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Concept Milestone

Target Employer Research & Game Concept Research

Concept Milestone Table of Contents

Target Employer Research

The Behemoth	3 – 6
Valve Corporation	7 – 10
Psyonix	11 – 16

Concept Research

Telefrag'd	17
Temple of Loot	17 – 18
Super Space Scavengers	18 – 19
Marketability	19

Target Employer Research

The Behemoth



About

The Behemoth is a privately held video game development company founded in 2003 by John Baez, artist Dan Paladin, and programmers Tom Fulp, Brandon LaCava, and Nick Dryburgh. Games by The Behemoth feature the comical art style of Dan Paladin, the featured artist for the company, utilize a unique art style and comedic approach to gameplay with heavy graphical violence. The Behemoth's website is www.thebehemoth.com.

Location

San Diego, California

Company Size

According to The Behemoth's LinkedIn website there are 11 – 50 employees currently employed (www.linkedin.com/company/the-behemoth).

Key Personnel

- **Dan Paladin:**
Co-founder, Lead Artist, and Designer.
- **Tom Fulp:**
Co-founder and Lead Programmer.
- **John Baez:**
Co-founder and President.

Public Statement

As per The Behemoth's Facebook about section

(www.facebook.com/thebehemoth/about/):

"We are humans. We like making games. We hope you enjoy them. The Behemoth is a small group of hardcore gamers with the modest goal of bringing craftsmanship and originality back to the game industry."

Job Postings

According to The Behemoth's website there are two positions available: Senior Programmer & QA Test Lead. There was no additional information about the requirements for these positions or links to specifically apply for these positions. However, The Behemoth's website accepts resumes with cover letters sent to jobs@thebehemoth.com.

Games

The Behemoth has seven published games and one known game, *Pit People*, currently in development. According to the professional reviews on Metacritic, the average score for games made by The Behemoth is an 81. The game with the highest Metascore is *Castle Crashers* with a score of 85. User scores submitted to Metacritic are similar to the professionally reviewed Metacritic scores.

Game Name	Release Date	Metacritic Score	User Score	Platforms
Alien Hominid	2004	78	8.3	PS2, GameCube, Xbox, GBA
Alien Hominid HD	2007	79	7.5	Xbox 360
Castle Crashers	2008	82	8.8	Xbox 360, PS3, Microsoft Windows, OS X
Super Soviet Missile Master	2011	—	—	iOS
Alien Hominid: PDA Games	2011	—	—	iOS
BattleBlock Theater	2013	85	8.0	Xbox 360, PS3, Microsoft Windows, OS X

Castle Crashers Remastered	2015	83	7.1	Xbox One, Microsoft Windows, OS X
Pit People	TBA	—		Xbox One, Microsoft Windows

Design Philosophy

The style of games that The Behemoth makes have so far always been simple 2D games that feature Paladin's signature 2D art style. While every game can be played as a single player, the majority of these games have multiplayer cooperative features where players work together to pass each stage. In their more recent games, like *BattleBlock Theater* and *Castle Crashers*, there are minor elements of competitiveness where players are rewarded based on performance, but nothing that ultimately sways the game from being cooperative in nature.

The mechanics of most Behemoth games are usually simple arcade-like controls that involve 2D movement, jumping, and attacks. Simple mechanics allow players to quickly pick up and play any game by The Behemoth, which works well with the cooperative multiplayer nature of their games. Of their released games, *Castle Crashers* has perhaps the most complex player mechanics, with the introduction of button combinations for different attacking and magic spells. However, *Castle Crashers* can easily be played using basic controls, meaning players of varying skill levels can always enjoy the game together. Most currently released games by The Behemoth are arcade-like in style, with features like level-by-level progression systems, boss fights, players dropping in and out of play, and continuing after dying at the loss of score.

The Behemoth puts a huge focus on humor and absurdity into the games that they make. Much of the humor comes from visually through character designs, the environment, and animations. In the most recently released game, *BattleBlock Theater*, humor is supplemented with a cut-scene and in-game narrator. Humor is a huge part of The Behemoth games, making player deaths interesting and much less punishing, while keeping the general nature of their games light-hearted.

