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Paul has asked me not to go into details on my work – others today will talk about process and best practice – but I shall try to give an introduction to China

I've worked with China and other areas of Asia since 1996,

Earlier outsourcing animation for movie and TV – now the latest 5 years for games; I moved to Shanghai in 2007

When charming me to speak here – meeting in Shanghai Paul said “I was the person he knew who seemed most comfortable in China” ; now I've been trying to collect the reasons why – and pass them on to you – making your experience in China better on a personal level as well as professionally

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China /Asia is very **different** from our Western environment; A difference which can be quite overwhelming when you first time visit, that can be disturbing at times, but if you keep an open mind you might end up finding the different way of thinking – the cultural roots soothing and inspiring

[slide: 'crises' 危机 ] [*wēi jī*]

To our current gloomy financial situation: a positive input from the Chinese language and culture:

The Chinese character for 'crises' is made of two parts; the sign for 'danger' and the one for 'opportunities' – one cannot and should not ignore the danger; but we can chose to focus on the opportunities that lies within the crises.

China is still a land of opportunities! I believe these years in our industry competition will measured in who can get most value on screen for recoupable production budgets; to gain higher efficiency on lower costs outsourcing is a great tool.

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We set up our Shanghai facility for Eidos mid last year; an outsourcing hub servicing the Eidos development studios – with goals of building partnerships and in the future see a larger integration of our projects within China /or Asia: We plan to grow with China – the teams we work with in China gain experience from our work, which makes them able to take on more complex tasks – instead of worrying about price level going up, and having to move to cheaper less experience outsourcing areas to produce simple tier #1 assets, we higher the tiers ...

## 艺夺 “art – grasp” [yì duó] *our Chinese company name*

(- It is good name; as most Chinese I’ve asked relates the ‘grasp’ to gaming – it is an aggressive word; as ‘taking by force’. The sound is close to Eidos (or at least to Eido). And it is nice looking characters; simple (only two). It has the Chinese philosophical touch to it and relating to art.

The word “duo” associates to a Chinese proverb “Qiao Duo Tian Gong”, which means “precious art which is so fantastic as if it was created by God”).

I have been getting comments about the name being too aggressive and ‘not polite’. However I also get the comment that it is strong – and showing a company that “wants to!”: related to the fact that in China being ‘aggressive’ as a company is seen with esteem and respect.

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I believe in doing better business in China if knowing what’s behind; its culture - its base:

Like anywhere else: If you are on the business side of things; you want to reach deals in a win-win environment – you’ll need to know what values are ‘wins’ for your Chinese counterpart.

If you have production /or training tasks; you need to know what motivates and why..  
First Advice:

Acknowledge and respect the difference between your culture and the Chinese

- and Acknowledge and respect the challenges in restructuring your home processes

I hear the argument “we are the client – I am paying, so why is it me who have to bend, learn, and research in their culture and habits?”.... well we’ve chosen to send our work half around the world – to get it done cheaper; there are reasons why it’s half the price – we are outsourcing to a developing country – and if we want to get a good result; we have to understand how to get it there

Don’t fall into the well-meant, perhaps political correct /or perhaps an excuse for less home planning; of saying that the studio you’ll work with, in China is going to be a part of your home team – the outsourcing studio is your business partner, with a different motive – it is bread and butter for the company and their staff. Of course they will get motive like all of us by working on a great game; but they cannot afford to idle – waiting for weeks for feedback, nor can they afford to be guessing what you want

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[picture: PANDA]

The studios in China are a great resource: Often with more experience than our home teams – the level of education is high: Most artists have a Master from Art Academies – with backgrounds in oil painting and clay modeling – and the teams are specialized in for instance character modeling: with hundreds of hours on the same techniques – while not working on your game, being trained further by your competitor.

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'Mei you wenti' [sign + pinyin]

This expression will bring any Chinese at ease – often translated as 'no problem'; however what it literally means is 'no question': One of the reflections through the Chinese language; which illustrates a cultural difference: A question equals a problem....

