Trigger Happy

Kill him again…but this time with feeling

# A High Concept Document

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Short Description: What makes the Future Proficient Solider Academy such a unique place to learn? Is it our status as the first and only armed combat and entertainment school? Is it our ground-breaking work in the fields of Spawn camping and performing With Extreme Blood Loss? Or is it our close ties to bleeding edge R+D labs and hospitals? Maybe it's our industry-trained faculty with real-world experience in a variety of forms including: real weapon historical reenactment, 1 vs. 1000 blood bowls, and customer-designed combat scenarios? All of these things make FPSA a world-class university, but what really makes it unique is its students and their dedication to each other spawn after spawn. Because as we say here at the academy: it takes both 'u' and 'i' to spell "multi-kill."

Spots are filling fast for our third freshman class. Apply now and receive a free health pack (clones may apply).

Tone words: Strategy, Modifiers, Traps, Comical, Teamwork

1. Game High Concept

Trigger Happy is a 3D first-person shooter (FPS) game that utilizes traps to affect the enemy's perception of the world around them. The action will take place in a small series of self-contained areas designed to allow plenty of beneficial locations to lay down traps in order to both benefit the player and deter opponents.

Players will have free reign to roam around these areas once a game has begun. A player will be able to pick up a series of weapons from various locations around each area, and they will use these weapons in order to attempt to defeat their opponents. Each player will have a certain amount of health, which will allow them to survive one or more shots from weapons. Each weapon will have its own advantages and disadvantages (speed, clip size, etc). Upon defeating an opponent, the opponent will spawn again in a new location on the map and the player that defeated them will be able to pick up the weapon (or additional ammo) they were carrying upon defeat. After a certain end condition has been met (number of kills, time is up, etc) the round will end and the players will be given the option to begin a new match.

Traps will also play a very important role in the player-on-player conflict. A player will be able to select a number of traps to bring into battle, and will be able to lay down these traps on the battlefield. When a trap is placed in an area, the game rules around that point (within a certain distance) will change. For example, placing an anti-gravity trap will invert gravity for all players that enter its bounds. Traps are not meant to punish players that enter them, only to change the nature of fighting in a way that can be exploited by the prepared. An anti-gravity trap could function as an escape or a kill preventing distraction depending on how prepared a player is to use it. Traps fit into many different categories including, but not limited to, physical (anti-grav, slowing), perceptual (camouflage, darkness), and weapons (unlimited fire rate, melee only). Traps may also be global, changing the battle for all players. These traps can be triggered as part of a map or function as a special item for players or teams.

Particular locations will be designed into the levels to maximize the potential of certain traps, but players will not be limited to setting traps in these locations. The uniqueness of Trigger Happy gameplay comes from the fact that players can change the rules on the fly in local and strategic ways. While a typical FPS only offers one rule set and map over the duration of a fight, our gameplay supports dynamic shifts which means that gameplay is more frantic and player moldable producing a wider range of unique battle experiences.

1. Development Scope

The development scope for Trigger Happy will be fairly detailed. The scope will directly reflect how our milestones will be laid out and it is because of this scope that our development process will be laid out using an iterative approach. With a development team of five people and about six months of design/development time, the project will focus on the first-person shooter genre as well as the player's use of traps within the game world to alter the enemy's perception of the world around them. These two concepts will need to be combined together fluidly to create a dynamic game experience. The development scope and the timeline of milestones will need to reflect that integration of mechanics. The target platform for development will be Microsoft Windows on a PC rather than a console release.

A three month design cycle with a three month development cycle is planned. Engine and core systems will be developed in parallel with the design cycle due to their independence from the game idea.

1. Business case

*Unreal Tournament 2004* (*UT2K4*) is an excellent first example to look at for its FPS elements. While sales data are unavailable online, *UT2K4* is considered to be one of the best in the Unreal Tournament franchise and performed remarkably in most reviews, giving it an average of 93 on Metacritic. (<http://www.metacritic.com/games/platforms/pc/unrealtournament2004>) In addition, it was awarded titles such as "Best Multiplayer Game of the Year" in multiple print magazines.

*UT2K4* features a fast-paced, frenetic multiplayer deathmatch system that is practically unrivalled (depending on the person you talk to) among PC FPS games. It will act as excellent inspiration and ideally help to guide the design phase. It is considered one of Epic's crowning achievements, and there is little to research in terms of "what went wrong" and more to study regarding "*why* things went well". Even though it is considered one of the best FPS games out there, there is still room in gamers' hearts for *Trigger Happy* -- FPS players are historically interested in exploring a number of FPS games with varying mechanics. *Trigger Happy*'s trap mechanics should very easily help to differentiate it from the crowd, and will likely draw in players of *UT2K4* and other games who are looking to experience something different. By appealing to them quickly and showing the strengths of the product, they are more likely to return to play often.

*Team Fortress 2* (*TF2*)is another well-known FPS released by Valve. While sales data are unavailable, *TF2* is one of the most popular games in the genre at the moment -- and for good reason. It too has won awards from sites such as IGN and 1UP, all of which cite its mechanics, visual style, and comedic elements. *TF2* is proof that the typically-serious FPS crowd does indeed have an appetite for comedy, which can easily become a drawing point for *Trigger Happy* as well.