Design Philosophy Key Takeaways

- Simple 2D Mechanics
- Distinctive 2D Art Style
- Simple Mechanics
- Cooperative Multiplayer
- Arcade-Like
- Humorous
- Easy to Pick Up and Play

Game Concepts Targeting this Employer

I feel as if though every one of my game concepts are primarily built to impress this employer. I am trying to incorporate simple game controls that are easy to pick up and play, as well as incorporate humor into my games in a way that would make the game silly and absurd. All of my concepts are multiplayer, and though all of them are not necessarily cooperative in nature, I think they fit the Action/Arcade feel of types of games that The Behemoth makes.

Valve Corporation



About

Valve Corporation is a video game developer and digital distribution company that is based out of Bellevue, Washington. Former Microsoft employees Gabe Newell and Mike Harrington founded Valve Corporation in 1996. Valve is most notable for their acclaimed game titles *Half-Life*, *Counter-Strike*, *Portal*, *Team Fortress*, *Left 4 Dead*, and most recently *Dota2*. Valve Corporation also develops and maintains their own engine, Source, and software distribution platform, Steam. Their website is www.valvesoftware.com.

Location

Bellevue, Washington

Company Size

According to Valve Corporation's LinkedIn website, www.linkedin.com/company/valve-corporation, there are 201 – 500 employees.

Key Personnel

- **Gabe Newell:**
Co-founder and Managing Director at Valve Corporation. Owns way too many knives, or as he would put it "not enough".
- **Robin Walker:**
Game Designer best known for co-developing *Team Fortress* and *Team Fortress 2*.
- **Alden Kroll:**
UI / Interaction Designer who specializes in graphic design and branding.

Public Statement

As per Valve Corporation's website at www.valvesoftware.com/company/:

"When you give smart talented people the freedom to create without fear of failure, amazing things happen. We see it every day at Valve. In fact, some of our best insights have come from our biggest mistakes. And we're ok with that! Since 1996, this approach has produced award-winning games, leading-edge technologies, and a groundbreaking social entertainment platform. We're always looking for creative risk-takers who can keep that streak alive."

Job Postings

According to Valve Corporation's website there are many positions available to apply for, some even not directly game designer related. In particular, I would be interested in applying to Valve Corporation for a Visual & User Experience Designer related position. In order to apply to Valve you must send an application and an online portfolio of work through their website submit form. The requirements for this position are as follows:

Requirements:

- BS/BA/BFA degree (or equivalent) in graphic, industrial, or interaction design (or equivalent)
- 6+ years of professional experience shipping world-class software and services
- A thorough understanding of graphic and user interaction design principles
- Highly effective multidisciplinary collaboration skills
- Personal commitment to quality, attention to detail
- Confidence with design communication tools
- Effective, articulate design communication and decision-making skills
- An online portfolio of work which conveys your capabilities

Games

Valve Corporation has 31 game reviews on Metacritic. According to the professional reviews on Metacritic, the average score for games made by Valve Corporation is an 85. The highest rated game for Valve Corporation is *Half-Life 2* with a score of 85 / 100. User scores submitted to Metacritic are similar to the professionally reviewed Metacritic scores. Due to the many number of games Valve Corporation has made, I will only be including a list of games published since 2008.

Game Name	Release Date	Metacritic Score	User Score	Platforms
Portal	2008	90 / 100	9.3 / 10	Microsoft Windows, PS3, Xbox 360, OS X, Linux
Team Fortress 2	2008	92 / 100	9.1 / 10	Microsoft Windows, PS3, Xbox 360, OS X, Linux
Left 4 Dead	2008	89 / 100	9.2 / 10	Microsoft Windows, Xbox 360, OS X,
Left 4 Dead 2	2009	89 / 100	8.6 / 10	Microsoft Windows, Xbox 360, OS X, Linux
Alien Swarm	2010	77 / 100	8.2 / 10	Microsoft Windows
Portal 2	2011	95 / 100	8.8 / 10	Microsoft Windows, PS3, Xbox 360, OS X, Linux
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	2012	83 / 100	7.8 / 10	Microsoft Windows, OS X, PS3, Xbox 360, Linux
Dota 2	2013	90 / 100	6.2 / 10	Microsoft Windows, OS X, Linux

