

*Creating Small Teams That Kick  
A\$\$ and Take Names*

*Chip Pedersen*

ilm mdc<sup>2015</sup>

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# *Let's get some things out of the way*

- This is an interactive talk
  - Not a lecture (Ask questions!)
  - Also time for questions after
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- Please silence your phones, watches, headsets, VR Goggles, etc
  - FYI Call your Mom, she misses you

# *Who is this Chip guy?*

- **27 years in Tech, 21 years in video games**
  - Hasbro, Apple, Anderson Consulting, Microsoft Game Studio, Psyclone, Outdoor Partners, Concrete Software
  - FrostBit Studio
- **Shipped over 100 titles**
- **Managed teams small as 2 big as 100**
  - Locally, Virtually, Multiple Time Zones
  - 10+ teams at once

# *Where has my job has taken me?*



Year	Title	Platforms	Year	Title	Platforms
1996	Marble Madness	PC	2006	World Series of Poker: Tournament of Champions	Xbox 360, PS2, PSP, PC, Wii
1997-2000	MSN Gaming Zone	Web	2007	Barbie as the Island Princess	Wii, GBA, PC
2003	MLB Inside Pitch	Xbox	2007	Cabela's Big Game Hunter	Xbox 360, PS2, Wii
2003	NHL Rivals	Xbox	2007	Cabela's Big Game Hunter: Trophy Bucks	PC
2004	American Chopper	Xbox, PS2, PC	2007	Cabela's Monster Bass	PS2
2004	Bicycle Casino	Xbox	2007	Cabela's Trophy Bucks	Xbox 360, PS2, Wii
2004	Cabela's Big Game Hunter: 2005 Adventures	Xbox, GBA, PS2, GameCube, PC	2007	Candy Land: Dora the Explorer Edition	Hybrid PC/Mac
2004	Cabela's Dangerous Hunts	PC	2007	Dancing With the Stars	PS2, Wii
2004	Cabela's Deer Hunt: 2005 Season	Xbox, PS2, PC	2007	Go, Diego, Go! Safari Rescue	Hybrid PC/Mac
2004	DreamWorks' Shark Tale: Fantastic Fun!	PC	2007	History Channel: Battle for the Pacific	Xbox 360, PS2, PS3, Wii, PC
2004	Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball	Xbox	2007	Hot Wheels: Beat That!	Xbox 360, PS2, DS, Wii, PC
2004	Mall of America Tycoon	PC	2007	Jewel Quest: Expeditions	DS
2004	Monster Garage	Xbox	2007	Mah Jong Quest: Expeditions	DS
2004	National Lampoon's University Tycoon	PC	2007	Monster Jam	Xbox 360, PS2, Wii, PC
2004	Rapala Pro Fishing	Xbox, PS2, GBA, PC	2007	Puppy Luv	Wii
2004	Shrek 2 Activity Center	PC	2007	Puppy Luv: Spa and Resort	GBA, DS
2004	Shrine Circus Tycoon	PC	2007	Soldier of Fortune: Payback	Xbox 360, PS3, PC
2004	Spider-Man 2 Activity Center	PC	2007	Soldier of Fortune: Payback -- The Ultimate Mercenary Experience Box Set [Best Buy Exclusive]	Xbox 360
2005	101 Great Games/139 Casino Games 2 Pack	PC	2007	Spanish for Everyone!	DS
2005	American Chopper 2: Full Throttle	Xbox, PS2, GameCube	2007	World Series of Poker 2008: Battle for the Bracelets	Xbox 360, PS3, PS2, PSP, DS, PC
2005	Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2006 Trophy Season	PC	2008	Barbie Fashion Show: An Eye for Style	DS, PC
2005	Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2	Xbox, PS2, GameCube, PC	2008	Barbie Horse Adventures: Riding Camp	DS, PS2, Wii, PC
2005	Cabela's Outdoor Adventures	Xbox, PS, GameCube, PC	2008	Big League Sports	Wii
