



CHRONICLER

We Are Chronicler a team member handbook

v0.0.1

Welcome to our way of working at Chronicler,
written and embraced by the entire team.

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Our Culture

At Chronicler we celebrate kindness, creativity, and innovation, while developing and caring for our people. We recognize, celebrate, and reward our successes. Creativity is at the heart of achieving our purpose. When we work together, we are highly engaged.

We are a company where results-oriented people can explore, consider new possibilities, and flourish. Actively creating that environment makes Chronicler an exciting and inspiring place to work. We recruit and develop truly innovative people - people who believe in our purpose, embrace our culture, and want to help us achieve our goals.

Above all, we are developing a place where people can grow, be their best, be creative, and feel welcomed, valued, and included.

About Us

Chronicler was founded in 2023 under the idea that kind, self-aware people can develop impactful, intimate, and inspiring stories in concert with players. We do this by creating games from innovative storytelling technology (whether machine-learning, new visual techniques, or custom tooling) that inspire the art and story - and vice-versa. Chronicler began as an R&D project by Derek Reese in 2019, later joined by Joe Wills and Rasmus Rasmussen.

Welcome

We're so happy to have you here, and have you be a role model for future Chronicler team members to come.

Your first day

Day 1 is the hardest. We really mean that. Decompressing from a role at another company, or managing part-time work, can leave you pretty exhausted even when you're excited to start a new chapter. Your first major task is to recover, rebuild, and start learning about your teammates by communicating with them. This is also your most important task.

Chronicler team members talk about “healing their inner child” - and the process of rediscovering how to be productive and consistently creative is absolutely vital to helping you be your most ingenious self and utilizing your time in fulfilling ways. It’s been a very different experience for every team member at Chronicler.

Hiring Chronicler Team Members

While the most important thing you can do at Chronicler is communicate with other team members, the second most important thing is hiring. Why? Every new person on the team shifts our culture. Being involved in the interview process is such a vital part of building our culture that it's typically the next thing we ask you to do after your first week of being hired.

Team members are kind.

Toxic people and traits have no place at Chronicler. Breakdowns in communication do happen, but that's why we strive to support people and do not tolerate bad behavior. Personal issues left to fester create team rot which can be fatal to the company. Unknowns and new frontiers are approached with curiosity and bravery. Anger and frustration are not an acceptable part of the equation for discovery.

Team members are driven & disciplined.

Every Chronicler team member is a life-long learner who believes in shipping games - games which create opportunities for personal growth and learning. They want to see that vision fulfilled as their primary career goal. We're not willing to settle for anything less than the most compelling experiences in the galaxy for the most diverse and passionate customers.

Team members demand balanced quality and delivery.

Quality is the hallmark of care and attention to detail. Notice we didn't say perfection: we are here to ship games and perfection is the enemy of shipping. Our careful eye for detail must only be superseded by our ability to properly prioritize where we spend our time and how efficiently we can do it. We work on this as a team, with different roles focused on different aspects.

Team members focus on sustainability.

A balanced work / life equilibrium and strong corporate bank account lead to healthier, long term-oriented working decisions. Every team member is in charge of making sure we all stay healthy - emotionally, physically, financially, and with our relationships.

Team members know their primary job is communication.

And while we as humans are social creatures, we're not born with the ability. Communicating well takes time, intentionality, and deliberate understanding of team members and their needs. We emphasize saying sorry when we're wrong, and celebrating when we achieve something amazing.

Team members are diverse.

We know from our own experiences that we cannot do everything there is to be done by ourselves - we need other people with *their* own experiences and perspectives to help us build things our players love. People with different backgrounds than our own.

Team members are passionate.

Passion plays a part in everything we do. Kindling and caring for that passion is the central tenet behind every other value, and we believe that true passion for interactive storytelling cannot exist without all of our other values being intact. Passion attracts others with passion and keeps team culture positive and true to itself.

Chronicler is Unique

It's important to us that we're in this together and that we succeed and recover together. Chronicler team members are firstly kind and driven. To ensure careful balance, our people managers are critically not our team leads.

Organization Structure

Managers are [corporate social workers](#)* who are responsible for helping you develop your career in a way that's healthy and most fulfilling to you. Leads help team members deliver a consistent experience to our players. Executive leadership is responsible for being the support staff for the team. Team members are what we call ourselves.

*not like this [



]

Healthy Career Development

The primary role of a people manager at Chronicler is to advocate for you, your health, and your career at Chronicler. They assist you in arranging mentorship, finding the right therapist, and maintaining a healthy work/life balance. They help you plan for and achieve your next role at Chronicler.

Executing on a Shared Vision

Team leads have a job focus on helping a team form, collaborate on, and execute a shared vision. This is done through consensus-building, giving positive and constructive feedback, and spotlighting team member's ideas and contributions.

