



Producer's role in game development and how to coach students for it

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After many years of growth in turnover the video-game industry in Finland has become **more stable in numbers** since 2016. International competition has been getting harder, and consumers more demanding. At the same time new game genres like e-sport, virtual and augmented reality change the scene. At least in Scandinavia employers and employees are more interested in job satisfaction. One part of a solution for these challenges is getting more people with a combination of business and game development skills in the industry.

This thesis looks for differences and similarities in the expectations and offering of industry employers, producers-to-be and the education industry. Finding these would help the universities in offering courses with correct content thus providing possibilities of rewarding learning for the students, and finally guiding valuable workforce to the labour market.

Laurea University of Applied Sciences being the commissioner, the major development task in the thesis is to suggest a learning module for the students interested in game production. For this main target, an experimental set of coaching session was planned and conducted. The results and feedback of this course was then compared with the answers received in the industry recruiters' field study.

Theoretical framework for this thesis is in management by coaching and service design. For the employer interviews and analysis, a thorough look was also taken into the science of qualitative research, interview studies, how to process the received material in analysis and reporting.

Experimental coaching session for producer students was planned together with the participants using methods of service design like visualization, co-creation, customer journey and service moments. Coaching as a method of teaching the producer work in teams of game development was applied. Field study for industry recruiters was carried out as semi-structured, individual interviews with combination of open, and multiple-choice questions. Design research using mixed method approach information, feedback and material from various sources has been utilised. Content analysis was made by factual method.

According to the results of this thesis the game industry is looking for people with a business mind and knowledge of videogames. With correct experience, activity and education these jobs are available for any student. They should be coached for pitching, team- and project work, business plan and soft skills like communication and facilitation. Certain hard skills like project management tools should be managed as well. A producer should be social human being and enjoy co-operation with other people. Visits in businesses, exhibitions and game jams are strongly recommended.

Keywords: game development, game producer, service design, coaching coaches, game industry

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1 Introduction

Suggestion for a videogame production is often coming from a game designer, programmer or an artist. It may take some time before a producer is invited to join. It has been estimated that almost 28% of the people working in the industry are engaged somehow within business and production side of the game development. This is the second largest occupational group of the branch after programmers with 33% total share. (The quality of Life in Finnish Game Industry 2013, 36.) Keeping this in mind it is important to examine how students should be prepared for this job.

Producer in a game development team is responsible for team- and project work, as well as tools and practices used. He or she is often the product owner, and therefore plays an important role as an intermediary between the design team, company management and possible publisher. A producer should be able to motivate, inspire and at the same time both manage and control the development team, so they reach the agreed timelines and do it within the budget frames. It is fair to say that a producer is a jack-of-all-trades in a team of game development. (Becoming a Producer to a game team 2018.)

The purpose of this thesis is to clarify, what the industry expects from new producers and plan, execute as well as further develop a learning module based on these and earlier results of research. The client is Laurea University of Applied Sciences together with the “Chips for game skills” research and development project.

Background of this thesis is in the writer’s earlier studies including projects in the world of open badges and game development. The client, other universities and educational institutes participating in the “Chips for Game Skills” - project have started to examine these areas in 2017. During autumn of that year a group of Laurea students carried out a project called “Open badges: Coaching multidisciplinary game development teams to project management professionals”. In this study it was found that the organisational structure and consequently communication in teams were the major challenge. There were also problems in peer leadership within the teams.

During spring 2018 the author of this thesis participated in next stage of the project, continuing the work started. The name of this project was “Chips for Game Skills and developing the Teamwork Skills of Students of Game Design”. This project aimed to develop the teamwork skills in the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences students’ teams of game development. In the meantime, the requirements for open badge of teamwork skills were designed. These were based on interviews of students and a teacher, and personas of 1st year and 3rd year student drafted. The Laurea UAS students’ team was offered a possibility to enter teams in Metropolia UAS as game producers, and the author of this thesis took the opportunity.

While conducting this work the base for this thesis was built. Late spring and early autumn 2018 the author continued work in a survey of The Competences Required in game industry - questionnaire interviewing recruiters of major employers in the branch. It soon became clear that students could apply for the jobs, and in fact some getting a position, if only the right skills and experiences are possessed. They should be well presented, and the owners work and results in them clearly specified.

Autumn 2018 the author decided to join also the third phase of the 3UAS-project. Work as an executive producer in the team of eight producers which gave the possibility to plan and execute an experimental learning module for these producer candidates. The information gathered would be an interesting extra for the knowledge already in hand, and the new data to be collected from the industry.

Open badges - project showed in its autumn 2017 sub-project Coaching multidisciplinary game development teams to project management professionals, that students of game development in general lack project- and teamwork-, as well as project management skills, content in their portfolio and commitment to the job to be done. Now it will be found as to how these shortcomings are seen when producers are interviewed for a position.

The producer trainees coached during the realization of this thesis were a group of Laurea UAS students who wanted to start working as producers. Besides their coaching sessions they acted in eight game design groups in Metropolia UAS. Their work or achievements there are part of this research only when it comes to the feedback received from their teammates. How far they got with their game, or details of this process are not addressed in this study.

This research leans on the co-operation done with but not the work inside the Metropolia UAS's game development groups during 2017-2018. Parts of work relevant to any producer in game industry, such as marketing, digital-, influencer- or other-, branding or community building are therefore ruled out from it. This is because the 3UAS-initiative producer work excluding marketing was Laurea UAS's students' area of responsibility.

The research problem in this study was "which tasks or processes of the work of a game producer could be taught in the universities of applied sciences". The question to be answered in order to know this is "which skills and competences the employers of game industry expects the students looking for a producers' positions in the business to have".

Research data and experiences from the projects conducted during the last three semesters was the **basis** of this work and the thesis. Visualization, co-creation, customer journey and service moments, concepts of service design were applied throughout the work.

Available literature and research of the areas of coaching, qualitative research and service design, both in printed form and in the internet were studied widely for this thesis. Employers were interviewed about their requirements for new producers in the field of videogame production. Other occupations which made appearances during research of the game industry were also studied. Results of these studies will be reported and applied for producer purposes when it is possible and acceptable without endangering the validity and the reliability of the research.

2 Available education in game production in Finland

Finland is one of the most important pioneering countries in video game design. This fact became **embedded** in the tailwind of Nokia's success during the 1980's and 1990's. The famous Snake game was offered to the consumers in their model 6110 mobile phones, and the popularity of it became soon obvious. (BIT1 2018, Wilhelm That.)



Photo 1: BIT1 presentation (2018)

A lot has happened since the Snake enchanted the world. There are about 250 companies in game industry in Finland only. They employ about 3000 people. Until 2016 the business grew extremely fast, reaching turnover of 2,5 b€ (Industry Info Neogames, 2018). Demand for skilled professionals was exceeded at the same time. It has been reported that the ITC sector

in total could hire 9000 programmers immediately (EVA Analyysit 6.4.2018). While coders are missed in game industry as well, in the Chips for Game Skills studies it has been learnt that the lack of professional personnel also in other trades of game design is tangible. The education industry has reacted to this need and started to draft courses and studies for people interested in this subject area. This thesis will bring its own spice to this discussion and work.

The Finish National Board of Education has profoundly reported about the skills and competences needed in the game industry. The contents of their study are directed to the education professionals mainly, but the results are equally interesting to the students and employers of the game industry. The work of the project lasted from 2014-2015. The results are predicted to be valuable for the education industry for 10-15 years. Productisation together with creation of social community, skill of scaling a game business, and ethical competence i.e. the work ethics, were the four main points brought out as skills and competences of importance. (Report on competences and skills need in game industry 2016, 6-7.)

In the same year (2016) Finnish Game Industry Report stated that since games education in Finland has been transferred to student friendly and game development-oriented direction instead of strict and formal lecture-courses, direct patch to success as well as welcoming community is to be developed here (Finnish Game Industry Report 2016, 59-61).

All above mentioned publications emphasize the importance of competences and skills of international business, monetization and professional management in a successful game design. Social community building and analytics are seen more important than some other aspects of game design. These facts show that more skilled producers are needed in the industry. Today there are more than 50 institutions giving courses and teaching various aspects of game design and related businesses (Game studies in Finland 2018).

Universities aim to bring theoretical, conceptual and cultural aspects to the basic research of game development. Studies are connected for example to entrepreneurship, economics and research of the area. In universities of applied sciences, the approach is more practical. Students often work in their own game projects, or within game labs developing more advanced products or services. In vocational schools, pupils graduate in sound design, programming or information- and communication technology. Besides the real-life implementation of these aspects, the importance of teamwork and process type work method are emphasized to the students. (Opas peliliiketoimintaan 2015, 129-132.)

Today a degree in game production cannot be achieved in Finland. A major in game industry can be chosen in the universities of applied sciences in Kajaani, Tampere, and in Metropolia

UAS in Helsinki. There within courses in business, media, science and engineering of game design are offered. Business of game development can be studied in Haaga-Helia UAS in Helsinki and in Oulu UAS. (Game studies in Finland 2018.)

Recently a plan of opening a coding school in Helsinki has been published. This university level education is available for people of all ages starting from autumn 2019. It is organized by Finish game industry influencer Ilkka Paananen of Supercell. The name of the school will be “Hive Helsinki” and there the industry wishes to do it’s share for solving the problem of lack of game programmers in Finland. The nature of the school is revolutionary since there’ll be no teachers. Students learn to solve given problems in teams and independently. They learn to learn and solve. The selection process will eliminate the majority of the applicants. Only 100 will be accepted. (Peliyhtiö Supercell perustaa Helsinkiin koodauskoulun 2018.)

When students move from any school to real working life, they will face fierce, real and hard competition. There the producer can really make a difference if the video game can be launched within the budget and schedule. While studying, adding to one’s experiences, and participating student game development projects the business side of the trade should be learnt as well. The tradition of game industry in Finland is technology oriented. As practices of team- and project work, business plan, marketing and similar should be implanted, the characteristics of the team should be taken into consideration. Could coaching be the correct method for this and should methods, as well as tools of service design be applied when designing the coaching sessions?

3 Utilising service design in design research

This chapter will shortly explain the theory of service design, it’s background in history and the concepts as well as the tools within. Much has been written of it, so the theory will be referred to here only when it is relevant to this research. Contents and practices of the course designed were based on the experiences of the first series of sessions during autumn semester 2018, the feedback received and most importantly the results received from the industry research conducted during January-February 2019.

The history of economies has been similar all over the world. All countries have gone through the phases as described in figure 1. Before reaching the level of today people have earned a living first in primary production of farming grain or livestock. Second step was often raw materials. Globalization meant that manufacturing was moved into places where it was wiser to practise. Distribution and retail grew in importance and well-being as well as an abundance of excellent products lead to competition between companies, brands and organisations. In this new situation service became more and more important. Today digitalisation has forced all to

come up with new sales- and service channels or change, as well as develop their processes in order to survive. (Reason, Lövlie & Flu 2016, 13.)



Figure 1: Development of economies (Reason & al. 2016, 13)

Service design has its' roots in the evolution of traditional business economies as shown in figure 2. For mass marketing of products excellent communication was needed. The importance of branding grew with the rise of industrial design. Historically the birth of the concept of service marketing paved the way for service design to grow in importance since early 2000's. The concept of service blueprints was brought to service design from the theory of service marketing. (Reason & al. 2016, 12.)

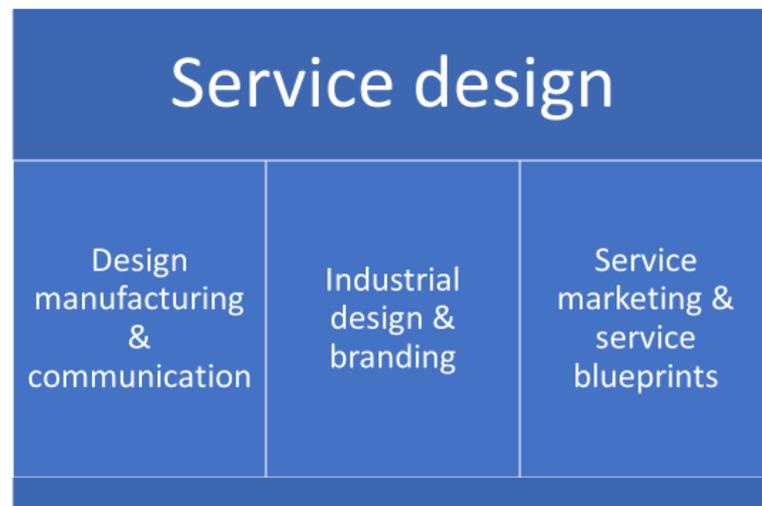


Figure 2: Factors behind the development of service design (Reason & al. 2016, 12)

Besides the economical trend there are also social and technical improvements behind the success of service industry. As shown in figure 3. these together shape the future. Social trend is the result of people getting accustomed to perfect or almost perfect products and services. They start to expect the same throughout their life. The growing importance of services and service design has lot to thank digitalisation for. It is the trend in technology that allows new companies, service providers or brands enter the traditional, established markets. (Reason & al. 12.)

