User experience

Usability

Information architecture

Interaction design

Graphic design

Ui design

Eye tracking

Field studies

Log data

Quantitative

Qualitative

Bounce rate

Last year I go the opportunity to work for a company that makes a very popular game called Gears of War. I am very interested in video game design so I started as soon as I possibly could. I have experience with computers, game consoles, and graphic design. I have been doing all three for about six or seven years now so I am pretty familiar with everything. When I first started I had no idea how much work it took to make a video game. I had the opportunity to meet and work with a lot of the games design artists who make all of the characters, maps, and camos for the guns. The type of design that they were doing was something that I had never seen before in my entire life. I still do not understand how it works. Like how they get the characters to move and how the maps interact with the characters shooting and blowing stuff up. For the most part since I had no clue what I was doing, I got to help the project manager organize and keep all of their deadlines on track. I had to input a ton of code and data because I was an intern. I definitely did not get paid but I had an amazing time experiencing everything. One of the most interesting roles that factor into game design were the engineers. The back-end engineer did a ton of work that essentially gets no recognition because people who play the game never pay attention. Before I worked there I never thought about how the buttons and menus work. Nobody that does not do this type of work understands. When they get the game, they just expect everything to work properly because they should. The front-end engineer basically gets the same treatment but they at the very least get to see their hard work in game and the experience of the game as a whole. Although I never got to meet the business person who markets the game to the public, I was told that his position although not strenuous like other positions in the company, still has a lot of pressure because he/they have to make sure the game is going in the correct direction and will appeal to the fans. All while creating something new and interesting that will keep fans playing and new players buying the game and becoming a part of the culture that is Gears of War…. Continued

Towards the end of the internship when the game was near release, the company had me moved over to another section of the building where I got to work with the web devs and game testing team. When I worked with the web developers, all they would preach is User Experience. There is no point in having a website that nobody understand how to use. This is why they used me for their usability tests. I did a few qualitative trial runs for them and it seemed like I had done everything correctly. When I was finished browsing the web site they were shocked to see how many things they had made mistakes on simply because they assumed users would understand what they were creating. This is why they do tests. To see what they are assuming people know versus what they actually know which apparently is “nothing”. They ended up starting over because the log data they had collected pointed out a lot of flaws with the sites information architecture. They ended up blaming most of it on a guy they called the interaction design manager and UI design girl for misleading users with features, links, and images that looked like one thing but did something completely different. The entire group ended up having a meeting and spoke about the issues I mentioned earlier and how that would correspond with the sites bounce rate and the issue with the misleading UI and unorganized information spotted by the eye tracking tool during field studies. The leader of the group was the head of design. Even though for the most part it was over my head, I couldn’t help but remember how mad he was about the calculations he received the from the quantitative analysis that said they were basically “fucked”.