I am deeply disappointed on how this project turned out. The release of milestone 3 will be my last work for this project and I will not continue with Milestone 4 unless everything is settled and resolved. That means further additional feature or update on the game after milestone 3 release will not be entertained.

I accepted all change request whatever the complexity is, but the last request to change the baker images in everything based on theme, greatly upsets me, I don’t want this kind of request in the future, first of all this is not part on the original plan or any plan and this need a lot of work, the customization theme documents provided by client (filename *“Front End Screen Architecture Front End - Level 1-3 tutorial - WG - 12 dec 2014.pptx”*) specified the only items customizable. I will accept this change as the LAST REQUEST for milestone 3. The last set of images that Hiba sent.

The request is the last straw that trigger my other concerns which I have been keeping all this time, as this kind of request has becoming a frequent case always;

1. Unclear targets
   1. At the beginning of milestone 3, the only description I got for this milestone is “Additional Changes to First 10 Levels and Any Open Bugs (due Dec 16, 2014)”

With no list of target or required items for the milestone,

As it turned out, it became an open target with an open requirements.

During December, I asked Hiba if there are other things that are needed for milestone 3 aside from the checklist I provided and shown them, she confirm that that is the only ones needed, but lately in the week, another set of request came up prior to January 9 agreed date, it includes the baker image changed mentioned. Personal schedules has been planned and this abrupt change of schedule is inconsiderably stressful.

The bad thing with open target/open requirements are;

* NO concrete end date can be foreseen. If I won’t be strict with Jan 9 for milestone 3, I can sense that it will be extended again (it turns out it is!).
* Work breakdown structure (WBS) and its schedule cannot be planned effectively, I cannot plan this project efficiently because there is no concrete list of targets and I cannot estimate the actual work and schedule does messing up my own personal schedules and plans.
* Client can request as many change or addition as he can whether it’s a small or big change. Those change are even closer to the agreed date.

These list is not even on the checklist last December.

* + Invite friends for gifts feature requested Jan 5,
  + Removal or change of purchase hits/time requested Jan 6).
  + Replace of ALL baker image (Jan 8).

1. Client
   1. Client is (1) fickle minded. Almost every week, the specification changes, however small or big is the change it is somehow has an impact on the project whether it is in database, engine architecture, gameplay. Similar modules are changed within a few days.

He wants a feature, later on he decided he does not want or like it.

One example that comes into mind is the level info/complete/failed screen which undergone so many changes in just a few span of time.

The fact that Hiba and her team consults the client and submits their layout for review to client, technically means that the client (Fab games) approved and agreed on the new layout and is ready for implementation BUT few days later the client decided he doesn’t like the layout and needs to changed again. This shows how fickle minded he is. This is also applicable to functionality and not only layout.

* 1. Client does not know what he wants or has no idea on what he really needs.
     1. What he requested contradicts what he previously wants and most of the time his new request contradicts with an existing specification. Since it is conflicting, things will be changed to fit his new request. And after his new request was implemented, within a few span of time, it will be redo with another request.
     2. Sometimes what he wants is unclear and needs feedback from him does delaying implementation.
     3. Request for change or add for features are not thought thoroughly, that sometimes does not make sense or has any problem.
     4. It has come to my attention that what we are doing is a trial and error approach on the game, which of course does not bid well for me as a fixed-rate freelancer as hours are wasted and or piled up on this effort.

1. Schedule
   1. This project is dragging too long. We took almost 3 months just for 10 levels. This is mainly because of lack of concrete specifications and #2 reason stated above (the client). I don’t think this project will complete in the next 6 months or even to a year given that there is NO solid plan for this project yet.

I have no issue with “long term partnership” but it does not fit with the price provided for this project. Long term partnership should be paid in a time-based manner and not a one-time low cost price.

* 1. Popcake legend requires a weekly release, which basically means I need to at least put a reasonable amount of time and effort on this project every week. As far as effort is concern, I have invested serious amount of time and effort for this project which can be seen on the result. But those effort focuses on specification change rather than enhancement or fixing bugs. We could have produced a much better and high quality game if all those efforts are focused on it and not on trial and error.

1. Cost
   1. The price we agreed was based on the impression on the initial documents provided. It turns out that there are more unknown and heavy work than expected. It is also now known and obvious that those specifications is just the tip of the iceberg and the size of the iceberg itself is still unknown. (Refer to #5 for Requirement issues).
   2. From what is stated above, the time and effort of this project is not reasonable for the price. Computing the effort and time for this project against my expected agreed payment ($1500) shows that I am totally at a disadvantage for this project.
   3. My rate is at $8 an hour at the minimum(around $20 for games), and the time I spent for this project including the wasted hours for implementation that was trashed, dropped or changed is significant enough that this project is becoming a main priority over everything else including personal plans.
   4. I project that because this game do not have a concrete solid plan, no solid specifications this will last more than 6 months, working for those months for just $1,500 is unacceptable even in the industry standard. A cost of $1,500 is just 2 or 3 months max for one game project (man hours computed).
2. Requirement Specification
   1. At the start of this projects, requirements, layouts and data are provided. Thus making the production of the project smooth, fast and has no problem.

Problems started during milestone 2 onwards, it seems like the documents and data provided at the beginning has no use as 60% of them were replaced or completely removed, from then on everything became patches and weekly requests. Most of the times, these weekly requests conflicting or undo each other.

* 1. It is obvious that this game has no solid plans and specification, the requirements come and go based from what client wants, and this is a big disadvantage for a fixed-rate freelancer. I am afraid that this project will fall into the same situation as what happen to “Duke Nukem Forever” wherein specification constantly change based from what client wants thus pushing schedules so far from original intended date (ironically, this project do not have a target date).