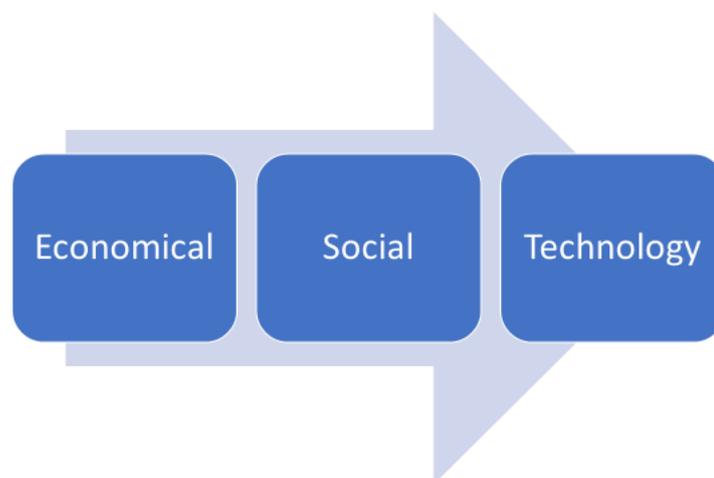


Figure 3: Trends behind the success of service design (Reason & al. 2016, 12-13)

Service design means innovating, developing and designing services and using the tools of design in this work (Jylhä & Viitala 2013, 331). According to Tuulaniemi (2011, 58) it is a commonly shared way of thinking and working, a process, selection of tools, a frame for developing a service. With it the developer can construct new methods for the work environment.

“Service design addresses the service production from the perspective of clients or personnel (Miettinen & Koivisto 2009, 15). Personnel like customer service agents (Tuulaniemi 2011, 53-54), but also clients produce and consume the service product. They are the key persons in service development and should be involved accordingly in the design process (Tuulaniemi 2011, 74-75). As Miettinen & Koivisto (2009, 76) write: “... human-centred design process focuses not only on developing usable, functional and desirable services but also creating unique value propositions for the customers.”

Service design is useful whenever any organization needs a change or development. It is a good tool to reach a better customer understanding. While connecting better with clients or personnel, useful networks are also built. (Reason & al 2016, 14-15.) It is equally important to note that while products are eagerly hunted by copy-cats for imitation, services cannot be copied (Tuulaniemi 2011, 55-57).

Design thinking
Qualitative customer research
Visualisation
Co-design
Service blueprint
Customer journey
Front-stage channels/ backstage processes

Table 1: Key concepts of service design (Reason & al. 2016, 15-20)

Above in table 1. key concepts of service design process have been presented. The following paragraphs explain in more detail those of them relevant to this research. More information of others can be found from the reference books like the ones of Tuulaniemi (2011) and Reason & al. (2016).

To understand the real expectations, disappointments and positive surprises of clients or personnel, these should be verified by proper research. Information on customers should be collected and analysed. Qualitative research has been found to be the best source for relevant information for service design. (Tuulaniemi 2011, 142-143.) Reason & al. (2016, 16-17) write

that the qualitative approach to the study should be selected since information of customer behaviour is what is looked for.

Service design uses a lot of visualisation in its' processes. It is useful in planning new service and communicating with clients or personnel. It is a more effective way of communication than written and printed text. Even spoken messages are more difficult for the listeners to absorb than a good picture. Visualisation builds mutual and shared understanding within the project group, and when using it the development process becomes faster. (Tuulaniemi 2011, 114-115.)

Good service is like a "magical moment". It is produced and consumed simultaneously, and it can be developed on daily basis. Service production is iterative work where the service provider and the client can both benefit if they join forces. This is called co-creation or co-design in services. (Reason & al. 2016, 18.) Tuulaniemi (2011, 117) writes that with this concept both parties become more committed to the mutual targets and results to be reached.

Customer journey describes how the process of service is seen and experienced by the client. There it is made visible how the contact is created, how the interaction is conducted and received. It's a concept of service design showing the process of customer service. With it the service provider can see how the clients can be bound to the organisation, which channels to use for this and where to invest or activate itself. (Reason & al. 2016,27.)

Service moments carried out in service touchpoints form the customer journey. These are the times when customers are met, and service consumed. People as well as environments, things and working methods can be touchpoints. The consumer enjoys the service through all his or her senses. Even lights, sounds and colours play a big role in customer satisfaction. (Tuulaniemi 2011, 79-80.)

There are many tools for collecting the necessary information for a service design project. It is possible that an organization has already background information or tacit knowledge of clients or personnel. Surveys and interviews of customers are good sources for obtaining new data. By using them it is possible to engage the clients in the service design. These and other methods are presented in table 2. (Tuulaniemi 2011, 146.)

<u>Method</u>	<u>Use of method</u>
Existing sources	Base for customer research
Interviews and surveys	For inspiring and guiding the research
Observing (passive or active)	Participant observation, still and video documentation.
Engagement of the client(s)	Co-discovery and -design
Self-documentation	Design probes, participant diaries

Table 2: Methods of data collection for client comprehension (Tuulaniemi 2011, 146)

People can be observed by shadowing them when for example information relating to the reasons for disappointment or unmet expectations in service delivery need to be found (Reason & al. 2016, 110-111). This means following the end-user's activities while they are participating in the service. At the same time the implementation of the service is to be examined. Then it will be known how the interaction between the service provider and consumer is realized and ideas for further development will be found. (Tuulaniemi 2011, 150.)

Probes are tools for discovering new design possibilities. In them service users participate in the work actively by documenting their own actions while consuming the service. These notes can be written out in the form of a diary. (Miettinen & Koivisto 2009, 62). The researcher has given the tasks and materials to the user. The probes are most usable when the consumers cannot be observed in their own environment or when information is needed for example of many people, many locations or around the clock. (Tuulaniemi 2011, 151-152.) Service design is teamwork at its' best. In those circumstances traditional management methods cannot be used. Would management by coaching would help a service design team to reach best results?

4 Coaching the producers

Manager in an expert organization often faces the fact, that subordinates know more of their own special area of responsibility, than the superior. This Phenomena exists also in game development teams. The presence of a coach in these project groups must therefore be well justified to the whole team. (Simpson M. 2014, xi.) Knowing this, it is fair to say that we've come a long way from the days when classical management theories dictated how to lead an organization.

At the end of the 19th century, and during the early 1900's managers concentrated on effectiveness in work and maximizing the profits. Management was in the hands of the foremen who solely made the decisions needed. This resulted from the idea that only money and physical

needs inspired the workers. While increasing the productivity of an industrial process this system neglected peoples' needs for variety and creativity. (Classical Management Theory, 2018.)

Robert Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs presented in 1954 forced a manager to realize that there was more than food and sleep to be considered when motivating the workers. As shown in figure 1. this famous pyramid of needs consisted of different levels moving from physiological needs up to the needs of self-fulfilment. Each level expressed the developing needs of a human being.

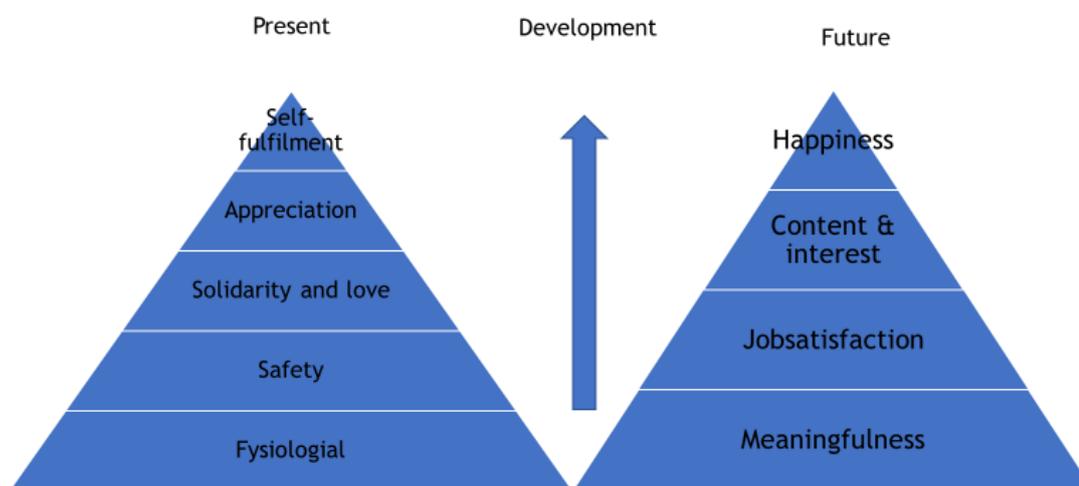


Figure 4: From Maslow's Hierarchy of needs to Baldoni's Hierarchy of Target (Furman & Rubanovitsch 2014, 108)

Furman & Rubanovitsch (2014, 108-109) describe how the hierarchy of needs has different contents in the future. Safety, solidarity and love, appreciation and self-fulfilment in work are already today taken for granted. Referring to Baldoni (2005) they write that relevance of job duties and satisfaction in work grow more important. The contents of daily duties should be interesting and bring happiness in life.

The same year with Maslow's hierarchy of needs Peter Drucker published his book *The Practice of Management* which continued bringing workers commitment to the forefront. By the end of the century the world was ready for Learning Organisations. Peter Senge wrote in 1990 in his book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation* that teamwork is a part of this new way of working. (A Timeline of Management and Leadership 2016.)

In 2009 Daniel Pink refreshed an idea from the times of the classical management theory. He built a new look for motivational theory that pointed out the importance of drive in the actions of human beings. His book *Drive, "The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us"* gathered together three important concepts that paved the way to coaching as management practice. They were autonomy, mastery and purpose. Autonomy means that people wish to lead themselves, mastery is equivalent to the fact that we want to become better in what we do **and purpose** states that greater meaning in the work is important. (A Timeline of Management and Leadership 2016.)

Management styles can be divided into authoritarian and democratic alternatives. The first one is legitimated by hierarchy and position. Classical management theory described above is a good example of this approach. The latter leads with prestige and what empowers people there, are skills and knowledge. The manager or team leader following democratic practise delegates and may even let others show the way, while still influencing in the background. (Maner 2016.) Using coaching as management tool means that the democratic choice based on the use of prestige is chosen. A good coach lets the trainee **show** the way and find solutions for the problems.

Coaching is based on trust which should be built consciously, and it covers both genuine interest on other persons or teams, empathy and sympathy. The real presence of the coach and his or hers active listening of the trainee is vital. On top of these effectivity in problem solving, accountability of the trainee and follow up is essential. This way persons or teams will to grow as well as develop, and organisations need to reach business goals can be combined. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 87.)

In my research I will design and execute a training program for the students of business administration. This learning module will show the way to the future Laurea UAS students, how to grow to become producers in a game design team. In this framework it is vital to understand the basics of coaching philosophy. Programmers and artists after all, are professional specialists and deserve to be managed likewise.

4.1 Research in coaching management

To define the concept of coaching we must study another similar approach for developing organizations called mentoring. Over time there have been scholars who either argue that these two methods are the same, or strongly oppose the way of combining these two approaches which they see as totally different. For both words the origins can be found from the history. Even the early Greek philosophers strived for full understanding between the participants of the discourse and reached for consensus in the end. These are typical targets for mentoring

process but also the ones of coaching. It seems however that since no use of the concept of coaching as an organizational work tool can be found before 1800's, the use of mentoring has longer history. (Garvey B., Stokes P., Megginson D 2018, 3-21.)

While the target in coaching and mentoring can be the same, to develop the organization, one factor makes them different. Mentoring sessions are often shorter, for example only one day and for some special issue. In coaching a new culture has been built and new methods of working are found so a coaching project can last weeks or months, even years. (Garvey & al. 2018, 16.)

Coaching has its' roots in sports. From there the practices have been taken to business. In the world of sports, as in game industry, a coach must have a proven track record with previous teams. The abilities of motivating and requesting results at the same time are essential in both industries.

While coaching, unlike mentoring, is more used in paid services, and not so often on third sector voluntary work, we may state that these two ways of consulting are very near to each other. Perhaps it is more a question of opinion or mindset of which word to use. (Garvey & al. 2018, 18-21.) In this research the word coaching is used since it will be executed in business like environment of students' game development groups and within the period of one autumn semester, i.e. 5 months.

Väisänen (2011) has found in her master's thesis one problem possible in coaching **when she** was studying coaching processes in a financing company. She argues that when coaching is used as a management tool, there can be a difference of opinion between managers and workers of how well it is applied. The management thinks that coaching is applied relatively well already while the personnel sees that it is not. It seems that for the supervisors it is enough if the visible factors of coaching like mentioning it in the company strategy, personnel observations, performance reviews and training programs are there. But the personnel would like to see that coaching is implemented, in all its' characteristics. It seems that the reason for this is that the methodology of management by coaching is practised through the routines of the old, authoritarian management. The author states that the methods of coaching should be implemented only by using the respective methods. (Valmentavan johtamisen toiminnallistamisen haasteet, 2011.) In game industry this would mean that for example manager's bonuses or other extra benefits should be based **on** job satisfaction and following the schedules besides exceeding financial targets.

