

Preproduction

FROM CONCEPT TO PROPOSAL

The First Idea

- Most games begin with a single idea. This idea can revolve around:
 - A character
 - A setting
 - A story
 - A style of gameplay
 - A philosophy
 - A new technology
 - And so on

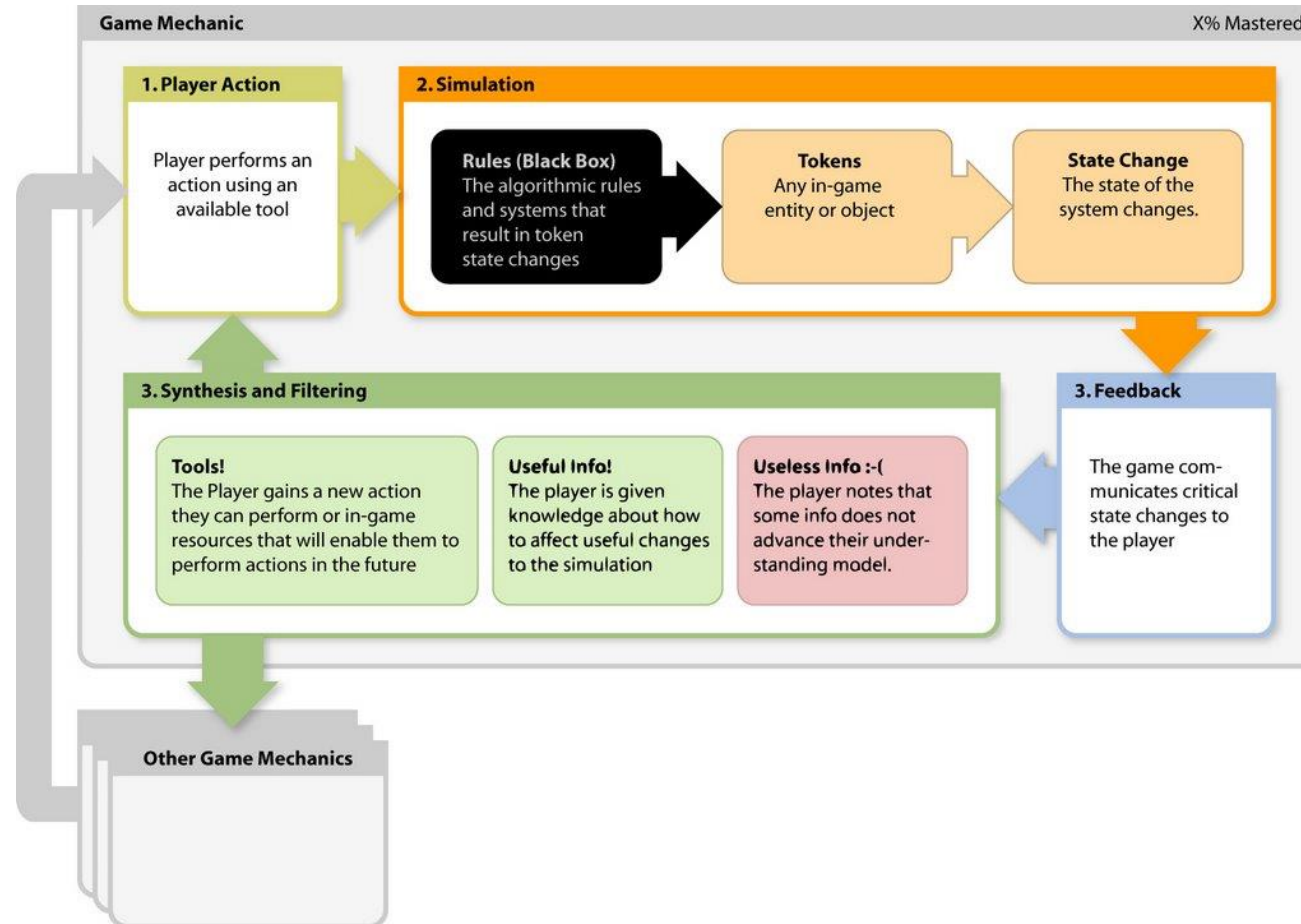
The First Idea

- Sometimes the idea is completely original, but more often it builds on existing work.
 - Totally new ideas can be good, but they are also unproven, and consequently untested.
 - New variations on something already established is safer, and often more easily accepted by game publishers.
- So, while you do need something new, innovative or interesting, don't despair over similarities to existing games.
- If it is truly original, it still might be an idea worth fighting for, however.

