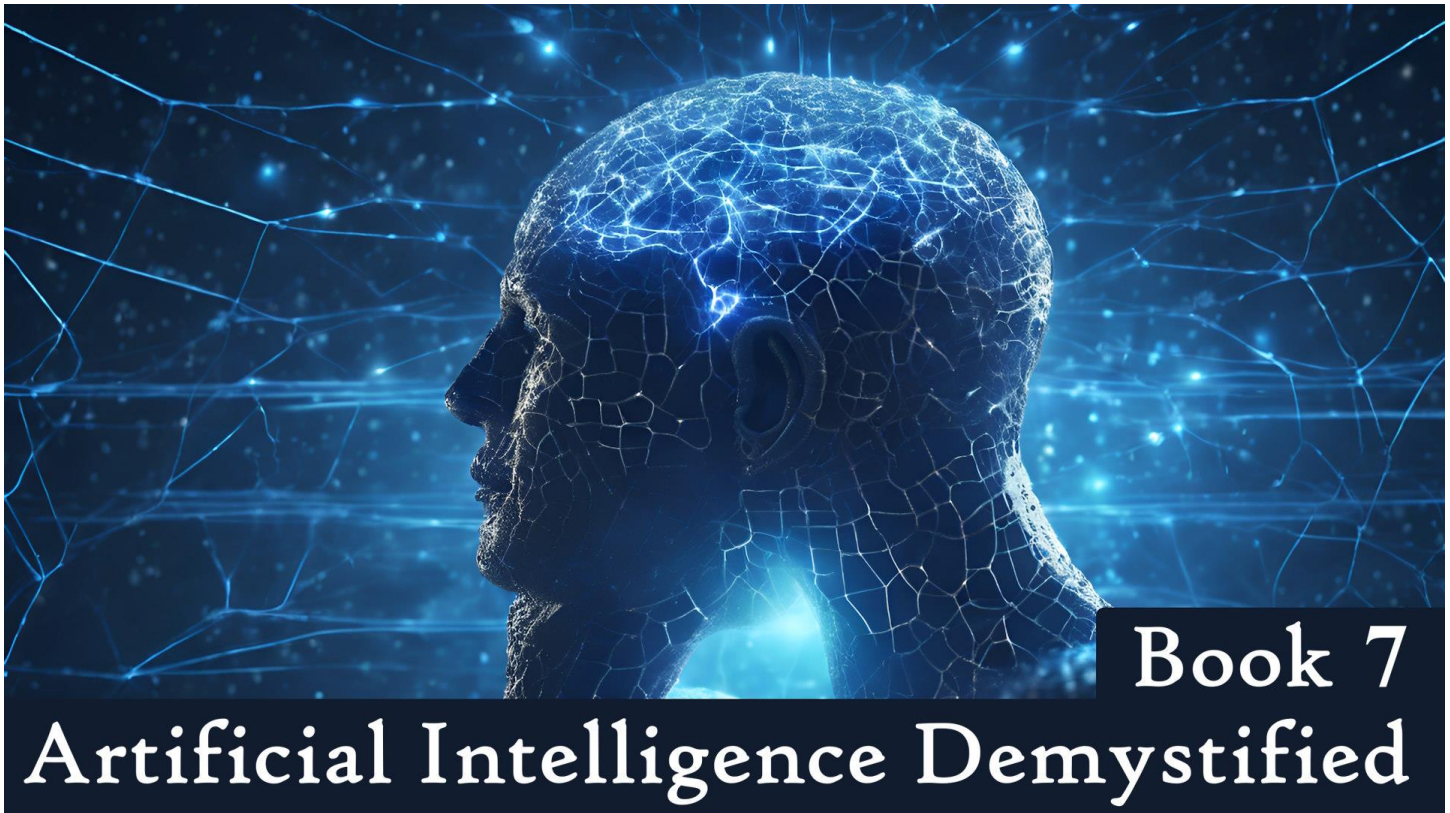
Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E000 Rick000 Book07 Trailer Teaser Blast Splash Hell Difficulty Saga Adventures of Rick Liberty Tech Zone AI Demystified.mp4

Rumble Playlist:
https://rumble.com/playlists/eaXn4d1GgYw

YouTube Playlist:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Ov-xrXhB_EwkM0iBmKLLX2BNQWvM-lO

Description:

AI Demystified explains Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) – from its origin to its world-changing state today. See how A.I. works – sees the world – and learns   and makes decisions. Understand how A.I. is trained and its 'values' shaped – with and without human supervision. Witness A.I.'s applications and real-world manifestations - and experience the cautionary tales of science fiction.

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AUTHOR: RICHARD SEABORNE

TEASERS & TRAILERS – VIDEO PLAYLIST:

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E000 Rick000 Trailer Teaser Blast Splash Attract for the Adventures of Rick Liberty from the Hell Difficulty Saga.mp4

Rumble Playlist:
https://rumble.com/playlists/AHjfK_JVp0E

Rumble "Jumble" @[Search for RickLiberty]:
https://rumble.com/search/all?q=rickliberty

YouTube Playlist:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Ov-xrXhB_H05LqWV3Y0yIct5c-a74B9

YouTube Channel @CrispyHeart:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbTGl543FFzcoMkdv8UzyHg

Description:
Watch the many teaser and trailer videos for The Adventures of Rick Liberty, The Liberty Zone, , AI Demystified, The Tech Zone, Tales and Lessons & Insights from the Video Game Industry, and The Hell Difficulty Saga.

The Story – as Rick Sees It (Splash)

Local File:
.\LibertyBooksVideos\E000 Rick000 Trailer Teaser Blast Splash Attract for the Adventures of Rick Liberty from the Hell Difficulty Saga.mp4

Rumble Episode Link:
https://rumble.com/v3x5c2a-rl-s1e01-intro-and-setup-for-the-adventures-of-rick-liberty-ai-art-video-bo.html

YouTube Episode from @HellDifficulty Channel:
https://youtube.com/shorts/q15d8IB6Vis

Description:
Watch the 'Story Narrative - As Rick Liberty Sees It' -Teaser Video for The Adventures of Rick Liberty.

The World is in Decline… Fewer and fewer "elites" control the world and futures of many people. Among those "elites" are Puppets to the Seven Princes of Hell… to The Devil. The Puppets do Hell's bidding - to erode and destroy people's lives.

The Seven Princes of Hell are about to unleash Hell on Earth. One man stands between The Devil Bael and Opening the Gates to Hell. That man is – Rick Liberty!

But – Rick Liberty – is a Persona – created by a man locked away in a psychiatric ward for the criminally insane.

Rick recounts his tale in hopes of securing his freedom and ability to resume his Mission Quest for God.

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THE TECH ZONE AND HELL DIFFICULTY

By Richard Seaborne