THE BIG LIST OF:

VIDEO GAME DEVELOPMENT TEAM ROLES

Contents

Game Design Roles

Game Designers are more than just the "ideas guys", they are problem solvers who work within the constraints of a system to bring to life the desired experience for a player.

They connect the various departments together by informing the executors on the many specific details of the game and by tuning, tweaking, playtesting and iterating on the final feel of the gameplay, progression, challenge and so on.

Many Game Designers are also executors, expected to dive into the engine to connect triggers, create scripts, sculpt levels and tune variables.

Game Director / Creative Director

This highly coveted and awesome role is the dream that drives many people to become designers. Typically the Game Director oversees the entire design of the game, spearheading the overall direction of the player's experience and ensuring this vision is being met. In some companies, or on some teams, this role oversees all of the creative direction for the game (i.e. As a Creative Director) including design, art, story and so on.

On other teams, there might be a Game Director leading gameplay, story, features, etc., while an Art Director oversees the artistic direction. In studios with multiple projects on the go, a Creative Director may be the head honcho for all games in the studio, with Game Directors being responsible for the day-to-day leadership of each specific project.

Lead Designer

A Lead Designer usually manages a major component of the game's design. On larger projects you will typically have a Lead Designer for different modes (e.g. Multiplayer Mode; Driving Mode; Campaign Mode) or different features (e.g. Combat; Flying; Narrative). Lead Designers may manage other Designers, or might just be the owner of an important part of a game (if they are the only Designer working on that part).

On smaller projects, the Lead Designer may be the person overseeing all of the design (i.e. There is no Game Director).

Senior Designer

The role of Senior Designer is often the same as a regular Designer, but the person is expected to have more experience, make more independent decisions, have more responsibility areas and as a result will (hopefully for them) be paid more money than a

regular Designer. In some cases a Senior Designer will be managing other Designers but this is often not the case.

As with Lead Designers, Senior Designers might be associated with a skillset (e.g. Senior Narrative Designer; Senior Technical Designer) or they may be associated with an aspect of the game (e.g. Senior Combat Designer; Senior Campaign Mode Designer).

Junior / Associate Game Designer

Some companies will call entry level Game Designers, "Junior" or "Associate" to indicate that they are more of an executor than a decision maker. The title usually gets associated with an area such as Junior Level Designer or Associate Technical Designer.

If referred to as just "Junior Game Designer" then most likely this position is more heavily involved in gameplay implementation, or is in an overall support role doing whatever tasks are required to help lighten the load for the more senior team members.

Producer

In most studios the title of Producer refers to someone who predominantly a Project Manager. On some game teams though the term Producer is used to describe someone who is a project lead with specific responsibility for the design of the game - akin to Lead Designer or Game Director. And on some teams the Producer will be a hybrid between a Project Manager and a Lead Designer, responsible for managing the team and for leading the creative process.

Gameplay Designer

This is a fairly broad role with expectations that the Designer will be involved in the creation of game features, game mechanics, progression, different modes (e.g. Multiplayer mode or Career mode) and generally the core aspects of gameplay. The role would likely also require the person to get their hands dirty with tuning and balancing the game and generally helping to "find the fun" of the game.

Level Designer

The role of Level Designer is very broad and can encompass a large range of skills, leading to specializations within level design (e.g. More artistic, or technical, or narrative in nature). At the core, a Level Designer is responsible for creating the layout of the environment (but usually does not beautify it – that is the job of the Environmental Artists); the challenges and puzzles the player faces; the specific placement of enemies, save points, pickups and so on; and may also be very active in designing and implementing missions or other objectives.

Technical Designer / Scripter

Technical Designers are expected to have programming skills, but not to the depth that a programmer would. Mostly the focus is on scripting. Scripting is less about creating features, but more about working with an engine or tools or system to trigger events, manipulate the characteristics of objects or fill in the details of a game once the architecture has been created.

People in this role are usually expected to have design savvy, that is, they know what makes for fun gameplay and are able to create the rules and tune the game (in other words, more than just follow a document created by someone else).

System Designer

A common way to hear a System Designer described is as someone who "enjoys creating spreadsheets". System Designers look at the economy, progression, balance, tuning, flow, points, stats, etc. of a game. They need to know what will be challenging and fun for a player at level 3 and also at level 30. The role is often high level in terms of how the macro systems fit together but is more typically focussed on the nitty gritty tuning and balancing of the game.

Monetization Designer

The term Monetization Designer is used within many companies making free-to-play or micro-transaction-based games to refer to a System Designer who specializes on where and how the game makes money. For example, where the pinch are points, what the price points are, what the rewards are, economies, currencies and so on.