2005	Caterpillar Construction Tycoon	PC	2008	Block Party	Wii
2005	Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Max'd	Xbox, PS2, GBA, DS	2008	Blue's Clues: Meet Blue's Baby Brother	PC
2005	History Channel: Civil War -- The Battle of Bull Run: Take Command 1861	PC	2008	Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2009	PC
2005	Madagascar: Island Mania	PC	2008	Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2009	Xbox 360, PS2, PS, Wii
2005	SeaWorld Adventure Parks Tycoon 2	PC	2008	Cabela's Legendary Adventures	Wii, PS2, PSP
2005	SeaWorld: Shamu's Deep Sea Adventures	Xbox, PS2, GameCube, DS, GBA	2008	Dancing With the Stars: We Dancel	Wii, DS
2005	Trainz Railroad Simulator 2004: Deluxe Edition	PC	2008	Dora the Explorer: Dora Saves the Snow Princess	Hybrid PC/Mac
2005	Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 3: Night of the Quinkan	Xbox, PS2, GameCube, GBA	2008	Ferrari Challenge: Trofeo Pirelli	PS2, PS3, Wii, DS
2005	Whac-A-Mole	GBA, DS	2008	Go, Diego, Go! Great Dinosaur Rescue	Hybrid PC/Mac
2005	World Series of Poker	Xbox, PS2, GameCube, PSP, PC	2008	History: Civil War Secret Missions	PS2, PS3, Xbox 360, PC
2006	Backyardigans: Mission to Mars	PC	2008	Little League World Series Baseball 2008	Wii, DS
2006	Barbie Diaries: High School Mystery	GBA, PC	2008	Monkey Mischief! Party Time	Wii
2006	Barbie in the 12 Dancing Princesses	PS2, PSP, DS, PC, GBA, PC	2008	Monster Jam: Urban Assault	PS2, PSP, Wii, DS
2006	Cabela's African Safari	Xbox 360, PS2, PSP, DS, PC, GBA, PC	2008	NPPL Championship Paintball 2009	Xbox 360, PS2, PS3, Wii, PSP
2006	Cabela's Alaskan Adventures	Xbox 360, PS2	2008	Pimp My Ride	Wii
2006	Cabela's Big Game Hunter: 10th Anniversary Edition	PC	2008	Pirates: Hunt for Blackbeard's Booty	Wii
2006	Cabela's Dangerous Hunts: Ultimate Challenge	PSP	2008	Pitfall: The Big Adventure	Wii
2006	Dora the Explorer: World Adventure!	PC	2008	Rapala: Fishing Frenzy 2009	Xbox 360, PS3
2006	Fish Tycoon	PC	2008	Rapala's Fishing Frenzy	Wii
2006	Go, Diego, Go! Wolf Pup Rescue	PC	2008	Rapala's Fishing Frenzy [Bundle]	Wii
2006	History Channel: Civil War -- A Nation Divided	Xbox 360, PS2, PC	2008	Score International Baja 1000	Xbox 360, PS3, PS2, Wii, PC
2006	Hustle: Detroit Streets	Xbox, PS2, PSP	2008	Secret Service	Xbox 360, PS2
2006	MTX: Mototrax	PSP	2008	Shrek's Carnival Craze Party Games	PS2, Wii, DS, PC
2006	Mystery Case Files: Huntsville	PC	2008	Wonder Pets!: Save the Puppy!	Hybrid PC/Mac
2006	Mystery Case Files: Prime Suspects	PC	2009	Bass Pro Shops - The Strike	Xbox 360, Wii, PC
2006	Rapala Tournament Fishing	Wii	2009	Bass Pro Shops - The Hunt	Xbox 360, Wii, PC
2006	Rapala Trophies	PSP	2011	Bass Pro Shops - The Strike: Tournament Edition	Wii
2006	Rapala Trophies: Pro Tournament Fishing	Xbox 360	2011	Bass Pro Shops - The Hunt: Trophy Showdown	Wii
2006	Shrek Smash n' Crash Racing	PSP	2012	Bass Pro Shops - My Guide	iOS
2006	Virtual Villagers: A New Home	PC	2012	Bass Pro Shops - The Strike: Pro Angler	iOS
			2012	Bass Pro Shops - The Hunt: King of Bucks	iOS

