IMGD 1001:
Game Design Documents

by

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Types of Game Design Docs

- ☐ Concept Document
- ☐ Proposal Document
- ☐ Technical Specification
- ☐ Game Design Document
- ☐ Level Designs

Concept Document (1 of 2)

□ Used to explore game idea in more detail
□ Often used as a proposal within an organization
□ Developed by designer or visionary
□ A short sales pitch: 1-3 pages
□ May have no art, or amateur art
□ Many ideas never get farther than this

Concept Document (2 of 2)

□ Must include:
  ▪ Intro
  ▪ Description
  ▪ Key features
  ▪ Genre, spin, flavor
  ▪ Platform(s) / market data
□ May also include:
  ▪ Background / License info
  ▪ Concept art

High Concept (1 of 2)

- ☐ The key sentence that describes your game
- ☐ MUST get the concept across concisely and quickly
- ☐ If you can't, it may be too complicated to sell

High Concept (2 of 2)

- ☐ Not so good:
  - ▪ "MindRover is a game in which players build and program robotic vehicles to compete in a variety of challenges including battles, races, puzzles, and sports."
- ☐ Better:
  - ▪ "MindRover is like *Battlebots* ... but with brains."
  - ▪ Still not good enough
  - ▪ Let's see if we can do better! … (next slide)

Exercise: High Concept

- Pick one of these 4 games
  - *Burnout*
  - *Grand Theft Auto*
  - *Zelda - Twilight Princess*
  - *Dance Dance Revolution*
- Write a high concept for it
- Form groups based on game choice
- Agree on one

Proposal Document (1 of 2)

- Used to get a deal
- Shown to publishers and 3rd parties
- Enough detail to show that the proposal is viable: 5-50 pages
- Sales oriented
- Big picture
- Polished!

Proposal Document (2 of 2)

- ☐ Must include:
  - ▪ Revised concept
  - ▪ Market analysis
  - ▪ Technical analysis
  - ▪ Schedule
  - ▪ Budget
  - ▪ Risks
  - ▪ Cost and revenue projections
    - ☐ Pessimistic, likely, optimistic
  - ▪ Art

Technical Specification (1 of 2)

- ☐ The 'How' of game design
- ☐ Contains the architectural vision; technology to be used
- ☐ Engineering detail
- ☐ Production detail
- ☐ Owned by tech director or chief engineer
- ☐ Can be exhaustive (and exhausting): 10-100 pages

Technical Specification (2 of 2)

- Must include:
  - Tooling
  - Art / Music / Sound / Production pipeline
  - Technology detail
    - Platform & portability issues
    - Networking or special tech
    - Server details
  - Software engineering info
    - Major design elements
    - Key areas of technical risk
    - Alternatives to risky or expensive sections

Game Design Document (1 of 2)

- Functional spec: The 'What' of the design
- Describes the player's experience and interactions in detail
  - Could be quite long, several hundred pages, but "enough" is the goal.
- Artistic feel
- Owned by the game designer
- A living document
- "The Bible"

Game Design Document (2 of 2)

- ☐ Must haves
  - ▪ Game mechanics
  - ▪ User Interface
  - ▪ Visuals
  - ▪ Audio
  - ▪ Story (if any)
  - ▪ Level Specs

Useful links

- ☐ Chris Taylor's sample design doc, in HTML and .doc format:
  http://www.fafhrdproductions.com/ctaylordesign.htm
  http://www.jonathanjblair.net/ctaylordesigntemplate.zip

- ☐ Tim Ryan's <u>excellent</u> two-part description of game design docs:
  http://www.gamasutra.com/features/19991019/ryan_01.htm
  http://www.gamasutra.com/features/19991217/ryan_01.htm