



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

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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"

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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 ...

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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

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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

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The Concept Document - Environment

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

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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)

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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

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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

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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.

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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

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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!

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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

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