Forming Effective Teams
Upcoming deadlines

- **Friday (Jan. 18): team status reporting**
  - Due by midnight
  - Report on team activities this week
  - Be sure to use team status reporting template
    - courses.soe.ucsc.edu/courses/cmps171/Winter12/01/pages/teamstatus-template
  - Don’t worry about making up for last week

- **Friday (Jan. 18): Technical design document due**
  - Be prepared to discuss in team meetings with Prof. the following week

- **Thursday, January 31: End of Sprint 1**
  - 16 days left in Sprint 1 (including a holiday, Jan 21)
Upcoming events

- Global Game Jam
  - Jan. 25-27
  - Stone Librande talk on Friday 4-6pm, E2 180 (Simularium)
    - Open to all, not just game jam participants
  - http://ggj.soe.ucsc.edu/

- Winter Job & Internship Fair
  - Tuesday, February 5
  - Resume & cover letter workshop: Jan. 29, 2-3:30pm
    - See event calendar at Career Center
  - See http://careers.ucsc.edu/ for more information
Lab Cleanup Schedule

- This week: Asterogue
- Next week: Siegebreakers

Team duties:
- Ensure overflowing trash cans are emptied to bin outside in 3rd floor courtyard (anytime during week)
- By 5pm Monday and 5pm Friday (unless things get out of control, then more often):
  - Pick up food containers, bottles, etc.
  - Pick up stray craft materials, pens, etc and return to drawers
  - Clean off tables in conference rooms and big circular table
  - Report any major soda/food spills to me, so we can call cleanup crews
  - Put controllers/game boxes/etc. away (tidy up game area)
  - Report any cleaning materials needed
Team meetings

- The team meetings with the professor are happening this week

Today:
- Pixture, only 30 minutes
- Asterouge, start at 5:15pm, only 30 minutes

Tomorrow
- We’re Screwed: not meeting, have meeting conflict
Growing a productive team

- A key challenge in any project, software or otherwise, is creating an effective team

- This is especially true in a student project class
  - Team members don’t know each other as well as in professional settings
  - Fewer experienced people to provide guidance
  - Less socialization about teams and less experience working in teams
  - Wider variation in skill levels among team members

- So, how does a team go about trying to make it all work?
A *jelled team* is a group of people so strongly knit that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

- *Peopleware*, DeMarco & Lister, Chapter 18
- An *esprit-de-corps*

A group of people *fuses* into a team that is capable of achieving challenges beyond the capabilities of the individuals combined.

- A *challenge* provides the reason for the team coming together.
- The *challenge* is important because it allows the team to focus on it together.
- The nature of the challenge itself isn’t so important here – what is important is its role in bringing the team together.
Behavior of a Jelled team

- In the best work groups, the ones in which people have the most fun and perform at their upper limits, team interactions are everything. They are the reason people stick it out, put their all into the work, overcome enormous obstacles.
  - Peopleware, DeMarco & Lister, Part IV introduction

- Prior to a team’s jelling, the individuals on the team might have had a diversity of goals. But as part of the jelling process, they have all bought on to the common goal. This corporate goal takes on an enhanced importance because of its significance to the group. Even though the goal may seem arbitrary to team members, they pursue it with enormous energy.
  - Peopleware, DeMarco & Lister, Chapter 18
Signs of a jelled team

- Low turnover during projects
  - (and in the middle of well-defined tasks)
  - Team members are personally committed to the task, and want to see it get completed
  - Commitment to the team overcomes issues such as money, status, position for advancement

- Strong sense of identity
  - Team members strongly feel they are members of the same team, and that membership means something
  - Indicators include: use of a team’s name, shared catch phrases or slang, spending time together outside of work

- Sense of eliteness
  - Team members feel they are part of something unique
  - Sense of being better than average in capabilities
  - SWAT team like attitude
Signs of a jelled team (cont’d)

- Joint ownership of the product
  - Team members take pride in their contribution to the product
  - Achieving high quality completion is personally important to team members; they are willing to make sacrifices for this to happen
  - People are pleased to have their names associated with the product

- Obvious enjoyment
  - The team is having a good time completing the product
  - Interactions on the team are easy, confident, and warm
How to form jelled teams?

- So, how do you form jelled teams?
  - No clear consensus on this

- Some research suggests that high social cohesion is a good predictor of team performance
  - “social cohesion offered the best prediction of individual performance, suggesting that improved individual success may be due to the greater effort invested by individuals in the context of a socially cohesive team. … there is considerable anecdotal and research evidence that teams in high cohesion perform better than do teams low in cohesion.”
  - So, having your team go out and do something together, socially, can help the team do its work better.

- Is it even possible to engineer a jelled team?
  - “You can’t make teams jell. You can hope they will jell; but you can’t make it happen/ The process is much too fragile to be controlled.”
    - *Peopleware*, DeMarco and Lister, Chapter 20
There is more consensus on why teams *don’t* manage to jell.

**Defensive management**
- Putting processes in place that have, as an underlying assumption, that team members aren’t trusted
- People who feel untrusted are unmotivated to form a cooperative team

**Bureaucracy**
- When a project has too high a paperwork burden, this stifles creativity, saps energy
- Challenge: some amount of writing things down is necessary for good group communication. What is the minimum paperwork for maximum gain?
Teamicide (cont’d)

- Physical separation
  - When teams are scattered over multiple distinct locations, so they can’t work together in the same place at the same time
  - Physically separated team members miss out on opportunities for casual interactions
    - These are critical for building jelled teams

- Fragmentation of time
  - Working on too many projects at the same time
  - Makes it hard to focus on one project, and achieve high quality there
  - People spend all of their time changing gears
  - It’s impossible to be on multiple jelled teams
Teamicide (cont’d)

- The Quality-Reduced Project
  - A joke; typically goes under the name “reduced cost project”
  - Hard on the self-esteem of developers
  - Who wants to work hard on a product you know is guaranteed to be low quality?
  - No joint sense of accomplishment

- Phony deadlines
  - A deadline that is so clearly artificial that it is demotivating instead of motivating
  - People are usually pretty good about detecting artificial deadlines
  - But wait, aren’t Sprints a series of essentially phony deadlines?
    - Yes, but there are important distinctions.
    - In a Sprint, a team has control over the user stories and tasks to implement, and commits to accomplishing them
    - Since the team has bought-in to an iterative process, they have bought into frequent, “artificial” deadlines as a way of pushing the project forward in small increments
Teamicide (cont’d)

- Clique control
  - Another name for a tightly-knit team is a clique
  - Breeze vs draft
    - Both mean cold current of air, but have different connotations
  - When management takes active steps to break apart a team at the end of a project
    - To reallocate people to new projects
  - Or, fails to take active steps to keep team together
Class exercise

- Find one other member of your team
  - (two others if your team has odd number of people in class today)
- Discuss your team, and its culture
- Develop 2-3 ideas on what your team could do to become more jelled and cohesive
- List things that happen in your team that might be hurting team cohesion
- After 10 minutes, get together with the rest of your team, and go round-robin, sharing your results
- **Pick one person in the group to report top findings back to the class**