Usability / UI Designer

Some large teams have a dedicated Usability or User Interface Designer who is responsible for wireframing the menus, buttons, and general functionality of how the player interacts with, or receives feedback from, the game. Sometimes this role is fulfilled by an artist with the designer giving only general needs and requirements. Other times, the designer will specify every detail / requirement / specification to be implemented.

Cinematic Designer

This role has a heavy focus on the non-interactive elements of a game (i.e. The cut scenes) and often requires someone with an artist or film background. The Cinematic Designer will be an expert in camera placement, lighting, pacing, background effects, atmosphere, ambiance and a bunch of other things that give the game its emotional impact. They may be involved in writing, animation or scripting events.

Narrative Designer

Narrative Designers can be responsible for one or more of the game's story, character creation, mission design, dialogue, quests, pacing, and cinematic moments. Sometimes a company will use the term Narrative Designer, but actually be referring to someone who is a writer – there is a lot of overlap between the two roles.

Writer

The Writer is usually the architect of the overall game story, plot points, what takes place in cut scenes, as well as specifically responsible for writing dialogue, on-screen information, background stories, character treatments and world development (often known as "lore").

Mission / Quest Designer

This role taps into skills ranging from writing to technical implementation (e.g. Scripting). Mission / Quest Designers need to map out which components will be involved for a specific mission / quest (e.g. weapons, characters, enemies, bonuses, rewards, requirements, achievements, and so on) and will usually need to craft the story flow and give instruction on how the mission or quest fits within the overall level or world.

Programming Roles
(Also known as Engineer, Developer or Coder)

Different studios refer to technical / programming roles using different terminology – "Programmer", "Engineer", "Developer", "Coder" and sometimes "Our Lord And Saviour" (well, that's certainly how you feel when they fix a critical problem during a tight deadline). Programmers are expected to be familiar with the particular coding language that the team will be using to develop the game and also to have a solid foundation in the broader concepts, techniques and solutions relevant to creating software programs.

Technical Director

This role is the "head honcho" for all technical aspects of a game. Typically the Tech Director will not do a lot of actual hands-on coding (often they don't do any) but will be the person who determines what architecture, tools, engines, middleware and other aspects of the tech stack are used. They will be heavily involved in managerial tasks such as planning projects and mentoring team members.

Lead Programmer

This role can be either general for an entire team / group / game or it can be specific to a skill-set area (e.g. Lead Server Programmer) or for an aspect of the tech pipeline (e.g. Lead Tools Programmer). Usually a Lead Programmer will be expected to manage / supervise other programmers which may involve project planning, task management and mentorship. Many Lead Programmers will also be active in coding, but some will be too busy with meetings, planning and problem solving.

Senior Programmer

As the name suggests, this title is given to programmers who have a lot of experience and can own particular aspects of the tech or game. In many cases companies will have 2 streams for programmers as they advance in experience – one which is more managerial, the other which is more for specialists / experts who are interested in being technical gurus more so than managers.

System Architect

This title can refer to nearly anything but at its core it is designating that the individual will make high-level decisions and execute high-level coding related to how the game is made. They may choose the tech stack (i.e. What languages, tools, platforms, and so on are used) and may be responsible for documenting the development pipeline or core code

framework. They are decision-makers and will be expected to have deep knowledge of the systems used by the game team to implement the game.

Junior Programmer / Intern

Junior Programmers (who in some companies are on an Internship program organised in conjunction with a school) are expected to support the other programmers and work on low risk or non-critical path tasks (such as automated testing, simple bug fixing, simple programming tasks, and so on) under close guidance from more senior programmers. In some studios the term "junior" will simply be a way of saying "not paid as much" with the expectation being that the individual will still have solid core skills and can be relied upon to complete important programming functions.

Gameplay Programmer

The Gameplay Programmer will work very closely with designers and artists to create gameplay features and mechanics as per the game design. This is traditionally the most hands-on programming role in "actually building the game" (as opposed to building supporting systems or infrastructure). Gameplay Programmers are often people who play games themselves and in many cases will take on some responsibility for designing how the game works, or how it is tuned and balanced. They are sometimes referred to using the catch-all term of "Front-end" programmers.

User Interface Programmer

The User Interface (UI) Programmer is responsible for creating tools and functionality so that the UI assets can be implemented as per the requirements of the designers and artists. Usually the UI Programmer is not placing the assets themselves, but supporting the team in being able to do what they have in mind for the UI.

Server Programmer

Server Programmers are often referred to as "Back-end" programmers and handle the infrastructure that the gameplay sits on top of. They are a critical resource for building online and multiplayer games. They ensure that build updates are propagated to players, data is loaded correctly, progress is saved, game states are accurate, the game is secure from cheating / hacking, that players can communicate in-game, that bandwidth is managed, that servers can handle the number of concurrent players and many more similar tasks.

