All Ears
by Brad Buchanan

Some weeks, it feels like you spend more time talking about your game than building it. Team BarrelEye experienced that feeling this week as we prepared a design presentation hot on the heels of our pitch. Everybody has a hand in preparing our presentations, which takes time - we hope to use the slides we have created to quickly template future presentations.

Monday was full of planning. Our engineers met to discuss the game's architecture, consider the challenges we are most likely to encounter down the road, and prepare a list of tasks they need to complete over the next two weeks. There were also a couple of design meetings to clarify details that we had to include in our Wednesday presentation. Over lunch we shared some of our experiences so far with West-Turn and agreed to meet later to share playtest results. We also had individual advisor meetings and, bit-by-bit, performed our first Scrum pulldown to begin our first official sprint.

Tuesday and Wednesday flew by as art and production prepared for the presentation, and engineering started a prototype.

Wednesday afternoon we presented to eight members of the OCCO team, along with our advisors. We shared our research, describing a few of the games we are drawing from. We gave a more complete overview of our design, specifically focusing on the core game loop to find the fun as soon as possible. Finally, we presented our playtesting plan for the next two weeks. Our goal is to test a paper prototype on Friday of this week, and to begin a Unity prototype that will be networked for internal testing on Tuesday. On Friday the 21st we will invite the other ETC teams to help us playtest that prototype, so that at Quarters on the 26th (also our next OCCO milestone) we can present playtesting results, a revised design, and a roadmap to alpha.

The OCCO team provided us with great feedback, and revealed some

ways that they will guide us as we proceed with the project. They were very interested in how we can make the game work for a trade show setting, from making the TV screen attract attention, to designing a multiplayer game that can be demoed to a single guest. After our meeting we had smaller conversations that lent further insight into our design. We were also asked to turn this presentation into a video, and future presentations as well - we've found it's a great tool to make our presentations clear and direct.

On Thursday and Friday we were happy to spend time with John Dessler, who is visiting from Pittsburgh for a few days. He gave a workshop on brainstorming and the creative process, and also took time to sit down with our team and talk about our project. John helped us anticipate some of the hardest challenges we will come across this semester, both from a product perspective and from a teamwork perspective. Thanks John!

By the end of the week we finished our paper playtest and had an early prototype running on a phone, so we feel good about our current progress. We also had our short weekly update with Ben, and we continue to struggle with a few IT issues but for the most part it's not slowing us down.

Even in a week of talking (and listening!) we've found that with good teamwork we can get work done. Better, we can learn to take advantage of valuable feedback from the talented people that surround us to make our game better than we originally imagined. Next week we have no major presentation so our focus will be on prototyping and playtesting, continuing to actively seek that feedback from our teachers, clients, and peers. Expect great things from team BarrelEye!

Our Team

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