

Chris Klimecky - Speaking Topics

Here is my list of current topics with summary details and timing estimates. Each of these topics has been presented and iterated upon multiple times.

Longer (~1 hour)

Project Predictability: How do we move toward greater project scheduling predictability? We'll start with the high level of what predictability is and isn't, and get a better understanding of the "Cone of Uncertainty". Then we'll dive into fifteen pain points that typically hamper predictability and discuss their mitigations.

High Level Project Planning: We'll reconcile common industry terms and understanding with an example Dev Framework. Then using that framework, we'll look at a case study project schedule example to see how team members and budget would be allocated.

Leading with Empathy: Improving some team issues goes beyond processes and spreadsheets. Leaders with strong emotional intelligence create an environment of trust and a safe space for team members to be candid/forthcoming about problems. This can lead to everything from better task estimation to solving problems before they escalate, for example. We'll discuss what goes into leading with empathy and how it can improve the functionality of any team.

Development Framework Deep Dive: Get into the nitty-gritty of how a well-structured dev framework can provide the organization to drive a project's success. We start with the high level view of the framework - why, goals, and values - then get into the guts of everything from stage definitions, phases, releases, gate criteria, artifacts, and more.

Facilitating Expedient Decisions and Simplification: Game development progress can be seriously hampered by a team culture of not making (or worse, reversing) decisions. Increasing iteration speed by eliminating decision making bottlenecks and facilitating decisions that stick can make or break game quality in limited time frames. We'll discuss tools, techniques, and red flags to watch out for as well as the Producer's role in making sure decisions stick.

Producer 101: For people who are interested in knowing more about the role of a Producer or are early in their Production track careers, this talk touches on a number of important topics. From what a career in Production looks like to values to milestones, budgets, and schedules, get a long term roadmap as well as practical advice for anyone who wants to improve their production knowledge.

Learning From AAA Failure: This is Vegas was an ambitious “GTA killer” that didn’t survive Midway’s bankruptcy. But it wasn’t Midway that killed it - leadership failures on many levels from the development team all the way up the WB Games chain that inherited the project contributed to the \$40m debacle. Hear the inside history and the leadership insights to take away.

Risk Management: A big topic with big ramifications, disciplined Risk Management (RM) is badly needed yet often ignored. Why? What does a straightforward RM process look like? We’ll look at many angles and takeaway practical tips for bringing RM to anyone’s team or project.

Shorter (~ 1/2 hour)

Pitching to Publishers: What’s involved in a basic project pitch deck to publishers? Many independent game developers are at a loss when it comes to what publishers are looking for and how to present their game in the best light. While not all publishers are looking or the same thing, you may be surprised by what’s actually important to some. Walking through this simple template will provide insights and direction for how to move forward.

Working with External Partners: This topic covers a wide range of uses for external partners in game development including Art, Animation, Code, QA, and Localization. Tips for processes, team configuration, tracking, and a partnership mindset provide insight into better ways to use such resources.

Retrospectives: A case study breaking down the simple yet effective retrospective process that Harebrained Schemes used. The goal is to show how the retrospective approach and “always learning” mindset can be used in a variety of situations to benefit teams.

Initiating and Managing Difficult Conversations: No one likes conflict in the workplace, yet as leaders we avoid sensitive or controversial topics at our own (and our team's) peril. Even worse is knowing the necessity of having a difficult conversation, making it occur, and then leaving with less than desirable lingering results (anger, resentment, etc.). As the name implies - these things are tough! Pulling from the book "Crucial Conversations: Tools for talking when the stakes are high," we will workshop what it takes to tackle such topics with confidence and leave with positive results.

Quantifying Creative Risk: Gauging creative risk on a project can be extremely difficult to define, hard to compare to past projects or experiences, and harder still to assimilate into real action that will help mitigate said risks in the future. Gaining an understanding of creative risk and how it may or may not affect a particular project can help with project planning and communication. This presentation raises various factors and considerations to then turn into actionable mitigation.

Building New IP: What's the value of a new idea? How do you create/build value or even fund the opportunity to do so? Should you focus only on the best ideas or the best execution of any idea? We'll tackle all of these important questions, case studies, and more as we look at the risky waters of new IP development.

A Realistic Task Estimation Model: A walkthrough of how traditional task estimation and the Producer/Leader expectations that come with it can lead to unrealistic scheduling. This model attempts to drive predictability via personal accountability and iterative mindset. We'll dive more deeply into a proposed task estimation model that takes into account the realities of iteration, 3rd party review, QA, and more.

Implementing Jira Kanban Workflow: Building off the "Realistic Task Estimation" discussion, this topic demonstrates how the use of such estimation techniques can directly translate into easy workflow for team members in Jira. Due to Jira's extreme flexibility and people's wide-ranging use of it, this model should at least give some helpful direction and potential ideas even if it doesn't line up perfectly with the team's current configuration.