

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR STUDENTS

# WORK ENVIRONMENT DYNAMICS AND SOFT SKILLS IN ANIMATION, GAMES, AND VFX INDUSTRIES

PANEURAMA Report 2024



PANEURAMA



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - TAILORED FOR STUDENTS

### Navigating Contradictions

This executive summary, tailored for students and young professionals, distills key findings from the comprehensive [2024 PANEURAMA Project Report](#) examining the complex dynamics between the European games, animation, and VFX industries, educational institutions, and students.

While the full report provides detailed analysis supported by extensive participant interviews and research, this summary focuses on crucial insights and strategic implications for your educational and career journey.

### The Industry Paradox: Conflicting Expectations and Job Market Realities

The European games, animation, and VFX industries are undergoing a significant cultural shift, moving away from the 'rockstar' employee archetype toward valuing humble, adaptable team players. This transformation reflects growing industry-wide efforts to create more sustainable and inclusive workplaces and reduce crunch culture.

#### The new 'ideal employee' demonstrates:

- Strong collaborative skills and cultural competence
- Flexible and proactive problem-solving abilities
- Commitment to continuous skill development
- Effective communication across disciplines
- Client-focused mindset
- Receptiveness to feedback
- Healthy work-life balance
- Creative inspiration from outside work
- Mobility and English language proficiency

Companies increasingly implement 'no asshole' hiring policies, prioritizing team fit and interpersonal skills alongside technical capabilities.

However, the shift toward valuing collaborative team players faces significant challenges in implementation.

#### An oversaturated job market creates a fundamental contradiction between industry values and hiring realities:

- Recent industry layoffs have increased competition, flooding the market with experienced professionals
- Growing number of graduates enter the market annually from expanding educational programs
- Limited job opportunities relative to available talent
- Flood of applications forces rapid screening processes
- Companies struggle to effectively evaluate soft skills during hiring

#### This market reality demands the 'ideal candidates' possess qualities that often contradict the 'ideal employee' profile:

- Exceptional portfolio showcasing individual excellence
- Strong and aggressive self-promotion abilities
- Competitive networking skills
- Stand-out presence in a crowded market
- High visibility in industry circles

#### Adding to this complexity, not all companies embrace the shift toward prioritizing collaborative abilities. Many still explicitly seek 'rockstar' talent but without 'the attitude':

- Highly skilled professionals willing to work extensive hours
- Dedicated individuals who prioritize work over work-life balance
- Compliant talent who won't advocate for workplace improvements
- Technical excellence over soft skills
- Individual achievement over team collaboration

This divergence in industry expectations, combined with market oversaturation, creates additional pressure on educational institutions and students who must prepare for both progressive and traditional workplace cultures.

## Educational Institutions' Response to the Balancing Act

Educational institutions have actively embraced industry trends by transitioning from traditional, modular approaches to collaborative, project-based learning environments. This shift aims to develop both technical excellence and the soft skills industry increasingly values.

However, the reality of the competitive job market creates significant challenges in implementation.

### Key approaches include:

- Transitioning from theoretical lectures to practice-based, self-directed learning
- Implementing interdisciplinary group projects that simulate industry pipelines
- Fostering lifelong learning mindsets and independent skill development
- Creating opportunities for industry exposure, networking, and portfolio development
- Promoting healthy work-life balance and sustainable career practices

### Despite these efforts, educational institutions struggle with several challenges:

- Balancing group work with individual portfolio development time
- Addressing varied student backgrounds, abilities, and career goals
- Managing conflicting industry demands and job market realities
- Negotiating generational differences among educational staff
- Supporting students with guidance on networking and self-promotion

## Student Responses to Contradictory Demands

### Students face an “impossible triangle” of expectations:

- Excel as collaborative team players
- Stand out as individual contributors
- Maintain a healthy work-life balance

### Three primary approaches emerge among students:

- The Rockstar Approach: Focus primarily on individual skills development and exceptional portfolios, minimizing group project investment
- The Middle Path: Give 200% to both individual development and group work, hoping industry employment will eventually lead to more balance
- The Self-Preservation Mindset: Prioritize genuine work-life balance over initial career ambitions, potentially missing opportunities but avoiding burnout

Each approach offers different advantages and challenges, with no perfect solution to the contradictory demands.

## Ways Forward: Industry Recommendations and Future Directions

Industry experts recommend students adopt strategic approaches to navigate these contradictory demands:

### Becoming the ‘Ideal Applicant’

- Conduct early “reality checks” (starting in year 1) to critically assess personal strengths, weaknesses, and career aspirations against job market realities
- Develop a personal brand that effectively communicates your unique value to potential employers
- Create strong, tailored portfolios/reels that showcase both technical excellence and creative vision
- Engage in proactive, persistent, and focused networking with industry professionals
- Stay adaptable to changing industry needs, being open to shifting career paths when necessary
- Research specific companies thoroughly before applying, demonstrating knowledge of their work

### Becoming the ‘Ideal Employee’

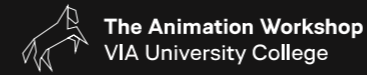
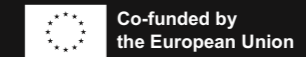
- Develop interpersonal and collaborative skills through interdisciplinary projects with diverse teams
- Gain experience working with teams outside the traditional games, animation, and VFX industry
- Actively participate in peer reviews and feedback sessions to improve receptiveness to criticism
- Find new hobbies and friends outside the ‘professional bubble’ to gain fresh creative perspectives
- Practice communication across different disciplines, understanding the language and needs of various production roles
- Learn when overtime is necessary while still maintaining overall work-life balance
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### Preparing for Career Evolution

- Embrace a mindset of lifelong learning, staying updated on industry trends and technologies
- Develop the ability to independently research and self-teach new skills as needed
- Explore opportunities in adjacent industries (healthcare, military, architecture) that increasingly value similar skill sets
- Build strong English language proficiency for international collaboration
- Consider leadership development opportunities, recognizing their increasing importance in the industry

This summary offers only a glimpse of the comprehensive industry recommendations detailed in the full report. The complete picture, including specific tactical approaches for career development, networking, portfolio building, and soft skills enhancement, can be found in the original PANEURAMA report.

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**PANEURAMA Report:**  
**WORK ENVIRONMENT DYNAMICS AND SOFT SKILLS IN  
ANIMATION, GAMES, AND VFX INDUSTRIES**

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The PANEURAMA Project research results in three reports that assess the current landscape, challenges, and achievements in the following areas:

*Work Environment Dynamics and Soft Skills in the Animation, Games, and VFX Industries (2024)*

*Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Animation, Games, and VFX Industries (2025)*

*New Technologies in the Animation, Games, and VFX Industries (2026)*

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