Brandon Humphries

[Company name] | [Company address]

Project Mechromancer

Games Design Document

Contents

[Project Mechromancer - The Main Elements: 2](#_Toc168326578)

[Working Title: 2](#_Toc168326579)

[Current Status: 2](#_Toc168326580)

[Concept Statement: 2](#_Toc168326581)

[Genre(s): 2](#_Toc168326582)

[Target Audience: 3](#_Toc168326583)

[Core Concepts and Unique Selling Points: 4](#_Toc168326584)

[Core Concepts: 4](#_Toc168326585)

[Unique Selling Points (USPs): 4](#_Toc168326586)

[Player Experience: 5](#_Toc168326587)

[Key Moments: 6](#_Toc168326588)

[Current Target Platform(s): 6](#_Toc168326589)

[Competition: 6](#_Toc168326590)

[Monetisation: 7](#_Toc168326591)

[Project Mechromancer – Game Details: 8](#_Toc168326592)

[Game World: 8](#_Toc168326593)

[Backstory: 8](#_Toc168326594)

[Backstory - Long-winded Version: 8](#_Toc168326595)

[MVP Systems and Features: 8](#_Toc168326596)

[Game Objects: 9](#_Toc168326597)

[Companion Creatures: 9](#_Toc168326598)

[References 10](#_Toc168326599)

# Project Mechromancer - The Main Elements:

## Working Title:

At this moment in time the game does not have a working title. The project is under the code name of ‘**Project Mechromancer**’. If a name had to be given at this stage, its placeholder name would be: ‘**Tidebound’**.

## Current Status:

The game’s current status is: **Games Design Document – Still Being Written**.

Once the Games Design Document has been written, it will be reviewed to see if the concept for the game and its other main components stands strong to make a refreshing title that can go into what the developer is calling ‘The Whitebox Alpha’ stage. This where the initial mechanics will be developed in the chosen game engine and be made playable for people to test, using only basic assets to see if the information currently written in the Games Design Document stands firm after the first playtest. The developer wishes the Games Design Document was further along but is not too far behind schedule for the Sprint end date and time of **15/06/2024 at 20:00**.

## Concept Statement:

Embark on a journey of self-discovery and adventure as you unravel the secrets of your legendary ancestry in an open-world action-adventure RPG. Set sail from your native coastal city, survive the untamed wilderness by taming unusual creatures that live there and work together to help build a thriving community. Immerse yourself in exploration, combat, and town management for an unforgettable odyssey, with the potential for future co-op play adding even more depth to games’ experience.

## Genre(s):

The game will combine many different genres to create a world that players will find valuable and that will keep them playing long after they finish the game. The following genres are examined in reference to (Shabazi & Aminian, 2024) and their blog post, "What Are the Different Kinds of Video Game Genres?"

* **Open World Action-Adventure -** Open World Action-Adventure is a prominent sub-genre for employing "Huge Sandbox Worlds." Shabazi and Amini define action-adventure games as a "diverse catch-all genre" because they "blend combat, action sequences, and exploration with puzzle solving." Shabazi and Amini offer gameplay examples from Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild and Assassin's Creed specifically for this subgenre. But games like Palworld and Kena: Bridge of Spirits also contribute to why this is a fantastic subgenre for this game. This subgenre lends substantial support to several of the game's features. Gathering supplies for the settlement, taking out minor foes, boss fights, solving puzzles to access new aeras of the map, and catching creatures to support the player are just a few examples.
* **Open World RPG -** Players can add unique abilities, and items to their characters in role-playing games (RPGs). Shabazi and Amini assert that missions, side quests, and exploration all lead to the discovery of rich stories. The Witcher and Skyrim are mentioned as examples of this subgenre. Providing players with the flexibility to choose their own path through the game, ensures its longevity. This subgenre is an excellent way to highlight the quest/mission part of the game. It also works well with the characteristics of the Open World Action-Adventure subgenre that were covered previously.
* **Survival Sandbox –** Survival games ‘challenge players to navigate harsh environments and scenarios by managing hunger, thirst, and other needs. Survival mechanics immerse players in the fundamentals of existence’ according to Shabazi and Amini. Where this subgenre fits into this game is the management of the players ‘hunger, thirst, and other needs’ whilst they are exploring the environment. This will make sure that players are constantly aware of their characters wellbeing and will have to make sure they are stocked-up for their outings when completing the tasks explained in the Open World Action-Adventure subgenre section.
* **Life Sims -** Shabazi and Amini explain that ‘Simulations replicate real-world activities, from piloting vehicles to running a business. Some aim for utter realism, while others take the artistic license of game art services for fun and accessibility. Management, construction, sports, and vehicles are common subjects. Building on this statement, the game focuses on the management aspect of this subgenre. While Shabazi and Amini cite The Sims and Animal Crossing as examples, the game will draw inspiration for its art style from Animal Crossing. However, Frontier Developments' games, such as the ‘Planet’ series (Planet Coaster and Zoo), better represent the management aspects. When players are in the town or return to it, they will see various user interface elements that reflect the town's status, including the townsfolk's happiness rating and the amount of specific resources available, which help the player create new items or buildings for the town.