Design Philosophy

I have to admit that I am a bit biased towards Valve Corporation and the games that they make. In fact, the whole reason why I decided to come to DigiPen was because of the PR materials about DigiPen students being hired straight of school to work there. This admiration towards Valve Corporation is not entirely misplaced, as the vast majority of their published games tend to resonate well with critics and users, alike. While Valve Corporation does take a long time to publish the games that they make, their brand has become synonymous with quality. I cannot think of a Valve game that I played that I haven't sunk hours of time into, enjoying everything from the high quality visuals, mechanics, and story in their games.

In particular Valve tends to place a heavy focus on nailing an aesthetic that best fits the games that they make. For example, Team Fortress 2 places a focus on an early 20th century look that is heavily stylized yet designed in such a way to be incredibly cohesive and readable. Simply put, the attention to detail in their games is incredible and does not compromise the quality of gameplay. This process causes delays in the shipping of their games, but in the end it

always is worth it. Clearly Valve Corporation is doing something right when it comes to making great games.

Valve Corporation also places a heavy emphasis on injecting as much personality as possible into their games. With the exception of their single-player characters being mostly silent, NPCs and even the environments in Valve Corporation games are given tons of life and personality whenever possible. A good example of this can be seen in the NPCs in Portal and Portal 2. Stationary turrets are given voices and personalities that make you feel for them. There's even effort made to make a lifeless "Companion Cube" feel like a character when no voice lines or animation exists on the cube itself. Valve Corporation is a good example of doing anything and everything possible to make the game feel great in every aspect of gameplay, even if it means long delays before releasing a game.

Design Philosophy Key Takeaways

- 3D Mechanics with Varying Complexity
- Distinctive Art Styles on a Per-Game Basis
- Multiplayer and Single-Player Games
- Emphasis on 1st Person Shooter POV
- Heavy Focus on Personality and Story
- Focus on Quality over Quantity

Game Concepts Targeting this Employer

Out of all the companies that I'm interested in applying for I am not sure if any of my game concepts are specifically targeting Valve Corporation. While my game concepts are all 3D, they do not have the art aesthetic that looks and feels like a Valve game, nor are my games 1st person based, or heavily story driven. This is not to say that my games could not capture the attention of Valve Corporation, however.

All three of my game concepts are mechanically similar so as to let me concentrate on creating a quality experience for this type of game genre. It's my hope that I can create a quality game by focusing on one particular style of game, similar to how Valve focuses on the quality of their games over creating a variety of games. By working on these similar game concepts I hope to prove to Valve that I can iterate and focus on making one type of game great. Of course, while my games are not heavily saturated in story, I do also hope that I'll be able to demonstrate my ability to give personality to all aspects of my game, which is something Valve also excels at doing themselves.

Psyonix



About

Psyonix is a privately held game studio founded in 2000 by Dave Hagewood that is based out of San Diego, California. Psyonix focuses mostly on the development of its own games, but also contributes to larger companies.

The most recognized game that Psyonix has released is Rocket League. With the success of Rocket League, Psyonix has shifted their business model to focus more on developing their own original games. Psyonix's website can be found at www.psyonix.com.

Location

San Diego, California

Company Size

According to Psyonix's LinkedIn there are 11 – 50 employees who currently work at Psyonix (www.linkedin.com/company/psyonix).

Key Personnel

- **Dave Hagewood:**
Founder and Studio Director. Invented Unreal Tournament's Onslaught Mode.
- **Corey Davis:**
Design Director and former Gameplay Programmer.
- **Thomas Silloway:**
Project Lead for Rocket League and Programmer.