Concept Development

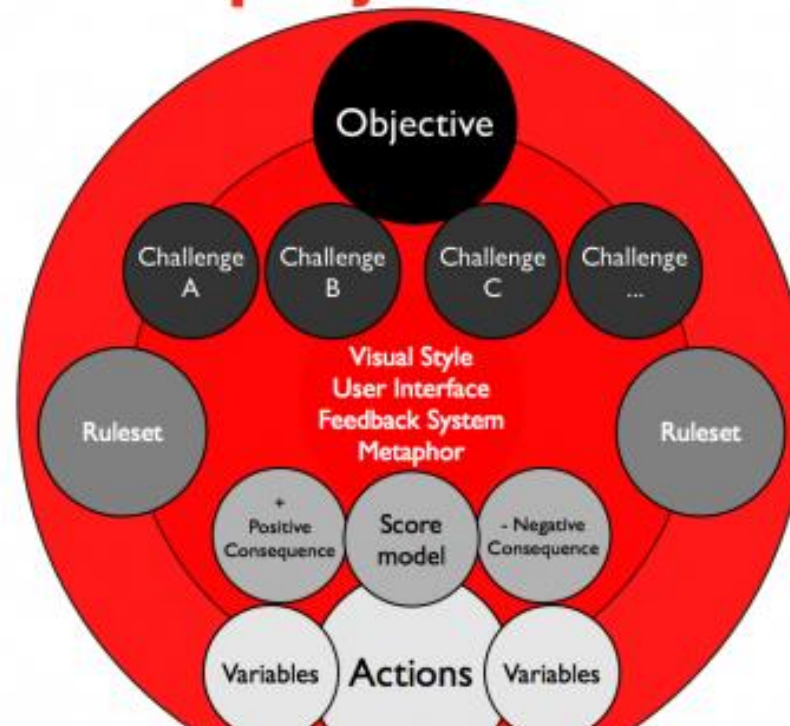
- The first phase of game development is concept development.
 - It starts with the first game idea.
 - The main goal is to take this idea, refine it and flush it out to decide what the game will be all about.
 - You must decide on story and character elements, gameplay, setting, and so on.
 - Concept art should also be developed.
 - In the end, a concept or pitch document is written, followed by a more detailed project proposal.
- If you work for an independent developer, this phase will not likely be funded by another company ... few people pay to sit and think!

Game mechanics



Game mechanics

Gameplay mechanics



Concept Development

- For a concept to be successful, you must keep in mind the publisher's goals, needs, and concerns when developing it.
 - Publishing strategy (many inexpensive games, or a few more expensive projects).
 - Risk tolerance.
 - Scheduling constraints.
 - Licensing conditions and issues.
 - Preferred platform and technologies.
 - Type of game wanted (totally new, sequel, conversion, adaptation).
 - And so on.

Concept Development

- The key elements that can be manipulated during concept development are:
- Gameplay
 - What is involved in playing the game?
 - Good gameplay is independent of time or budget availability.
- Scope
 - How big is the game?
 - Effectively determines cost and schedule constraints.
- Technical Risk
 - What potential difficulties lie ahead?
 - Too much risk will scare away a publisher ... not considering or discussing it will too!

The Concept Document (or Pitch Document)

- The point of this document is to convey the goal and purpose of the proposed game.
- This helps management (or a prospective publisher) assess if the game is viable, timely, and feasible.
 - The purpose of this document is to sell the game concept to the key decision makers needed to approve further development.
- The document should be brief, approximately five pages in length, more or less, and should discuss the topics on the following slides.

