Staff Roundtable Discussion

It Takes Passion and Courage to Become the World's No. 1!

KOEI TECMO's strength lies in the professionalism and passion for games that our employees display every day. We gathered four members actively involved in development to discuss their day-to-day work, personal goals, and the challenges they face in their pursuit of becoming the World's No. 1.

Roundtable Participants

Developer A
Joined in 2016
AAA Studio Development Planner

Developer T
Joined in 2014
Team NINJA
Development Planner

CG T
Joined in 2019
Entertainment Production Division
CG Designer

Marketer K
Joined in 2017
Marketing Division

A deep love for gaming and a determination to make games players love

Developer A I joined KOEI TECMO because I love games and wanted to develop PC and console games. My happiest moments are the ones where I see our players enjoying our games and having the experiences and emotions we were hoping to give them when developing the game. It's extremely rewarding to read the positive comments made by people who play games I've worked on, such as *Persona 5 Strikers* and *Stranger of Paradise: Final Fantasy Origin*. How about everyone else? What are your happiest moments in development?

Marketer K I'm there with you. Player reactions are so rewarding! I remember when we unveiled a teaser for the new *Warriors Orochi* series at the at the Omega Force 20th Anniversary concert, and the audience gave us a standing ovation. I even saw some of them with tears in their eyes! That moment will stay with me forever. Whenever I hit a wall, I can remember these moments and the goals I'm striving for: to reach even more people about the games I love.

Developer T I enjoy how all of our colleagues share a common goal, to challenge ourselves to create the best entertainment content available. It's one of our Basic Management Policies, too. The first game I ever bought after saving up my allowance was

KOEI's *Nobunaga's Ambition: Soutenroku*. The *Nobunaga's Ambition* series was my entry into the gaming world, and now that I'm often working on the series myself, that history sometimes makes me put more pressure on myself. But by developing new games and sequels that become successes, I feel I've fulfilled my responsibility to the series. Despite the challenges that crop up during development, it's only by overcoming them that I feel this much satisfaction when seeing players enjoying the final product. It also reminds me how grateful I am for the fans of the games we create.

CG T I'm originally from China, but I love Japanese games; the first game I ever played was KOEI TECMO's *Haruka: Beyond the Stream of Time* series. This game was what originally drew me to Japanese culture, and eventually to move to Japan. It's so fulfilling

to know that I get to play a role in making games at the company that made my favorite series. I'm currently working in CG design, and I'm always thinking about how fans will react to everything, even when I'm working on the tiniest character animations.

Developer T I agree, it's important to see things from the perspective of our fans. After a game launches, I check social media, review sites, and sales rankings at local stores. That gives me a better idea of how our players are responding to our projects. I believe all of our colleagues want to provide exciting player experiences, just like the ones we've all had ourselves.

It's not just about fun—it's also about sales. Discussions shape creativity and business perspectives

Developer A Another thing we share is our commitment to the business end of development. For example, even before our dev planning meetings (P.26), our marketing team meets to discuss how viable the game will be, sales-wise. The project has to get approved at that stage before we can start diving into development. As a group, we all agree that achieving business goals and making profit is what gives us the ability to bring our next title to our fans. Once the game passes our marketing appraisal meeting, we move into development planning in

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earnest. All the members participating in the meeting come with feedback from junior employees in their department, which helps them get a handle on how to evaluate projects from a business perspective early in their careers.

Marketer K Our Marketing Department also gets involved with these dev planning meetings to discuss topics revolving around cost, such as target demographics , the number of units, or the price of the game. You can see our commitment to business planning here, too.

Developer T Yes indeed. After the planning stage, we hold review meetings to share our ideas and opinions about prototypes that are in development. During these meetings, all staff members, regardless of seniority or responsibility, are encouraged to bounce opinions off one another as they, as gamers, explore how our fans might engage with the product. While we developers tend to focus on the production process, this stage is extremely important for receiving objective feedback from other teams on the emotional experience and the meaning fans might take from our games. This system is great, not only for getting to the crux of the challenges we're facing, but also because it helps us get a sort of "fan feedback" early in development, while also cultivating ideas that align with both creative vision and the business aspect of our work.

Healthy Discussions Backed by Mutual Respect

Developer T One thing I love about KOEI TECMO is that everyone can speak up with their opinion, no matter their role or tenure at

the company, and it doesn't negatively impact our relationships with one another. We all understand that we want to make any course corrections at the earliest possible stage of the project. Sure, it can feel a little intimidating, but brainstorming together helps us to create higher-quality games for our players. My supervisor encourages me to share my own answer, even if it's different from what the rest of the team has already said. At first it was tough, but now I realize it's a critical part of the production process. We are all creatives with our own experience. That's why it's important to fully explore all of our thoughts and opinions, so each member of the team can contribute to the project.

CG T As a CG Director, I get a wide range of requests from our development teams. While I always try to accommodate their requests, I'm also prepared to have discussions about them, and see if we can explore better options or come to different agreements. It might sound unnecessary or like a waste of time, but in the end, it's the fastest way to create the highest-quality content for our users.