Public Statement

As per Psyonix's Facebook about section (www.facebook.com/Psyonix/about/):

"Based in San Diego, CA, Psyonix is a critically-acclaimed independent video game developer and leading experts in Unreal Engine technology. For more than a decade, the studio has been a driving force behind some of the most successful games in the industry, including Gears of War, Mass Effect 3, XCOM: Enemy Unknown, Bulletstorm, Unreal Tournament III, Unreal Tournament 2004, Nosgoth, and the award-winning Sports-Action hit, Rocket League."

Job Postings

According to Psyonix's LinkedIn, there are many positions available. The positions that would best fit my skillset are UI Programmer and UI Artist. Both of these positions are areas of interest for me that I feel like I would excel well in. Requirements for the UI Programmer include:

Responsibilities Include:

- Architect, implement, and maintain new and existing interfaces and UI systems
- Work with UI/UX Lead, Designers, Artists, and Programmers to create high quality user experiences
- Work with UI Artist(s) to come up with practical solutions to graphical and layout issues; create dynamic and responsive UI that can scale and reflow to suit a variety of resolutions and localized content
- Implement final artwork from UI Artist(s); work with them to ensure assets are reconstructed in-game to match the mockup and vision
- Help to maintain a clean and optimized UI codebase, ensure consistent coding conventions, and help develop best practices
- Evaluate new software, UI development techniques, and ways to improve workflow and boost team productivity

Ideal Candidate:

- Has 5+ years of experience, preferably within the games industry
- Is exceptionally competent in JavaScript and/or ActionScript or similar scripting languages
- Is highly proficient with front-end web development (HTML5/CSS3/JS)

- Has experience developing UI using Flash/Scaleform
- Has experience developing UI using Coherent GT or other webkit-based UI solutions
- Has a solid understanding of interface conventions and knowledge of current tools and trends in UI development
- Has shipped UI for projects across a variety of platforms (PC, console, mobile, etc.)
- Works well in a team environment with both programmers and artists
- Can listen to feedback and collaborate with others to come up with creative solutions to challenging designs

Additional Preferred Software:

- Flash/Scaleform
- Unreal Engine 3 & 4
- UnrealScript
- C++

Requirements for the UI Artist include:

Essential Duties & Responsibilities:

- Concept and design UI across a variety of projects, platforms and styles
- Work with UI/UX Lead, Designers and Programmers to create high quality user experiences
- Work with the marketing artist to ensure a consistent brand that can also extend beyond the in-game UI to promotional materials
- Explore a variety of UI styles to find what works best for the projects; continue to raise the bar on the visual quality of the user interface
- Come up with practical solutions to graphical and layout issues; design dynamic and responsive UI that can scale and reflow to suit a variety of resolutions and localized content
- Export and deliver art assets to programmers for implementation; work with the programmers to ensure assets are reconstructed in-game to match the mockup and vision

Ideal Candidate:

- Highly skilled in graphic design and typography with a background in user interface, illustration and/or concept art

- Exceptionally skilled with Photoshop and Illustrator
- Has an attention to detail and can generate clear and concise mockups that anyone can understand
- Has an eye for motion graphics and can concept dynamic UI transitions and animated widgets
- Is a self-starter that can design UI appropriate to the style and gameplay of various projects
- Has a solid understanding of interface conventions and knowledge of current tools and trends in UI development
- Has shipped UI for projects across a variety of platforms (PC, console, mobile, etc.)
- Works well in a team environment with both programmers and artists
- Can listen to feedback and collaborate with others to come up with creative solutions to challenging designs

Additional Preferred Software

- After Effects (or similar motion graphics software)
- Flash/Scaleform
- Unreal Engine

Games

Psyonix has 5 published games and worked on 2 games that were canceled. According to the professional reviews on Metacritic, the average score for games made by Psyonix is a 77 / 100. The highest rated Metascore is a tie between *Rocket League* and *ARC Squadron: Redux*, both with an 87 / 100. User scores submitted to Metacritic are similar to the professionally reviewed Metacritic scores.