## Target Audience:

* **Targeted Players** **-** The target player for this game is likely someone who enjoys immersive and expansive gaming experiences. They are likely fans of open-world games, RPGs, and simulation games. They appreciate rich storytelling, exploration, and character development.
* **Other Games They Might Have Played -** Potential players might have played games like ‘The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild’, ‘Animal Crossing’, ‘Palworld’, or ‘Kena: Bridge of Spirits’. These titles share an array of similarities with Project Mechromancer in terms of gameplay mechanics, open-world exploration, and the town management aspects.
* **Age Range and Their Relevant Interests/Attributes -** The target audience's age range is likely broad, spanning from older children (10-17) to adults, with a particular focus on middle-aged/older teens and young adults. They likely enjoy titles with immersive narratives, strategic gameplay, and the freedom to explore vast virtual worlds. They may have an interest in adventure, fantasy, and simulation genres. Additionally, they may appreciate games that offer a blend of action, strategy, and creativity.
* **Desired ESRB/PEGI Rating -** Given the themes of adventure, exploration, and combat, as well as the potential for online interactions in future co-op modes, the desired ESRB/PEGI rating would likely be Teen (T) for the ESRB rating (Entertainment Software Rating Board, 2024) and 12 for the PEGI rating (Games Rating Authority, 2024). This reflects the game's content, which may include fantasy violence, mild language, and suggestive themes, while still being accessible to a broad audience of older players. The developer aims to try and get the game down to an Everyone 10+ (E 10+) for the ESRB rating, as they believe it matches better with the desired PEGI rating. However, the final rating would depend on the specific content and tone of the game.

## Core Concepts and Unique Selling Points:

### Core Concepts:

The game’s core loop involves exploring the island, defeating enemies to gain experience, and using skill points to unlock valuable abilities that aid in the adventure. While exploring, players must gather materials like wood, stone, and metals to construct new buildings for the town. Some of these buildings will offer gear or powerful upgrades for your creatures. As players gather rarer materials, they can further upgrade these buildings, enhancing loot generation. Additionally, townsfolk will provide side missions that reward useful gear or materials and unlock more loot in buildings as players progress through the main story.

The setting begins on a dull, somewhat abandoned island with only a few remaining townsfolk, including your long-lost grandfather. The player’s goal is to revitalize the island, transforming it into a vibrant town full of life. Players can plant trees and crops and construct various important buildings to honour their ancestors.

The game’s island is procedurally generated, meaning each new save creates a differently shaped island, allowing for unique adventures in every playthrough. By teaming up with the island's creatures, players can use their powers to navigate difficult terrain and defeat larger foes obstructing the protagonist’s path to uncovering their destiny.

### Unique Selling Points (USPs):

* **Deep Narrative -** The game’s story places a strong emphasis on unravelling the mystery of the protagonist's family history and forming a bond with the creatures that inhabit the island. But standing in your way are the four guardians of the island that block your path into new territories never explored before. Team up, to fight the dangerous faction trying to remove humankind from the island, whilst gathering materials and creatures to help build a thriving town for the descendants of those who followed your ancestors. This personal journey of discovery adds depth to the narrative and provides players with a compelling motivation to explore the game world.
* **Dynamic Gameplay -** With a seamless blend of open-world exploration, strategic combat, survival mechanics, and town management, the game offers a diverse range of gameplay experiences that cater to a wide audience. Whether players enjoy embarking on epic quests, taming exotic creatures, or building thriving communities, there's something for everyone to enjoy.
* **Immersive Setting -** Set against the backdrop of a bustling coastal town and a mysterious uncharted island, the game features stunning visuals, atmospheric sound design, and richly detailed environments that bring the world to life. Players will feel fully immersed in the game's vibrant setting as they uncover its secrets and forge their own path.
* **Player Agency -** With a focus on player choice and freedom, the game allows players to shape their own adventure and make meaningful decisions that impact the outcome of the story. Whether they choose to follow the main questline, embark on side quests, or focus on building their community, every decision matters and contributes to the overall experience.
* **Future Co-op Potential -** While our game is initially designed as a single-player experience, the developer plans to introduce co-op functionality in future updates, allowing players to team up with friends and embark on epic adventures together. This potential for cooperative play adds an exciting new dimension to the gameplay and enhances the overall social experience.