The Premise (or High Concept)

- A short paragraph description of what the game is about and what its unique hook is.
 - Can be as short as one or two sentences.
 - If your game cannot be summarized in this way, it could be too unwieldy and complex.
 - Must be exciting and catch the reader's attention.
- An example:
 - Echoing back to the Gladiators and arenas of ancient Rome, human, alien and other more sinister warriors are locked into battles where there can only be two outcomes – victory or death ... (UT3 aka UT2007)

Player Motivation

- This section should discuss the player's victory condition and what will drive the player to actually play the game to that end.
- For example, a player could be driven to complete, solve puzzles, or explore the game world.
 - Think back to the player motivations discussed earlier in the course.

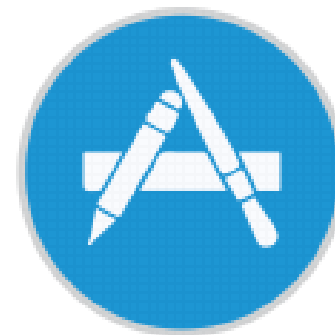
Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

- In essence, this section describes what makes your game stand out from other games.
 - What makes your game unique?
 - Why is it special?
 - What are its distinguishing characteristics?
 - What features make it exceptional?
- Think of the things you would like to put on the back of the packaging for the game, and you are on the right track.

Target Market

- This is a statement of who the intended players of the game are.
 - Children?
 - The mass market?
 - Niche market of special interest fans?
- This section also generally includes some historical information about how this type of game has sold to the target demographic.

Target Market



Target Rating

- The point here is to identify the target Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rating for your game.
 - What rating are you aiming for?
 - Why?



Entertainment Software Rating Association



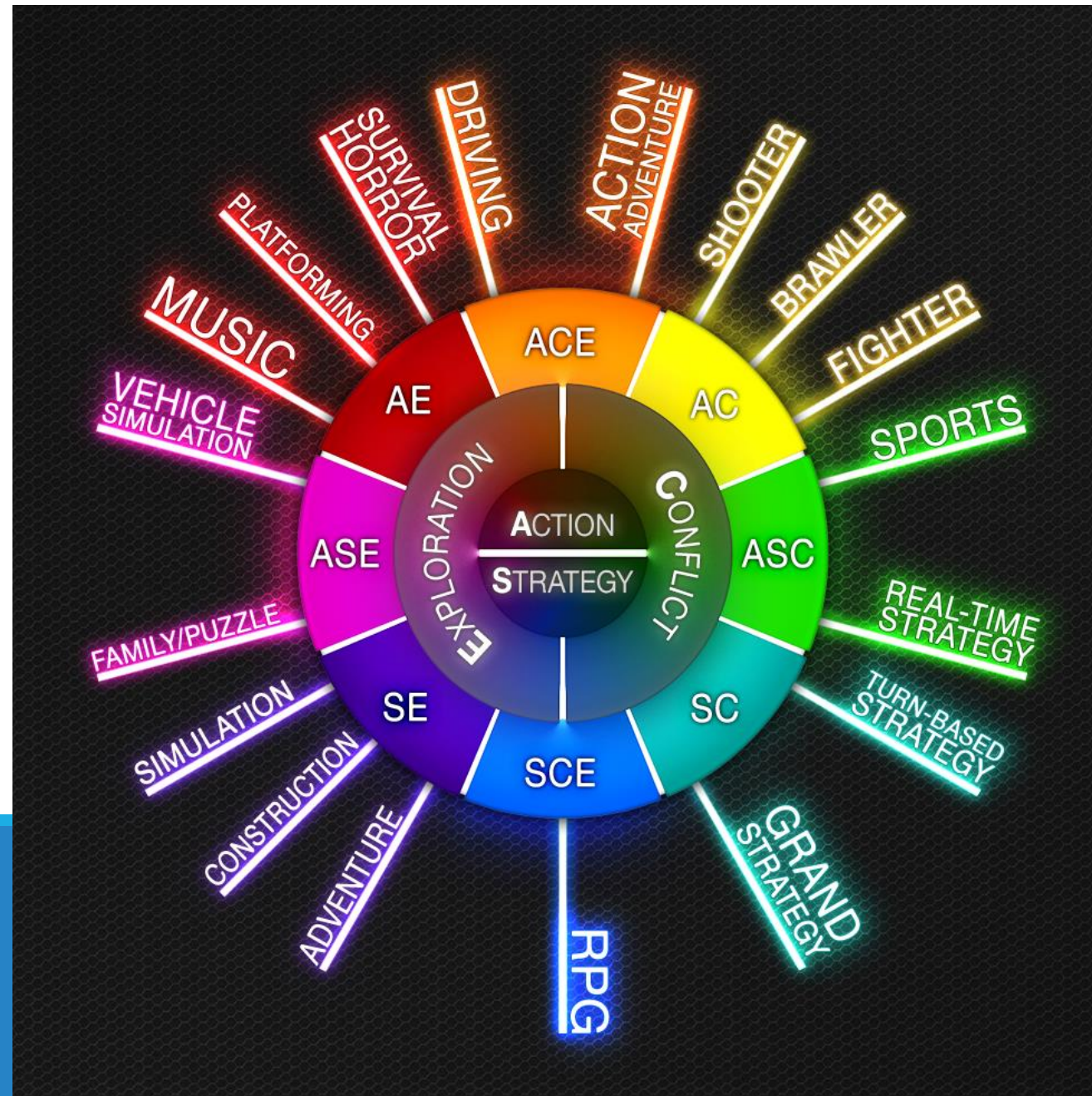
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ESRA(Entertainment Software Rating Association)

