

What does a technical director do?

Name: Dev Joshi

Position: Technical Director

Company: Collective Act Limited

I'm responsible for...

Directing the technical development and delivery for the Dreamachine programme as part of the Creative Team. The Dreamachine programme includes a ticketed immersive experience touring the four nations of the UK, the Perception Census citizen science study and an online engagement programme for schools. I work with our team and partners, to ensure seamless physical and digital delivery of the project from creation of the audience experience, to ticketing through to participant research and everything in between.

My typical day...

Collaborating with specialists and the creative team to build the bespoke tools and processes which we work with to create the Dreamachine's specialist and novel media. Checking in on the design and delivery of our digital tools, web touch points and the operating tech for the Dreamachine immersive experience. I work closely with the technical teams on delivering these technologies in a safe and repeatable way as well as continuing research and development tasks. There's always testing, problem solving and decision making to do – Dreamachine is a live and evolving endeavour so there's always new data to analyse and hurdles to clear to keep the show on the road.

The most challenging part of my job...

The Dreamachine experience is entirely generated inside the mind of the participant – and so – we have no way of experiencing first hand what anyone else will have seen or felt while inside. This makes it challenging to conduct research in a standard 'test-measure-modify' loop so we had to develop new methods and tools for creating the immersive experience. This unprecedented context required us to define the processes and methods for evaluating our work in parallel with developing the work itself. Each participant has a unique and unrepeatable experience inside the Dreamachine and as such, the inputs and the outputs are black boxes – in every sense we are designing in the dark.

The best part of my job...

Receiving feedback from participants as part of their experience – in conversation, in writing or as drawings – is a privilege and a pleasure. It is proof that we are delivering something that is a type of magic, the audience will never really know how it works and they are moved to express themselves about the experience having surrendered to it. Designing and developing with a direct interface to this pure unannealed excitement is incredibly rare. Having the audience as part of the feedback loop means we have to innovate in the 'how' of our process as much as the 'what'.

I love my job because...

It is a treat to work with a team who are all at the top of their game. Delivering the Dreamachine is not quite like anything that any of us has done before which means interdisciplinary collaboration is embedded in everything we do. The result is something which is greater than the sum of its parts. We're still learning from it and from each other.

Advice to others... (What advice would you give to others who want a role like yours?)

Say yes to everything! Having trained as a designer my career path to this point has not been straightforward or predictable. I'm here because I always try to say yes to opportunities, especially if they seem unusual. Creative engineering and problem solving benefits from design thinking as a practice and a skill – it provides a template to quickly learn the languages of other sectors. Having constructive conversations with peers from other disciplines is key to delivering innovation: we can do whatever, together.



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I want to be remembered for...

Not being boring.

My Plan B... (If it wasn't this job – what else would I be doing?)

I enjoy asking questions and finding the answers and so could be working in research, design and development. However, having spent the vast majority of my career exercising those muscles in the context of people, performance and products I can't think of a better place than the arts and creative technologies sector to be.

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