

Video Game Design & Development Methodologies

(For internal use only)

High-Level Design Process

- Designing from a high-level vision

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- Analogous to other industries
 - User types
 - User experiences
 - Systems first then features



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High-Level Design Process

- Designing from a high-level vision
- Analogous to other industries
 - User types
 - User experiences
 - Systems first then features
- Getting better at the process
 - We are a young industry
 - Rockstar
 - Ubisoft



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My Principles of Design: Starting Points

Design is an exercise in constraints

- Technical
- Narrative/World
- Time/Resources/Scope

Player Choice as a key constraint

- Some games offer little choice (the designer experience)
- Others are more-wide open

Make sure you understand the project requirements

- Saints Row 3 and the over-developed missions/Co-op
- Processes can be constraints
 - “Fail Fast”



My Principles of Design: Starting Points

All apps/games start with an IDEA

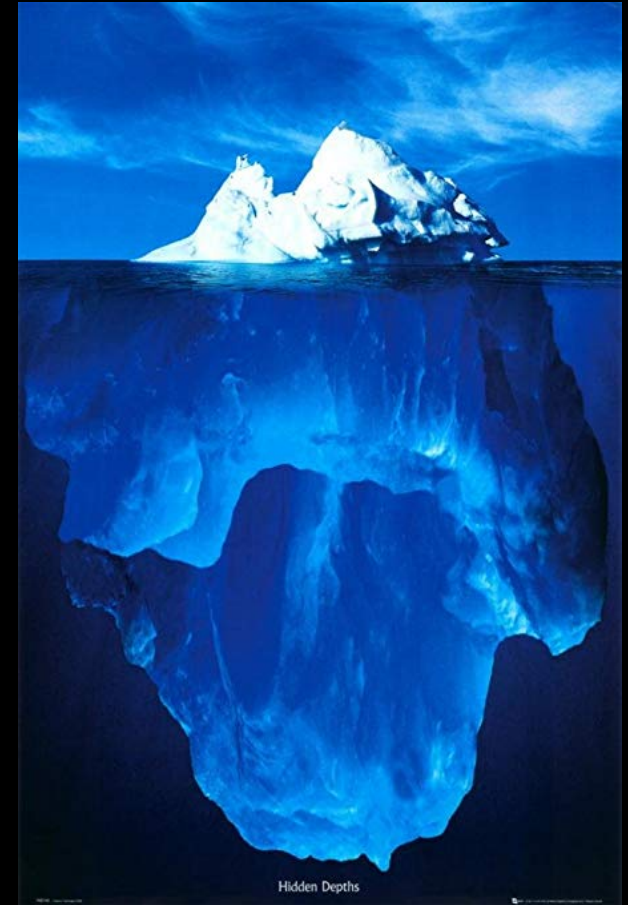
There is so much more to what you want to build

The primary role of a designer is to clearly communicate how that IDEA fits into an App/Game (the bigger picture, the Vision)

What happens without that clarity?

- Confusion
- Delay
- People building to their own vs. the required standards

The question is: what focuses the design, what drives the definition of the Vision?



My Principles of Design: Starting Points

Once you have an idea, set a genre and then build a world around it

- Provides Context
- Provides Consistency
- Expand upon the idea to provide depth
 - An idea is a feature in most cases, a feature is not a game
 - Why is the world the way it is? Leads to new complementary ideas
 - Examples: Renegade and Red Faction Guerrilla
- Improve Immersion/Presence
 - Most games are Skill Challenges
 - Skill develops over time, the world encourages retention
 - Interactivity can add another layer



My Principles of Design: Starting Points

Player Types: These define the core interests of the user we are targeting with our features.

Example: Minecraft

The Collector:

This user requires the opportunity to gather items and build a large stockpile of items.



The Builder:

This user type enjoys creating different imaginative items from the resources available.



My Principles of Game Design: Starting Points

Define your User Experience(s):

- The different emotional responses we are trying to elicit with our app/game features
- Example: *We want the gamer to be in awe when they face the challenges of our world.*



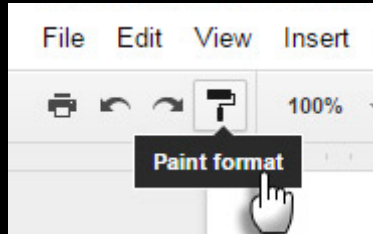
My Principles of Design: General

Design from the user's perspective, their experience:

- What are they seeing, thinking and *FEELING* as they move through your app/game?

Fulfill the user's low-level expectations, make them feel comfortable

- Think about the difference between Microsoft Word & Google Docs Format Painter



Make the user's path or choices clear and meaningful



My Principles of Game Design: General

Everything you design should be a loop

- Most Skill Test Games use the following low-level loop:
 - *See enemy, engage enemy, kill enemy, loot, repeat*
- Turn based and RTS games often use this low-level loop:
 - *Collect resources, build (buildings or units), fill out tech tree, repeat*
 - *Combat is a side loop to the main loop*



By Ethan Stanaway <https://prezi.com/gyqljrywdmzu/super-mario-bros-core-game-loops-and-reward-structures/>

My Principles of Game Design: General

Players want balance across the whole game, weapons, characters, environments, etc.

- Balance is a combination of strengths and weaknesses
- Balance and test, balance and test, balance and test (make sure you have the time).
- If you want a change to have impact then use this rule: No small changes, double it or half it.
 - Anything else will not be noticed by the player. Small tweaks satisfy the person that has played an element numerous time (you or your tester).

Provide Pacing vs payoff (the building tension curve is key in most games).

- Tension: Built through various means, choices to overcome obstacles, puzzles, enemies
- Give audio & visual cues to help build tension

My Principles of Game Design: General

Immersion

- All these elements add to immersion, immersion adds to retention

Absence is the enemy

- When something is missing it stands out



My Principles of Design: Test, Iterate, Test, Iterate

REMEMBER to Iterate to fun

- Don't trust your view of fun
- Get audiences of people that fit your player types to test your game
- When they tell you its fun you have something

Conclusion