While its predecessors and the name of its developer helped get it out to the public in the first place, it truly shines in the mechanics. *TF2* features two teams that compete across a variety of different maps for goals such as pushing a cart from one end of the map to another, capturing the opponent's flag, or maintaining control over certain points on the map. Each player has the option to choose from one of nine classes, allowing players to experience a variety of different options and adapt themselves based off the team's needs -- something that *Trigger Happy* allows for with its traps as well.

There are two specific classes that are applicable in this instance: the Engineer and the Demoman. Each provides the player with the ability to lay something unexpected in the terrain of the world, much like the traps in *Trigger Happy*. The Engineer has the ability to place down four different types of machines in the world: a Sentry Gun, which automatically fires at any opposing players in range; a Dispenser, which heals and refills the ammunition of any friendly player that comes near it; and a Teleporter Entrance and Exit, which allows players to unexpectedly (to the other team, at least!) move from one point to another. Each Engineer may only place one of each at a time. The Demoman, on the other hand, has the ability to lay down sticky bombs on the ground. They may then detonate them at any given point in time with a single click of a button, surprising players who do not see them or pay attention to their surroundings. These two classes make playing various maps in Team Fortress interesting, as players must always pay attention to the environment around them. Valve takes this one step further by creating maps with areas that would benefit from a sentry gun or sticky bombs. Player behavior has emerged from this, and players tend to specifically scout out certain areas of the level to check for these unexpected elements or attempt to take different paths all together. Valve has shown that specific level design can make this a positive effect rather than a negative effect.

*Shadowrun* is another FPS based off a pen-and-paper RPG intellectual property.  It was released for both Windows and the Xbox 360 and includes some interesting mechanics that are worth looking at. Reviews for the game were mixed, and the game received a 66 (Xbox 360)/67 (Windows) on Metacritic. Major criticisms of the title included its high price ($60 on release for the Xbox 360) and its limited number of maps and game modes. In addition, many people were disappointed with the direction the IP was taken in; many players were disappointed to find a FPS rather than an RPG. Despite this, *Shadowrun* sold 400,000 copies on the Xbox 360 and an unreleased number of copies on Windows.

*Shadowrun* allowed players to purchase abilities at the beginning of a round with money earned through teamwork and kills. These abilities were broken up into two categories: magic and technology. These could each be used by spending a certain amount of "essence", which varied per technique. Players had a maximum amount of essence determined by the race chosen before the match started. This added a unique strategic element to the game and was hailed as one of the most innovative points of *Shadowrun*. Moreover, players had a tendency to strategize ahead of time in order to create a team with a variety of abilities. This is something that *Trigger Happy* should succeed at as well, and this system will be very important for further analysis during the design phase.

1. Premise

**Old History**

* Man is split over different planets in the galaxy. These planets form factions and often go to war.
* Man applies cloning technology (in many forms) to humans.
* War becomes pointless because of the unending amount of soldiers on each side.
* War becomes outdated. Armies are no longer trained and war theory slowly fades into obscurity.
* The vast amount of now useless weapons are put to other purposes.

**Recent History**

* Armed combat experiences a resurgence and enters the domain of the entertainment industry.
* Troupes of modern "soldiers" can be purchased for various occasions (parties, ceremonial reasons, reenactments, conflict) usually with customer selected rules for combat (our global traps).
* Much of what was previously considered "War" has been lost, so most troupes act on weird interpretations of history.
* These troupes compete against others and the best have the profile of rock stars.
* The level of technology and weapons used by different troupes varies depending on funding.
* Getting startup funding is difficult and competition for troupe spots is high. The first school is created to train future members.
* This school has little money and is forced to partner with two other organizations to operate.

**The University System**

* Future Proficient Soldier's Academy - Accepts students and trains them in dealing with various situations and weapons. The school has roughly zero dollars to purchase materials and relies on a number of other sources for support. One source is their own liberal arts program which has classes in weapon and item crafting. Another source is...
* Bleeding Edge Research - Designs and builds brand new tech for the professional competitions. It is well funded by those corporations, but still has trouble finding test subjects for some reason...hmm. This is where FPSA comes in. In exchange for providing access to their amazing and terrifying tech, FPSA provides willing subjects for testing.
* Healing Headshot Hospital "Reduce. Reuse. Respawn" - A hospital interested in experimental medicine and environmental protection. The endless piles of dead bodies generated by the popular OwnAClone system have wrecked havoc on the Earth and filled nearby blackholes. HHH is pioneering research in repairing combatants and using factory built inter-changable parts when repairs can't be made. FPSA provides a steady diet of test cases while HHH provides cheap care in return. HHH sees FPSA as their partner in their movement, though FPSA isn't really that...um, into it.

**Possible "Gigs"**

* Famous battle reenactment for people who have no clue what the real old school battle looked like.
* Birthday party for a child prince (lots of changing rules to suit his fickle tastes).
* Intercollegiate sporting event forced on FPSA to gain status as a real university (no normal weapons allowed).

The world is built as a parody on existing FPS worlds without just copying their oddities and saying "how dumb is that." It's a faux-serious look at the full economy of a world where combat is sport and respawns are cheap. The predominant feel is comedy and absurdity with a flair for wild technology, characters, and locations. The world will motivate our weapons, locations, items, rules, and reasons for combat.

1. Research Topics

* Eric: Deferred Particle System
* Jonathan: Multi-core Threaded Game Engine Architecture
* Chip: Procedural weapon/trap modifications.
* Sela: Granular Synthesis
* Nicholas: Application Optimization Using Policy-Based Templates and Template Metaprogramming