Monika Musial (2015) has created a concept of "the need to be creative" in her doctoral dissertation "Exploring the Organizing of Work for Creative Individuals". She presents this idea

for a situation where new idea or product is being developed. The research has been conducted on the arena of performing arts and creative industry like film makers and game developers. To recognize the value of person's creativity and meaning of creative work is important according to this analysis. It also verifies the known fact that freedom of creativity and need of control are in constant conflict when managing a creative team. On the other hand, it is found that both approaches for project management are needed. The author states that successful management of creative individuals is based on balance between creative freedom given, control and balance in working life. (Exploring the organizing of work for creative individuals 2015.)

In game industry the management culture, project management and methods of working are such that the teams are self-piloting and versatile. They have full freedom of decision making within the limitations of budgets and project timelines (Final report - Chips for game skills 2018). How is it then possible that game launches are often postponed (Dead Rising 4 on mainio myöhästynyt joululahja 2018)? Is it because of the project management tools used, the complexity of the game design projects, or something else? (Red Dead Redemption 2. 2018, Jälleen yksi suuri pelijulkaisu myöhästyy 2016.) These could be examples of projects where the successful balance of freedom and control have not been found.

Anna-Kaisa Lehtinen (2010) has made interesting findings in her master's thesis. She conducted a survey of the effects of the Leadership-coaching program in an expert organization. The results tell us that not only has the coaching affected the trainees' solution-focusedness and skills of giving feedback, but more importantly also had positive effect on the self-deception. (Valmennuksen vaikuttavuuden arviointi oppimisen, tavan toimia ja hyötyjen tasolla 2010.)

4.2 Principles of coaching

Much has been written of coaching. One can say that the number of versions is as numerous as the number of authors. Few details however seem to remain common although one of them is the consensus of coaching being a way of working where new, creative culture of coaching is developed and imprinted in the organisation (Alanen 2017, 2).

In this chapter literature findings of differences and similarities in the concepts of coaching principles are addressed. It will be shown that there is more consensus than disparity to be found. Mainly it is a question of approach. Some authors tend to take an approach by describing their experiences in coaching deeply and giving verbal instructions in writing of how to plan and execute a coaching session. Others rely on frameworks, documents, forms, and are using them even for visualizing the process. The approach of this research being practical,

more space is given to the writers with hands-on approach, without forgetting the formal approach totally.

“Coaching sessions can be of tremendous benefit to individuals and therefore organizations - particularly when they are set up correctly.” This important notification has been written by Gillian Jones and Ro Gorell in their book 50 Top Tools for Coaching. In their book one can find several documents and frameworks of how to plan, prepare and conduct a coaching session. There are forms, questionnaires and rules which are good to know when starting the coaching career. (Jones & Gorell 2018, 7-30.) This work however, especially in the teams of game development, is very time limited and informal procedure and for this reason, I will take a more practical approach to coaching. Saying this, I will return later to the frameworks of Jones & Gorell. Even if a producer-coach is not following them exactly, they can be studied and applied while preparing for the team meetings.

There are four principles in coaching **which** are; trust, potential, commitment and execution, which has been shown in figure 5. The first one means that a coach must create and build circumstances where the team or person to be coached feels safe. It must be clear that what is discussed with the coach, stays there. Another part of the trust factor is that the coach must know his or her job, and the trainee must be of this opinion as well. (Simpson M. 2014, 4, 9-16.)

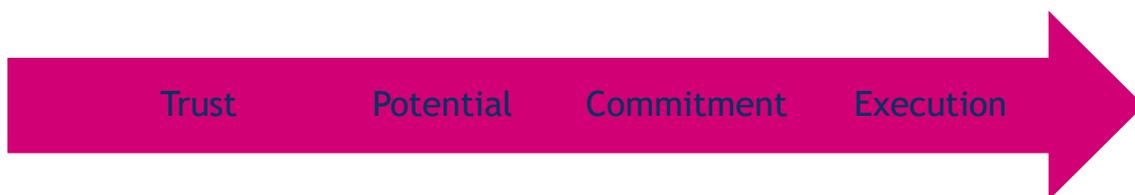


Figure 5: Four principles of coaching (Simpson 2014)

The coach must quickly sense the potential and existing attitudes as well as established modes of operation within the team. These, so called paradigms of the team will be discussed in chapter 4.3 coaching skills. Presumptions are self-evident, so called truths can be concluded from the physical, oral gestures, or emotions and reactions shown by the trainee. (Simpson M. 2014, 4, 17-24.)

Like M. Simpson (2014, 17-24), also Sari Ajanko in her book *Moninaisuuden johtaminen - ytimessä johtajan itsetuntemus* (2016), points out that when applying coaching in management, certain potential and possibility to personal growth should be seen in the trainee. To see something good and valuable in **another** person is an important part of management abilities. It is very inspiring for any of us to realize, that someone else sees in us possibilities of which we have not been aware of. (Ajanko 2016, 106-107.)

Patrick Lencioni has described the best practices of teamwork as ; trust, healthy conflict, active commitment, accountability towards other team members and focus on results. These qualities and activities are not mastered by all of us, but they can be learned. For this high qualified coaching, patience and time is needed. (Lencioni 2016, 5-7.)

Commitment as shown in figure 5. is needed both from the coach and from the person or team to be coached. Short term commitment can be reached by an experienced coach by an inspiring pep talk. But it is only the long-lasting will of changing circumstances that matters. For this real change in the organization is needed. Coach must make the right questions and through them create circumstances as well as situations where the trainee can feel the need of the change and actualize it. The questions are to reveal trainees' real goals in working life. These targets must to be specified if necessary, and it should be decided how the actualization of these can be verified. (Simpson M. 2014, 4, 25-30.)

Jones and Gorell (2018) have prepared tools for asking and listening as well. Interestingly they have established so called listening levels where the coach must use in order to convince the trainee. The four levels of listening, respect, real time (listen actively), relate and reflect should be taken into consideration when listening to the answers of the trainee. Like M. K. Simpson (2014, 25-30), these authors also point out the importance of meaningful questions. They divide the questions to types like open, reflective and hypothetical etc. giving description and examples of each question type.

Active listening means that the listener has heard and understood what the other person has said. This gives positive feeling to the speaker. He or she understands that the message has been heard. Listening is not a synonym for agreeing. It's a manifestation of a curious atti-

tude. An active listener wants to know what the speaker thinks and why the subject is so important. The mimics of the listener are as important as the comments given. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 106.)

How can the realization of the changes be proved? In the coaching sessions goals must be agreed, how the trainee is supposed to reach them and how the results are measured. This is the execution part of coaching process shown in figure 5. Otherwise the whole process has been useless. It is important that the targets are pointed out without the interference of the coaches' own opinions. (Simpson M. 2014, 4, 31-37.)

The coach must hold the team accountable for the targets they have committed themselves to. This should not be done by authority, but by showing the trainees the way to self-piloting, job development and functionality in their work. They will be able to influence the decision making within their area of responsibility. A skilled coach and manager delegates power of decision and responsibility in a healthy ratio. As described in figure 6. below, the balance in this activity is essential.

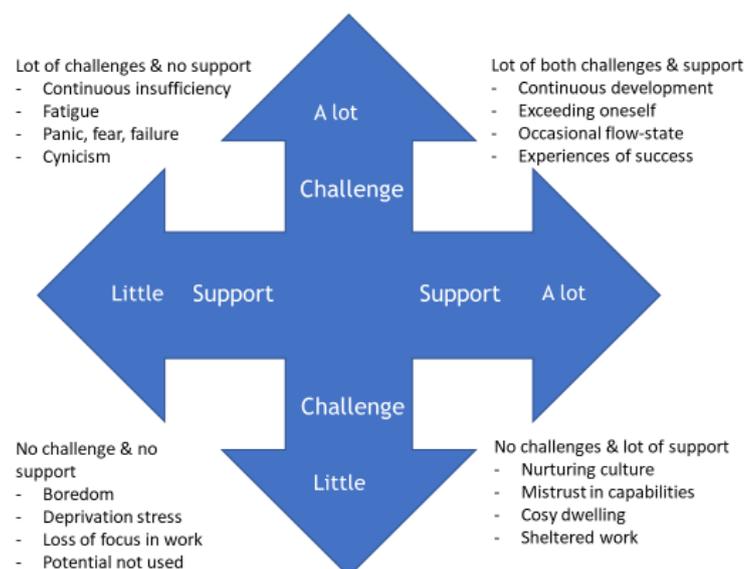


Figure 6: The balance of responsibility and support in coaching (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 153)

Above in figure 6. it is visualized why the balance between challenges and support given by the coach or manager is important. If there are not enough challenges and the support is non-existent, the trainee or worker can for example feel deprived, i.e. abandoned by the superior. Too much support combined with less challenges is obviously considered as underestimation of the skills of the worker. If the support remains low but challenges keep growing

more difficult, people tend to get tired and feel inadequate in their work. So, the best solution for the coach is to give the person chances to exceed and tools to master the success. (Salmi-mies & Ruutu 2013, 152-153.)

4.3 Coaching skills

Moving from the **principles** of coaching to the coaching skills, more concepts are defined. This will give the reader practical tools for planning and executing a coaching session. Among the existing approaches to coaching we can find many applications **such as** sports coaching, life coaching, executive coaching, team coaching and brief coaching just to mention a few (Garvey & al. 2018, 84-85). In this paper the focus is on team coaching since groups of game development in universities as well as in actual working life work as teams.

According to Garvey & al. (2018) Hackman and Wageman (2005) there have been identified four prerequisites for successful team coaching. They are shown in figure 7. below. Question of coaching target being the group is most important of them. (Garvey & al. 2018, 89.)



Figure 7: The four conditions of team coaching (Garvey B. & al., 2018)

Effort, strategy, knowledge and skills of the team are the performance processes. These should not be limited too much by the task or the organization. A team well designed, with talent and ambition in healthy ratio builds a successful, smoothly operating team. Timing of coaching sessions is important. The groups should be well prepared for them. (Garvey & al. 2018, 89.)

Building trust between a person or a team, and the coach is the first important skill that must be mastered. If it is achieved, the coach can create a safe and supporting environment for the people being coached. Only then personal growth and development can be seen in the team. In practice this would mean an open mind and communication within the group. Confidence and appreciation build trust. If these qualities are found in a team, also unpleasant matters or problems can be addressed properly. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 88.)

Seven coaching skills lead from the principles of coaching (Simpson 2014, 39-117) are introduced in table 3. Simpson (2014, 39-117) also finds that trust is the first skill to be learned. Without trust one would be doubted, the suggestions can be denied, and one may not be accepted. For avoiding this, characteristics and capabilities of the trainee must be examined. This can be done by making correct questions and leading a comfortable discussion between the two parties.

As written above in chapter 4.2 surprising attitudes can be found in the teams to be coached. They can come up as sharp criticism from the trainee. These are the paradigms that the coach must challenge firmly and friendly (Simpson 2014, 39, 49-53). If for example a programmer in a game development team thinks that they do not need help in teamwork because they've worked together for a long time, a polite question of the very essence of the concept of teamwork should be proposed.

<u>Skill</u>	<u>Problem tackled</u>
Develop confidence	Suspicion, mistrust, rejection
Challenge the attitudes	"We know this already"
Find measurable goals	"Where are we going?"
Reach these targets	"What to do next and how to reach the goal?"
Useful feedback	About what to do
Find and show the talent	Underestimation of own possibilities
Promote the average	Find the possibilities in underachievers

Table 3: Seven coaching skills (Simpson, 2014)

For real progress and development, a person or a team must know where they are now and where they want to go. With coaching, the trainee will be able see the gap between present results and what is needed for reaching the target. A coach can show how something can be done better. (Furman & Rubanovitch 2014, 13.)

Simpson (2014) points out the problem of lacking strategic clarity and perfect realization of work. As shown in table 3. they are the third (find measurable goals) and the fourth (reach the targets) coaching skill to be mastered. The individual targets and support for flawless execution is to be given by the coach. This includes also helping individuals or a team to find the order of importance for the tasks. They must also be held accountable for the results. (Simpson M. 2014, 40, 54-71, 72-83.)

Jones & Gorell (2018) divide their tools for goal setting in the ones of creating strong purposes or intentions and then setting goals. With the help of their frameworks one can even visualize the goals. Since many teams fail to reach the target, they even have a formula for breaking down the previous goals and reasons if failures are repeated. (Jones & Gorell 2018, 59-75.)

How to give effective feedback? This dilemma has been described on the fifth row of table 3. Transmission of information in feedback should be such that the receiver understands more after it than before and should be concentrated in what has been done and help the trainee to reach the goal. Since the coach is not finding a solution but helping the trainee to find it, the feedback should not be negative, and the focus should be on positive. (Simpson M. 2014, 40, 84-98.)

Feedback should not be used for judging people. Confidentiality and loyalty should be the coach's guidelines also when analysing performances. How the receiver wants to get the information can also be agreed. Important is the time when the feedback is given. Normally immediate return to the matters just coached is best but coach should also see that he or she is in correct mood for continuing the process. Time allowed for the feedback session should not be too long. (Jones & Gorell 2018, 40-45.)