Genre

- The goal here is to provide a basic genre statement for your game.
 - What genre(s) are you choosing for your game? Just what type of game is it?
 - How will your game be following or breaking with genre conventions?
- Explain any new twists your game provides on genre conventions or on the genre itself.



Target Platform

- In this proposal section, you identify the target platform(s) on which your game will be played and defend your selections.
 - Hardware requirements, operating system requirements, and other software requirements.
- As development costs rise, more and more games are cross-platform projects.
 - Released on several systems to leverage costs and increase chances of success.
- This trend might change because of differences in console hardware and capabilities though ...



Unity 5 Target Platforms

From Upper Left: iOS, Android, Windows Phone , BlackBerry, Tizen, Windows, Windows Store, Mac, Linux, Web Player, WebGL, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, PlayStation Vita, XBOX One, XBOX 360, Wii U, Android TV, Samsung Smart TV, Oculus Rift, Gear VR, Microsoft Hololens,

License

- If your game will be adapted from a licensed property, this should be discussed in this document.
 - How will the license be used?
 - What kind of deal has or will be made with the licensor?
 - Will it be exclusive or non-exclusive?
- Also include any additional information about the property's popularity and appeal to particular markets.

Competitive Analysis

- This is an analysis of potential competition to the proposed game, both in the present and in the future.
 - What games are out in this genre?
 - How did they do? Why will this be better? (Be sure to relate this to your game's USP.)
 - When the game is ultimately released, what will competition be like then?
 - How will the game compare, and succeed?
 - Why will this game earn precious shelf space in the retail market?
 - Will new games and technology make the game obsolete as soon as it is released?

Goals

- What goals are there for this game?
 - What are your expectations for this game in creating an overall player experience?
 - What mood are you attempting to achieve?
 - Are you trying to provide excitement, tension, suspense, challenge, humour, nostalgia, sadness, fear, or a happy feeling?
 - What do you want the player to ultimately walk away with after playing this game?
- How will the game achieve these goals?

The Project Proposal

- The project proposal is a follow-up to the concept document, providing further details than those given earlier.
 - The purpose is to present the details of the game to a party already interested in the game (likely after the concept document).
- This document is longer than the concept document (ten to twenty pages).
 - It should include all the sections from the concept document in more detail, and provide additional materials as well.

