

Audio Asset Management for Large Projects

Don't Do What Donny Don't Does.

Pre-production

- Set up a budget schedule so that accounting is aware of when certain funds will need to be available.
- Make a broad outline of resources and timeline the project based on past experience.
- Determine whether the current resource pipeline can handle the project or will external parties need to be contracted to complete the project.

Determining Naming Conventions and Compiling Asset Lists

- Develop a naming convention that makes sense.
- Document the naming convention so that others can reference it.
- Go through the entire game and compile a list of all the audio assets that you know will be needed and name them.
- Enter that list into a document or database so that anyone that needs to can access it.
 - If you choose to use a database assign different levels of access for the database so that only certain parties have the ability to delete records, change names, etc.

Creating and Tracking Assets

- Begin creating assets in order of priority .
 - Determine cross-discipline dependencies.
 - Cross-reference with budget schedule if using contractors.
- Enter the state of assets being created into your tracking system.
 - Possible states - Not Started, In Progress, Finished, In Game, Tested, Approved.
- Determine how each "type" of asset will be implemented, and who is responsible for each implementation style.
 - Will animators enter keys for triggering walk sounds, will programmers trigger sounds for visual effects, etc.
 - Important to know "how" the sound is implemented before it is created.



Sound Design/Voice Asset Tracking – Contractor’s Point of View

- Break developer’s asset lists into groups (Ambience, Impacts, Voice, etc).
- Designate audio team members if you are working as a team
 - Who is best suited for the type of sound needed?
- Get a firm idea of how feedback will come to you and when a file is approved .
 - Runaway revisions can hurt schedule.
 - Have riders in contract if game gets re-written and old assets become obsolete.
- Plan any necessary field recordings, voice sessions, Foley work, etc.



Sound Design/Voice Asset Tracking – Contractor’s Point of View

- Come up with a directory and file structure and stick to it.
 - Need to manage authoring (Pro Tools, etc) sessions, high resolution files and game-resolution files.
 - Back up
- Prepare assets for potential future localization.
 - Need to be able to recreate things like voice processes.
 - May not happen for a long time, you need to be organized or you’ll run into trouble.
- Cuts scene mixes should be neat and tidy.
- Develop a solid path for revisions including archiving of old versions, multitrack sessions, etc.
 - You always want to be able to go back to an older version.
- Back up – again.

Implementation

- Begin handing off assets to the people that are implementing them or start implementation yourself, depending on your role.
- Troubleshoot sound systems and make sure that everything is functioning in game, as it should.
- Add new assets to the list as required, because some areas, objects, creatures will be missed in the first pass.

Balancing and Polish

- Make a pass for overall balance and polish. This is a must for quality and to make sure the player hears what needs to be heard, like dialog.
- Revise or remake sounds that don't fit the overall feel of the game.
- Quality Assurance - Make a list of all quality control issues and verify for major builds or submission candidates.
 - Multi-platform releases will have different issues crop up on each platform. Identify and add these to a QC checklist.
 - Check the mono, stereo, and surround speaker configurations for each platform, to ensure consistency across all systems.
 - Looping, compression and dynamics can vary on Xbox vs. PS2 vs. GCN.
 - Check consistency with movie playback systems.
 - As a contractor, this phase is not based as much on deliverables as it is your expertise. This is more of a consultant-client relationship.

Post Mortem

- Look back and document what went right and what went wrong.
 - If possible do this with as many team members as possible. Other people may have had problems that you were not aware of.
- Look for methods of improving the audio pipeline in the future.
 - Once again, look to other team members for suggestions in this area.

The End

- Or is it...