Universal Forum

# Employer

Big Fish Games

# About

Big Fish Games wanted to increase the amount of supported games for their forums. This required that I work with a 3rd party developer Vanilla Forums in taking an original design for an existing game and define approaches for future games.

# Approaches used

* Design Taxonomy
* Card Sorting
* Tree Test
* Competitive Analysis
* Sketching
* Wireframing
* Collaboration
* Design Fidelity

# Process

## The Review

Starting out my UX Lead and I reviewed the existing forum for Dungeon Boss and immediately realized that the forum categories and child categories were built around that particular game. This needed to be addressed for future games.

## Card Sort

The categories and subcategories used for Dungeon Boss provided a great start. Using Optimal Workshop we entered every subcategory with a description. Anything that was specific to Dungeon Boss itself we left out or generalized it. To identify what main categories were needed, we required the surveyor to create their own categories. Once the card sort was ready we sent it out to all the internal employees.

When the cart sort was finished, my lead left remaining project in my hands.

The first card sort created numerous amounts of category names. After review and consolidating the groups we re ran the card sort test, this time with specific categories. This identified which subcategories fell into which category.

To validate our findings we created a tree test using Optimal Workshop. The first test showed 60% of the subcategories were easily found. The remaining 40%, we were able to tell where the users were attempting to find the sub category or view their click paths to identify their first approach. After a few corrections the second test showed that we placed the subcategories into the correct categories.

## Collaboration

At this point my UX lead left me to work on the project alone.

Now that a site structure has been defined it was time to talk with Vanilla Forums to understand their design limitations. This proved to be a little more difficult than expected. The design approach was open ended, but certain requests would require additional developer work, which in turn required an increase in cost. This led to the discover of their library of “addons” . These addons were essentially plugins for their system.

After the collaboration with Vanilla Forums, I reviewed all the possible addons. Picked the addons I wanted to incorporate into my design. As for the remainder, I shared with the stakeholders to identify if any were especially necessary for their line of work.

## Competitive Analysis

To fully understand Vanilla Forums approach to forum designs, I reviewed some of their work. I kept my focus on games, but allowed it to be for different types of games: cross-platform, AAA titles, and mobile.

## Wireframes

After talking with Vanilla Forums about design limitations, card sorting, tree testing, and competitive analysis I was ready to create the wireframes.

While creating the wireframes I had to keep in mind of the following requirements:

* Responsive breakpoints
* Links to various social media outlets
* Ability to update website graphics and font colors to match each game
* Developer representation
* Links to various app stores
* Vanilla Forums design limitations
  + Framework type
  + Element designs

After a few rounds of wireframes we finally landed in a happy medium. The path encountered a few hiccups due to a few proposed design requests requiring additional developer work. This proved difficult to avoid due to my Vanilla Forums contact having to take my questions and reach out to their developers.

## Design Fidelity

Once the full suite of wireframes was created, a new request was made. Vanilla Forums requested that I provided a high fidelity view of the forum that will stand as a default version. Whenever a new forum is created, it would carry out this default version. With the assistance of Vanilla Forums, a dashboard was created that controls different inputs for font color, images, and links.

## Developer support

At this moment Vanilla forums has a full default game forum design ready to develop. After rounds of back and forth for design corrections, the end result mostly matched the original design

# Final result

In the end, a universal forum design was implemented and new games are adopting the forum design. The project was a success.