The Hooks

- A hook is an element that will attract players to the game and keep them and their attention there.
 - Why would anyone buy this game?
 - Choose the three to five best game features that best answer this question and provide more information here.
 - Hooks can be based on visuals, audio, gameplay, story, mood, and so on.

Gameplay Mechanics

- This section of the game project proposal essentially describes what the player does in the game.
- It should list several (10-20) elements that describe the experience of playing the game.
 - What challenges does the player face?
 - What actions can the player take?
 - What activities does the player participate in?
 - From what perspective is the game played?

Online Features

- If your game contains any online component, it should be discussed here.
 - Will it support online multiplayer play, or just provide an online community for players?
 - What scale of multiplayer play?
 - Will gameplay be competitive, cooperative, or both?
 - What kind of game location and player finder services will be provided?

Technology

- If special software or hardware technologies are to be incorporated into your game, you should discuss these technologies here.
 - Will you be licensing game engine software?
 - Will you require specific peripherals or special-purpose hardware for your game?
 - Will your game require custom technology specifically built for your game?

Art and Audio Features

- Discuss any unique art and audio features of the game in this section.
 - Particularly those that are main selling points for the game.
- Examples of such features include:
 - Licensed music
 - Professionally scored music
 - Orchestral or live performances
 - Motion capture for character animation

Story and Characters

- Most games have a story behind it.
 - In some cases the story plays an integral role in the game; in others, it is only to provide some basic background behind the game and to give the player an idea as to why the game is being played.
- A game proposal should include a summary of the game's story elements.
 - Main plot ideas.
 - Main characters.
 - Problems faced by the characters.
 - The villains in the game.
 - How the player will ultimately overcome all of this.

Walkthrough

- This is typically a one-page description of what it is like to play the game.
- The form this takes can vary ...
 - In some cases, the walkthrough focuses on the first hour of gameplay, and provides a fair amount of detail on this critical period.
 - In other cases, the walkthrough goes through the entire game from start to finish, but in much less detail.

Production Details

- Describe the current production status of the project in question.
 - Are you still in concept development?
 - Has the game been designed yet?
 - Is there a prototype available yet?
- Discuss additional production details of your project, including development team, budget, and schedule in separate sections, as follows.

Development Budget and Schedule

- This is a statement of how long the game should take to develop and what the costs involved will be.
 - Since this is early in the development cycle, this will be an estimate, but do as much as possible to make it an educated one.
 - This is a critical part of the proposal, and is also one of the more difficult parts.
- This usually includes a profit and loss (P&L) statement, and some estimate of return on investment (ROI).

The Team

- This is a list of who is on the development team, what their credentials are, and what their roles will be.
 - If the team is established, what games have been produced together.
 - If the team is new, list the credits for the major team players.
 - What are the team's experiences with the target platform, genre, and so on.
- Publishers invest in people, not just ideas.
 - Ideas can be cheap and plentiful.
 - It takes good people to turn ideas into reality.
 - The team ultimately determines success or failure.

Risk Analysis

- This section of the proposal discusses the potential difficulties that could be faced in developing the game.
 - Itemize the potential problems.
 - Identify why they pose a risk to meeting project goals.
 - Summarize plans for minimizing or eliminating these risks.
- Too much risk is a bad thing, but so is not identifying or discussing it!

Concept Art

- Include concept drawings and sketches of elements from the game.
 - Main characters.
 - Character classes and races.
 - Scenes and locales from the game world.
 - Interface layout.
- Also, discuss the art style to be used in the game. Will it be realistic, cartoonish, or some other style?



disney concept art

Summary

- In the proposal summary, you reiterate why the proposed game will be a great game.
 - Repeat the major selling points.
 - Justify why your team is the right group of people to pull it off.
 - Show that you understand the publisher's goals, needs, and concerns.
- Include anything else you think will help gain final approval of the proposal.