Full-Stack Programmer

This role refers to someone who is expected to do both front-end (e.g. Gameplay) and back-end (e.g. Servers) tasks. Quite often a Full-Stack Programmer will oversee a specific feature

or aspect and implement the entirety of this feature all the way from what the player sees on the screen to how the data is saved / accessed / loaded.

Rendering / Graphics Programmer

The Rendering Programmer is responsible for specific tasks relating to graphically displaying the game. This includes ensuring that the game looks as amazing as possible (by implementing and supporting any of the latest technology used by the art team) as well as technical optimisation to make sure the game runs smoothly at the same time as looking good.

Animation Programmer

The Animation Programmer will be responsible for specifically supporting the animation team and to create tools, pipeline and efficiencies as they relate to moving objects on the screen.

A.I. Programmer

The A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) Programmer is responsible for bringing the world's characters / NPCs / enemies / moving objects to life in line with how the Designers wish these things to behave. They create the often complex rules and exceptions that tells things what to do in each and every scenario encountered in the game.

Audio Programmer

The Audio Engineer creates the tools, systems and pipeline for attaching audio (music, sound effects, speech, and so on) to the relevant moments in the game. They usually work very closely with the Audio Designers and will often be the person who actually places the sound effects within the game engine at the appropriate place.

Physics Programmer

The Physics Programmer handles challenges related to implementing physics within the game engine – that is how things move, collide, react and so on. There is obviously a huge emphasis on mathematical skill. Sometimes Physics Programmers will be working on core tech (such as engine development) and not touching the game itself, other times they'll be heavily involved in implementing core parts of the game.

Build Engineer

The term "build" is used to refer to the process of combining all aspects of the game (i.e. The code, the art, the audio, backend, and so on) into the one cohesive product that can be run and played. The Build Engineer creates, maintains, debugs and improves the systems used for integrating all of these components and is on the hook for keeping the lost time (broken build) or down-time (waiting for the build to finish being created) to a minimum.

Pipeline Engineer

The Pipeline Engineer aims to improve the efficiency of getting assets and features created and into the game. On larger teams they look at the juggling act of dependencies and make sure that it is clear how something progresses from person to person on the team. There is some overlap between the role of the Build Engineer and that of the Technical Artist.

Test Engineer

Test Engineers create scripts and systems to find issues and bugs with the build. There is a heavy emphasis on automating tasks which would take a person a long time to replicate (for example, quickly playing through the entire 10 hour game or testing every permeation of items that a player might be able to wear). Sometimes Test Engineers will be part of the Programming Team, sometimes they'll be part of the Quality Assurance Team.

Tools Programmer

The mandate of the Tools Programmer is to make life easier (usually that means "quicker") for mainly Designers and Artists to create assets and implement them into the game. The tools that are created will vary greatly depending upon the nature of the project, the platform used, engine used, and so on with the consistent element being problem solving to support the team.

VFX Programmer

The role of VFX Programmer is to create the tools and systems to allow incredible visual effects to go into the game. Some of this will focus on the asset creation itself, as well as implementation, triggering, optimising and debugging of the visual effects.

Operations (Ops) Programmer

This is a broad role that refers to all things related to bringing a game to market, ensuring it has little or no downtime, managing updates and that the server setup is running as it should be. In most instances the Ops team are not building the game itself, but supporting its ongoing success. This role is most relevant for large online multiplayer games where there are a lot of concurrent players accessing the game.

Online / Network Engineer

This role focusses specifically on the connectivity between players, their ability to play / communicate with one another and their ability to access data from the game's servers. There may be a heavy security component to the role.

Database Engineer

There is overlap in this role with Server Engineers and other back-end roles with the Database Engineer being responsible for ensuring smooth operation of databases linked to a game or a service. Aspects of the role include building data collection and storage systems and may involve working on the data analysis and analytics pipeline to allow better decision making on the team.

Language-Specific Roles (e.g. C++, C#, JS, Python, etc.)

Some job descriptions will list a role as something like "C++ Programmer" or "Senior Python Engineer". The obvious part of these roles is the requirement to code aspects of the game or infrastructure that supports the game in that particular language. The less obvious part is what specifically the role will be doing on a day-to-day basis.

Platform-Specific Roles (e.g. iOS, XBOX One)

Some job descriptions and job titles will looks something like "iOS Developer" or "Facebook Programmer" which refers to the required skills and experience to work with the tools, processes and requirements pertaining to that platform.

