

Milestone 3 report

Author: Johan Lövdahl
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Email: ojoola-7@student.ltu.se

This report is a document about what I have done so far and how I have done it, why I chose my subject and what I will do the upcoming weeks until Milestone 4.

Why I chose my subject.

I choose to work with downloadable games because I think they are a part of the future in gaming.

With downloadable games I mean games that can be bought and downloaded on each of the three consoles download services. On Microsoft Xbox 360 it is called Xbox Live Marketplace, on Sony Playstation 3 it is called Playstation Network or Playstation Store and on Nintendo Wii the exclusive Wii titles are called Wii Ware and can be found in the Nintendo Shop Channel.

Downloadable games are usually done by small teams and with small budgets and I think this is good because it gives the developers the chance to try out new stuff. If you want to start a new IP you could make a "prequel" game where you introduce the characters and the world and see how the game sells, if it sells well enough a full priced game could be developed maybe. It also gets smaller studios the opportunity to develop something that will get sold and played and not only as a budget title that no one sees because there is a ton of other games released the same time.

So that is why I chose downloadable games as a subject.

How I divided my work.

The design project was divided into six different steps, one for each part of the process. I divided my work like this:

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|-----------|---------------------------|------------|
| • Phase 1 | Creating concepts | 2 weeks |
| • Phase 2 | Describe more in depth | 1 week |
| • Phase 3 | Power point presentations | 1 week |
| • Phase 4 | Research | 1 week |
| • Phase 5 | Prototypes | 2 weeks |
| • Phase 6 | Design Document | 1-1½ weeks |

The first two weeks are a start up period when papers had to be filled out and we received a lot of information for the project and that is way I dedicated two weeks for that phase. I am trying to keep up with this plan and it works very well.

Phase reports.

Phase 1

Phase 1 was about coming up with 100 concepts and I used different techniques to come up with them. The techniques I used were found in the book Game Design Workshop¹ on page 142-145 in chapter 6 they were:

- Open minded
- Lists
- Randomize

¹ Game Design Workshop: Designing, Prototyping and Playtesting games by Tracy Fullerton, Christopher Swain and Steven Hoffman, ISBN:1578202221, Year: 2004

- Stream of Consciousness
- Idea Cards
- Darkness
- Game mix up

Open minded is a very basic technique; you use only your mind and the environment around you. I came up with a lot of ideas when I was out walking and if you put your mind to it; ideas pop up. It might not work to well if you need ideas in a hurry but for small projects or future ideas it works well.

Lists were my first technique from the book and also the first technique I used in the project. I thought it was rather hard to come up with good topics on the lists and the ideas weren't too random. The technique works in the following way: write down words that you come to think about on different topics, I used *war reasons*, *fruits*, *bad things* and *snow* as topics. Then you pair words together to create concepts. I think this technique would work really well if you got an area where you need ideas for, like war themes or puzzles for a adventure game but to use the technique to come up with ideas for a different game concepts it isn't the best technique to use.

The Randomize technique is about picking words from different sources and then create concepts with those words. I used my manuals for pretty much all my games, five different Discworld² novels, five different Lord of the Ring³ books and a two numbers of Level⁴. I found this technique good and the ideas that came forth were very random indeed. I picked out two words for each idea by pick a random page in the book/manual/magazine and then pick a random word on that page. If the word was a useless word I choose one in the vicinity.

Stream of Consciousness's first step is about writing as many words as possible on a specific time. I wrote 160 words on either five or ten minutes. The next step is to pick words from the "list" that you just created and use them to come up with new ideas. Not the best method I tried but it did what it was supposed to do.

Idea cards is a very simple method, put down words on pieces of paper, mix them all up and draw two or three for each concept. I can take a while to find words to use but I was reading Level⁵ and picked words from there, I also used different gaming manuals, stuff I saw on the TV and so on. I created 75 "cards" and drew three of them for each idea. The ones I had used I put on another place so that I didn't use them again. I really liked this method, it was easy to use and the cards is easily to create when doing other stuff like watching TV or playing a game, surfing the internet or pretty much anything.

The darkness technique was an emergency solution when I could get more out of my head. I went into the bathroom with a piece of paper and just sat there for a while. I wrote whatever came to my mind and went out into the light again when I thought my mind was ready to create more ideas. I had at that time come up with ten new ideas. Of course it doesn't have to be in the darkness, but it should be something that you normally don't do and that creates emotions or thoughts in your brain.

² Author: Terry Pratchett

³ Author: J.R.R. Tolkien

⁴ Publisher: Reset Media

⁵ Ibid.

In Game mix up I paired different games unique selling point with each others. I wrote down a couple of games and what I thought was unique with them and I also wrote what you play in the game which came to be very important to me, without it I couldn't come up with anything but when I had a word like robot together with spraying and inlines I could form an idea. I had a main character and what it should be about. I only came up with three ideas with this technique but that was only because of that I only needed three more to reach 100 concepts.

That was all the techniques I used which resulted in 100 game concepts. I did not use remakes or normal sport games as concepts but variants of sport games with different rules would have been okay. I used one technique each day so I would keep my schedule that I've created.

Phase 2

In phase 2 I first picked out 20 ideas out of my 100 concepts that I created in phase 1 and I made it in three steps. In step 1 I put a grade between one and ten on all concepts. One was the lowest grade and ten was the highest and best grade. I went thru the list and in the end I had six concepts that had received an eight as a grade which was the highest grade I gave a concept.

