

1st Design Meeting | Notes | 08.04.2020

1. The Development Team

Devs come from different time zones and collaborate remotely

- Different nationalities (maybe potential for conflict later on)

- Work schedules do not align -> in-level comments are effective form of communication for them

- Not necessarily native speakers

 - Spelling and grammar mistakes in the comments could help establish distinct voices

Small indie team of 5 members

- Two designers fighting over the authority of the game design

- Two artists, one responsible for 2D, one responsible for 3D and tech art

- One programmer

- Maybe one of the designers also has to take over marketing and public relations?

- No dedicated sound designer, done by one of the team members (sound hobbyist)

- Maybe include a freelancer somewhere in the process?

- One person disappears for a longer period (maybe even the crunch period) and returns later

One of the team members (the traitor) felt mistreated, left the team at the end, and leaked the different iterations with all developer comments to sabotage the project

2. Storytelling

At first, main focus is on the development itself, side focus on personalities and team dynamics

- Interpersonal aspects becomes more and more important towards the end when conflict emerges

Personal stories are told but have to be related to the development process

- Example: If the coder's wife is pregnant, it's not relevant. If he does not show up to work because of it and the team thus misses a major deadline, it is.

Who is the player and how did they get the files?

- Not a QA tester

- Common player who got their hands on this executable

 - Made and leaked by one of the team members (the traitor)

- Rest of the dev team never intended anyone to see these stages and comments

How do we use the developer comments for storytelling?

- Most of them are put in areas focusing on traversing/exploring the level, not in combat areas

 - Players should explore them at their own pace

Player is gently guided towards a few comments, many others are scattered throughout the level

Open question: What kind of stories would explorer players be interested in?

Threads about a certain topic are opened in visible areas and continued in “side corridors”

Main story has to be understandable from the few comments you’re guided to

Some developer comments stand out visually

Written by the traitor before leaking the game

Other team members are not aware of them

Mystery who the traitor really is

Point towards their reasons for leaving the team and sabotaging the project

Increase in frequency towards the end

Question: When and how is this introduced?

Unclear whether other comments have been messed with by traitor

Towards the end of the game, the comments illustrating personal and interpersonal issues start to pile up

Ends with final comment by traitor explaining that they leaked the game and why they did it

3. Development Stages and Overall Arc

1 – First prototype

Focus: Hope and optimism

Loads of crazy ideas for future stages

Team dynamics are still fine

2 – Core gameplay build

Focus: Pride and doubt

Core gameplay mechanics are there and potential for fun can be seen

Before the first playtesting

Way too difficult, bugs have to be exploited to get through the level

3 – Feature creep

Focus: Stress and friendship

Many unpolished features are implemented

A lot of future content is promised

Art assets are recycled for the areas that will be cut in stage 4

4 – Vertical slice

Focus: Relief and distrust

A lot of content from stage 3 has been cut

What is left is polished, presentable, and fun

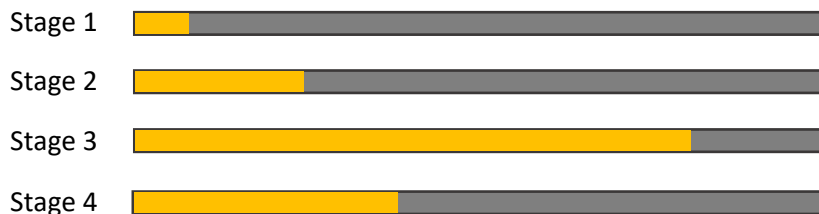
Conflict between team members peaks

Team wants to pitch this game to publishers using this vertical slice as demo

Traitor leaks the files to sabotage this

Level becomes slightly larger with each stage until stage 4

Amount of content varies depending on the stage



4. Underlying Game – Gameplay

First-person shooter in a sci-fi brutalist environment

Player uses an arrow as a weapon

Enemies are stationary turrets and drones hunting the player

Goal: Reach certain point in the level

Different quivers can be found in the level and transform the next arrows you shoot

Not all arrows have to be related to combat

Either limited amount of arrows (like ammo), or effect remains until next quiver is picked up

No puzzles in the underlying game

Some can be derived from game development constraints

Example: Team forgot to remove invisible collision box so exit cannot be reached, player needs to “bug” his way through the level

What kind of level are you playing?

Self-contained chapter somewhere in the middle of the game

Developer comments in early stages serve as tutorials

Player owned bow before this level

Maybe need to pick it up in early stages, which is later pointed out as a plot hole

In later stages, you start with the bow equipped

Boss fight at the end

5. Underlying Game – Narrative

Percival (protagonist) is intruder in the building

Why is Percival there?

- Wants to gain hidden knowledge about the gods in his world

- Weaknesses, flaws, and secrets (in short, everything that makes them seem human)

- Mirrors the player gaining behind-the-scenes info about game development and the team

Developer comments hint at overarching story of the game (stuff you do not understand just from this level)

A bit of narrative information is put in the level

- Mode of storytelling should not focus on text (already used for developer comments)

- Focus on visual storytelling (statues, environments, architecture)

Why are the drones there?

- Made by the gods to defend the hidden knowledge

Who are the gods?

- Pantheon of multiple gods

- Maybe use classical Greek or other existing Pantheon

- Could also be fictional

- Needs to be discussed with artists

Where does the bow come from?

- Comes from one of the gods (e.g. Artemis' Bow)

One of the gods turned traitor and wants to expose the secrets of the other gods

- Human should use god's weapon to accomplish that

- Mirrors traitor aspect of the game development story

6. What's Next?

Work on open questions in individual work sessions

- Who are the members of the development team and how do they relate to each other?

- Why did the traitor become the traitor? Who are they?

- What do the first developer comments deal with?

- What are potential scenarios and realizations for the player?

- What are the details of the narrative for the underlying game?

- How do we design the level to be both modifiable and immediately recognizable as the same level?

Meet on Saturday, April 11, to discuss results of individual work sessions

Pitch game design ideas to team on Sunday, April 12

Work on the 3D level from Sunday to Tuesday evening