

The Naughty Dog Experience

Find out how one of our local studios, **Passion Republic** has been working with big studios such as Naughty Dog on games such as Uncharted.

Earlier this month, we met up with local studio Passion Republic, who worked with Naughty Dog on one of their exclusive titles, Uncharted and we wanted to see how our local studios work on such a big project and to ask them about their experiences working with an AAA game making company like Naughty Dog. Meeting up with us was Sern, the founder of Passion Republic.

What was Passion Republic responsible for in Uncharted: Lost Legacy?

Well, we were involved in most of the creative process of the game. First, we were given a brief from Naughty Dog's art director then we are required to visualise on the game levels and stories. We are also involved in creative assets such as treasures, collectables, and

creative assets such as the train you see in the game.

How did it feel like to work for a massive studio such as Naughty Dog?

Hmm, it has definitely been one of the most challenging experience we had, as they are one of the best game studios around, thus creating a new kind of pressure which was insightful for our team in terms of experience and excitement.

What was one of your toughest challenges you faced during your time working on the Uncharted project?

During our first initiative, when we worked on Uncharted 4, our first challenge was the time frame itself and we were required to finish assets like the treasure within 1 month because we were

unfamiliar with Naughty Dog's workflow thus we had to pick up the slack almost immediately. On the second project we worked on, which was Lost Legacy, we were also involved in the creative process thus we had to be on their level when it comes to game design and storyboarding, and there were many iterations which we had to go through before finalizing on the final product.

How long does the creative process take and how does the short timeline for projects like the last minute assignment from Uncharted 4 affect your creative process and quality of work?

We spend about 6 months to work on storyboarding and visualization and we work on a daily basis with the art director, with feedback usually happening

within the day or the next. This process will continue in a cycle with the process beginning from concepts from the script and usually, the end product is always different from the original idea. This is normal within the game industry. We wouldn't say that last minute changes affect us, as Naughty Dog is a very reasonable developer, hence, even with changes, we are given extra time to produce our works.

So how does one keep up with a big studio like Naughty Dog? Can you shed some light on your workflow practices?

Wow, keeping up with Naughty Dog, that by itself is no easy feat. Normally what we would do is look at the games they did in the past and try to push our quality of work beyond 50% of what the previous title would have been as a way to keep up with the quality in terms of texture and content. We also got a benchmark asset from Naughty Dog, so that we can get a key reference to maintain the same standards of quality. As to how we streamline our pipeline, we have daily meetings whereby everyone will gather to provide their feedback and challenges

they face, and the end of the day we have another daily meeting to make sure no one is off track.

What were the lessons learned by working with Naughty Dog?

What we learned the most was to believe in the process of iteration. Most of the time, the younger artist would believe that iteration is distracting and an obstacle in making a good game, but after working with Naughty Dog, we really found the iteration process to be the key process to creating a higher quality game.

What are the toughest projects you have worked on thus far?

I can't actually choose one but there was an instant when David Jefferies, the creator of God of War, whereby the art direction was all from a line drawing and sketches from 7 years prior which gave our artist visualisation issues. Usually, we would derive our visuals from a complete and original sketch. This was a challenging period for us.

Malaysia has many local studios involved in many partnership projects

but what is the key factor that we are lacking to produce our own IPs?

In my personal perspective, the lack of IPs from Malaysia is because of lack of experience or readiness to execute an original IP, because everyone has an idea, but the execution process is crucial. The current goal should be to nurture everyone to reach the same goal. As I had mentioned earlier, game design and game engines are not the only factors on what makes a good game. Good storyline and mechanics are just as important thus I feel the solution would be to train our local mentality.

So what do you think Malaysia needs to produce quality studios that can compete in a global market?

I would say that our goal and passion is to nurture as much talent as possible because we believe when the art or game development community is ready in Malaysia, good things will happen naturally. So I believe that Malaysians should stay passionate within the industry and also stay determined to thrive within the industry as well in order for them to reach greater heights. ■

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the Passion Republic team