Working Hours

While Chronicler is a full-time job, we also do not have minimum working hours. Chronicler is a results-oriented work environment ([Wikipedia](#)), and normal collaboration days are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Most team members aim for 25 hours of creative work a week to ensure they deliver agreed-upon results, plus hours needed for meetings, syncs, and collaboration.

| | TUE 4 | WED 5 | THU 6 |
|--------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| GMT+07 | Home | | |
| 8 AM | | | |
| 9 AM | | | |
| 10 AM | Core Hours 10am – 2pm | Core Hours 10am – 2pm | Core Hours 10am – 2pm |
| 11 AM | | | |
| 12 PM | | | |
| 1 PM | | | |
| 2 PM | | | |
| 3 PM | | | |
| 4 PM | | | |

Preventing Crunch

We do, however, have maximum working hours and those are 40 a week. Crunch, i.e. not getting enough rest, is unacceptable. Overtime means a breakdown in the planning process and we take that seriously. During retrospectives we implement steps to make sure it doesn't happen again. In the case that you're really loving something you're working on and have the full support of everyone around you, we'll just focus on improving our planning processes to support that passion.

20% of all production time is planned for time off and scope issues, and an additional 20% for polish. If we run out of production runway, then scope reduction, reworking features to reduce scale, or delays (if the content revenue impact justifies the additional funding) are how we continue to prevent crunch. Each team member needs to bake 40% into their estimates and make production team members aware for planning purposes.

Vacation

Minimum vacation days are tracked and are 35 per calendar year. If you don't take the time off, we will require you to. Taking breaks from work is necessary to keep a fresh perspective and maintain relationships outside of work. Take care of your families and friends so they can take care of you. Take care of yourself so you can find inspiration in hobbies and passions (especially ones that don't pay any bills!)

The Tree Analogy

We've used the tree analogy to explain structure at Chronicler, because we've found the typical top-down org chart leads to a lack of accountability and assumption that leadership are the ones to credit for the work. In our model, the executive team is the trunk, bringing up nutrients (investment), guiding overall growth, and keeping the tree solid. Management is the support structure, helping everyone be at the best possible place to make the most impact. And leaves, team members, are doing the work keeping the tree alive and growing. If they all blow away, the tree dies. It's integral they have all the support they need to grow, mature, and be successful.



Team Members (Leaves)

Managers (Branches)

C-Roles (Trunk)

Investors (Roots)

*The image is abstract on purpose.
We're not actually a symbiotic plant. Probably...*

A Service-Level Agreement

The most important thing you can do at Chronicler is communicate. Since we do not have required minimum hours, maintaining communication for feedback and collaboration is the lifeblood of our team. We make sure we acknowledge problems, and specifically which ones we're deciding to solve. To be of service to others means:

Discord Message

Discord is our primary means of communication, and the way we discuss, collaborate, and problem solve. Unless you're on vacation, that means a 12hr or less response time so you don't accidentally block teammates.

Phone Call / Text

Phone calls or texts are reserved for an emergency. Don't use them unless you have to, as the expectation is near-immediate call back or response - at least within 1hr.

Favro Ticket

Favro is how we get work done and give production the tools to help us figure out prioritization. Tickets may require discussion in Discord, but the final decisions must be logged in Favro, and questions answered within 12 (working) hours.

Email

Emails are mostly used for collaborating with contractors, publishers, and other third parties. We set boundaries but stay responsive by either replying within 24hrs on weekdays or auto-responding when not working or on vacation.

Measuring Performance

In a Results-Oriented Workplace Environment,
performance is determined by:

- 1) Setting goals, deadlines, and deliverables
with your leads. Continuing to refine these
is an important part of good performance.
- 2) Succeeding by hitting the discussed results.
Job well done! Celebrate your wins.

- 3) Learn from previous errors and aim for continuous improvement. When you do not achieve your desired results, remember this is a learning experience and does not reflect negatively on your performance. Instead, we make adjustments, share our learnings, and keep striving forward.
- 4) If you don't set goals, deadlines, and deliverables, you will fail. Leads are responsible for helping you craft the right targets, but you're also responsible for working with leads to make sure it happens. Good team members look out for each other and are always finding new ways to help everyone succeed.

- 5) Seeking feedback. Your manager will help you explicitly get feedback on:
 - a) Something you did that helped a team member recently.
 - b) An area where you can improve in your communication or work.
 - c) Something you did that team members admired recently.

This cycle repeats as often as necessary - often in cadence with game sprints, but not always.

Team members, regardless of their performance or time at the company, are eligible for bonuses and rewards in the form of stock options and restricted stock units. This reflects our core values of being a team, all in together.

Your manager will help you seek feedback to understand if you're just feeling a bit of imposter syndrome (this is normal!), or if there really are issues holding you back from doing your best at Chronicler. Good hiring practices usually prevent this, but it does happen from time to time.

Your First Month

Your first month is going to be a bit crazy, and that is OK! It takes a while to adjust to a new setting, a new team, and a new project with everything that entails. Your first priority is to get comfortable.

Yes, there will be a mountain of work waiting for you when you start, and we need it all done, but no one is expecting you to jump in and get your hands dirty right away.

Getting Comfortable

There are four main areas, in which we want you to feel comfortable. Some will come quicker than others, depending on your personality. We don't expect anyone to have it all figured out right away.

These four Comfort Categories are especially important:

- **Physical** - like a good place to work, and the equipment you need to do the job.
- **Social** - feeling accepted and not afraid to ask for help or clarification is crucial for success at any job. This one is no different.

