Foundational vs. Decorational

One of the most concrete ways to keep a sane perspective about technology is to understand the difference between *foundational* and *decorational* technologies. Foundational technologies are the ones that make a new kind of experience possible. Decorational technologies just make existing experiences better.

Gartner suggests that every new technology goes through five phases of hype:
1. **Technology Trigger.** This is when the technology is first discovered or announced.
2. **Peak of Inflated Expectations.** This is when many more people are talk- ing about the technology than have actually experienced it. In other words, "Nobody knows what it's really like, but everyone says it's great." Companies launching a product (like, say, the iPhone) try to make the most of this quirk of human nature to believe that a new technology will make your dreams come true, though this never seems to actually happen.
   3. **Trough of Disillusionment.** When the technology can't live up to the incredible hype that surrounded it (like, say, the Segway), and people see it in the cold, harsh, light of reality, it quickly becomes unfashionable, even despised.
   4. **Slope of Enlightenment.** Gradually, people and businesses start to figure out the areas where the technology is actually useful and beneficial.
5. **Plateau of Productivity.** At this point, the benefits of the technology are widely understood and accepted. The height of this plateau is dependent on how broadly useful the technology really is.

As a game designer, you need to know about the Hype Cycle for three big reasons:
1. **Immunity**. If you are aware of the Hype Cycle, you can make yourself immune to its effects and not risk your career on a technology you haven't actually seen work.
2. **Inoculation**. Chances are good that at some point you are going to find your- self surrounded by people who have bought into the hype on some crazy new technology, and they will want you to design a game around it. If you can make them understand about the Hype Cycle, you may be able to save your team from making a dangerous decision.
3. **Fundraising**. There is no pretty way to say this. At some point, you are going to have an opportunity to pitch a design to someone who is fully under the spell of inflated expectations, and they are going to be willing to fund your game not because of its merits, but because they believe that the technological bandwagon they are jumping on is going to make them very rich.

Innovator's Dilemma
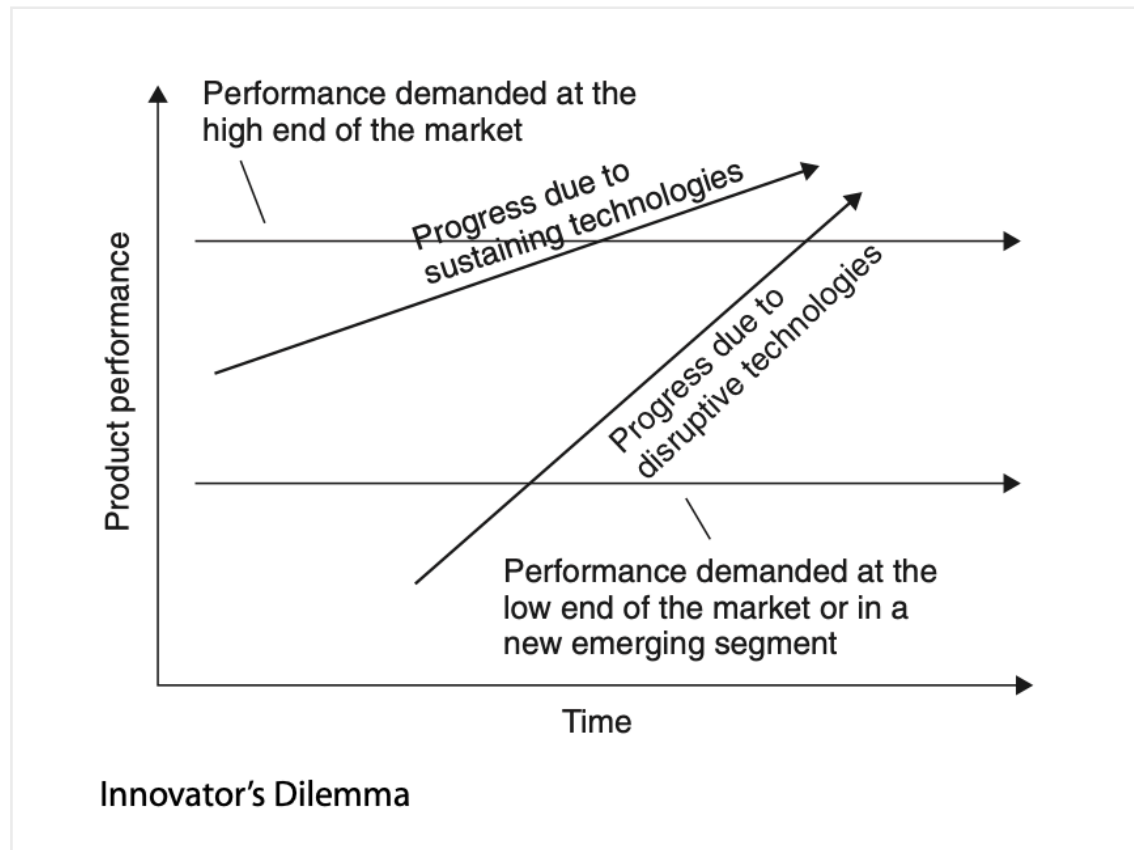
Lens #92: The Lens of Technology

To make sure you are using the right technologies in the right way, ask your- self these questions:

● What technologies will help deliver the experience I want to create?
● Am I using these technologies in ways that are foundational or decorational?
● If I'm not using them foundationally, should I be using them at all?
● Is this technology as cool as I think it is?
● Is there a "disruptive technology" I should consider instead?

Lens #93: The Lens of the Crystal Ball

If you would like to know the future of a particular game technology, ask yourself these questions, and make your answers as concrete as possible:

● What will _____ be like two years from now? Why?
● What will _____ be like four years from now? Why?
● What will _____ be like ten years from now? Why?