The concept of feedforward used with the traditional feedback is interesting as it makes us think about the deeper meaning of a present situation. Best way to build this phase of coaching event is to make it so that both the past and the future are considered. Quality and quantity are important. Coach should tell in detail what was good not only thank and smile. Knowing actual consequences of a job well done boosts the trainee even more. (Ajanko 2016, 93-102.)

A manager or a coach should notice the talent and growth possibilities of team members. For example, a negative person can easily criticize, and bring problems to the table. Maybe these people could be used as the ones that point out potential problems in the project. Those who are always bursting with new ideas should be given to chance to use their full potential and be active in brainstorming. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 227-234.) A coach should take also this

into consideration when giving the feedback as well as finding and showing the hidden talent and potential in each team member.

Simpson (2014, 84-98) writes that often we underestimate our possibilities and talents. A coach must be able to help people to tackle this problem and let everyone find their unique talent. This can be done by starting first the conversations of performance, improvement and thus clearing the path for personal growth. The conversations include deciding results and goals, measures how to reach them, honest but fair and friendly discussions of points of improvement, and once at final change, the coach-manager must clear the way for the team to continue by themselves successfully. (Simpson 2014, 99-106.) Seems that this way of thinking is common in coaching practises and can be considered also as giving room for the trainee to realize what the situation is (Ajanko 2016, 109).

What can bring most visible results in coaching a team? Is it possible with training the top performers of the organization, or something else? The top dogs should not be forgotten but if medium-level good performers that could be developed further, are touched then even better results can be reached in total. At the same time people who did not fill-up their potential get help. This problem can be approached for example by grooming the organization with a dense comb and finding the best performers on the mid-level and they should be coached to become great from good. (Simpson 2014, 107-117.)

How do authors outside USA see coaching skills? In table 4. it can be seen how two Finnish professionals name the most important coaching skills. There are many similarities with the skills of US-origin showed in table 3., but the tone of approach is softer and solution oriented.

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Solution offered</u>
Building trust	Create safe and supporting atmosphere
Developing empathy	Reciprocal communication
Active listening	To hear and understand what the other one says, the speaker has the feeling that he/she has been heard
Presence in interaction	Concentration on the present situation and people
Honest and open communication	Direct, genuine and intuitive conversation
Widening perspectives	Feedback-positive atmosphere, etc.
Developing problem solution skills	Identify cause-and-effect chain, etc.
Ensuring progress and accountability	Competence development, self-piloting, etc.

Table 4: Core competences of a coach-manager (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 87-158)

Building trust creates a foundation for a successful coaching relationship and its a result of smooth interaction. It can be promoted for example by showing loyalty to the trainees, by promising only things you can keep, admitting mistakes while at the same time showing willingness to develop, sticking to the truth, avoiding old-boy system and buttering-up. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 87-95.)

If the coach can understand the trainee's feelings and stand in his or her shoes, then there is empathy involved. Then one can recognise and read hints of the well-being of others. This quality can be developed and less selfishness as well as prejudice will follow. Tools for this can be for example concentration of listening and understanding others, learning non-verbal communication, avoiding advising and by learning to follow personal time limits. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 96-105.)

If active listening is not at a proper level in a team it can be encouraged by for example repeating what you just heard, asking clarifying questions, opening possibilities and strengthening ideas of others, controlling the structure of the conversation and bearing the silence. Sometimes people need just time to process their thoughts. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 106-113.)

Active presence is essential if interaction is to succeed although total concentration in the situation and people is needed. Receiver appreciates this kind of behaviour and is more available for giving ideas. The coach can promote this attitude in the team by being curious in others' opinions, remaining in the situation here and now, and by looking for solutions from others. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 114-119.)

Honest and open communication is needed in a good coaching relationship and it can be promoted firstly by direct, genuine and intuitive conversation atmosphere. It is however important to keep the discussion constructive. Information should be given early and in-time. Prepare your answers and leave possibilities open as well as giving reasons for your opinions and act as a role model. Ask for feedback of your own practises. Separate meaning and effect. It doesn't help to mean good with others misunderstanding you. Take care of equal treatment of people and interfere with excessive negative feedback politely. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 120-127.)

Opening chains of deduction of mind helps the coach to widen his or her perspectives. If positive feedback atmosphere is needed by the trainee, then also beliefs should be separated from the facts. Paradigms should be challenged, success should be noted and made visible,

and positive attitude should be kept. These are the tools for widening the perspectives. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 128-136.)

The coach can develop problem solution skills by identifying the problems behind the visible technical or economic problems. The labour input effects and consequences of potential problems should be identified. It is important to understand the causalities behind the cause-effect chain since otherwise a right solution for a wrong problem might be found. The actual problem might be found if enough time is invested in the specification of the core problem. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 137-150.)

If progress is not monitored well and trainee held accountable of reaching the agreed results it is possible that the project might not succeed. The coach and organization can help here by guaranteeing possibilities for competence development and by allocating responsibility of self-piloting to the teams. Engagement and functionality are important for accountability. The coach-manager can enforce accountability by being a good example, distributing information effectively, communicating directly of expectations, rotating responsibilities in meetings, creating versatile possibilities for discussion, delegating responsibilities, spreading the understanding of development meaning and exit from the comfort zone, asking people to tell by their own words the nature of their commitments and by following up how the targets are achieved. (Salmimies & Ruutu 2013, 151-158.)

Certain characteristics are shared in American and Scandinavian coaching literature. The importance of building trust is strongly presented in both approaches. So is the relevance of measurable results and accountability of trainees.

Whereas Simpson (2014, 39-117) manifests challenging paradigms (stagnant attitudes), tapping into talent and moving the middle, Salmimies & Ruutu (2013, 87-158) narrates for example developing empathy and widening perspectives. It seems that both directions present same details of coaching only emphasizing them differently. Salmimies and Ruutu are softer in their writing and Simpson offers hands-on tools of how to succeed in coaching.

Since all members of game development teams should be specialists and best in their own areas like coding or art, a soft approach of coaching may be the best way of managing them. Building trust, getting measurable results and holding team members accountable for their targets are more difficult goals to reach with other methods of management. Next chapter of this thesis concentrates on the “trial” coaching sessions designed and executed during autumn 2018.

5 Experimental coaching sessions during autumn semester 2018

Laurea UAS project team Chips for game skills - To be a producer in game development for autumn 2018 was well received among students. Instead of one producer during spring 2018, now eight students from four different campuses of the university volunteered. Two of them were studying master's degree in Leppävaara, and another two joined the group from Tikkurila bachelor's program in IC-technology. Four students from Hyvinkää bachelor's program of business administration applied as well, and the team was topped by one BBA student from Laurea's campus in Lohja.

Since coaching was recognized the best management method for team of professionalspecialist, it was also applied during these experimental coaching sessions. These producers-to-be for Metropolia UAS's teams of game development took the mutual target of trying to help their teams to get their game on a demo-stage before the Demo Day in December. Together we decided the things to be learned for reaching the target. Weekly meetings were arranged for co-operation and follow-up. At the end of the project the results were measured when feedback was asked and received from the game development teams. New learning module was designed based on the experience and the industry interviews made and methods of coaching were applied for the successful result.

The team was active, self-piloting and very co-operative from the beginning. There were versatile knowledge of business, ICT and science available. Many had also more working experience, which was very useful for the coach when for example project management tools or monetisation were discussed.

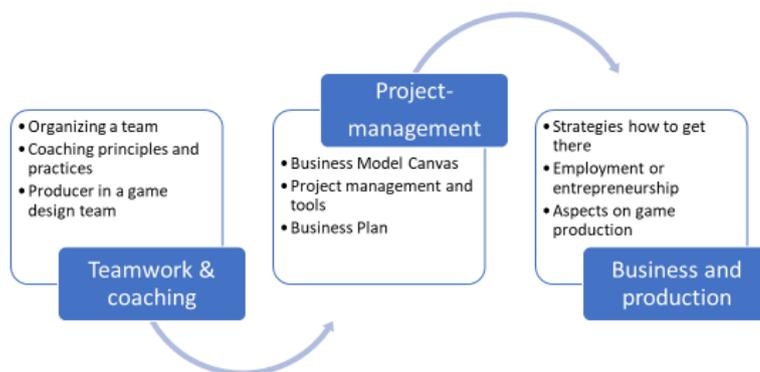


Figure 8: Learning modules for coaching sessions during autumn 2018

Based on this and the earlier projects within the Chips for game skills-project the contents of this experimental producer education at Laurea UAS was divided in three main subjects. They were teamwork, project management (including business plan and monetization) as well as employment in the game industry as shown in figure 8. The last one included a session of discussing working in the industry as an employee or starting an own company for self-employment.

The first day of the learning module covered the presentations of team members, project brief including characteristics of project work in general, and producer's job in game design. That day also the producer team organized itself by selecting project manager and secretary, as well as vice persons for both. On top of these the producers-to-be were prepared for the meetings with their game design teams by a lecture on coaching principles and practises. Based on the contents of coaching session-of-the-day the students were asked to draw a list of capabilities they presume to have at the project start and write down skills they would like to cover in December 2018 when the project is ready.

The next step in producer coaching was to draft Business Model Canvasses for a game project and at the same time, basics of project management and tools used in it were studied. Due to the limited time available, this aspect was divided in two afternoons. The team appreciated especially the section where tools like Scrum and Kanban were discussed.

The last part of producer coaching consisted of business and employment topics. Business plan including business idea, model and goals, as well as strategies how to get there. Employment question was approached from two angles: working as an employee or one of becoming self-employed. Tools and places for applying a job as producer were thoroughly presented. Describing possibilities of job seeker to start working as freelancer or establishing your own company aroused also a lot of interest.

For the third coaching two afternoons were also needed. In the second day, after the employment sections, new perspectives for producer's work were presented. In these food for thought was given to the students by presenting the latest research results and media news.

5.1 Targets and achievements of the students

Versatility and different backgrounds of the producers in the team enriched and challenged the teamwork during the semester. The team was therefore divided in two when defining their targets in the beginning.



Figure 9: Steps from BBA-student to a producer

BBA-students named teamwork, communication and vocabulary, i.e. professional jargon of game industry, as something they know a little of but need to learn more (starting-level in figure 9.). Also scheduling, memo writing and holding meetings was something they could do but need further coaching for. Team- and project work including communication and time-lines were headers we partly had touched already. For project tools an immediate look was necessary.

Things they wanted to manage when the project was ready (=target in figure 9.) like pitching, monetization and game lifecycle were already on the agenda of coaching sessions. Besides these skills marketing, budgeting and skill to adapt in sudden changes were targets to reach. One goal given by the group was developing their talent in human relations meaning **the** capability of reading and interpreting people.

After four months of hard work, as listed in point “Ideas” in figure 9, we could see that many goals were reached. In the meantime, some had been ignored. These “Ideas” are subjects, that students would’ve liked to learn still. Reasons for these decisions were limited time- and work resources, which called for prioritizing. Tools like vocabulary of professional jargon and job-descriptions in game industry were among these. Control of time was touched on when coaching for project management tools. Community building in social media and digital marketing were areas ruled out from this study.

As could be expected MBA students took a wider look into the targets and what really could be stated as achieved in December. They also had higher starting level for example in pitching, facilitating the teamwork and communication in a team. Their development is shown in figure 10.



Figure 10: Steps from MBA student to producer-to-be

These two students wished to start with getting the basic knowledge of producers' work based on the earlier experiences of Laurea UAS students working in game design teams. Commercialization and monetization, as well as basics of digital marketing and agile project management tools were expected by them.

At the end of the project they anticipated to know more (= target in figure 10.) of the everyday work of a producer in a game team, widening their theoretical knowledge in game design besides the actual production work of games. They wanted also to know in more detail what is required in the games industry in general, be familiar with influencer marketing and community building, as well as Scrum and Kanban project management tools.

What they then really saw in December (= ideas in figure 10, i.e. important points for the coaching learning module) was that they would have liked the future students to know even more of lifecycle of the game and influencer marketing as well as community building. Trello was on the wish list for to learn before entering the game design teams. MBA students felt that writing blogs and editing vlogs was a good method for absorbing the theoretical fundamentals of the area. What they really missed was delving into the secrets of a game that really engages the audience i.e. the game loop theory was expected more of.

5.2 Feedback of the teams to the producers

Seven of the eight game development teams formed in September 2018, were able to participate in the Demo day on 12th of December. The project that split up suffered lack of workforce like programmers. Afterwards all the teams were asked to evaluate their producers about their contribution to the team. It seems that on a general level Laurea UAS students succeeded quite well when it comes to project management- and teamwork skills.

Of 14 replies received for the teamwork skills of producers, 10 resulted grade 5 on the scale of 1-5. The rest of the respondents evaluated the work worth of 4. For the project work skills one team gave grade 3, five teams 4 and eight of the respondents said that the producers earned the best grade of 5 of their work. The answer giving lowest grade in project work would have liked to have "... stricter touch to everything..." and would have liked to see more inspiring and motivating way of work, as well as more follow up in schedules and processes alike.

