

Roles in game design and prototyping

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Computer Games Development – Games Design

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**Existing Phases in Game Development**

There are two types of Workflow Practices: Agile and Waterfall.

Agile Workflow is the best one to use if your project isn’t fully polished but you need to make a basic prototype. This is especially useful if you are creating a pitch to show to potential buyers in the games industry, and even more so if you are working within a small group that can communicate with each other easily.

Waterfall is one that you would use when you have already got a very specific goal in mind and that won’t change (much) within the development period. This one is easier to manage as everyone knows, in detail, exactly what they are supposed to do in order to perform their job correctly and efficiently.

The pro of using the Agile Workflow for us was that we were able to work independently rather than constantly finding some way we could meet up. Of course, this is also a con, as not being able to meet up all the time meant we had no idea if the other people were doing work or not. The only evidence we could go on was what everyone had to say on the Thursday.

For our project, we used Agile. We found this method was the better choice as each week we changed our ideas around so we could make the development as easy as possible and skip past the complicated mechanics, like creating a shop. We could’ve done the other method had we had more time using Unreal Paper2D before starting this project.

In our group, we all had one basic idea of what we were going to do and were able to create a basic concept for what we needed to finish each week. Using Agile also meant that we could go back to previous stages (sprints) if we decided to scrap certain parts of the game.

The first stage in Game Development is to come up with the **IDEA**.In this stage, everything from the core concepts (including genre and mechanics) to the planning of the audience is decided. The idea is mostly created by the game designer. They brainstorm different ideas and eventually cut it down to the basic concept – which could then be further fleshed out to make the game fun and enjoyable for the players. Sometimes games may seem like fun in concept, but they could turn out rubbish if they are rushed out of this stage too early. Other times game ideas may take too long and are left on the back burner while companies create a simple game to release (so they can make money).

After the initial Idea is created, the next stage is to make a paper **PROTOTYPE**. This is done so that they can get a very basic idea of how the game should look in its final stages. This is created by the game designer – who has the completed concept in their mind and on paper. The final idea could look entirely different from this prototype as ideas could quite easily change due to lack of time to include different ideas. That isn’t too problematic though, as a new prototype can easily be made throughout the development cycle.

The next stage is the creation of a **DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE**. This is so that they can plan out how they are going to do each section of the development. This is done by both the Lead Designer and the Lead Programmer. The programmer has to make sure they are able to do different concepts in a fully detailed and resource friendly way.

There are a couple of different **MILESTONES** throughout the development. Alpha is where a game has all the major functions but is still yet to get the main content. Beta is where the game is finished in development but is still yet to be heavily tested for any bugs. Candidate stage is where the game and testing is complete but is yet to get approval. For Gold Master, the game has been approved and is able to be produced.

**PRODUCT** stage is the production of the game box, manuals, and everything that goes along with the finished game. This is done around the same time as the development.

The final part of the life cycle is **SUPPORT**. This is where the game is fully released. Most of this section are Bug fixing, maintaining the website or any servers if it has any multiplayer requirements. Also a part of support includes making DLC, and porting the game to new consoles.

**Roles in Game Development**

**Lead Programmer / Programming Team**

The job roles of lead Programmers varies depending on the company they work for. Though on a daily basis, Lead Programmers are usually required to:

* Teach junior programmers and help improve their skills
* Encourage the team to create a document with detail
* Manage the programming team
* Provide the estimated time it would take to complete each task
* Work out any risks that could prohibit development
* Help out with any code if necessary

Lead programmers make around £90,000 / year. Normal Programmers usually make somewhere around £24,000 and £50,000 / year.

**Lead Designer / Design Team**

A Lead Designers Job includes:

* Making notes and brainstorming ideas
* Turning those notes into clear documents for the rest of the team to follow
* Oversee the rest of the design team
* Discuss with the art team any help they may need and let them know any ideas
* Work with the marketing team

Lead Designers make around £90,000 / year. Normal Game Designers usually make somewhere around £30,000 and £60,000 / year.

Lead Designers work closely with the entire game development team. This is because they are the ones who know what the end product should look like.

**Level Designer**

A Level Designers job role tends to be:

* Create the level maps
* Create level environments including different objects precisely placed for specific reasons
* Make sure everything in the level has an actual purpose so as to not waste any resources
* Test the levels to make sure it is playable and fun (including using others to also test)
* Flesh out the basic level designs into full environments

Level Designers make around £26,000 / year.

Level Designers work closely with QA so they know any issues there are with their levels and whether they are fun to play.

**Lead Artist / Artist Team**

A Lead Artists job roles are usually:

* Create original innovative art that could revolutionise gameplay
* Work with the marketing and PR Team to ensure good art assets are being created and used
* Ensure the rest of the art team are doing a good job and help out where needed
* Work closely with the game designer to make sure the art style is fitting with the rest of the game concept

Lead Artists make around £80,000 / year. Normal Artists usually make somewhere around £26,500 and £68,000 / year for those more experienced.

