User-centered Design in Games(Week 2)

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The aim of this paper is to examine the nature of concept of game and to discuss the current user-centered techniques used in the evaluation processes. To begin with, the authors question about the importance of games. According to them, because of the rapid growth in the forms of entertainment, video games have been spreaded too. Moreover, by differentiating video games from other softwares, they define the game concept and compare it with productivity applications. Some of the comparison criterias are: process(game) vs. results(productivity app.), defining goals(productivity app.) vs. importing goals(game), few alternatives(productivity app.) vs. many alternatives(game), being consistent(productivity app.) vs. generating variety(game), imposing constraints(productivity app.) vs. removing/structuring constraints(game), function(productivity app.) vs. mood(game),view of outcome(productivity app.) vs. view of world(game),organization as buyer(productivity app.) vs. individual as buyer(game) and standart input devices(productivity app.) vs. novel input devices(game). As the reader can grasp from all these comparison is that games are more flexible/adaptable and free than productivity applications in terms of usage and features. The definition is also done by enumerating various game types according to their genres. In addition, the authors clarify the principles and challenges of game design. As they state; identfying the right kind of challenges, addressing different skill levels, appropriate reward system, collecting and completing features, feelings prior to interactivity, the necessity for story, technological innovation, perceptial-motor skill requirements are some of them. While providing these rules, overall quality, ease of use, challenge and pace are much more important in terms of the user experience of fun. To measure this experience, some principles have been introduced and in use conducted by Microsoft Games User Testing Group. The main three **usability techniques** are "structured usability test" in which the testers are observed and being get feedbacks from and "rapid iterative testing and evaluation method" in which relatively conducted by smaller participant in a short amount of time iteratively and variations on usability methods(open-ended tasks,paper prototyping and emprical guideline documents) in which there is no limitation for participants. In all two methods, the expectations of the players and their level of fun and attitudes are observed and measured quantitavely and qualitatively, and making changes in the design accordingly. Besides of usability techniques indicated above, there is **survey techniques** as critical facet playtest, initial experience playtest and benchmark playtest which are aimed upon the comparison of the product according to its previous state or competitors. Moreover, with **qualitative group methods**, deep gameplay and focused group techniques are used to point out the remaining bugs and annoying little details in the game. As indicated by the authors, the **combined approach** can be used to improve the quality(in terms of fun) of the game by satisfying the players with the results of the methods above.