More variation could also be found from the opinions of game development teams when the skills of project management tools were asked. 12 of the 14 answers gave grade 4 or 5 to the producers. On the other hand, one 3 and even and one grade 2 was received. The lowest grades were given by the same team as discussed in previous paragraph.

All 14 answers said that producers' work benefitted their team. One of 14 however was of the opinion, that a producer is not necessary for a game development team. Following statements are referred from the material of the study when the contributions of producers were asked: "... recruited new personnel in the middle of the project...", "... marketing and pitching. Without a producer the quality of them would have been much less...", "... reminded the team of deadlines...". It seems that Laurea UAS producer students did good work which was also appreciated. Contents of this survey can be found in appendices 2.

5.3 Feedback to the head coach

Kick-off and first coaching session took place on the first days of the autumn semester 2018. Evaluations of the actions were asked from the students in a short and incisive Google Forms - survey, where they were to comment the content of the day, the materials and the coach's performance. There was also possibility to leave more feedback in an open question under the topic Word is free.

A survey was sent to all eight team members and six answers were received. The feedback was all positive, best result being when content of the day was asked about. There the respondents gave average 4,5 on the scale of 1-5, where 1 meant very poor and 5 very good content. Four students answered this question.

Materials used, mainly Power Point slides received the poorest grade average 4,25. Coaches performance received also 4,5 average on the scale of 5. There was however more variation, one student giving only grade 3. In the open feedback section coaches were grateful for the insight about teamwork and coaching, although part of it was familiar to some of the students. The coach was thanked for his performance.

6 Requirements for producers in game industry

Very little of the theory or practice of the actual game production can be found from the printed or internet sources. Mainly they are descriptions of producer's workflow and duties in a company and take a practical approach as one can expect. For example, Olli Ikonen has in his thesis for Karelia University of Applied Sciences in Joensuu written an interesting study from the viewpoint of a producer in an indie-game. He has among other things written of game designer Ste Currans' lecture at Joensuu University on 29.9.2014. There Mr Currans explained that once while working with a producer, he had asked him to list his wishes and expectations. Then the more business minded adversary gave value from 1-5 to each of his ideas, and told he had the total of 20 to use before the project is ready. This led to realization of a need to cut down the ideas in order to reach the target. (Ikonen O. 2016, 57.)

While describing the work of a producer and the tools as well as methods used, Tommi Krogerus states one interesting point of managing team members. Producer's main headache, keeping the budget and staying in schedule is part of it. He writes that "... Producers most important job is to take care that those creative people with whom he or she is working with, may do their job without interference, protect them from the management, and even from themselves. (Ketterät menetelmät ja tiimi, tuottajan työkalut 2017, 1.) These four last words seem very important to me. Are they the key to the solution of paradox between control and creativity?

Phan Nguyen's thesis from Savonia University of Applied Sciences gives interesting information of game community in Vietnam. The title being Game Production and Role of Game Producer the author writes mostly of the title subjects. At the end of the thesis there starts the more interesting part of a survey conducted among relatively small but very active community of players in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. According to this survey 86% of players in Hanoi use average 15-30 hours each week for their dear hobby. (Game production and role of producer 2014, 37.) Globally it is said that only 14,6% of players use 15 hours or more in front of pc, console or mobile device (The State of Online Gaming 2018). This comparison suggests that Vietnam and Hanoi are potential markets for any pc- or mobile game marketer, but also potential country of origin for outsourcing.

John Nousiainen defines in his thesis more precisely, but also widely, the workflow of a producer in a videogame team. He takes into consideration small, medium and bigger size teams

in his analysis, and lists three points every producer should note before starting a game project. They are the level of experience the team has, the importance of risks management when trying to control the effects of various coincidences like illnesses to the game timeline, and finally he points out the importance of documentation of each step of the game development process. (Producer in a Game Project-A Game Producers Workflow Case Under, 27.)

Tuomas Roininen discussed in his master's thesis of the balance of life in Finnish game industry. This research from 2013 shows the challenge of crunching, i.e. excess working on overtime in an organization. (The quality of Life in Finnish Game Industry, 2013, 53.) Although we can find development to healthier working methods (Becoming a Producer to a game team, 2018) the urgent need for some overtime might always surprise a producer.

Earlier in this thesis (page 17) Monika Musial's doctor's dissertation was reported of. This work should be recognized when we discuss about the work of a producer in a team of game design as well. She argued of the paradox between art and business in creative industry. Results of this study show how to manage creative people effectively and still inspiringly while getting the game ready in time and budget. Researcher's answer was that creative workers should be managed with respect and understanding of their specific passion to do the creative work. (Exploring the organizing of work for creative individuals 2015.)

As expected, no scientific research concerning the employment of producers in game industry was found. The author has been forced therefore to look for thesis with more practical approach. Luckily the two a.m. studies directly concerning game industry can give some food for thought for **want-** to-be producers and their education. In this situation it is necessary to study other professions of a game development team and see what has been written of their methods of getting a position in the industry.

Master of arts thesis of Nelly Sääksjärvi sheds light on the secrets of getting employed from the visual artist's point of view. Her research is targeted to employees instead of the industry representatives. Most of the respondents were employed when answering to the survey. She shows that internships and connections like friends in the company are the two most important factors the respondents found affected in their success. It was also found that the tools like excellent portfolio and social media are more important in their employment than CV or traditional job applications. Education like master's or bachelor's degrees were informed to be helpful in some cases, but not essential. Besides the above mentioned, experience and activity in game jams or pitch & beer and other similar events are more important. (How visual artists find employment in the Finnish game industry, 2015.) In my re-search I **was looking** to find out if the same features apply on producer's employment.

6.1 Implementation of the research

During the research series of interviews were conducted with employers of the game industry. Qualifications for the producer candidates set by the recruiters, as well as which of these universities of applied sciences could teach, were examined with the help of these interviews. The possible areas of development in the abilities of students graduated were found at the same time. For achieving better understanding of this phenomenon the qualitative research methodology was applied.

6.2 Methods and execution of the research

The strategy of the research and thesis is the one of design research. In this mixed method approach data of previous studies, experiences of the practice of producer coaching and the actual research results have been combined.

Producer's role in game development - study was conducted as semi-structured, individually interviewing people in charge of recruiting producers in six companies in the industry. This method was selected since in it open and multiple-choice-questions could be combined. With this method the researcher could also give more freedom of answering to the respondent, while still controlling the phrasing and content of questions. Besides only one background question the interview consisted of 13 questions under three themes: work of a producer, job search of producer candidates and skills UASs could teach.

Companies to be interviewed were found from the website of Neogames, the hub of game industry in Finland (Operators 2018). Potential companies were contacted first by e-mail and phone for agreeing times for interviews. The meetings took place during January-February 2019. List of questions can be found in appendix 3.

The respondents were selected from the companies that showed interest in the research and agreed with an interview. Relevance of respondents' business activities like turnover, profits and amount of personnel were also taken into consideration. If the operator informed that they had no personnel, they were not approached. Source for this information was Kauppalehti's public internet pages (www.kauppalehti/yritys/yritys/).

Companies were named alphabetically from A to F, in the order of interviews. A-C and F were established operators with significant success in international game development. Company D was smallest of the five respondents and concentrating in subcontracting while also designing a game of its own. Company E was a recently established Helsinki branch office of bigger European game publisher.

Although the business is very Helsinki concentrated two companies in other cities agreed to take part in the study as well. One of the respondents (E) had domicile in the UK, and the interview took place over lunch near their Helsinki office. Companies A and F were also met face to face, but in their office. With companies B, C and D private meeting was not possible, so questions were asked over phone.

Duration of each interview was estimated for one hour. This decision was made since busy industry professionals would probably prefer short time used effectively. 60 minutes was estimated to be enough in all circumstances. This time limit was followed with all respondents.

All interviews were recorded, and notes made simultaneously. After this material was transcribed on Google Forms and Word document, word by word, or as well as it was possible, depending on the interview and the recording level. The factual approach of content analysis was applied in order to find repeated logic or typical skill or competence needed when applying for producer positions in game industry. Material collected from the answers of respondents was all combined in one Word-document.

The sample being small (n=6) most of the answers were analysed manually. Contents of answers for questions three and four were coded by themes for finding repeated similarities. The themes were hard skills, soft skills, processes, experience and other. Concepts of hard and soft skills are self-evident. "Processes" theme included the idea of giving education in the basics of game development processes. Under theme "other" suggestions to teach and learn game development by doing, shipping a game or two before turning to a producer, and team- as well as project management were mentioned by the respondents.

6.3 Justification for methods selected

The name of this research Producer's Role in Game Development and how to coach students for it allows the author to approach the subject from two directions. First one is the obvious - how to get employed. The second one About the Work of a Producer is equally important. Especially so, since the target of this study is to build a learning module for Laurea UAS.

There is no single, correct method for applying for a job. Quantitative approach was therefore out of question. One can quantify the amount of job applications sent, or how many games a producer has shipped before applying but would this bring any new and interesting information through a thesis? In game industry quality comes before quantity usually. We should consequently qualitatively study which tools and why, lead to success in job search for game producers. (Vilkka H. 2015, 75.)

In qualitative research one should find answers to questions why and how. Something new of the area of study should also be revealed (Hirsijärvi S., Remes P, Sajavaara P., 2009, 160-

166). Inspired by master's thesis of Nelly Sääksjärvi and my talks with executive producer of company A, one of the oldest companies of game design in Finland, studying the possibility internships as a gate to the industry for newcomers became relevant. The latter proved that these practical trainings in real working life helped artists to establish themselves among employers (How visual artists find employment in the Finnish game industry, 2015). The latter told that they hardly ever take internees. But still they have had some. In the end few got a job in the company. (Becoming a Producer to a game team 2018.) For these reasons questions and section of internships was added in the research.

Timeline of research was almost a year from the very beginning of early version of research analysis, till the thesis seminar. Already before that author had been involved with a project linked to the research. The experiences, views and expectations of the subject changed and evolved in time. For the results, conclusions and objectivity of the research this had a positive impact. This time was needed to collect enough valid information for conducting this study.

Respondents were selected primarily for reaching reliable and valid results in the research. Employers of different size were therefore chosen. Since the target was to investigate experiences of recruiters with new producers more than views or opinions of them, the informants directly in charge of hiring people for this position were chosen.

6.4 Results and analysis of the research

In this chapter only the questions directly answering the research problem and questions are analysed. All the others will be discussed in chapter 8.

Second question of the interview was: Producer in a team of game development is managing specialists, professionals in their own field of expertise. How is this work different from the work of any other project- or team manager, heading a group of professionals-specialists in on other branch? Or is it? Answers for it were polarized. Respondents of companies A and D were clearly for the view that there is no difference. One answer (company C) was both for and against the existence of any discrepancies. Replies of representatives of companies B and E reflected more technical approach to the work of a game development team and pointed out differences to software or project work in general. Company F saw that the conflict in game development between art and business is such that project management there is quite different compared with other branches.

If project management in game development is considered different from other industries, other methods of team- or project management could be applied there. The respondent of company A mentioned "... fourth generation facilitation methods...". E on the other hand

pointed out that “... Industry has gotten rid of waterfall model... Scrum is actually quite old fashioned already as well ...”. These results must be taken into consideration when students are learning skills for game industry.

Open question three was: When hiring a new producer, we find following soft- and hard skills, as well as competences necessary. Question four was also open: Of these soft- and hard skills or competences universities of applied sciences could teach. For these respondents could answer in their own words.

While processing the answers to these questions, the material was divided in six themes: process, hard skills, soft skills, experience, other and unnecessary. The last category consisted of an answer with no clear content relevant to the research. Rest of the themes covered skills and competences important for the jobseeker to manage. Some of them were mentioned by the respondents as subjects which universities of applied sciences could teach or coach.

<u>Hard skills</u>	<u>Soft skills</u>
Project management tools	Project management through people
Budgeting	Attitude
Monetization	Leadership
Modern facilitation methods	Social skills
Teamwork methods	Communication skills
Basic processes of game production	People analyse skills
Game development cycle	

Table 5: Skills expected by the employers

More references of these codes were given to hard skills as shown in table 5. This could be well expected since employers recruit people in professions where these skills are more easily included. If a programmer can write code, or an artist draw graphics at a certain level, they are easy to select. Producer’s hard skills in Google Sheets or Excel, project management tools, budgeting and monetization, modern facilitation and teamwork methodologies were consequently seen good subjects for education industry to teach. An important comment was given by the representative of company A who said: “... hard skills like being an excel wizard or stuff like that ... (showing dismissive gestures), okay, but it’s not a key for me.”

For him (like for all the other respondents as well) as important as hard skills, seemed to be capabilities like attitude (A), leadership (B), people management skills (C), social skills (D) and “... to understand the project situation from the people, not from the ... Jira...”, also seen

in table 5. Other interesting descriptions for this code were self-organized and good communicator (A) and “people analyse” skills (E). He also stated that “... you can maybe teach this to some extent”, meaning these subjects require more from the coach than the straightforward hard skills. Giving in-dept education in this area might be difficult in universities. Respondent F had studied herself game production and considered, that ability to give feedback to all kinds of people is one of the most important competences to manage. As she said:” ... there are lot of both extroverts and introverts in the game industry...”.

