



## Transparency and Trust Turn Employees into Brand Advocates as a Small Company Grows Up

### Company Profile

**INDUSTRY**

Video Game Developer

**HEADQUARTERS**

Burbank, CA

**EMPLOYEES**

207

**WEBSITE**

[www.insomniacgames.com](http://www.insomniacgames.com)

### About

Headquartered in Burbank, California, Insomniac Games is a video game developer founded in 1994 by President and CEO Ted Price. Most well-known for its Ratchet & Clank and Spyro the Dragon titles, the company has sold more than 45 million console videogames worldwide. Insomniac Games is proud of its independent spirit—they believe all their games have soul, humor and heart. More than 200 artists, programmers, designers and creative thinkers work at the company's two locations in Burbank, CA and Durham, NC.



When Insomniac Games increased its headcount by 150% over a 2-year period, leaders kept an open dialogue with employees to help keep them engaged with their work. Employees not only stuck around – they helped grow the team towards results that have been nothing short of “explosive.”

### The Challenge

For years, Insomniac Games was a small, tight-knit group of around 50 employees, where the Founder and CEO, Ted Price, was involved in everything from setting production schedules to approving vacation requests.

Sharing information with employees and demonstrating how their work impacted the

company's business results was manageable when Insomniac was that small. However, a two-year, 150% employee growth spurt and expansion to a second office across the country made it challenging to ensure everyone in the team was rowing in the same direction and continued feeling personally invested in the organization.

“Transparency equates to fairness—this is the most transparent company I have worked for, and they genuinely try to improve in ways that surprise me.”

–Insomniac Employee

## Employees speak up & management listens

**90%** of employees say that management is approachable and easy to talk with.

**86%** of employees say they can ask management any reasonable question and get a straight answer.

**86%** of employees say management genuinely seeks and responds to suggestions and ideas.

Source: Great Place to Work® Trust Index® Survey

## The Solution

Leaders realized that they needed to scale their transparent culture to engage employees in this time of growth. According to Chief People Officer Carrie Dieterle, one way Insomniac has been able to do this is rooted in the strong levels of trust at the core of their culture. “As we have built a high-trust culture we’ve really looked to our employees and said ‘share everything’...we don’t hold back unless we are contractually obligated to do so.”

Insomniac renewed its commitment to foster a culture of trust and transparency that ensured every employee at Insomniac felt like an important part of the team. The studio instituted a variety of programs to foster transparency, one of which is called Ask Me Anything (AMA), borrowed from a popular Reddit feature. In this version, employees can pose questions about any aspect of Insomniac’s programs and culture. Founder/CEO Ted Price

personally answers every question, sometimes with the help of the leadership team. Price also offers all employees the ongoing opportunity to meet with him one-on-one.

Carrie Dieterle, also meets with each employee during an “Insomniac Future” (IF) touch-base to specifically ask for their opinion on the company and its culture—what they’re doing right, where they could improve, and what keeps employees around.

Employees find out the impact of their suggestions through a number of active approaches to information-sharing, such as “Daily Decisions” an e-mail that summarizes key decisions affecting production, as well as CEO walk-arounds to each department whenever the company has a major announcement.

## Insomniac reports their efforts to build trust and transparency have also led to:

**+79%**  
Increase in knowledge sharing

**+53%**  
Increase in employee referrals

**-32%**  
Drop in benefit costs to the company

**+16%**  
Increase in studio morale and productivity

**-3%**  
Drop in employee turnover

## The Results

According to Ryan Schneider, Chief Brand Officer, the benefits of increased trust and transparency during the company’s growth are evident. “When I first started at Insomniac, we released one game a year. Now, we’re releasing up to five games a year and (this year) we have a feature film coming out. If we weren’t a trust-based organization, we couldn’t have delegated responsibility to multiple different creative directors and department heads to [achieve this].”

Dieterle says that fostering a trust-based environment of transparency has also turned their employees into advocates. “People believe in Insomniac Games,” she said. “[Employees] know they have a voice, they know they have a say. We’re not hiding anything from employees, we’re not hiding anything from ...our fans, and I think that

**“When people have the information, then they can be thinking [about] where they want to steer the company, and it can be explosive.”**

**–Carrie Dieterle, Chief People Officer**

we’ve gained more respect in our industry and a greater following because we’re authentic.”

Turning employees into advocates has paid off over the long-term: The company has just 6% voluntary full-time turnover (U.S. Average is ~26% according to BLS). Employees don’t just stick around longer – they want others to join the family, as nearly 25% of new hires are referred by employees.

“When I think about the benefit of transparency and not holding anything back, I think that you have just engaged an entire workforce in driving your business forward,” shared Dieterle. “When people don’t know where you’re headed, when they don’t know what the objectives are...that’s a challenge. When people have the information, then they can be thinking [about] where they want to steer the company, and it can be explosive.”