Game Name	Release Date	Metacritic Score	User Score	Platforms
Vampire Hunter: The Dark Prophecy	2003 (canceled)	—	—	—
Monster Madness	2008	55 / 100	6.7 / 10	PS3

Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	2008	67 / 100	8.6 / 10	PS3
Whizzle	2009	—	—	Microsoft Windows
ARC Squadron	2012	87 / 100	6.7 / 10	iOS,
ARC Squadron: Redux	2013	—	—	iOS, Android
Rocket League	2015	87 / 100	8.4 / 10	Microsoft Windows, PS4, Xbox One, OS X, Linux
Nosgoth	2016 (canceled)	—	7.0 / 10	Microsoft Windows

Design Philosophy

Out of all the game companies that I am interested in playing, I know Psyonix the least. I have only played *Rocket League*, but the game has captured my heart in an unexpected way. *Rocket League* is a 3D game made in the Unreal 4 Engine that features the rules of soccer applied to the gameplay of driving a rocket-powered car. The concept of soccer with cars was not immediately appealing to me, as I am not usually drawn towards sports games, but I tried the game anyways and quickly fell in love with the game. Since I can only judge Psyonix based on *Rocket League*, my analysis of Psyonix might not be entirely accurate.

Rocket League is an example of a game that is simple in concept and mechanics and yet very deep all at the same time. The concept of being “easy to pick up and play, yet difficult to master” applies very well to *Rocket League*. The game has simple controls and easy objectives that allow anyone to jump into the game and quickly understand how to play. The depth of gameplay comes from the interactions of player actions throughout the game. While the objective of the game is simple, hit the ball into your opponent’s goal, the complexity comes from the interactions of the players whilst playing the game. *Rocket League* gets a lot of mileage out of the limited mechanics of the game proving that sometimes less is more. This design philosophy resonates well with my own goals for game design.

Since the release of *Rocket League*, Psyonix has continued supporting the game by adding several other sports modes like hockey and basketball. In addition to this, Psyonix has also added “Mutator Mode” that allow for extreme gravity, awkward ball shapes, and other mechanical adjustments to the game. Psyonix has also released “Rumble Mode” that adds random power-ups to the game, such as spring-loaded punching gloves, that add to the chaos of playing a game. This mix of serious game modes and silliness is something that I love. It shows that the company is interested in supporting their games by providing variety and humor to even years after their initial release.

Design Philosophy Key Takeaways

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---|
| • 3D Game and art style | Multiplayer | • Not afraid to add fun through serious game modes or humor |
| • Simple Mechanics | • Arcade-Like features | |
| • Cooperative / Competitive | • Variety in Gameplay | • Easy to Pick up and Play |

Game Concepts Targeting this Employer

One of the main reasons why I’m focusing so heavily on competitive multiplayer features in my game concepts is to impress Psyonix. All of my game concepts feature simple mechanics, easy to pick up and play controls, and are meant to be fast paced and chaotic. All of these features can easily describe how it is to play *Rocket League*, Psyonix’s standout game title. In particular I want my game concepts to show my ability to take a particular idea, boil them down to their essence, and create something that is enjoyable by casual and hardcore gamers.

My controls need to be very tight and easy to use in order to show that I understand how to make a game that just “feels right”, something that *Rocket League* absolutely nails. Secondly, I need to make sure that any and all features of the game support the main focus of the game, nothing extra added that is just a one-off feature. Lastly, I need to make sure that the gameplay is fast and frantic. I’d rather have people wanting to play again rather than try to stretch out the little bit of game that I have. These are all things I feel like Psyonix have incorporated into *Rocket League*, so I’ll be paying special attention to them in my games.

Concepts Research

Telefrag'd

Telefrag'd is a 3D multiplayer game that pits 2 – 4 players against one another in a trap filled arena. The game features 2D mechanics of movement and simple controls. Each player has two abilities: teleporting and shielding. Teleporting allows the player to rapidly teleport a few spaces away in a direction that they are pointing using the gamepad's left analog stick. Up to three short teleports may be taken before the ability needs to recharge. Shielding allows the player to quickly come to a halt and deploy a shield that briefly repels any and all objects that are about to come into contact with the player. Players are meant to navigate hazards in the arena and destroy their opponent by either teleporting into the location of their opponent, causing the opponent to burst, or to bump their opponent into hazards.