This is anchored thousands of years back from Confucius, and has been further emphasized during the last hundred years of war and Cultural Revolution: And unfortunately the Chinese school system today is still dominating the attitude

Therefore original design is still rare coming out of China – our methods of brainstorming, experimentation and asking the open question are nowhere in place

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You'll meet great differences within; another word describing the experience would be Contrasts:

'China is – very ancient history and rituals; very young (everyone educated and running things around here are in their early thirties – a gap made by the Cultural Revolution)

There is a beauty in the way ancient Chinese culture is lived – the balance of the body /and the family is everything: Don't miss a food massage /acupressure by blind people, which will re-set your inner functions

Young yuppie game designers will still during lunch advice you to eat more lilyroots if you have a cold, and black ear mushrooms if you had too much to drink last night (good for the liver).

They will be caring for their parents, who are probably early retired – as the elder generation's job possibilities are limited, because of lack of education due to the Cultural Revolution

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Shanghai is the place to be – [picture: PUDONG NEW]

I had to go back taking this picture last week, as I realized the one I took last year was extremely outdated; buildings rise in Shanghai by the speed of seasonal flowers (weather...)

it is probably the most bustling business city in the world right now – and I hear first time impressions like 'this could be New York' – 'it's as Chicago' etc. But do try to get a bit distanced to the new polished high-rises, and see the China that's really behind it all...

The contrasts are enormous – when I walk to work in the morning, downtown Shanghai; I pass old housing areas, where young women are washing their hair in the shared outside sink (with cold water), dressed elegant ready to go to work – perhaps in nice International offices like ours – and this makes me understand why they might have different standard for the goal /quality bar of what is to be achieved

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[rě'n] patience (slide)

In China they say “if you can keep patient for one moment; you can have beautiful future for a life time”

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Advice:

Language is a true barrier – on the street you won't find many speaking English (in the studios, there will always be key-people with good English skills and translators)

Chinese people are very caring, and good hosts – you will most likely be offered assistance to your visit – like pickup in the airport, invites for meals etc. You should accept with gratitude – as it can be quite difficult getting around alone – if you do arrive alone to China; make sure to bring a print out of where you want to go – in Chinese!

Traffic is crazy – imagine a 24 million people city, with much cars – all driven by teenagers; it is a developing country; privately owning a car is new: most drivers has less than one year's driving experience

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Practical advice:

Bring plenty of business cards –

Show respect for the people you meet by giving your card with two hands

Receive your partners card the same way

In meetings it is respectful and practical to place the received cards in front of you on the table – and meetings in China takes time! Things have to be translated, and the Asian culture doesn't require you speaking all the time – silence is strength, and so is patience! When considering your answer – take your time – look down at the cards and up at the person acknowledging his high position written on his business card. Once the meeting is over do remember to take the cards with you – and never in your back pocket – on your ass; but best close to your heart – or in a designated folder; showing your worth ship.

Food:

The food is great – and healthy! And luckily there are not many rules around the table – or at least are we as foreigners excused from not knowing, not liking, not able... just enjoy!

However the bacteria base is very different: to make sure you can enjoy the entire trip – and be able to follow through your heavy schedule of meetings and sights; do not eat fresh fruit unless peeled, and no uncooked veggies

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Did it all sound too complicated?

- Well I have spared you the details on Chinese bureaucracy, and the amount of paperwork it takes to start a business there; however I should remind you: You need a visa to get there!

- and it is worth it! The China contribution to our projects are valuable – and gives our super development teams back home in the Eidos studios time and freedom to focus on what they are best at: creating new franchises, design and better gameplay.

The one picture I did slip in here from work – is a single frame from a trailer for our new franchise Mini Ninjas – MADE IN CHINA

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(“take away” : Acknowledge and respect the difference; with an open mind try to understand – and you will have a better (maybe even inspiring) personal experience – as well as a chance to do better business in China)