Then to get the other 14 concepts for phase 2 I started to check on the concepts I had given the grade seven. I read all of them thru and graded them between one and three this time where one was a bad idea and three was a great idea. At the same time as I read them thru I also made a checklist on which titles I can see pictures on in my head. It could be a concept picture or an environment from the specific concept. In my first iteration I received eight ones that I had given the grade three and for the remaining six concepts on the list of 20 I checked the second list, the one where I had checked whether I saw a mental picture of the game or not in my head. On that list I had eight titles and had to lose two of them so I went thru them again to see which concepts I believed in and which I didn't believe in. In the end I chose the following ones:

1. Sun vs Clouds
2. Lost in the desert
3. the Tree
4. Electricity!
5. Space Station Breakout
6. Radioactive Mutation
7. Career Challenge
8. Rize
9. Glacier Terminal
10. River
11. Parkinghouse Defense
12. Triangle Evolution
13. Elemental Railroad
14. Taging Robot
15. Chicken survivor
16. Eco
17. Medicin shooter
18. Abstact Dinosaur
19. Breeder

20. Boy/Soul

I thought it worked really well to grade the concepts to get the best out of the bunch and even though I had to do it in several steps might show the quality of my concepts. I then started to explain them further with a couple of guidelines found in the book *Game Design Workshop*⁶ and they are the following ones:

- What are the objectives in the game?
- What is the conflict?
- What actions do the player take and when?
- How many players can play?
- Are there any special rules in the game?
- What are the boundaries in the game?
- How long does the game take to resolve?

To explain a couple of things here; the objectives are what the goal is in the game or what type of game it is. A racing game would be referred to as a race game and a platform game like Super Mario Bros would be referred to as a Rescue and Escape game since you are trying to rescue the princess.

The conflict is the relationship between procedures and rules; creating something to overcome in the game. In Tetris it could be that when a row is full it disappears so you have to watch out when to make them disappear and when not to, to achieve the highest score.

The boundaries are the play field where the player is allowed to move.

I planned on describing four concepts each day but I worked a bit in advanced but I was finished in time. During phase 2 I also received a mentor, Ted Kjellson from Direktörn & Fabrikörn.

Phase 3

Phase 3 started with a meeting with my mentor Ted where I pitched my 20 ideas. The goal was to take out the 10 best concepts to work further with and when the meeting was done I had a list of eight concepts he thought was worth working on and he also let me choose two as an editor's or developer's choice. The list of all the titles looks like this:

- Sun vs. Clouds
- Lost in the Desert
- Space Station Breakout
- Rize
- River
- Triangle Evolution
- Elemental Railroad
- Eco
- Electricity!
- the Tree

⁶ *Game Design Workshop: Designing, Prototyping and Playtesting games* by Tracy Fullerton, Christopher Swain and Steven Hoffman, ISBN:1578202221, Year: 2004

For these concepts I created power point presentations to each of them. I planned to create two each day which I rather did. I made one the first day and three the day after to be in phase with the scheme. I created pictures on characters, went out on the internet to find pictures for the moodboards that Ted wanted me to have. I saved all the sources in a specific document to hand in with the presentations. I also spent the weekend to draw more pictures and make some animations in Adobe Flash CS3 to describe certain details and game elements.

That is all I've done so far, I have a mentor meeting this week where I will pitch my ten presentations and reduce them to only five titles. I made two presentations each day to keep in phase with the schedule.

What I will do the upcoming weeks

This week it is time for phase 4 where I will make some research on my titles. I will read some in the book *Game Design Workshop*⁷ to see if I can find any useful information on what to research on. But I will check how innovative they are, if there is something similar out in the market and if there is a place for them in the market. If I had a construction game, random Tycoon game, I would have seen that there is a ton of similar games out there and that the Tycoon franchise has decreased in quality over the last couple of years.

In phase 5 the week after I will start develop prototypes for my remaining two concepts. Depending on what ideas that is left; different techniques will be used but possible alternatives are paper and pen prototype, or software prototypes made in Blender or Adobe Flash CS3. I will also arrange a play testing for each idea where I invite people to try them and let them answer a couple of questions that I will have ready for them. I will also use this when presenting the prototypes to my mentor Ted.

In phase 6 I am going to write a design document on the best idea that has survived all the eliminations. I will use a design document template that I've used before from the book *Game Design Workshop*⁸ which covers most of the stuff that needs to be in a design document. The template has been used in real games and that is why I will use it. I might search for another template to see if anything is missing but the main plan is to use the one found in *Game Design Workshop*⁹.

Thoughts

I have managed to keep in phase with my schedule even thou some days have gone to waist to other things like project planning and being on fire. I have also been able to write in the blog more than the three times necessary but I am doing it because I think it is good for the future when I am looking for work that they can see that I am someone they can trust and someone who can write good.

My first thought on this project was negative but from when I started working with it until now I have liked it a lot. It feels really serious, maybe because I take it serious, and it really feels like something I can use when applying for a job. I also hope that the end result holds industry standard and that some company takes the project under their wings and develops it but that might just be to dream a little too much.

⁷ *Game Design Workshop: Designing, Prototyping and Playtesting games* by Tracy Fullerton, Christopher Swain and Steven Hoffman, ISBN:1578202221, Year: 2004

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.