Key Features

- Simple 3D Art
- 2D Mechanics
- Simple Controls
- Teleporting
- Shield
- Hazards
- Quick Competitive Gameplay
- Humorous / Absurd Deaths
- Arcade / Action

Temple of Loot

Temple of Loot is a 3D asymmetrical multiplayer game that is based off a previous board game that I made during my Sophomore year at DigiPen. *Temple of Loot* game features simple 3D visuals with 2D mechanics of movement and simple controls. *Temple of Loot* is an asymmetrical multiplayer game that has 2 explorer players competing over treasures in an Egyptian tomb with a third player acting as the temple itself, placing traps, spawning enemies, and otherwise trying to protect the temple from the other two players.

The two explorer players can move, pick up and use objects, and perform a simple attack. Their goal is to collect treasure and bring it back to the start to increase their scores. The two explorer players are competing over who has the most treasure and can try to steal treasure from one another. The third temple player must try to prevent the other two explorer players by possessing and placing traps, spawning in enemies, and directing the dreadful temple's Mummy to attack the other players. When explorers are killed they respawn back at the start but lose whatever they were carrying before death. The game is over when the game

timer has expired.

Key Features

- Simple 3D Art
- Simple Enemies
- Quick Competitive Gameplay
- 2D Mechanics
- Simple Traps
- Humorous / Absurd Deaths
- Simple Controls
- Loot
- Arcade / Action
- Asymmetric
- Hazards

Super Space Scavengers

Super Space Scavengers is a 3D multiplayer game where players must board an abandoned space ship and strip all valuables aboard before the ship explodes! *Super Space Scavengers* is either a 1 versus 1 or teams of 2 versus 2 multiplayer game. The game features 2D mechanics of movement and simple controls. Each player has two abilities: picking up and using items and hacking systems. Picking up and using items allows the player to collect valuables in their inventory or use weapons to break open doors or stun opposing players and enemies. Hacking systems allows the player to interact with systems of the ship that might interact in beneficial or catastrophic ways.

My main goal for *Super Space Scavengers* would be to develop a multitude of systems that interact with one another in order to make an environment that feels like how a space ship would work. For example, someone could unwittingly disable power to a prison brig section of the ship, freeing the enemies trapped within, or even accidentally open the cargo bay doors, flushing out all players and cargo into space to be forever lost. With enough systems in place and interacting properly, I would hope to make an environment which increasingly becomes unstable, forcing rounds to end because players cannot simply survive any longer onboard the ship. The game would end when enough systems fail, causing the abandoned ship to explode.

Key Features

- Simple 3D Art
- Items
- be Interacted with
- 2D Mechanics
- Simple Items
- Hazards
- Simple Controls
- Loot
- Quick Competitive Gameplay
- Pick up and Use
- Systems that can

- Humorous /

- Absurd Deaths

- Arcade / Action

Marketability

The genre of game I'd most closely relate to my game concepts are of the Action/Indie genre featured on Steam. Popular Action/Indie titles on steam right now that are closely related to my three concepts are *Duck Game* by Adult Swim Games, *ChargeShot* by Cowboy Color, and *Gang Beasts* by Boneloaf. SteamDB.com reports that *Duck Game* has 307,033 owners on Steam, *ChargeShot* has 18,051 owners on Steam, and *Gang Beasts* boasts 405,596 owners on Steam.

According to SteamSpy.com the "Indie" genre is composed of 6019 games that receive an average user score of 76.21%, average Metascore of 70.79%, and an average price of \$8.58. There are a total of 650,267,837 copies of games labeled "Indie" sold on Steam. The "Action" genre does roughly the same with 4432 games that have an average user score of 74.68%, average Metascore of 71.22%, and an average price of \$10.02. There are a total of 1,348,086,933 copies of games labeled "Action" sold on Steam.