# *Chip's Team Sizes*

- **Microsoft Games Studio**
  - Game Team 60+ [#CuJo4Life]
  - Marketing (?), Legal (?), Localization (?), User testing (?)
- **Activision Minneapolis**
  - 60 Entire studio
  - Marketing (1), Legal (1)
- **Outdoor Partners Entertainment**
  - 3 Fulltime
  - Outsource everything
- **Concrete Software**
  - ~25 (Dev, Artists, QA, Designers, Producers, UA, Data Analysts)
- **FrostBit Studio**
  - Virtual Team

# *This talk is NOT about*

- How to find...
  - Funding
  - A Publisher
  - People
  - Projects
  - Backend
  - Coffee fetcher
- Find an investor, lawyer, an accountant, IT, and learn to get your own coffee.

# *What this talk IS about*

- Building, managing, and growing a successful small team
- Most importantly, Team Communication



# *Recent Headlines*

- Applications for US unemployment benefits rise to 281,000
  - April 9th 2015
- Where Twin Cities techies find jobs
  - April 7th 2015
- Layoffs at The Nerderly cut workforce by 4 percent
  - March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- Arrow Electronics Is Eliminating 17 Jobs In St. Paul
- Target layoffs: 1,700 Twin Cities jobs; 1,400 open jobs eliminated
  - Feb 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- Microsoft layoffs hit St. Paul, dozens of developers displaced
  - Oct 9th, 2014
- Massive Layoffs at Best Buy, Huge Management Reshuffling
  - April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014

# *Ask yourself these questions...*

- Do we have enough people?
- Do we have the ***RIGHT*** people?
- Who is in charge? (Company/Project)
- Where are we going to be located?
- How are we going to communicate?

# *Do we have enough people?*

- **Always a difficult question**
  - Depends on your project
  - Is your project funded?
  - Bootstrapping?
- **Also very dependent on the next question**

# *Do you have the Right people?*

- Every person should have a specific role
  - Escape pod or Lifeboat drill
  - Don't hire your buddy, BFF, family member, etc. \*
- Every person has to be committed to the project
  - Ask them “Are you in? or Out?”
- “Better firing policy than hiring policy”
  - Protect your culture
- When and how to expand?
  - Buy vs. Grow

# *Who's steering the ship?*

- **Sorry, everyone can't be in charge**
  - If you don't work this out you will have problems
  - You can be equal business partners
- **Who is your Whip Cracker/Cheerleader**
  - This is the person in charge of the project
  - Don't kid yourself, you need someone
  - They go by many names
    - Producer, Project Manager, Scrum Master, Bob

# *Location, Location, Location?*

- **Brick/Mortar**
  - Second biggest expense after people
  - Start small
    - Kitchen table
    - Coffee Shop
    - Co-Working Space
    - Trade for space
  - BYOD
  - BYOF
- **Virtual Team**
  - Act like you are in the same location
  - Use IM/Slack/Skype/FaceTime

# *Virtual Examples*

**AstroPad**

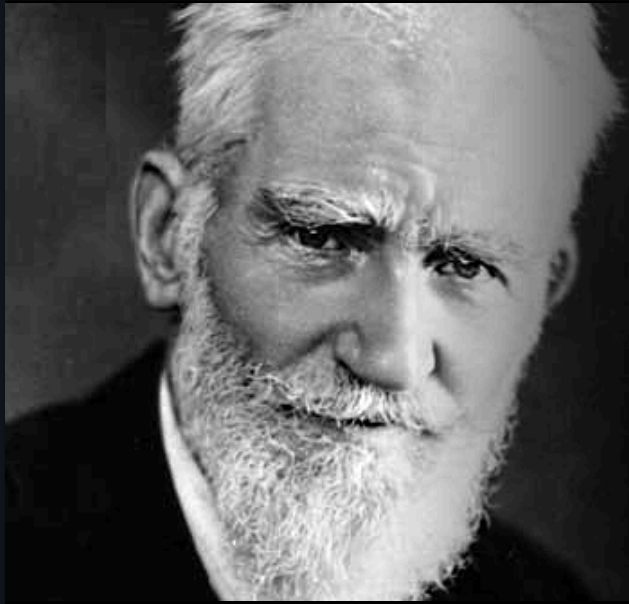
<http://astropad.com/>

**Alto's Adventure - Mobile Game**

<http://www.altosadventure.com/>



# *Communication is Key*



"The single biggest problem in communication  
is the illusion that it has taken place."

~ George Bernard Shaw



## *Small team misnomers*

- **It will be easier to communicate because we are a small team**
  - Wrong
- **We have worked together before. We are all on the same page**
  - Wrong
- **Since the project is smaller it will be easier to keep track of everything**
  - Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!

# *Communication*

- Remember Great ideas come from everyone
- Start the week with an all team meeting
  - Shout outs, Hot list, Pri, Updates, Changes, Goals
- Status reports! [Hold that thought]
- Individual 1:1's (Make them a Priority)
- Suggest you use Agile process
- Use a collaborative software
  - Google Doc, Asana, JIRA, Basecamp, Wiki
  - These are more than tools, they're Weapons

# *Status Reports*

How are things going [Gut Feeling]

- Tasks completed this week
- Tasks scheduled for next week
- Risks/Dependency
- Key Dates

***Thank You!***

**I hope this helps you with your  
Teams & Projects**

# *Questions?*





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