Under the code **process**, which got two references from the respondents, they found good subjects for universities to coach. Those are shown in table 5. as well. Among them were “... rudimentary knowledge of different software and game production processes (A). Among hard skills-code game development cycle was also mentioned. This visual circle could be seen, as process also. As company E puts it:” ... should be like teach the practicalities like, how does the project lifecycle go, ...”. The results show that basic knowledge in hard skills are enough for the students, but new facilitation and teamwork methods, as well as one project management tool and business plan should be mastered.

Experience
Game development (few games already brought to the market)
Pitching (game jams and other events)
Fieldtrips and visits to events and exhibitions (domestic and abroad)

Table 6: Experience expected by employers

Experience code showed listed competences shown in table 6, that can be acquired only by “... being involved in game development...” as B stated. Minimum for him would be “... some role in game development...”. The recruiter of company D mentioned that teaching in universities should be “... covered with hands-on work with games development connected.” Getting experience is mostly for the student to take care of. Universities should urge and support them to do it.

A producer for your company is usually found

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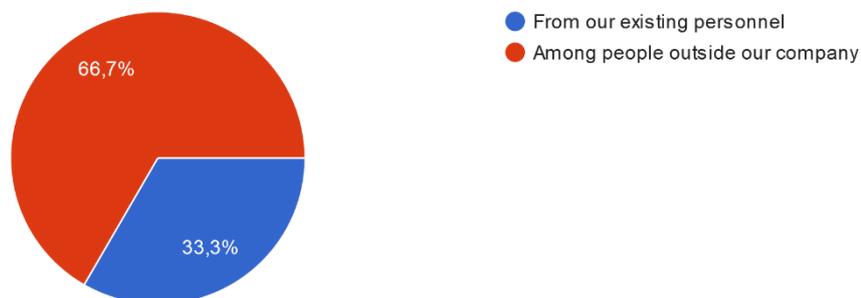


Figure 11: How producers are searched for by the employers

Basis of successful job-search of producer was monitored in questions five (shown in figure 11.) and six (Let us know why you tend to employ like this - an open question). The respondents were guided to question 7. concerning producer internships, by asking first if companies preferred their own personnel or outside sources when hiring new producers. Question seven of internships will be analysed in chapter 9. This is because there the results are not directly connected with the research problem and questions.

As shown in figure 11. four of the six answers (A, B, E and F) were for finding employees from the open labour market. Common factor between the three first of these respondents was that they all were very experienced and successful in the field. This means strong and wide network across the industry which helps in finding new people outside. Company A also had a major restructuring project going on and needed fresh newcomers who are open for ideas the old personnel might oppose. Respondent F was relatively new in the industry but had herself entered the business via connections built during her studies, and their company favoured job searches outside of the company.

The answers of C and D reflected the expected set-up when new producer is needed: Work in this profession is so demanding that it is an advantage if the person to be selected knows the company, the colleagues and the products in advance. As the respondent E put it: "... so it's nearly impossible to come in straight from the school."

From these answers one could determine that it is more possible to become a producer from outside than it is from the inside of a company. This is good news for everyone dreaming of this profession. However, it is also obvious that networks are important for the recruiters. So, without being active within the field of game development a job seeker will remain unknown.

The one best way for producer candidates to get the attention of employers is:

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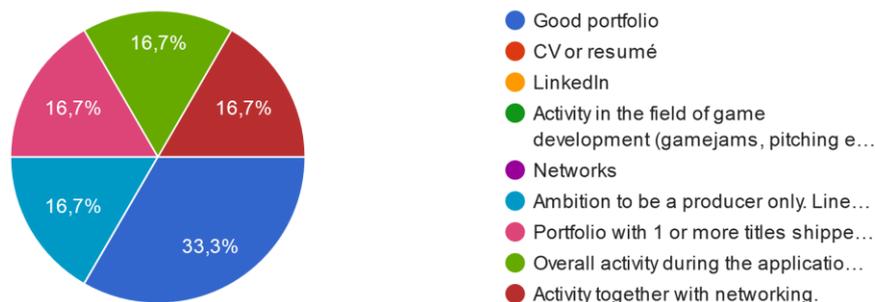


Figure 12: The best way to draw recruiters' attention

Question 12 (shown in figure 12.) was offered multiple choices to select from: The one best way for producer candidates to get the attention of employers is). Open question 13 was: Why? Please widen your answer to the previous question. You can also mark here the second or third most important tool for the applicants to get the attention. The answers for question 12 shown in figure 12 were however, that only companies D and E were able to select one choice only. For them a good portfolio is most important sign of a good producer candidate. Others selected option "other" and explained more widely.

For them (companies A, B, C and F) overall activity in game development and during the application process, portfolio and networking was appreciated. Respondent A came up with one surprising remark: "... but what I really am looking forward with the people that apply is that they want to do the production. They want to be producers. Because quite many, maybe more than half of those applications they start that ... Yes, I am applying for this, but my dream is to be a game designer...". One would think that when you apply for a job of a producer, that is really something you've dreamt of.

If the four answers for option "Other" would be combined in figure 12 it would be the biggest segment with the percentage of 66,4. As a conclusion it can be said that there is not one best way to get the recruiter's attention. One must have a good portfolio, be active in networking, apply multiple channels and approaches to succeed.

Figure 12 shows less options of answers than given by the respondents. Reason for this is that under option "Other" feedback was wider, and four lowest statements on the right side of the

figure are respondent's comments below this option. None of the respondents mentioned LinkedIn as on best one to focus on.

Relevant content for the coming learning module was looked for in four questions. Question 14, where several of multiple choices could be chosen was: In our company producer's responsibilities in a game development team cover:

All six companies replied that teamwork and project management are duties their producers take care of. Only in company A immaterial property rights and marketing belonged to the duties of producer. In most of the companies, producer is accountable for product ownership (A, B, C and F) and business plan (A, B, C and F).

Reason for variation in answers between respondents is the differences between companies and producer roles. For example, D pointed out that in spite of his answers for multiple choices their producers in some cases are responsible for community building, marketing, brand building and product ownership also. Company A made difference between line producer and lead- or executive producer (=EP). As a line producer you're in charge of your specific area of responsibility. As an EP you will be involved with sales also. Company E, as a branch office is the head of development for the games to be published from Finland, so their producers are responsible for team- and project work only.

15th question where several of multiple choices could be chosen was: The most important areas of a business plan (for the producer to control) are. In the answers there was a lot of variation, only budgeting and pricing was found compulsory by five of the six companies. Company E had its headquarters in the UK, so obviously it was not important subject for their producers in Finland.

Monetization and setting goals for the game development and drafting strategies how to get there were also voted important by more than half of the respondents. It is also worth of noticing that market analysis was considered important part of the business plan in three of the six companies (A, B and E), but in F it was taken care of by the management of the company. Otherwise it would have been producer's job to do it there too.

As a support skill (trusting that project- and team management, as well as business plan are taken care of) for a producer the best one is

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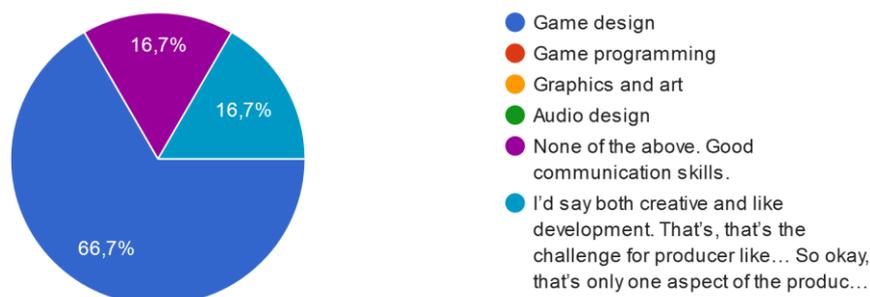


Figure 13: Best support skill(s) for a producer

When the most important support skill for a producer (trusting that teamwork and project management skills as well as business plan are covered) was asked in question 16 (shown in figure 13) most of the respondents mentioned game design as their option. Reason for this could be like F said: “If you have (game) design experience, you probably know something of programming or art already....”. Answers for option “Other” (A and E), together 33,4 % of total are shown separately in figure 13.

Companies A and E took another stand for this. From their point of view people skills or social skills are number one. Company A said it directly:” None of the above... It’s, it’s super basic stuff (communication, giving and receiving feedback), but people don’t pay attention to that enough.” Respondent E explained more widely that both creative and “development” skills (meaning hard skills) are important, but from his point of view the reason for this was the different personalities in a team who all need different kind of attention (=communication).

In question 17 (The most important tool of project management in your company is) the respondents were given possibility to choose one of the six given alternatives only. Last option was again “Other”. All of them saw other options as methodology and Jira as a tool for follow up of bug fixing. Another tool for that used in company F was Han Soft. Of the actual methods none of the given choices got majority. But what became obvious is, that by learning one agile method, that being Scrumban (for A and E) or Kanban (for C, D and F), a student in job search has an advantage compared with other applicants.

For the last question, number 18, the respondents gave some more details to be noted. Maybe the most important of them, that came up in three answers (A, B and E), was that the producer must be flexible and stay alert when the game is produced and tested. Because of the iterative characteristics of the industry, one must be able to read the test results, the consumer feedback and already at the early stages of the production to know where the team is heading. As a captain of the ship, or CEO of the game production one must be able to change the direction, even sometimes kill the product, and communicate this with the team successfully.

Respondent F as a former producer student had an important approach and idea for the teaching of production. It is important for the university to take out the students to game events and exhibitions, in Finland and abroad. Help them to recognise the operators in the industry, and more importantly introduce them to their idols, experienced game producers. Like this, new producers get a soft start to their career.

7 Reflection

As presented in chapter 6, results of industry interviews mostly supported the decisions made while planning and executing the coaching sessions during autumn 2018. Certain processes and tools are also studied during other courses of bachelor's degree of business administration in Laurea UAS. Such are the important areas of team- and project management. The actual tools for these subjects have been added in the learning module designed.

Facilitation and project management tools are something that are to be presented more deeply. Employers mentioned modern tools of facilitation, and project management tools like Kanban or Scrumban as something that producers could learn already during their studies. Tools of bug fixing in game development, Jira and HanSoft, are to be briefly presented, so that the students know a bit more of them than a name only.

But the research also showed that soft skills are even more important to manage than tools. In many occasions, respondents mentioned that social skills, people analyse skills and project management through people should be valued more. Problem is how to coach students for this. Maybe the answer is the word coaching. Producers should approach teammates with inspiring but responsible attitude. Targets should be agreed together and measured during and after the process.

We now know that often a new producer is found outside. This means that learning module should encourage students to keep on networking, visit events and exhibitions of game development, and show overall activity on the field. Combining these to actual teamwork in game design, at least in one or two games during the studies, is to be the extra for the learning module.

As shown a good portfolio is an important tool when looking for a job in game industry. This should be developed during the studies as well. With it and real inspiration and target of becoming a producer one has smaller chance to fail. In the learning module it will be learned that if you want to become a producer you have to have the desire for it. You cannot hesitate in job search in terms of becoming a producer or a game designer. One must know and decide what to want.

8 Results

Important result of this research was developing a suggestion for a learning module for the students of Laurea UAS interested in becoming a producer in game industry. In this work methods of service design were used. Tools like visualization, co-creation and qualitative research were applied together with concepts of customer journey as well as service moments.

Studies at Laurea UAS Hyvinkää campus are organized as projects that last usually one semester. This was the procedure in Chips for Game Skills projects during autumn 2017 and spring 2018, as well as in the Producer in a Game Development Team-project. Within that project 8 producers were coached. This experimental learning module lasted from late August 2018, till December same year. With these producer students, customer journey of a game industry business professional was started.

8.1 Soft- and hard skills needed

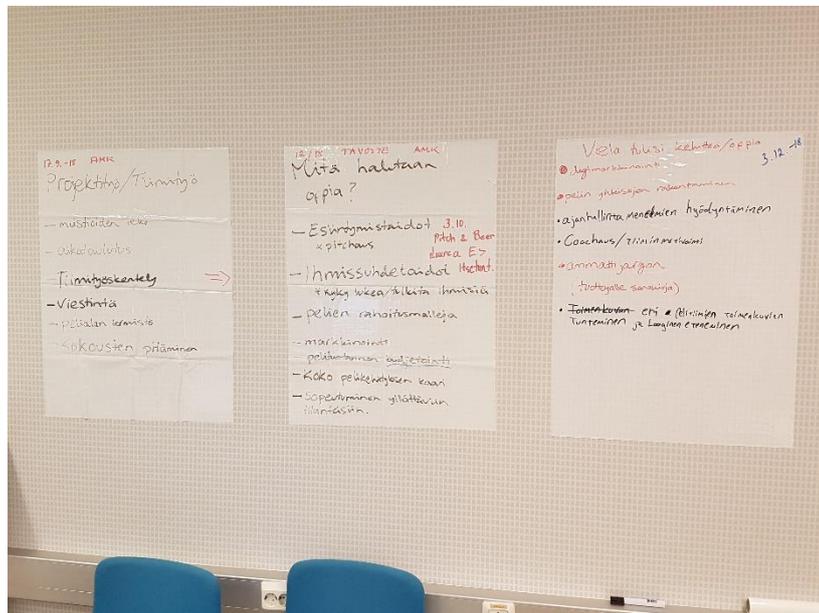


Photo 2: Expectations, targets and ideas of students

Customer journey for producer students was drafted together by the team and the coach in two sessions. Expectations and targets we set in September, results and ideas for further development were written down in late November 2018. These, as drafted by BBA students can be seen in photo 2. Below in table 7. are shown the same in more detail, also the ones of MBA students included.