Engine-Specific Roles (e.g. Unity, Unreal, Flash)

Some roles will be named according to the Engine that someone will be working in such as "Senior Unity Programmer" or "Flash Developer". Obviously these positions require particular knowledge and expertise in that engine, its interface, its limitations, its pipeline, and so on.

Art Roles

The art team is responsible, first and foremost, for creating the assets that will bring the world to life. A senior member of the art team will set the visual style and direction and the other team members will produce each aspect of the game to match that vision. The major division within the art world is that of 2D and 3D. 2D Artists are expected to be excellent illustrators or graphic designers while 3D Artists are expected to be intimate with 3D software like 3D Studio Max or Maya.

Creative Director

The Creative Director, when used to refer to someone with an Art specialisation (as opposed to Game Design) will typically be the person overseeing the visual look and feel of one or more titles in development. They will often be responsible for mentoring and guiding the art team and pushing the envelope in terms of new directions, creativity and processes.

Some Creative Directors will also be involved in non-art related aspects such as business decisions, game design decisions and so on. They nearly always have many years of experience as an art content creator and in some cases will be expected to have concepting skills (i.e. 2D illustration to set the direction for the artwork).

Art Director

This is usually the most senior art role on a team. They will be the person who sets the visual vision for the game and guides the team to execute on this vision. They will provide feedback and mentorship for the art team. Quite often the art director will be expected to have 2D illustration / concepting skills although this is not a given, especially if the team has dedicated concept artists. The Art Director is usually a master of at least one artistic discipline (e.g. 3D modelling, animation, 2D illustration, and so on).

Lead Artist

A Lead Artist usually manages one specific discipline (e.g. Animation or 3D modelling) or content creation area (e.g. Environment art or cinematics) for the game. On larger projects you will have many Lead Artists each heading up a team of content creators in their area. On smaller projects, the Lead Artist may be the person overseeing all of the art content creation (i.e. There is no Art Director). Usually the Lead Artist will be expected to be creating assets as well as managing the process and people under them. They are expected to be masters at their particular craft.

Senior Artist

The role of Senior Artist is often the same as a regular Artist, but the person is expected to have more experience, make more independent decisions, have more responsibilities areas

and as a result will (hopefully for them) be paid more money than a regular Artist. Usually a Senior Artist will be highly skilled and experienced in a particular aspect of the art creation and is expected to work with minimal instruction often in the form of "cranking out assets as efficiently as they can".

Junior Artist

This title doesn't tell us a great deal about what the person will be doing on a day-to-day basis, just that they will be somewhere on the art team (don't worry, someone will have told them what to do!) and that they are early in their career and therefore expected to do more of the grunt work and less of the conceptualising or leading of the process.

3D Environment Artist

This is a specialisation requiring good 3D modelling, texturing and UV Mapping skills. As the name implies, this person is creating the environment (that is "the world") that the game takes place in. They may be expected to create entire areas from scratch, or may be creating components or aspects or props within that environment. Most teams will start the process with Level Designers creating a rough environment and giving it to the Environment Artist to bring to life, but some teams will start with art first and have the game fit within that world. An Environment Artist may also be responsible for lighting and camera for the game, as well as working on cinematic moments that aren't part of gameplay.

3D Prop Artist

Very similar to the 3D Environment Artist, with a lot of overlapping skills, the Prop Artist will focus on creating singular assets (e.g. Trees, buildings, dumpsters, and of course exploding barrels) that can then be placed in the world, either by another artist or by a designer. This role requires strong 3D modelling and texturing skills.

3D Character Artist

Typically this role is responsible for modelling and texturing characters for the game. On smaller teams this role might also be expected to rig and animate the character, but usually not so on larger team. Sometimes the 3D Character Artist will be developing the character themselves entirely from scratch, but in many situations (especially on larger teams) they will be provided with 2D concept illustrations from a Concept Artist.

3D Animator

This specific skillset (animation) has fairly broad applications – everything from animating characters to vehicles to cameras to explosions and anything else that might appear during gameplay or cinematic moments.

3D Rigger

The step between creating a 3D model and animating that model is called rigging. A Rigger might, for example, put bones into a character model so that they can be animated to move. On smaller teams it's possible that one person is rigging and animating (and possibly also doing the modelling and texturing).

3D Motion Capture Artist

This is a pretty specialised role that requires 3D art skills and some technical art skills. Motion Capture historically has involved sticking little reflective balls onto an actor to map their coordinates when moving and then transposing those coordinates onto a game model. Artists are required to ensure the data is matching up properly and sometimes to clean up any issues with the resulting animations. The role is evolving as the motion capture technology advances.

