Puzzle Design Research

Puzzles should be able to be fully understood by the player, as there is less enjoyment in trail and error puzzle solving, which is usually due to the objective being unclear. Therefore, it’s vital that the player understands what the game wants them to do, quickly. We don’t want players to feel like they have no chance of beating their opponent, due to unclear puzzles. Therefore, I’d suggest we display the goal of each puzzle for a small amount of time, so the player fully understands the puyzzle, before the actual puzzle starts.

Note on playtesting: just because a player can solve a puzzle, that doesn’t make it a good puzzle. Therefore, asking players their opinions on the puzzles, specifically, can gain vital insight into the best puzzles to use. This may require us to add and remove puzzles from the game, but will enhance the player experience immeasurably. (Einhorn, 2015).

It’s important to rotate the type of puzzle often, so the player doesn’t become bored with playing the same of puzzle over and over again. However, the specific amount of times the same one can be used will need to be decided through playtesting, as it’ll be difficult to get this right the first time around. We can play similar games and get a rough idea as a starting point for our game, but this will likely need constant tweaking throughout development.

It’s important to keep the puzzles elegant and a simple way to do this is by making them minimal. This is in terms of making them sim ple to understand and solve, rather than have the puzzles be overly complex or complicated. (Davies, 2015).

Puzzles, and by extension puzzle games, appeal to both genders across various age ranges, depending on how they are designed, in terms of designing simpler puzzles for a younger audience or puzzles with a higher difficulty level for an older audience.

Puzzles should be made in a way that keeps them tightly focused, in terms of no superfluous additions that overly complicates the puzzle, as players need to know what they have to do quickly. (Kim, 2000).

One of the biggest issues in puzzle games is the replayability aspect, as the whole point is to find the optimal/dominant solution. However, we shouldn’t run into a replayabilty issue with our puzzles, as players like to compete against each other. Therefore, it’s important to design the puzzles to be fun and interesting, so that players will want to come back to compete against others, time after time. (Sala, 2012).

**Bibliography:**

Davies, M. (2015). *A Good Puzzle Game Is Hard To Build*. [online] Rock Paper Shotgun. Available at: https://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2015/01/22/how-to-make-a-puzzle-game/ [Accessed 13 Feb. 2018].

Einhorn, A. (2015). *Four-step puzzle design*. [online] Gamasutra.com. Available at: https://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/AsherEinhorn/20150528/244577/Fourstep\_puzzle\_design.php [Accessed 13 Feb. 2018].

Kim, S. (2000). *The Art of Puzzle Game Design*. [online] Ksuweb.kennesaw.edu. Available at: http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~jprest20/cgdd2002/readings/puzzles-gdc2000.pdf [Accessed 13 Feb. 2018].

Sala, T. (2012). *Game Theory Applied: the puzzle of designing a puzzle game*. [online] Indie Dev Stories. Available at: http://indiedevstories.com/2012/01/04/game-theory-applied-the-puzzle-of-designing-a-puzzle-game/ [Accessed 13 Feb. 2018].