Customers for whom the learning module was designed are students of business administration at Laurea UAS's Hyvinkää campus. They are suggested to be learning the responsibilities of a game industry producer in three to four coaching entities. As experienced during autumn 2018 the time is always too short. It is recommended to divide these sessions in half or more, so that students can work on other activities of the project the same day. If coaching is divided in parts of 1,5 hours instead of 3 hours and a break in between, the results are possibly better also.

<u>Hard skills</u>	<u>Soft skills</u>
Teamwork methods and facilitation	How to read and interpret people
Commercialization, monetization, budgeting	Communication
Game lifecycle	Social skills
Adapting to sudden changes, schedules	
Agile methods, Trello	
Pitching	

Table 7: Soft- and hard skills necessary as seen by students in the beginning

While visualizing their customer journey students found soft- and hard skills shown in table 7 important. When planning the learning module, the subjects like commercialization, monetization and budgeting were combined below the header business plan. Schedules, Trello, agile methods as well as adapting to sudden changes were combined to be a part of the entity of project management and project management tools. Adapting to sudden changes is a realization of change management which is an important part of good project management work.

From this list subjects like marketing, digital marketing and items connected to those like community building and influencer marketing were dropped. Reason to this was that in order to find out what is similar in the lists of employers and potential employees, the ones that the other party didn't mention couldn't be included. Student's wish to learn about the concept of game loop was left out for the same reason. That concept, however important it is in game development, is closer to the work of game designer than a producer. One thing that is worth of considering from the list of the students is a vocabulary for professional jargon of game development.

As among employers, the students also came up with less targets and ideas in soft skills. Nevertheless, these important competences included very similar factors with the ones that recruiters mentioned. When table 5 from page 37 and table 7 above were combined, interesting similarities could be found.

<u>Hard skills expected by the industry</u>	<u>Hard skills reached for by the students</u>
Project management tools	Trello, agile methods
Budgeting and monetization	Monetization and budgeting
Teamwork methodologies	Teamwork methods
Modern facilitation methods	Facilitation methods
Basic processes of game production, game development cycle (also after the launch)	Game lifecycle
Pitching	Pitching
	Schedules, adapting to sudden changes and situations

Table 8: Hard skills by both the recruiters and the students

It seems that both the employers and the potential employees are looking for the same hard skills as seen in table 8. The last subject of students, schedules, should be included in the benefits of having at least one project management tool typical to game development in one's toolbox. Adapting to sudden changes and situations is an important part of change management. Which closely belongs to the skills of team- and project management.

<u>Soft skills expected by the industry</u>	<u>Soft skills reached by the students</u>
Social skills	Social skills
Communication	Communication
People analyse skills	How to read and interpret people
Attitude	
Leadership	
Project management through people	

Table 9: Soft skills by both the recruiters and the students

The list of soft skills required were even more similar between these two parties. Dropping out attitude and leadership, as well as moving project management skills to hard skills were it partly belongs, would make these two columns identical.

8.2 Learning module for producer-students

These results were reached by co-creation and visualization with the producer students during autumn 2018. At the same time the customer journey for a producer student was built. The contents of it were designed based on this work and qualitative research within the employers of the game industry. Below in figure 14.

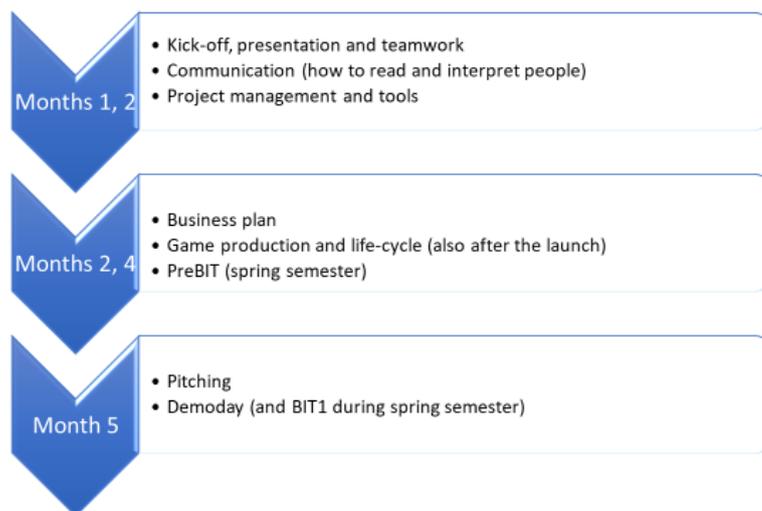


Figure 14: Customer journey and service moments of the learning module

Any semester, autumn or spring, is divided in figure 13 in three parts. Month 5 is December or May, which is always shortest, and August has less effective working days than January. The most important months in student coaching are the three months in the middle. Spring semester is few weeks longer than autumn, so the coaching sessions should be adjusted accordingly.

The contents of each coaching session should be built in a short but effective way. If a full half day can be used for this purpose it may be wise to divide it into two 1,5 hours parts. In between there should be a 15 minutes break and an agenda could be something like seen in figure 14. Team organization here refers to Laurea UAS student team.

Session 1. Kick-off, presentation and teamwork

- ▶ Presentation
 - ▶ Team members, instructors and possible partners
 - ▶ Project presentation
 - ▶ Producer's work in game development teams in general
 - ▶ Organizing the team (manager, secretary and their extas)
 - ▶ Presentation and applying for the game development teams
 - ▶ Preparing for the teamwork theme day



Figure 15: Content of producer 1st coaching session

As seen in practice, even three hours is a short time for the above agenda. The theme day of teamwork should be organized separately reserving at least three hours for it. Suggestion for an agenda is shown in figure 15. Team and team agreement here, refers to any game development team in which producer is one member.

Session 2. Teamwork theme day

- ▶ Team SWOT
- ▶ Team agreement
- ▶ Project plan



Figure 16: Itinerary for the teamwork day

Good communication is vital to a successful team. In Laurea UAS it is daily practiced in project work supported with the theory that is being learnt at the same time. Since it has been shown that game development teams have challenges in it, and it was requested both by the industry recruiters and the producer students it has been added also to the agenda of these producer coaching sessions. In the research what was seen is that it should be approached especially from the perspective of “people analyse skills”. Facilitation, how to receive and give feedback is important part of this session as seen in figure 16.



Session 3. Communication

- ▶ Bad communication
- ▶ Good communication
- ▶ How to really listen
- ▶ Facilitation (give and receive feedback)
- ▶ People analysis

Ref. Tervonen 2019. Chips for Game Skills blog. <https://pelimerkit.metropolia.fi/en/2018/12/17/crpg-producers-tips-for-teamwork-part-5-communication-in-a-team/> referred 15.3.2019.



Figure 17: Agenda for third coaching session

As project management is learnt during other courses at Laurea UAS Hyvinkää campus, this research suggests, that the students would familiarize themselves with the available project management tools in game development generally and learn one of them properly. Most popular ones being Trello and Kanban, basics and practice of these should be included in the coaching sessions as shown in figure 17. Two most popular ticketing systems in quantitative project follow-up in games are Jira and Han Soft. These are good for the students to know and study to some extent, but not necessary to learn in more detail. It is also good to remember that many game developers still use Excel as well.

Session 4. Project management tools

- ▶ Presentation of most popular methods
- ▶ Visual and quantitative approach in game development
- ▶ Trello
- ▶ Kanban
- ▶ Jira and Han Soft for bugs



Figure 18: Itinerary for project management tools - session

For the business plan, or business case, as the industry often calls it, the important finding was that it is not necessary to be very exact yet. What was pointed out by the employers as “super critical” was well realistic, considered and well-founded game idea. A producer should also prepare thorough market and SWOT-analysis.

Session 5. Business Plan

- ▶ Game idea
- ▶ Business Model Canvas
- ▶ Market analysis
- ▶ Tentative
 - ▶ Budget and pricing
 - ▶ Monetization
- ▶ Strategies and how to get there



Figure 19: Agenda for the session for business plan

More information of game production and lifecycle demanded both the industry representatives and the students. Game production here means methods and processes of it. In this session a quick look should also be taken into the game lifecycle after the launch, which means checking game analytics and metrics. This subject being so huge, and employers also talking about basics of game development methodology and processes, one should not go too deep in it during this kind of short period of time. Experience shows that game lifecycle is important to understand, now also after launch.



Session 6. Game production and -life-cycle

- ▶ Methods
- ▶ Processes
- ▶ Life-cycle
- ▶ Also after the launch
 - ▶ Rudimentary review in game metrics and analytics



Figure 20: Agenda for session of game production methods

Rest of the producer-team activities shown in figure 13, PreBIT and BIT1 during spring semesters, Demo day twice a year, and pitching are important parts of the producer coaching as well. One of them, pitching was considered very important part of the producer part among the industry representatives. As shown in figure 20 one afternoon should be reserved for practising it as well.

Session 7. Pitching

- ▶ Tools
- ▶ Tagline
- ▶ Business Model Canvas/Lean Canvas
- ▶ Elevator pitch
- ▶ Five minute pitch
- ▶ Bond with the audience

Ref. Mäkeläinen 2018, CRGP Kick-off/Pitching, referred 15.3.20198, <https://wiki.metropolia.fi/display/avaytot/Capital+Region+Game+Project>



Figure 21: Pitching session agenda

These seven sessions can be arranged together with the producer team. Since the theme is vast and only afternoons are reserved for each of the lessons, they should be planned in detail and executed effectively. Depending on the semester, part of them could be arranged together with the game development teams in order to save time. In these events producers work with their game development teams directly. If this would happen, producer students should be well prepared and coached for the occasion.

As stated earlier, students should be encouraged, even supported, to visit and travel to game shows, exhibitions and jams. There they should be introduced to the industry professionals in order to promote their networking. Half a day is the minimum in this effort and if travels abroad could be arranged a long weekend is not too much.

9 Conclusions

In this thesis it has been shown that game development teams in Metropolia UAS have had challenges when it comes to team- and project management. Also, the need and appreciation of a producer role in the teams became obvious. Combining the information and experiences from the experimental coaching sessions during autumn 2018 and industry interviews conducted in January-February 2019 gave the writer the possibility to offer accurate and **the** right content for the future producer learning module.

Expected content from both the industry side and the students was surprisingly similar. Both point out the importance of social skills, people management not forgetting the tools and

other hard skills necessary. Basic knowledge of one project management tool and the making of business plan is needed. There within should be the ability of game budgeting, monetization, market research and pricing shown.

Industry pointed out the importance of active participation in one, preferably a few game projects. It is important for a job seeker to be able to show exactly what is his or her contribution to the preferably already commercialised game. The more pitching experience is included in these game production experiences the better. One should also be active in events and exhibitions of the game industry. Only there the professionals can be met and only like this, new producers for the industry can be coached, trained and found as both producer candidates and industry representatives wish for.

10 Development ideas and suggestions for upcoming research and actions

In the ninth question of the industry interview the use of internships for producers was asked from the recruiters:

Have you taken students for producer internships in your company?

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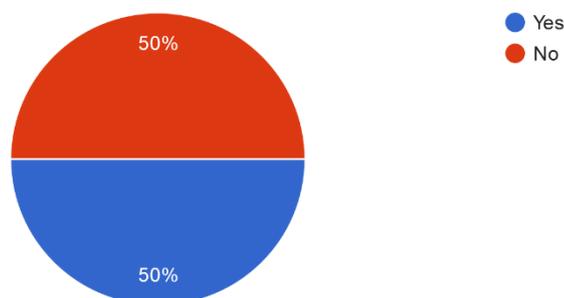


Figure 22: Employers attitudes towards producer internships

Earlier mentioned master's thesis of Nelly Sääksjärvi (How visual artists find employment in the Finnish game industry, 2015.) brought the researcher to think that since internships bring students and employers together, they might promote also the employment of graduated students looking for producer jobs in game development. However, as shown in figure 22, three (A, B and E) companies replied that they take producers for internships. Respondent A announced to be looking for two producer interneees with the next 18 months. On the other hand, he said that their requirements for interneees is very high. It might be easier to apply for a junior producer's position than become a trainee.

Companies C, D and F saw that for them it is not possible to employ producer internees. This was because the high requirements of the profession and lack of time of possible mentors. All also expressed that it is easier to get internship in other positions of game development. For positions of programming, art or sound engineering, more training and mentoring resources can be found.

It is clear, that coders and artists can get internships more easily than students looking for producer's positions. But answers also tell that it is not impossible. Respondent of company A even said that they'll be looking for internees in the future. A wider research of the use of producer internships in game industry should be made as industry needs people who can combine both business and game development. Business students need jobs and in-depth research is called for.