## Player Experience:

* **Who is the Player in the Game?** – The player assumes the role of the protagonist, in which they can choose their own character’s name, customise their character, and choose from a few starter skills. The player’s character role is mentioned further down in the document, covering their [backstory](#_Backstory:) and abilities. Click on the links here to go to those specific sections.
* **What is the Setting?** – The overall setting of the game takes place on an island (**yet to be named**). On the island there are **five biomes to explore.** Each with their own unique elements to them. The player will also some historical objects in these biomes which help them gain a better understanding of the environment, as well as their ancestors’ history. For more information check out the World Organisation section below.
* **How Long Does the Game Last?** - The main storyline takes around 15 hours to complete, with additional side quests and exploration adding a further 10 hours to the overall playtime. As well as this the town building aspect of the game aims to add a further 10 hours to the game. Players can also re-defeat bosses to obtain better loot and buildings times for the town allowing for further hours to be added, with the potential for New Game +. **This will change as the game develops** because new ideas will be thought of, and new mechanics may be implemented to support this.
* **What is the Aspiration the Game Grants the Player?** – In this game, players can expect to go from zero to hero and create bonds with the creatures and the villagers who inhabit the island, whilst discovering the islands secrets and defeat those who choose to keep it hidden.
* **What Emotions Does the Player Feel by Playing the Game?** – The game aims to affect a range of emotions: excitement and curiosity during the exploration, adrenaline when engaging in combat with enemies and bosses, joy in levelling up by gaining access to new abilities and buildings for your town, and overall satisfaction for completing quests.
* **What are the Major Phases of the Player’s Experience in the Game?**
  + **Introduction/Tutorial Phase:** The Player will the basic mechanics of the game that will allow them to navigate the island, whilst being introduced to the story.
  + **Early Game:** The player will begin their adventure, undertaking the initial quests and building a team to start building the town and exploring deeper into the island.
  + **Mid-Game:** The story deepens, challenges increase, and players unlock more abilities and equipment. Will have defeated at least one major boss.
  + **Late Game:** Players face the most challenging enemies and complex quests, preparing for the final confrontation. Will be on the final boss that restricts movement around the island.
  + **Endgame**: The final battle against the main boss of the story, followed by post-game content such as bonus quests, exploration, further town building and repeatable bosses for better loot to potentially setup New Game +.

## Key Moments:

* **Introduction -** At the outset of the game, the player's character reunites with their long-lost grandfather, who unveils the enchanting island and its mystical inhabitants known as '***ADD CREATURE NAME HERE***’. Guided by the grandfather, the player learns to capture these creatures and enlist their aid in exploring the island's marvels.
* **Key Challenges -** The crux of the journey involves assembling a formidable team of '***ADD CREATURE NAME HERE***' to overcome the island's guardians, fiercely protecting its secrets. Concurrently, the player must manage the town's infrastructure, enhancing it to procure better equipment and improve the island's habitability for both humans and '***ADD CREATURE NAME HERE***'.
* **Pivotal Triumph -** The climax of the player's quest culminates in a decisive showdown with their long-lost grandfather, where the darkest truths of the island come to light. As they strive to rescue the burgeoning human population and the '***ADD CREATURE NAME HERE'***, ensnared in the grandfather's nefarious plans, the player achieves their greatest victory.
* **Final Resolution -** Following the defeat of the long-lost grandfather and the retrieval of the '***ADD ISLAND RELIC NAME HERE'***, the player entrusts them with restoring the island's safety. Through the cooperation of humans and '***ADD CREATURE NAME HERE'***, harmony is restored, securing a peaceful coexistence on the island.

## Current Target Platform(s):

The first target platform for the game is **PC**. At this time, the System Requirements have not yet been discussed.

## Competition:

1. **Pokémon Sword and Shield:**

* Release Date: November 15, 2019
* Revenue: Approximately $1.4 billion globally (as of December 2021)
* Budget: Development costs estimated around $90 to $100 million
* Description: "Pokémon Sword and Shield" are role-playing video games developed by Game Freak and published by Nintendo and The Pokémon Company. Players capture, train, and battle various creatures known as Pokémon in a fictional region while embarking on a journey to become the champion trainer.

1. **Stardew Valley:**

* Release Date: February 26, 2016
* Revenue: Over $36 million in sales (as of January 2022)
* Budget: Developed primarily by one person, Eric Barone, with an estimated budget of less than $1 million
* Description: "Stardew Valley" is a farming simulation game where players inherit a run-down farm and must restore it to its former glory while also engaging in various activities such as farming, fishing, mining, and interacting with the local community.

