Game Development Meetup Report  
*Learning Outcome 1 (10%)*

**Introduction**  
On 10 April 2025, I attended the **APR Dunedin Game Dev Meetup** at The HUB, Otago Polytechnic, organised by Dunedin Game Developers. The event featured special guest **Joe Simmonds**, founder and lead developer at FourFox Interactive, who presented “Moving Forward Through Failure,” detailing how setbacks informed the development of their turn-based tactics game, *Match & Mastery* ([events.humanitix.com](https://events.humanitix.com/apr25-dunedin-game-dev-meetup)). This report reflects on the speakers and their roles, new insights beyond my course, surprises, challenged assumptions, comparisons with expectations, newly discovered career paths, impacts on my goals, networking experiences, questions asked and whether I would attend again.

## 1. Speakers and Roles

* **Joe Simmonds** – Founder & Lead Developer, FourFox Interactive
  + Shared his journey from audio-production lecturer to indie studio founder.
  + Oversees design iterations, funding applications and community engagement.

## 2. New Learnings Beyond the Pathway

I learned that **FourFox Interactive** secured support not only through grants but also mentorship and workspace via CODE NZ (listed among event sponsors) ([events.humanitix.com](https://events.humanitix.com/apr25-dunedin-game-dev-meetup)). I had presumed funding for small studios was limited to private investors; instead, government-backed programmes offer comprehensive resources. Joe also emphasised that **every discipline**, art, code, audio, relies on rapid prototyping and iterative feedback loops, reinforcing that adaptability outweighs rigid pipelines.

## 3. Surprises

I did not expect such **rigorous pre-production documentation** from an indie team. Joe showcased design bibles, risk matrices and vertical-slice schedules used to secure funding and manage scope. The level of formal planning far exceeded my experience with student-level projects, highlighting the value of professional project-management practices even in small teams.

## 4. Challenging Existing Assumptions

I believed indie studios operated on passion and ad hoc workflows. While passion remains central, Joe’s use of **Agile sprints**, **daily stand-ups** and **Jira boards** demonstrated that scaled-down corporate methodologies are common in lean teams. This challenged my assumption that formal frameworks are reserved for large companies.

## 5. Comparison with Expectations

I anticipated a superficial overview or marketing bias. Instead, Joe provided candid accounts of **failed pitches**, **prototype abandonments** and **technical pivots**, illustrating real-world decision points. His transparency and practical advice exceeded my expectations for depth and honesty.

## 6. Unconsidered Roles and Career Paths

I had not considered roles such as **Grant Writer** or **Community Manager** within a studio. Joe highlighted that FourFox employs a Community Manager to cultivate early player feedback and social media presence, critical for sustaining engagement and shaping feature priorities.

## 7. Influence on Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

**Short term**, I will assemble a small prototype team to apply for CODE NZ’s next funding round. **Long term**, I aim to found my own indie studio, PixelFlux Games, leveraging the documentation standards and funding strategies I observed. Joe’s pathway demonstrates how structured planning and external support can accelerate growth.

## 8. Networking and Peer Interactions

During the post-talk mingling, I spoke with developers from Otago Polytechnic and CODE NZ about engine choices (Godot 4 vs Unreal 5) and performance trade-offs on mobile. These conversations reinforced that **community building** and knowledge sharing are as vital as technical expertise.

## 9. Questions Asked

I asked Joe: “What criteria does CODE NZ prioritise when evaluating applications?” He explained that **innovation potential**, **team capability** and **clear milestones** are paramount, with **market viability** and **social impact** also considered. If I could return, I would probe further into **IP management** support provided through the mentorship programme.

## 10. Future Attendance

I would **definitely** attend another meetup. The combination of honest practitioner insights, detailed workflows and networking opportunities was far more valuable than standard lectures. I highly recommend these events to anyone serious about a career in game development.

## References

Humanitix. (2025). *APR Dunedin Game Dev Meetup – with special guest Joe Simmonds* [Event page]. Humanitix. <https://events.humanitix.com/apr25-dunedin-game-dev-meetup> ([events.humanitix.com](https://events.humanitix.com/apr25-dunedin-game-dev-meetup))

Simmonds, J. (2025, April 10). *Moving Forward Through Failure* [Conference presentation]. APR Dunedin Game Dev Meetup, The HUB at Otago Polytechnic.