3D Texture Artist

This artist is usually working in Photoshop or similar 2D applications to paint the outside texture onto 3D models. They are responsible for matching the look of their textures with the overall art direction for the game and may also be responsible for the UV Mapping / Unwrapping of the models.

3D Lighting Artist

Lighting Artists may be responsible for placing and setting up lights in the world, in levels, in rooms, and in cinematic moments throughout the game. Usually they work directly within the game engine which sometimes requires some technical expertise to script events or dynamic lighting changes.

3D Camera Artist

Responsible for placing cameras for gameplay and for non-interactive cinematic moments. Usually required to work directly within the game engine and often need to have some technical scripting knowledge.

Special Effects Artist

Depending upon the game, this role can be either a 3D role or 2D role. Special Effects Artists create the explosions, puffs of smoke, fog, fireworks, and overall "bling" of a game. In a 3D capacity, this involves creating and possibly attaching / placing particle emitters in the correct places in the game. If this is a 2D role then it likely involves a lot of custom animation creation.

2D Concept Artist

This highly coveted role requires legendary illustration / drawing skills. Usually a Concept Artist translates the written or verbal vision of the game (from designers and / or Art Director) into visual representations (i.e. Concept art) so that the team knows what the game should look and feel like. Some of this art is purely to guide the team, some of it will be used in the actual game as additional flavour (e.g. During the loading screen, cut scenes, menus, and so on).

2D Environment Artist

This role is focused on bringing a 2D world to life by creating backgrounds, scenery, and other art assets to populate the game. Depending upon the game's art style, the 2D Environment Artist may be required to create vector art, raster art or pixel art.

2D Character Artist

This role will typically require strong 2D classical animation skills to concept what a character will look like and then bring them to life by creating the key frames of animation to be used in the game.

2D Animator

This broad role can cover everything from customised cut scenes to character animation to special effects to enemy design. The 2D Animator may be required to create smoothly tweened animations, or to create frame-by-frame sprites.

Story Board Artist

Story Boarding refers to the process of roughly sketching out cut scenes (cinematics) or game moments in order to quickly (and cheaply) decide what will be built with full bells and whistles. Usually this is a role requiring 2D illustration skills, although some teams will use 3D software and simple animations to achieve the same purpose (therefore requiring modelling and 3D animation skills).

User Interface (UI) Artist

The User Interface (UI) Artist is responsible for creating the menus, on-screen indicators (such as score, health, etc.), buttons, on-screen feedback and in some cases some of the visual effects for the game. The role may require skills in user experience (UX) design to design where the UI elements will be placed, but in other cases a UI Artist will receive a design and then be required to create the assets that will be placed in the game. On smaller teams the studio may also be looking for the UI Artist to implement the assets into the game, requiring some technical implementation skills.

User Experience (UX) Artist

This role is very similar to the User Interface Artist – often the names are used interchangeably to refer to the same thing. In theory though, the UX Artist is more heavily focussed on the design of the overall user experience than on just the specific user interface asset creation.

Technical Artist

This very valuable role is usually referred to as "the bridge between the artists and the programmers". They are responsible for ensuring that art assets can easily be integrated into the game within the constraints of the platform, game engine or time limits. They are expected to have both technical and artistic skills (although not necessarily needed to create art assets themselves) and will do things such as investigate new technology, build tools for the artists or designers, create scripts for faster workflow and improve the overall art creation pipeline (i.e. the steps of creating and implementing the art from start to finish).

Production Roles
(Also known as Project Management)

Some companies refer to this discipline as "Producers" while others use a term such as "Project Manager" or sometimes "Scrum Master". The consistent element is that these roles are responsible for managing the processes for executing the development of the game. They often have hiring and firing authority within a team as well as managing the personal growth and development of team members.

Producers who are more senior will manage budgets and may be responsible for allocating resources (i.e. People) to various projects within a studio. Production staff who are more junior may be responsible for the "everything else" tasks ranging from data entry to office administration to note taking. Some progressive teams have dispensed with Project Management and instead require the leads of various disciplines (i.e. Art leads, Tech leads, Design leads) to handle the planning and task management on a team.

Producer (also called Project Manager)

You'll find the role "Producer" listed here as well as in the Game Design section of this list. This is because some companies require Producers to have creative input and oversee the game's core vision. In general though, the role Producer is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the project – scheduling, budgeting, tasks management, communication, meetings, and so on. The Producer may oversee the whole project or a component of the project (e.g. Multiplayer Producer or Art Producer). Nearly always, a Producer is responsible for managing and tracking who is working on what within the team. If the Producer is responsible for an entire project they may be referred to as "Lead Producer".