1. **Kena: Bridge of Spirits:**

* Release Date: August 24, 2021
* Revenue: Specific revenue figures are not publicly available, but it received positive reviews and generated significant interest upon release.
* Budget: Development costs have not been publicly disclosed.
* Description: "Kena: Bridge of Spirits" is an action-adventure game developed and published by Ember Lab. Players control Kena, a young spirit guide, as she embarks on a journey to help troubled spirits move on to the afterlife. The game features exploration, puzzle-solving, and combat elements set in a visually stunning world inspired by Eastern culture and mythology.

**What sets our game apart? -** Our game stands out with its distinctive amalgamation of creature-capturing dynamics, town management intricacies, and a captivating narrative that revolves around unravelling the enigmas of the island. Unlike "Pokémon Sword and Shield," our focus lies on assembling a diverse team of creatures ('***ADD CREATURE NAME HERE***') to conquer challenges and delve into the island's mysteries. While "Stardew Valley" shares aspects of town management, our game seamlessly integrates these elements with creature capture and battle mechanics, offering players a novel and immersive journey.

Additionally, in comparison to "Kena: Bridge of Spirits," our game places a significant emphasis on creature capture and team development. While both narratives offer engaging stories and visually striking environments, ours delivers a distinctive adventure and complexity. Through its emphasis on creature collection and battling systems, combined with intricate town management features, our game presents a multifaceted gameplay experience that sets it apart from its counterparts.

## Monetisation:

1. **Monetisation Model –** Due to the points discussed above, this game’s monetisation model will be a **one-time** **purchase** on platforms like **Steam**, **Epic Games** as a couple of examples.

# Project Mechromancer – Game Details:

## Game World:

### Backstory:

The protagonist in the game is the descendant of a renowned adventurer who vanished during an expedition in search of new lands and civilizations. Believed to be lost at sea, their mysterious disappearance left a lingering legacy. As a humble fishmonger working on the city docks, the protagonist's mundane routine is disrupted when they discover a message in a bottle addressed to them by name. Shockingly, it's from their long-lost grandfather, revealing family secrets and a hidden island their ancestors once called home. Fuelled by curiosity and a desire for answers, the protagonist sets off on a daring journey, leaving behind their old life to uncover the truth and confront their family's past.

### Backstory - Long-winded Version:

The player (the protagonist) is the great-grandson or daughter of a once famous adventurer that went on expeditions to find new lands and civilisations. After some time, nobody heard from this adventurer and was assumed dead after finding ship debris floating ashore into the city where he once came from and grew up in (the protagonist grows up in the same city too). The protagonists’ job is a fishmonger working at a local stall on the docks of the city. Whilst working a shift, the protagonist notices a bottle in the water. Inside is a message from a supposed stranger. When they read the message, it refers to them by name and it turns out to be from their grandfather who they never knew about. They state that their grandmother fled the island their great-grandfather discovered, after having a disagreement about how they wish to raise the family whilst living amongst the creatures who inhabit the island. The protagonist confronts his family, and after an argument, they storm off and in a moment of realisation, they quit their job, buy a small dinghy, and compass and set a course for the island, using only the coordinates on their grandfather’s note.

## MVP Systems and Features:

## Game Objects:

### Companion Creatures:

The companion creatures in this game are like ‘The Rot’ in Kena: Bridge of Spirits. However, the creatures in this game have different abilities for you to help navigate the island, support the town’s production, and help the player defeat bosses. As stated previously, there are five biomes on the island, each corresponding to a type of the creatures:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creature Type | Effect Type | Class Type | Animation Time | Damage Output |
| Splasher | Water | Close Combat | Fast Attacks | All three Attacks are Low Damage |
| Ignitor | Fire | Mid-Range Combat | Medium to Fast Attacks | One Attack is Low Damage. Two Attacks are Medium Damage |
| Zapper | Electricity | Ranged | Medium to Fast Attacks | Two Attacks are Low Damage. One Attack is Medium Damage |
| Harvester | Farming | Mage | Slow to Medium Attacks | Two Attacks are Medium Damage. One Attack is High Damage |
| Constructor | Building | Heavy | Slow Attacks | All three Attacks are High Damage |

#### Companion Creatures Attack Descriptions:

# References

Entertainment Software Rating Board. (2024). *Ratings Guide*. Retrieved from Entertainment Software Rating Board: https://www.esrb.org/ratings-guide/#rating\_cat

Games Rating Authority. (2024). *Our Ratings System*. Retrieved from Games Rating Authority: https://gamesratingauthority.org.uk/RatingBoard/ratings-system

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