**Informative Speech Topic:** Indie Game Development

**Proposed Focus:** To explain the process of developing an indie video game on a technical and financial level, and describe the difference in development between indie games and larger Triple A titles.

**Attention Getter:**

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How many of you have ever played a video game before?

How many of you have ever played one of these games before? (Show a slide of 4 major video games)

Now, how many of you have ever played one of *these* games? (Show a slide of 4 indie video games)

**Introduction:**

**Statement of Central Idea:** There is a major difference in the development process between larger Triple A games (Show big games again), and Indie games (Show indie games again).

**Tie to Audience:** According to a survey done by the IEEE Software magazine in the early 2000’s, three in five Americans age six or older say they routinely play computer or video games (IEEE Software, 2000). Even if you haven’t played video games in the past, the game development process and the difference in development between indie games and larger games, is something that I believe is worth knowing about.

**Credibility Statement and Preview of Main Points:** Both through personal experience developing video games, as well as through research into various indie game studios, I have learned that the process of developing video games involves not only coding, but also artwork, music, financial management, and risk assessment. These different factors affect indie studios and larger studios in different ways.

**Body:**

**Main Point 1:** The development of videogames in general involve a multitude of technical skills.

1. Hard coding the engine for games is what most people would first think of when considering the development of video games.
   1. With the creation of free game development software such as Unity and Unreal Engine, coding games has become a much easier prospect than it once was.
      1. These free software applications provide indie developers with the same tools that professional Triple A studios have access to, allowing an even playing field between the two in terms of
2. In addition to coding, artwork is an essential piece to indie game development.
3. Something that many wouldn’t think about when developing a game is the music that makes up the soundtrack of the game.

**Transition 1:** Development of the physical game is merely 1 side of the coin. Financials when developing an indie video game are a major part of the process.

**Main Point 2:** Financial aspects of video game development are just as varied as the technical aspects.

1. Small indie teams (such as Polygon Studios or Team Meat) in general have a much lower budget to work with than larger companies (such as Bethesda or Activision).
   1. This differentiation in budget allows larger companies to put more money into manpower and research/development, allowing them to oftentimes pull off games that are much more graphically stunning.
   2. Thus, the more successful the indie developer is, the more money they will have to work with on later projects (Ex: Jonathan Blow)
2. Game studios work in a high risk / high reward environment, where the financial success of their games is directly related to the time and polish that goes into making them.
   1. This risk / reward factor effects larger game developers and indie developers differently.
      1. Larger developers are more often than not less worried about the risks of developing a game due to having a larger budget to work with, and thus a larger safety net to fall back on if their game fails.
      2. Indie developers must weigh these risks more so because they are usually paying for their games out of pocket.

**Transition 2:** Indie studios must face both the technical and financial aspects of game development head on, and come out on top after publishing, problems that are circumvented by larger development studios. The difference between the two, however, is more comprehensive than that simple answer.

**Main Point 3:** Indie game studios differ from major developers in 3 main ways.

1. The pool of technical and artistic knowledge in Triple A companies is much larger than that of an indie developer, who oftentimes must rely solely on their own skills in these areas to complete those parts of their game.
2. Indie developers are more weighed down by the financial burden of game development than larger studios due to paying for most of their game out of pocket.
   1. That being said, the rigid structure that larger companies have to follow to meet financial deadlines is something that indie developers can ignore to a point.
      1. This idea is explained well in an interview with indie developer Jonathan Blow where he describes that as an indie developer you can wake up in the morning and simply decide what you want to do that day (Blow, 2016).
3. And finally something that I have not mentioned yet but something that warrants knowing: Indie developers have far more creative freedom in what they produce than larger companies, leading to a much more varied library of games in the indie genre.
   1. As seen in an interview with Playdead Studio’s founders Arnt Jensen and Dino Patti, larger game development companies’ main goal is “to create shareholder value”, and that that is not the goal of their studio (Jensen, 2012).

**Conclusion:**

**Restate Central Idea:** Video game development as a whole is a culmination of multiple skill sets coming together to create a well-rounded entertainment experience, and one that differs greatly depending on the team that works on the project.

**Review Main Points:** In terms of coding, artwork, and music and in terms of financial management and assessment of risk, indie game development varies greatly from larger triple A game development.

**Closing:**

**Final Thoughts:** Conclusively, for those of you who have yet to play an indie game, or any video game for that matter, I highly recommend trying one out. I think you would be surprised by the level of creative depth and personal touch that shines through in these games. Thank you.

**References**

Blow, J. (2016, July). Jonathan Blow Interviewed in Stanford's Pre-Collegiate Summer Program [Interview by N. Dwork].

Jensen, A., & Patti, D. (2012, February 24). Hanging in Limbo [Interview by C. Nutt]. In Gamasutra. Retrieved from <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/162457/hanging_in_limbo.php>

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