Executive Producer

Sometimes Executive Producers will have direct involvement with game teams (and the creation of the game) and other times they will be decision makers involved in only milestone reviews, funding green-light meetings or in higher level wheeling and dealing such as negotiating partnerships or business development. More often than not they will have budgetary decision-making powers such as how much money is allocated to which team within a studio and possibly final say on what people in the studio get paid. They are also sometimes the Head of Production – that is, the boss of all the Producers in a studio.

Development Director

This is a terminology used by some companies (Electronic Arts, for example) to refer to senior team members who are responsible for the smooth operation of a project, a team, a sub-team or another grouping of individuals. This would involve budgeting, planning and

scheduling as well as personal mentoring or support of team members (for example, one-on-one career planning discussions).

Senior Producer

Typically a Senior Producer will oversee a large chunk of a project and may be the lead of a number of other Producers / Associate Producers. Sometimes they do exactly the same thing as those with the title of "Producer" but have more years of experience and therefore get paid more and get to call themselves "Senior". It would be expected that Senior Producers provide mentorship and training to others on the team.

Associate Producer

The Associate Producer is part of the Production team but isn't as senior, and doesn't have as broad a responsibility area, as a Lead Producer or Senior Producer others. An Associate Producer may be responsible for an entire aspect of the game (eg. Quality Assurance or Localisation) and work with the team to coordinate scheduling and task management. They may manage Scrums or other regular planning / communication sessions.

Assistant Producer

Typically an Assistant Producer is a more junior role and is responsible for doing low level grunt work to free up the time of other people on the team. For example, they may format documents, take meeting notes, regress bugs in the bug database (i.e. Check that bugs have been fixed), and other office admin tasks. If anyone is going to be the person who "is getting the coffee or ordering the late meals" it will be the Assistant Producer. It's a great role for learning how a team operates.

Scrum Master

Teams who use Scrum as their primary task management and planning system will sometimes have a dedicated Scrum Master. This person has many of the typical production tasks such as scheduling, planning, communications, but will use the Scrum methodology for executing these tasks.

Production Coordinator

The Production Coordinator role can mean many different things depending upon the studio. Often they are more administrative in their role, looking after things like team logistics (for example, making sure people have the chairs, tables, computers they need, taking care of software licences, planning events, and so on). In some studios, a Production Coordinator is pretty much an Assistant or Associate Producer working with the team to do scheduling, planning, helping with meetings, documentation and so on.

Discipline-Specific Manager (e.g. Art Manager)

Usually a Discipline-Specific Manager (e.g. Art Manager, Design Manager, etc.) is someone who has a deep understanding of that area but is not required to actually create assets or deliverables for the game. They perform typical production tasks such as scheduling and facilitating meetings and may also have a larger role in the personal career planning or development of team members in their area. They are especially involved in the step-by-step process (i.e. Pipeline) of making the game as it relates to their area and will have ongoing input into what changes / improvements need to be made.

Outsourcing Manager

The most common Outsourcing Manager is an Art Outsourcing Manager, although the role can be responsible for any aspect of the game's creation as it relates to managing team members or contractors not located in the same physical location as the main team. Typically assets will be created in a cheaper location by a 3rd party team with the Outsourcing Manager communicating the requirements, providing feedback on the deliverables, asking for changes, and so on. They will often be the bridge between the main team (e.g. The Lead Artist) and the external team's Producer, handling communications and document control so that the Lead Artist isn't swamped with day-to-day management tasks.

Quality Assurance Roles
(Also known as Game Tester)

Video games are software. They are complex beasts to make and without exception will have errors, problems and issues (commonly referred to as "bugs") that need to be found, understood and usually fixed before the product is shipped. The role responsible for finding, describing and regressing (i.e. Checking that it has been fixed) bugs is usually called "QA" (Quality Assurance), sometimes "QC" (Quality Control) and sometimes "Game Tester". And, if you're a programmer who has been informed that his code isn't working, you might call these individuals something not suitable to be written down!

This is often the challenge with being in a QA role – you have to be thorough enough to find every error that the team has made in addition to being enough of a diplomat as to describe the issues (both written and in-person) in a way which is constructive and professional. QA is much more than "sitting around playing games all day", it requires great organizational skills, good communication skills, patience and attention to detail. Typically, the QA team will be small and lean at the start of a project (not much stuff to test) and can grow very large during the latter stages. For this reason, QA positions are often contract for a specified duration rather than full-time.

QA Tester / QA Analyst

This role is responsible for testing specific aspects of the game to see if there are any unintended issues with gameplay, graphics, technology, progression, and so on. They will often create test plans (i.e. How to go about testing as much of the game as possible, including all variations such as platform or what level a player is or how many other people are playing, etc., with limited time), play through relevant sections of the game, write detailed bug reports, identify the impact of the bug on the game and test issues that have been reported as fixed.

