The Game Development Process

Documentation

The Role of Documentation

- The Concept Document
- The Design Document

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland
The Concept Document - Overview

• Use to sell idea
  - To investors, externally
  - To colleagues, internally
• First document people will read (many, only document they will read)
• Always have a concept document
  - Maybe exception for sequel
  - Maybe exception for development team of 1
• Reflects abbreviated version of the game
• Should be able to “play” game in “minds eye”
  - Reader will bring preconceived notions, so be clear about what is innovative and different

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland

The Concept Document - Overview

• No “correct” way, but certain common elements
• Can include artists inspiration if involved in the early design (“Picture worth a thousand words”)
  - Rough sketches of characters/environment
• Title page
  - Title, author, one-sentence description
  - Example: “Norbot, Quest for Freedom”

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland
The Concept Document - Intro

- Genre.
  - Example: action-adventure, 3rd person
- Platform (maybe justify, maybe include 2nd-ary platform)
  - Example: All Game Consoles
  - If PC, provide specifications
- Target audience (demographics)
- Market research
  - Indicate potential of game
  - Should justify target audience, genre, platform
  - Example: action-adventure best selling, but repetitive, so includes new themes. Family friendly so weapons are defensive ...

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland

The Concept Document - Expand Idea

- Overview - high level, 1-2 paragraphs
  - Example: 3rd person action adventure in fantasy setting, with puzzle solving and narrative...
- Core objectives - player goal
  - Example: Guide Norbot to safety
  - Example: Use robot attachments, get parts (hand, heart, soul) ... stimulate player
- Game play theme - conceptual premise
  - Example: Robots, both bad and good, with switchable components

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland
The Concept Document - Expand Idea

• Game structure – how game proceeds
  - Example: Several major worlds, sub-quests
  - Example: Expand capabilities of Norbot
• Distinctive features – what sets game apart
  - Example: Unique character, customizable robot
  - Example: Unique sub-worlds and puzzles
• Character features – what the player avatar (if appropriate) will do
  - Example: Movement, visual aids, weapons, maps, inventory

The Concept Document - Environment

• Game world, description – includes look and feel
  - Example: Modern robot city, recycling plant
• Features that provide the game flavor

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland
The Concept Document - Player Mechanics

- Internal rules for how player will interact with world (example of Norbot below)
  - Character internals (hit points, stamina)
  - Rewards (powerups)
  - Environment interactions (pickup, drop items)
  - Maps (saving and loading)
  - Camera views
  - Control Mechanisms (interface with keys or console)

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland

The Concept Document - Artifacts

- Includes weapons, treasure, etc.
- Details on use, general rule interaction
- Friends and foes
  - Not details, but general appearance and roles
  - Include main enemy

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland
The Concept Document - Story

- May be last if story is not important to game
- But sometimes story will interest audience (and publisher) more
- Game industry sucks at stories
  - IMGD 1002. Storytelling in Interactive Media and Games

The Concept Document - Timeline and Misc

- Timeline for development completion
  - May include budget
- Misc - anything else that should be said about the concept of the game
  - mocked-up screenshots, concept sketches, sample level designs, backstory, character descriptions, game balance discussions, and etc.
The Concept Document - What Next?

• Will undergo several drafts before v1.0 (ready to show publisher)
• Feedback
  - Development team (art, technical, producer)
  - Incorporate comments *when appropriate*
    * Not all feedback is appropriate
• Pitch
  - An art, so not always the designer (marketer?)
  - Storyboards, artwork, other props
    * Give your game a physical presence

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland

The Design Document

• How to build your game
  - Written for development team
  - May take 4-6 months to complete
• Analogy: building a house
  - Architect plans building - sketches, blueprints, boundaries layout
  - May include miniature model
  - Contact authorities, permits materials
  - Then, *finally*, build
  - Should be the same for Game Development!

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland
The Design Document

• Should describe game in detail
  - Innermost working to outermost visual feedback
• One early component is “The Gameplay Spec”
  - Highly detailed description of the game
  - Given to programmers
• Also keep “Designers Notes”
  - Ideas related to details in the spec
  - Analogous to comments in programming code … explains the “why” behind the “what” in the spec
• Not everyone will read every part
• How long? Long enough. 200-300 pages.
• More details if time

Based on Ch 18-19, Gameplay and Design, by Kevin Oxland