No Plan means no actual schedule, no actual requirements and the complexity of the project is unknown, thus this is a totally disadvantage for a fixed-rate freelancer.

* 1. Some new requirements/request from client has huge impact enough that it can affect the entire architecture or needs a great amount of hours of rework. These kind of requirements should have been figured out even before the start of the production of the game as it is needed and necessary for database design as well as the entire game architecture design.
  2. I am in the software making industry for over 10 years and I can guarantee you that we will not achieve a quality game without a plan and specifications, we will have a buggy and low quality game if specifications are figure out as the production move. As features are added frequently without it bring in the original plan, bugs are introduced as well.

Furthermore, I would like to clarify that our relationship is a freelancer-client relationship and not an employment, with this in mind the following should have been observed.

1. Every milestone should have a clear target and schedule, a list should be provided with descriptions on items that are needed to be delivered for a certain milestone.

Further addition or modifications to the list should be discussed.

The list will serve as an important point for the project:

1. The list will serve as the requirement to judge whether the milestone is complete or not.
2. With a list of modules and requirement, it is Okay if the schedule will get push for reasons modules specified are not yet completed.
3. A delay on client, artist or developer side is justifiable provided that the module is on the list and not yet delivered.
4. Each milestone corresponds to a payment, therefore the weight of each milestone should be justified and balanced. Milestones should have clear and reasonable target list. And the list of requirements of each milestone should consider the schedule also, from it, the number of hours can be computed.

Milestone 3 was so heavy and stressful that it includes 2 engine and database architecture changed including countless hours wasted for updates and/or specification changes.

1. I am not an employee of the Waldorf Company, I cannot work on this project on unlimited hours and on unlimited specifications.

Constant changed of requirements waste a lot of production hours for me. This thus not do well for a freelancer that is fixed-based paid.

Constant change of requirements is tolerable for hourly and full time employees as they are paid by the time they are working.

For a fixed-rate freelancer, a list of modules must be provided and agreed and we will based our costing on those requirements. For this project we agreed on the costing based on a “ghost” requirement which is I am at a disadvantage.   
A standard process for this client-freelancer relation is, Walldorf provide the specification, I will implement modification, any change in modification is extra payment, that is the industry standard.

This project has become a shoot in the dark for me, no specification, an ample number of request and changes.

I maybe new to oDesk, but I am not new to software engineering industry and freelancing specially in outsourced projects.

I don’t know about your agreement with the client but this is not how software outsourcing business works, in Outsourcing, a client provides a set of requests, the provider (which is Walldorf) will work on the probject based on the set of requests (aka the Specification requirement), further change or update on the request will be categorized to a “bug” or an “enhancement request”, enhancement requests are charged extra and separately. This should also be applied in freelancer(provider) scenario.

With the above points I mention, the following is my conclusion;

**My Action:**

I am totally at a disadvantage on this project, I will not entertain anymore changes for milestone 3 until payment for the said milestone has been provided. I cannot tolerate further milestone 3 schedule extension for reason as it is almost two months working for this project unpaid. Furthermore I am giving you options on how we proceed with the phase of the projects.

I honestly think that beyond milestone 3 is more stressful with a Client like Fab Games who doesn’t even know yet what he wants for his game and for the fact that both Waldorf and the client still has no plans for the higher levels yet that gives me the chills thinking the huge uncertainty of this project and the amount of effort that will be exerted given the low cost of this project.

For it I am giving my options:

**Option1**. I will continue with the project (milestone 4 onwards) BUT the following points must be observed:

1. I will not work on milestone 4 until list of requirements (a checklist) is provided. A list should also be accompanied with specifications and layout. Any change on the list must be agreed if it’s acceptable or not.
2. Each milestone should be balanced out as described in my previous statement above.
3. Requirement in the milestone is justifiable and reasonable given the cost payment of each milestone which is at $270, which gives us around 35 hours of development time reasonably.

The weight of the milestone will be based on the cost of each milestone. The weight refers to how heavy the feature request and the amount of the request per milestone.

1. Request from client must be consulted first before agreeing to do it.
2. Entire Schedule for the project should be known. I cannot spent 6 months on this project for $1500, this is not justifiable. I do not expect the “Long term partnership” to be a one-time low payment work.

The project spent 3 months for 10 levels alone due to constant change of requirements.

I can even sense that there is still NO concrete or solid plans for the next 11-20 levels,

I am projecting that this project will reach as far as 6 months to one year.

This option needs to be discussed as this is a disadvantage for me. With how this project is moving, the initial agreement of $1500 is a total mispriced. *I can only work up to how much the initial agreement of ($1500) can go.*

**Option 2.** We will do this as per contract basis (fixed rate), we will prematurely end our current oDesk contract and have a new one. Walldorf will provide me a list of things or modules to implement for a separate payment. I will evaluate the cost of the contract based on the modules provided. With this client can request whatever he wants inside a given contract.

**Option 3.** We will do it as a separate contract but within an hourly rate, constant change in requirements wastes a lot of hours in production. With an hourly rate, Client (Fab Games) can request as many changes and as often as he wants.

**Option 4.** I will drop the project completely and you guys can find a new developer. You can get me for consultation in an hourly payment basis. I will provide all the source and deployment documents BUT NO engine documents as I still own the rights of the framework of the game, The framework powers all the games I made even before this project. Providing the documents is equivalent to me licensing the engine framework to Walldorf. However game implementation document can be provided, game and framework codes can be separated.

**Option 5.** You can pay me monthly. This will be independent on the number of modules or hours of the work. At this point the client can request whatever he wants and the project can last whenever it wants to complete.

For my personal opinion, I prefer Option 2 or 3, I don’t think we can finish the game with Option 1 alone with its original price and with the kind of client and production approach we have.