QA Director

In large studios there may be a QA Director who oversees all QA functions across a number of projects. Usually the person in this role has hands-on QA experience themselves (they may have risen up through the ranks). Much of their day-to-day duties will look similar to a Producer, being responsible for team processes, hiring strategies, career development, budgeting and so on.

QA Lead / QA Manager

The QA Lead / Manager is nearly always an experienced QA professional who has worked on one or many games and is now responsible for overseeing a team of QA individuals –

organising schedules, creating high-level test plans, teaching and mentoring newer team members, and so on.

Senior QA Tester

As with the other parts of the game team, the more experienced / more valuable QA team members will be referred to as Senior QA Analyst or Tester, paid more and given more responsibility – they may be responsible for an entire component of the game (eg. Campaign mode or multiplayer) and may oversee other QA team members.

QA Automation Scripter

This QA role requires skills in scripting / programming in order to automate the process of testing the game as much as possible. By creating scripts for certain repeatable actions they can cut down on the time it would take for a person to do all of those actions. Some actions (such as quickly playing through a level or entire game) can also be sped up to be completed more quickly than a human could do the task.

QA Test Engineer

This role has different meaning in different studios but generally refers to an Engineering role – that is, someone who is working in code or systems – that creates processes, tools, structure to enable the testing of the game. They may be required to create specific automation or to be involved with the testing / regressing / deployment pipeline.

Audio / Sound Roles

Typically, audio for a game is divided into 2 buckets – sound effects which require the skills of a Sound Designer and music which require the skills of a Composer. Dialogue might also be a large part and that tends to be grouped with a Sound Designer's responsibility rather than a Music Composer's. Larger teams and studios may have dedicated, full-time Audio team members, while smaller teams will more than likely employ these individuals on a contract basis as external partners.

Some teams will also have Audio Engineers to create the functionality required to bring the sounds to life – that role tends to be part of the Programming team and has been described in the Programming Roles section of this document. On some teams there may be an Audio Director or Lead Audio Designer or other similar designations depending upon the size of the studio, how many projects they are involved with, and how senior the individual is within the broader team.

Sound Designer / Audio Designer

This person will bring the game to life through the creation and implementation of Sound Effects (SFX), ambient background sounds, user interface sounds and so on. In some cases they will be a skilled technician who creates SFXs from scratch, in some cases someone with a good ear who searches sound libraries for the best sounds to associate with aspects of the game, and in many cases a combination of each. Depending upon the project and engine used, the Sound Designer will also be the person hooking up the SFX to the appropriate trigger within the game.

Composer

The Composure is responsible for creating music for the game. Larger games may have quite a generous budget for music creation and a very specific feeling, tone, style they wish to be created for the music. This music may be background music during the gameplay, music during menus, music for promo videos and more. At times the Composer will be required to make short segments that can fit together seamlessly depending upon what is happening in the game (ie. Dynamic music).

Product Management Roles

With games that are positioned as "Games as a Service" (i.e. Online games where there are ongoing payment transactions) there are a number of roles required to strategise and analyse how to keep players engaged and paying money. These roles usually require a person to have a deep knowledge of what is going on in the market, what competitors are doing, what new trends are afoot, and generally look at the game as a business product, not just a source of entertainment. They are often key decision makers for what features are worked on for a game, but typically aren't working on creating assets for the game itself.

Product Manager

This is a role more likely seen on a Free-To-Play game. The product manager is sometimes a person with a background in marketing, brand management or traffic acquisition. They will usually create the game's product strategy, oversee feature deployment timing (e.g. When special events with limited-time content will occur) and make decisions based upon the trends they see in the game's usage data. In some cases the Product Manager will be the highest ranking decision-maker on a Free-To-Play team.

Game Analyst

The Analyst will look at all the data collected from the game's players (such as how many people are playing, when they play, how long they play for, what actions they take, what they spend money on, when they quit, and so on) and analyse that data to test assumptions and make decisions. Sometimes an analyst will have a game design background and will make recommendations on how to tune and balance the game and on what new content should be added to increase the key performance indicators of the game.

It is important to note that the Game Analyst is a statistician – they are not like a Business Analyst (a common role in other areas of software development who creates understands the business needs in order to create requirements for the software development).

Community Support Roles

Any game that has an ongoing relationship with its players will need Community Support roles. The responsibilities range from people getting fans / players excited about upcoming features (more of a marketing focus) through to the people who help resolve complaints or refund requests (more of a customer service focus).

Team Members in this role usually don't create assets for the game but are a large source of input for what is / isn't working, what should be changed, what opportunities exist and so on. Sometimes there is a merging between this role and a more QA-focussed role with the person testing product updates before they are rolled out, communicating to players what is coming, and supporting the community by answering questions.