- **Project** - processes and communication flow is understood, along with your fit into the production ecosystem.
- **Ownership** - taking ownership of an area of responsibility and establishing yourself as the go-to person within that area.

Question Everything

When you first join us, we are going to be excited about the perspective you bring. We also want you to have a good understanding of how we do things. With those two statements in mind, you are encouraged to ask any question that comes to mind.

See something that doesn't make sense? Please point it out! Doubly so, if you know of a better way to do said thing.

Not sure how something works, or where to find it? Ask, instead of wasting a bunch of time trying to figure it out alone.

Not sure who to go to for something? Ask the producer. If nothing else, they can point you to the real expert.

There are no stupid questions.

Feel like our culture is a load of fluff and hot air?
Hold us to our words and values by calling a meeting or collaborating on an async solution.

Your First Six Months

Once you've found your footing, It's time to start running! Expect your first six months to be heavily focused on the immediate needs, specific to your role.

We try to be careful not to over hire, so when we do bring someone on board, it's because we really need them! So prepare for some heads down, focus time.

Because of this focus, you'll come out of those first few months an expert, ready to go beyond the day-to-day work in your role.

Sync with Your Lead

If you work with a team lead, it's crucial that you collaborate closely with them, communicating *daily*, even if you then go off to work on your own thing.

Planning your work together is one of the most important parts of that collaboration. This is not so your lead can micromanage your work, but so they are aware of any potential dependencies or risks involved, and can communicate this to other teams as needed.

Your lead is also the person to inform if you need time off, get sick, and so on, so they can take this into account when planning the work ahead.

First Steps to the Next Level

Towards the end of your first six months, we expect you to have a solid grasp of how things work, what your role is, and what the expectations are. It is at this point that we begin the conversation about your future goals and what we can do, to help you achieve them.

Career Incentives

Support Leadership A fairly typical promotional path, we cheer on team members who have developed leadership and communications skills and wish to broaden their horizons and accountability by becoming a manager or director.

T-Shaped Development And our unique way of promotions at Chronicler. This path requires a board of your peers to confirm your development in related skill sets that amplify your existing skills.

Team Reward When someone at Chronicler goes above and beyond, we acknowledge that by having them choose a reward given by all of the teams at Chronicler: from a shared cash bonus, to a commemoration in one of our games.

Creative Leadership When they feel ready, new directors must pitch three new games, and bring with them a minimal crew of a Designer and Engineer to make it happen. Then, leadership selects which project they feel the director and team have connected with most strongly.

Severance The worst thing we could do is force an unproductive or even harmful relationship. Since we consider every failure an opportunity to learn, severance is just another always-available path forward for our team members.

Tenure At the last stage of a journey at Chronicler, we offer part time teaching work, where your invaluable experience, skills, and knowledge are rewarded with the opportunity to mold and shape the next generation of game developers.

Things We're Not Good At Doing

Our goal is to strive to embody the values in this book.

Kindness. Drive. Balanced quality and delivery.
Sustainability. Communication. Diversity. Passion.

That said, a primary component of communication is acknowledging things we're not good at and want to fix, things we're not good at and can't fix, and things we won't fix by design (...yet!).

Things We Want to Fix

- **Hiring junior team members.**

Our Results-Oriented Work Environment and development pipeline doesn't leave a ton of time for training - everyone on the team knows to ask for help and seek our mentors for their own improvement. Many juniors would flail in such an unstructured environment, without dedicated management and scheduling.

This is the primary reason behind partnering with colleges and developing our internship program, which allows us to find new team members with the right fit earlier in their careers.

- **Training and mentoring.**

A regimented training system for median level game developers is just not in our wheelhouse, especially given our reliance on self-directed improvement. That being said, there is always room for juniors who work with managers to seek mentorship!

Things We Can't Fix

- **Hiring.**

It is extremely expensive (read: time-consuming), and a lot of that comes from the fact that we have an extremely high bar for talent and there is only so much of us to go around. Good Chronicler candidates are often found by scouring fan sites, forums, galleries, and published works from people outside of the typical game industry recruiting pool.

Things We Won't Fix

- **Busy work.**

These are absolutely vital tasks that do not require much game-oriented creativity or problem-solving. Examples are background prop art, IT services, functional QA, accounting, or direct written translation.

These tasks we outsource to production and business partners.

- **Accepting Kantianistic Viewpoints**

We value kindness to ourselves and to our teammates much higher than politics or practiced niceness. We focus on honesty over agreeableness, authenticity over pleasantries. If you're into philosophy, you could sum it up as social Contractualism.

An Evolving Culture

As Chronicler continues to grow, we will get better at many things, from diversity to our understanding of storytelling, technology, and game development in general.

This handbook is meant to be a living document that allows everyone to contribute and build upon what we started back in 2023.

We appreciate you, every day, for what you bring to Chronicler, as a game developer, as a team member, and as a human being.

For questions, suggestions and errata related to his handbook, please [reach out to Rasmus](#) (rasmus.rasmussen@chroniclersoftware.com) any time.