The Artist team usually work closely with Lead Game Designers and Programmers.

**My Role in Game Development**

For our group, I was the Game Designer. My roles included:

* Communicating and ensuring the team work closely together
* Design the game concept – including story and character information
* Working with whoever needs some extra help
* Playtesting the game to give feedback on what we need to include

Overall I’d say I did a pretty good job with those except for the teamwork part. This I think was down to us all being good friends, so whenever someone gave excuses to why work wasn’t done, you don’t want to start telling them to get everything together as it could ruin friendships. This is a problem as it means less work was getting done, though this aspect improved in the last month.

My main job role was to create an interesting story of which the players would be engaged and want to learn more. After getting feedback from the play testers, they thought the story was funny and definitely worthwhile playing for, so I would say I have done very well on that aspect. For this role, I spent most of my time working with Microsoft Word writing down all the little details of how the story will be told. One concept that came to mind was the idea of having a side character called Kenny. Kenny is the player’s best friend, who appears at the start to tell the player what the story is (as if they had just been knocked out and forgot) and give them their first item. This idea was inspired by Zelda, with the guy at the start giving you the sword and telling you it’s “too dangerous to go alone”.

Working alongside Matthew to create a basic map on paper was another job I did. We did this in St John’s centre near McDonalds, as we were basing our location on that shopping centre.

Another thing I decided was that rather than having a “tutorial” level, we could just do a loading screen with controls showing for a maximum of 5 seconds. For this idea I was inspired by the countless games that tell the plot through loading screens to distract the player, and found it was more effective than forcing them to sit through an entire level of being told everything all at once.

My other job role of playtesting the game meant that for every prototype that was made I had to play it and figure out anything that needs fixing. One example would be by walking up and right (the opposite direction you are supposed to go at the start), you can clip out of the map and walk down to the other area. There are full collisions around the other area, so you can’t actually get in though.

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| Task | Description | Completion Date |
| Core Game Mechanics | Came up with some core mechanics we need in the game, such as attacking and movement. | 1st October 2019 |
| Apparel company | Decided on the chosen Apparel Company – Done as group. | 1st October 2019 |
| Video Game Research | Researched into a few different games which could be potential competition. | 1st October 2019 |
| Basic Story | Created a basic concept for how the story should go (with very few characters) | 10th October 2019 |
| Background | Created how the main story came to be. | 11th October 2019 |
| Paper Map | Worked with Matthew on creating a paper map. | 11th October 2019 |
| Different Bosses | Came up with the different Bosses and how they fit into the story. | 14th October 2019 |
| Character backgrounds | Decided upon how the character backgrounds should fit into the main story, and how it is related to the company chosen. | 14th October 2019 |
| Clothes | Decided on having coin pick-ups and making the player buy clothes using coins. Also did research into clothes by ADIDAS. | 14th October 2019 |
| Enemy Types | Came up with some different Enemy Types to create challenge for players. | 15th October 2019 |
| Paper Prototype 1 | Made a basic Paper Prototype to show the current work we have. | 24th October 2019 |
| Loading Screen | Created a loading screen concept so we don’t need to do a training level. | 30th October 2019 |
| Clothes | Decided against using the coins to buy clothes. Clothes are now pickups. | 4th November 2019 |
| Paper Prototype 2 | Created a second Paper Prototype to show the increase in progress since the first and implement any changes we made. | 19th November 2019 |
| Polishing story | Got rid of a few characters that we decided to be unnecessary and finished extra details. | 20th November 2019 |

**Reflection on the roles and Groupwork**

In general I think we worked alright as a group. We had a few issues but when things went right they were great.

The issues we faced was usually down to a few members procrastinating and coming up with excuses as to why certain things weren’t done on time. An example of this is with the Level Design, where we were told he couldn’t do it because he didn’t have the art. After a few days I just told him that he needs to do it whether or not he had the art. If you don’t have art, you just create temporary blocks to use in place.

As Game Designer it was my job to make sure everyone was doing their roles to the best they could. I think if I had done even more research into the different roles this would’ve been more effective. Originally I was letting people get away with not doing much, but towards the last month it was getting too annoying having done meetings every week with little to nothing to show for it.

I think a problem with being the Game Designer is with it being such a background role, you don’t see a lot of what I needed to do, so when looking at the finished product I would have no evidence within the game. Though, all of my evidence is multiple word documents, PowerPoints for the paper prototypes, and the collaboration of art, UI, and programming.

By the last 2 weeks, we had nothing from the Level Design (or the things that we did have were unable to be used due to it being in 3D rather than a 2D Tileset) so Daniel had to recreate it in the correct format. This could have also been an issue on my part, not explaining in perfect detail what we needed from the Levels, though I believe they were given clear instructions multiple times. The art also came in late as we were trying to get animations, even though we told them we only need basic sprites so we have something to show for it.

Overall I believe that our team really needs to work on our communication and planning skills if we work together again. Rather than making up excuses, being honest and saying we haven’t done anything is best, and saying an actual time that we can get each section finished correctly would also help us out.

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