Community Manager

The Community Manager informs players and fans of upcoming events and features in the game and responds to issues that players are currently having in the game. They will manage forums, update website postings and may create videos and other promo materials. Much of the role involves answering questions from the community and making sure that players remain committed to playing the game.

Customer Support Representative

This is a traditional support role which may involve manning the phones, responding to emails, answering support tickets, and/or being active in forums. The Customer Support Representative will be expected to know all the ins-and-outs of the game and will usually have access to a database of common issues, questions and resolutions. Many times they will be the person creating this database.

Customer Support Lead / Manager

The Customer Support Lead or Manager will be actively involved in training, mentoring and supporting the team members who are responding to issues from the games' community. They will document processes and best practice procedures and will likely also be responding to inquiries themselves, depending on the team size and workload.

Studio Administration Roles

Like any other company, game studios need to have people focussed on keeping the machine well-oiled and on track. Most of the administration roles will have very little involvement with the creation of the game itself. The roles range from the Office Assistant who sits at the front desk and answers the phone through to the Studio Head who oversees every aspect of the studio's budget and is responsible for setting the vision and shaping the studio's culture. There are dozens of roles that a studio might have but only the most common ones are listed below.

Studio Head

This role will have many different names depending upon how the particular studio fits within a broader organisation. They may have Vice President somewhere in their title (e.g. VP Operations North America) or maybe even referred to as Executive Producer or CEO. Ultimately their role is to ensure the company / studio / division / team is appropriately staffed, has all the resources they require and is operating in a profitable manner. They may set the vision for the studio and may be actively involved in the hiring and recruitment process. For smaller studios this role may also be an active Lead on a game project (e.g. Creative Director as well as CEO). They are also usually engaged in dozens of important but not visible initiatives such as publisher deals, investment negotiations, office space planning, bonus payments, and so on.

Office Manager

The Office Manager oversees all of the day-to-day logistics required for people to get their jobs done. This ranges from ordering stationary to keeping the office kitchen stocked with tasty treats to organising the Christmas party to upgrading all of the older computer monitors to dealing with vendors / suppliers / contractors. Some Office Managers will also double up as the HR person, responsible for payroll and policies.

Office Assistant

This role really is the "do whatever needs to be done" role. They will be responsible for ordering supplies with vendors, manning the front desk, answering phone calls, getting meeting participants coffee, ordering lunches, and trying to be productive even though being interrupted every 5 minutes by one of the game team looking for an excuse to take a break from their work and have a chat with someone other than their immediate team mates.

Human Resources (HR) Manager

The HR Manager will typically be responsible for recruitment, payroll, benefits, and policies related to the studio. They may have an active hand in career development and will most

likely be involved in any conflict resolution / complaints / terminations. The role might also take an active part in "happiness and culture", helping coordinate social events or training initiatives.

Recruiter

Larger studios will have a number of team members whose responsibility is to find and lure quality candidates to the studio. They will attend conferences, networking events, school events and so on in an attempt to sing the virtues of the company they represent and to scout for talent. Often times a candidate's first contact with the company will be through a recruiter who then passes that candidate on to the decision makers on the team. Recruiters will also be active online using platforms such as LinkedIn to track down (or poach!) quality candidates.

Accountant / CFO / Finance Person

Depending upon the size of the studio this role might be filled by a part-time person who has the title of Accountant through to a Chief Financial Officer who is juggling the ins-and-outs of a multi-million dollar business. They may have responsibilities with negotiating business development deals with publishers or other partners and will usually have some involvement with payroll / benefits.

Business Development Manager

This role is often referred to as the "Biz Dev" person. They are responsible for landing deals with publishers, finding investment, gaining a wider audience for the studio's products, building relationships with partners such as platform owners (e.g. Apple, Facebook, Microsoft) or vendors (e.g. Unity, Adobe, Epic). They will likely be heavily involved in any trade shows / conventions where the studio will be presenting their games and may also have a marketing component to work with websites, YouTubers, etc. to promote the studio's games.

Marketing Manager / Marketing Team Member

The Marketing Manager (might be Marketing Director, Marketing Officer or another title depending upon seniority and team size) is responsible for getting maximum exposure for the studio's game(s). They will foster relationships with bloggers, websites, YouTubers, conferences, forum owners, and so on as well as overseeing the creation of marketing assets such as promo videos or screenshots. They may write posts in a developer diary / website and will likely be active in posting about the game(s) on Social Media. In smaller studios there will be overlap between this role and the Community Manager role, perhaps with both functions being performed by the one person.