Developer A The advice we get from the CG Department is really helpful. For example, they've suggested changes to movement or animation to better convey our creative intent to our players. Not only do they carefully read our requests, they're proactive about opening discussions, for example, by setting up meetings to discuss specific points with our team. This collaborative attitude and back-and-forth directly leads to the creation of high-quality content.

Developer T You're right. Healthy discussion between all parties

helps us create great games. We actually get excited to have these debates! Considering the Company has made so many historical games over the years, I know we have a deep respect for our culture and history, as well as respect for historical IP. It goes to show how seriously we take our jobs as developers, and how much respect we have for the diverse professionals working throughout the Company. We also have many opportunities to learn about other brands, whether it's their goals or how they create their content. Not only do these lessons foster a mutual respect between our brands, they help us recognize the uniqueness of our own brand, too.

Learn to Grow, Grow to Learn.
A system of education and support that helps junior employees learn from their mistakes

Developer A KOEI TECMO's culture of learning together is also reflected in our approach to game development. I love how we dive into case studies reviewing our brands and the content created by other brands. It's yet another opportunity to learn together. I've also enjoyed many opportunities to develop my business skills, such as team management and meeting presentation techniques, at external training sessions with other colleagues in our industry.

Developer T Team NINJA holds a monthly forum for team leaders to come together and share updates about the challenges they're tackling on their projects. This forum not only meets the needs of

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our developers, who all want to learn about their colleague's work and experience, but also our management, who want to resolve tough issues and promote education amongst their teams, junior employees in particular. There's so much we can learn from the challenges our colleagues are tackling, and we can apply those learnings directly to our own projects.

Marketer K You mentioned junior employees; they have so many opportunities for growth there. In the Marketing Division, new graduates are given the opportunity to create proposals for producers by the end of their first year with the company, and in their second year, they already expect to be drafting proposals for the division head. Because they get so many opportunities to plan proposals and present them to management, our employees learn from their failures and gain experience, improving their business acumen. This is an extraordinary amount of training for junior employees that quickly gives them the skills to create proposals that are aligned with our business mindsets.

CG T We also have great support outside of work, too. The senior members in my department looked after me like older brothers and sisters (P.43). I moved here from another country, and when I first started, I would often get tripped up by cultural differences, but my mentors were always by my side to help me get back up again.

Developer T I love our mentor system. It's a great opportunity to learn not only about standard work tasks, but also the mindset we need to succeed here, what points are important to specific departments and brands, and so much more. Senior employees give junior employees the support they need to try again after they fail. I also believe that through teaching others, we can learn new things about ourselves and strengthen our skills, too. It's all about learning and growing together.

CG T I liked that I was able to live in the company dorm. After coming here from China, I got to spend my days in a shared living space with a senior employee from Taiwan and other colleagues that joined around the same time I did. We played table tennis and baseball together, which helped us make friends across our respective departments. Dorm life also encourages cross-cultural exchange, so I highly recommend it for any employees who are moving here from abroad.

Climbing towards No. 1 by thinking globally and developing our human resources

CG T I strongly believe that international employees will help accelerate the growth of our Company and speed us towards reaching the coveted No. 1 spot in the global entertainment market. For example, in my homeland, China, technology is changing at a rapid pace, and there are new trends in our domestic gaming market. Incorporating both of these ideas can help us create even better games. Right now, we're discussing how we can add new, fresh appeal to the deep worldview we've woven through our many series and our long history of game development.

Marketer K Like T said, we focus on the major appeal of our games: being immersed in a world that's based on our historical reality. As we move forward, we want to catch up with the new trends and needs of the gaming community while also creating games that can be marketed globally. We've started to create a project planning framework for developing globally-oriented games, but we still have a ways to go before it's ready. As a leader in the Marketing Department, I want to strengthen our international partnerships and implement region-specific

strategies. I also think it's important for the Company to keep acquiring talent from outside Japan. Building trust and influence both inside and outside the company will boost our efforts to expand into the global market.

Developer T Our company vision is to become the World's No. 1 Digital Entertainment company, so it's crucial that we create games worthy of the title of "Number 1 in the World". One of my personal goals is to work on a game that can earn the coveted title of Game of the Year*. But game development at KOEI TECMO is a team effort. The most important part of development is the people who make games. A huge number of our employees are in their 20s and 30s, too, with about 200 young new employees joining us every year. We hope to develop this next generation of game makers into leaders that can achieve our vision and boost our Company's ability to take on challenges and make great games. I'm going to keep polishing my own skills, too. If we can build and grow our own skills alongside the Company's medium-to-long-term growth, I believe we can achieve our goal of providing the best entertainment in the world, both for our own careers and for the Company.

*An award given to the 'best' game software released that year, selected and awarded by many different media outlets and industry organizations worldwide, as well as the collective term for such awards.