In chapter 4.1 (pages 17-18) of this thesis the author presented questions of possible connection between conflict of creativity and control, as well as delayed or even failed projects in game development. Team manager's poor ability of protecting them from each other and even from themselves was also presented as a possible danger. Tommi Krogerus wrote about it in his thesis (*Ketterät menetelmät ja tiimi, tuottajan työkalut 2017, 1*). This all is something where producer could step in and help the team. If solution could be found, maybe the development processes within the industry could reach the target in time and within the budget frames. For future research these conflicts and combinations would also be an interesting subject.

Laurea UAS's students work as producers in Metropolia UAS's game development teams was a success. Only in one year the number of producers rose from one to eight. The result was probably good because of suitable students being in the university at the same time. The marketing of the course was well planned and effective. Spring semester 2019 was totally different. Not one producer could be recruited from the Laurea UAS's students. It is necessary that for autumn 2019 plans are prepared well and in advance so that students can join the course already late spring when they select their autumn courses. During August and September 2019 strong marketing should be made in the webpages of the university and in direct e-mails to the students. If the results of this thesis are of any help in this work, it may be freely used. It is possible for example to go public with the press release and with it draw attention to the course in Hyvinkää and surrounding regions.

This thesis is based on relatively long research and writing period and the information applied is collected from project works from two semesters earlier. After defining the research problem during autumn 2018 the work advanced more rapidly. Interviews of the industry professionals were executed in a relatively short time period during January-February 2019.

Subject for this thesis was found automatically after working one semester with open badges and game production. By the time the decision was made it was also clear that during the autumn semester I would coach new producers for the game development teams. It was natural to start writing something about coaching the producers and game production. At the early stages it was also agreed with the instructors that one topic would be a learning module for producer coaching. This should be done by the methods and tools of service design. After that started the difficult part of writing.

Most difficult and time-consuming part of the project was to specify the research problem and questions, as well as writing the theoretical frameworks of coaching and service design. For these areas lots of sources could be found, but less so for the producers' skills, competences and expectations they face in working life. Thesis that describe their work in practice, and even a doctoral dissertation of how to organize work with creative professionals could be found. The topics of this thesis are less researched so something new has been established in it.

Part of the reason of the slow beginning was that the decision of making the thesis alone challenged the writer. Without a team one has less pressure and support. The tendency of writing too widely and deeply was another problem for the author. After October and November, the work proceeded smoothly. When the industry interviews were conducted in January and February, the big picture became suddenly clearer and after the earlier difficulties the goal could be seen clearly ahead.

The theoretical framework should be taken into more consideration from the very beginning of the research. In this thesis principles and theory of coaching was written early. The one of service design later. These should be produced one after another.

Heading a group of producer students with different backgrounds, skills and competences was like managing a game development team. The enthusiasm is there but the hardest part is to bring the team together for mutual target. We succeeded in bringing seven of the eight games to the goal, i.e. presenting them on the Demo day. All though having all there with us would have been great, we can be proud of the achievement.

While analysing the results of industry interviews the methods were learned well. This was something that we don't learn in P2P projects so much. Qualitative research however needs

it. The material must be analysed by dividing it to teams and codes especially if the sample is large. With only 6 respondents in this research, the material could be mostly analysed manually. Analysing the skills and competences expected by the industry required more tools which were needed due to the amount of information received from the employers

Among the questions made to the game industry professionals there were some underlying themes not touched earlier in this thesis. First question was about the size of the answering companies. When measured in workforce, size of the companies selected for this research varied from six to more than 50 employees. Four of them (A, B, C and F) were among the biggest operators of the industry in Finland. This focus resulted from the decision of leaving out employers that publicly announced small turnover or low employee count. Respondent E had 16 and D 6-10 employees in Finland. Following this procedure meaningful answers were received from more established employers.

Question nine of internships, and partly also five, where the tendency of favouring labour outside of the company or internal employer in new recruitments was mapped, should be noted here also. The latter one gave tips to the job-search of producer students, the late one is directly information that could be applied in future research.

Design research, where methods of qualitative methods are applied, should be evaluated from the perspective of truthfulness of results produced, analysis and methods used. Are these actions giving answer to the research problem and questions is an important conclusion to be made? Reliability and validity are the concepts to define this in the thesis.

Reliability means that the results analysed and reported can be repeated in another research and reach same conclusions. In this thesis the six recruiters interviewed were employing for different types of companies. A, C, D and F were representatives of traditional developing studios, smaller or larger, all independent enterprises who hired producers for their game development projects. B and E were sister- or daughter companies of domestic or international owners whose main activity is publishing besides game development. All respondents however were hiring producers or had done it in the past. These differences have been taken into consideration in the analysis, so if new researches are conducted the same way, the results should be same.

In the analysis conclusions have been made after analysing and interpreting the answers given by the respondents. Material has been transcribed from the recorded sessions or from notes made of the interview. This way inner validity has been reached in the research.

Research problem of tasks or processes producer candidates should manage, and which of these universities of applied sciences could teach were answered in questions three and four. Indirectly this information was given also in replies for questions two, seven, eight, nine, ten, 11 and 12. Content of answers for question 13 gave added information for these questions. Research question of the expectations of game industry employers towards the job seekers looking for positions of producers were clarified in the answers for questions three, five, seven, eight, nine, ten, 11 and 12. Consequently, the validity of this research has been proven.

Documentation of this thesis consist of this publication, the materials of producer coaching sessions during autumn 2018 and questions and results of the interviews with the industry representatives. In references there are also links to Chips for Game Skills projects of autumn 2017 and spring 2018. These documents were important for the author when studying the background for this thesis. With this documentation a reader can evaluate the thesis and trace the results from the research material.

With this thesis it has become obvious that with the right attitude, knowledge, skills, competences and experience, anyone can be a producer in the game industry. Now it is up to the education industry to take the challenge and the possibility for this should be given to the students and enough resources should be given to this work.

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Appendix 1: Feedback to the head coach from the producer-students - questionnaire

Producer gurus - Coaching sessions 1-3 - Feedback

On a scale of 1-5 give your opinion (1= very poor, 5= very good), in the last “question” the word is free. You are welcome to give other comments and ideas there.

1. The factual content of the day was:

1 2 3 4 5

2. Materials (pp-slides) were:

1 2 3 4 5

3. Coach’s presentation was:

1 2 3 4 5

4. Free word:

Appendix 2: Feedback from the game development teams to the producer-students

Tuottaja pelikehitystiimissä - palaute opiskelijatiimeiltä

Kiitämme kaikkia syksyn 2018 pelikehitysprojekteihin osallistuneita opiskelijoita hyvästä yhteistyöstä! Kehittääksemme toimintaamme edelleen pyydämme teitä arvioimaan Laureasta tulneiden tuottajienne toimintaa. Vastaukset pyydetään lähettämään torstaihin 20.12.2018 mennessä. Kiitokset etukäteen ja Rauhallista Joulua!

Pelin nimi (valitse vain yksi vaihtoehto)

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

- Apophis-01
- Battle for Sampo
- Chopball
- Clutter Jump
- Flue Season
- Sestra - Gone Astray
- Strategy Arena
- To Be a King

Tuottajan tiimityötaidot. Arvio asteikolla 1-5. 1=erittäin huono, 5=erittäin hyvä

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

1 2 3 4 5

erittäin huono

erittäin hyvä

Tuottajan projektityötaidot projektijohtamisen osalta. Arvio asteikolla 1-5. 1=erittäin huono, 5= erittäin hyvä

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

1 2 3 4 5

erittäin huono

erittäin hyvä

Tuottajan projektityötaidot työmenetelmien (esim. Trello, Scrum, Kanban) osalta. Arvio asteikolla 1-5. 1=erittäin huono, 5= erittäin hyvä

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

1 2 3 4 5

erittäin huono

erittäin hyvä

Tuottajan kirjallinen viestintä (WhatsUp tai vast., Discord ym.). Arvio asteikolla 1-5. 1= erittäin huono, 5= erittäin hyvä.

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

1 2 3 4 5

erittäin huono

erittäin hyvä

Tuottajan esiintyminen ja suullinen viestintä (pitchaus jne.). Arvio asteikolla 1-5. 1= erittäin huono, 5= erittäin hyvä.

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

1 2 3 4 5

erittäin huono

erittäin hyvä

Tuottajan hoitamat tehtävät (täppää vaihtoehto, mikäli tuottajanne, yhdessä tiimin/pelisuunnittelijan kanssa tai yksin hoiti mielestäsi tämän työn). Valittavissa useampi vaihtoehto

Valitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.

- Tiimityön organisointi (tiimisopimus, team-swot, tehtävien jako, kommunikaatiomenetelmistä sopiminen, aikataulutukset jne.)

- Projektityön organisointi ja työkalujen käyttö (projektisuunnitelma, sen seuranta, tulosten ja valmistumisen seuranta jne.)
- Liiketoimintasuunnitelma sis. Lean Model Canvas, monetisaatio-, markkinointi- ja brändäyssuunnitelmat
- Muu:

Tuottajamme osasi (useampi vaihtoehto mahdollinen)

Valitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.

- Innostaa ja motivoida tiimiä
- Kuunnella muita
- Tuoda esille oman mielipiteensä
- Antaa myös korjaavaa palautetta (esim. aikataulujen noudattamista tai vast. koskien)
- Muu:

Tiimimme hyötyi tuottajan työpanoksesta (vain toinen vaihtoehto)

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

- Kyllä
- Ei

Milloin ja miksi tuottajan työpanoksesta oli eniten hyötyä?

Jokaisessa pelisuunnittelutiimissä pitäisi olla tuottaja (vain toinen vaihtoehto mahdollinen)

Merkitse vain yksi soikio.

- Kyllä
- Ei

Mitä toivoisit, että tuottaja olisi tehnyt paremmin?

Sana on vapaa:

Appendix 3: Industry interview questions

Producer in a game development team - study

In this research I try to find out requirements, expectations and preconditions of game industry employers on the producer job applicants. It is part of my BBA thesis in my major project management. The focus in this survey is in tools, elements and experiences producer candidates should have in order to be selected for the job, and how university of applied science could help them to obtain them. Thank you in advance for your answers. More information can be obtained from Juha Leskinen, juha.leskinen@student.laurea.fi 050-5287616

*Pakollinen

1. How many people are working in your company? *Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

1-5 persons

6-10 persons

11-50 persons

>50

2. Producer in a team of game development is managing specialists, professionals in their own field of expertise. How is this work different from the work of any other project- or team manager, heading a group of professional-specialists in on other branch? Or is it?

3. When hiring a new producer, we find following soft- and hard skills, as well as competences necessary:

4. Of these soft and hard skills or competences universities of applied sciences could teach:

5. A producer for your company is usually found *Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

From our existing personnel

Among people outside our company

6. Let us know why you tend to employ like this:

Siirry kysymykseen 7.

Siirry kysymykseen 8.

We prefer hiring producers from our existing personnel

7. What has led you to employ more from the existing personnel?

We prefer recruiting producers outside our company

8. Let us know why you tend to employ like this?

Using internships in hiring producers (and other professionals of a game design team) for your company

9. Have you taken students for producer internships in your company? * *Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

Yes *Siirry kysymykseen 10.*

No *Siirry kysymykseen 11.*

We take student(s) for internship(s) in our company If you answered "Yes" to preceding question

10. Why are you taking students as producer interns in your company?

We haven't employed producer internees in our company If your answer to question 9. was no, please tell why

11. Why cannot you employ producer internees? *

Siirry kysymykseen 12.

Students' search for work

In the following questions I ask you about details of a successful job search for a producer candidate for your company:

12. **The one best way for producer candidates to get the attention of employers is:** *Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

Good portfolio

CV or resumé

LinkedIn

Activity in the field of game development (game jams, pitching events, organizing these events) Networks

Muu:

13. **Why? Please widen your answer to the previous question. You can also mark here the second or third most important tool for the applicants to get the attention.**

About the work of a producer

In this section we would like to hear your opinion of tasks and tools of a producer.

14. **In our company producer's responsibilities in a game development team cover (multiple options available) *** *Valitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.*

IPR, i.e. Immaterial Property Rights, registration of the brand etc.)

Product ownership

Brand building

Team Management

Marketing

Business Plan

Community building

Sales

Project Management

Muu:

15. The most important parts of the business plan (for the producer to control) are: * *Valitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.*

Game idea

Market analysis (incl. customer, competitor- and SWOT-analysis)

Monetization model

Outsourcing plans

Brand registration and the rest of the IPR.

Budgeting and pricing

Setting the goals and draft strategies how to get there

Muu:

16. As a support skill (trusting that project- and team management, as well as business plan are taken care of) for a producer the best one is * *Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

Game design

Game programming

Graphics and art

Audio design

Muu:

17. The most important tool of project management in your company is * *Merkitse vain yksi soikio.*

Scrum

Kanban

Scrumban

Kanplan

Jira

Muu:

18. Other important feedback concerning producer's work, job search or internships you want to bring to the attention of the researcher - add your company or name here if possible: