10 STEPS TO CREATIVE PROTOTYPING
1. MAKE CHANGE
HARD DECISIONS

• “A Point & Click adventure game in a world that has turn based battles”
  • Too large, too unfocused

• “Cut it in half and do only one part”
QUESTION TIME

• How many people **CUT** their pitch after being told it was too large?
FOLLOW UP

• Fallacy - **False Dilemma**
  
  • X or Y, when a whole spectrum of choices actually exists

• You will create **False Dilemma’s** for yourself
PIVOT

• Good advice does not mean right advice

• **PIVOT** – Taking an idea or product into a new direction

• **MAKE** a new prototype
  
  • **THIS** - “A Point & Click adventure game in a world that has turn based battles”
  
  • **INTO THIS** – “A turn based adventure game”
1.5. DON’T GET STUCK ON TECHNICALITIES
2. MAKING IT PERSONAL
WHAT IS PROTOTYPING?

• Prototyping is building something YOU’VE never made before
• Every game is unique
• Treat everything as a prototype
THE ORIGINAL ROGUE LEGACY PROTOTYPE

• A 2D Dark-Souls with puzzles
THE EVOLUTION OF ROGUE LEGACY
REITERATION

- Everything’s a prototype
- A game is just a pile of prototypes
3. DIRECTED PROTOTYPING
BREAK IT DOWN

- Combat System
- Status Effects
- Enemy AI
- Meta Progress
- UI
- Skill Tree
MAKE TIERS

• Combat System – Tier 1
• Status Effects – Tier 3
• Enemy AI – Tier 2
• Meta Progress – Tier 3
• UI – Tier 2
• Skill Tree – Tier 3
KEEP BREAKING IT DOWN

• Combat System
  • Puzzle System – Tier 1
  • Mana – Tier 2
  • Blocking – Tier 3
4. CREATIVITY SAVES TIME
“DIFFICULT PROBLEMS”

• No such thing as “Creative Problems”
• There is only “Creative Solutions”
“DIFFICULT PROBLEMS”

• Bullet Audyssey

• “A Rhythm-Based-Bullet-Hell where you couldn’t shoot unless you stole ammo by grazing enemy bullets”

• Tutorial? A problem for later

• Long Loading Time? MAJOR BLOCKER
“DIFFICULT PROBLEMS”

• FALSE DILEMMA
5. SWEAT THE DETAILS
GOAL OF A PROTOTYPE

• IT IS NOT:
  • To get something to **WORK**

• IT IS:
  • To see if something can be **GOOD**
DEVIL’S IN THE DETAILS

• GOAL: Faster paced Castlevania
• Castlevania without Move-Locking
WHAT’S IN A SWING

• Animation Separation
• Added Direction-Locking
• Added Priority Animation Canceling
• Added Input Queuing
• Etc.
6. KEEP EXPERIMENTING
CHURN AND BURN

• Prototyping is about rapid experimentation
• Make Editable Values
• Don’t stop at “it works”
CHURN AND BURN

• Prototyping is about rapid experimentation

• Make Editable Values

• Don’t stop at “it works”
DON’T STICK TO THE SCRIPT
6 STEPS TO CREATIVE PROTOTYPING
THE PLAYTESTING CHECKLIST
THE 4 STAGES OF PLAYTESTING

- **PREP** - What to do before the playtest
- **LIVE** – The Psychology of Assholes
- **POST** – Collating data
- **FIX** - Reaching conclusions
STAGE 1

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PREP
FIX OBVIOUS ISSUES

• Feedback stops at:
  • The First Major "bug"
  • Poor Balance and Controls
  • Confusing User Experience
MAKE A TUTORIAL

• One Un-Manned Tutorial
  • In-game or on a cut-out stand
• One in-person Tutorial Pitch
  • Backup
DATAMINING

- Collecting user play session data programmatically
  - Heat maps, Damage dealt, Item usage, etc.
- Be selective
- Too much is a bad thing
STAGE 2

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LIVE
WRITE IT DOWN

• You WILL forget the details
• Laptops? MEH
• Pen and Paper? GREAT
  • Mobile
  • Doodle
MAKE IT A CONVERSATION

• Get people talking
• Keep it open ended
  • “What are you thinking about?” - GOOD
  • “How’s the difficulty?” – GOOD
  • “Did you like that?” - BAD
• Real-time opinions > “neutered” thoughts afterwards
QUESTION TIME #1

• “This is literally the worst boss fight ever”
• “That boss fight was ok”
• “That boss fight was interesting”
SUSS OUT PERSONALITIES

• “This is literally the worst boss fight ever”
  • The boss fight sucks
• “That boss fight was ok”
  • The boss fight sucks
• “That boss fight was interesting”
  • The boss fight sucks
BEWARE THE EUPHEMISM

• Don’t trick yourself
  • “That boss fight was interesting”
• Euphemisms lead to bad games
EVERYONE SUCKS

• Dunning Kruger Effect
STAGE 3

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POST
QUESTION TIME #2!
TAKE TIME TO COOL OFF

• You are not thick-skinned
  • Professional criticism != Personal criticism
• Go to sleep
• Give yourself 24 hours to think on it
THE SURVEY

- Surveys are a safety net
  - Don’t make it just about the game
  - Feedback ISN’T EQUAL
  - Pay attention to wording
    - **BAD** – “How fun was the boss?”
    - **GOOD** – “I found this boss to be…”
- Use the right answer forms
ANSWER FORMS

My favorite types of games are:

In general I prefer games that are:

1 2 3 4 5

Easy  o  o  o  o  o  o

I believe that I am:
# RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPG</td>
<td>Coop, indie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMO or RTS</td>
<td>RPG (but really anything except sports games)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action adventure</td>
<td>Action adventure, survival horror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platformer</td>
<td>Action-Adventure / RPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellar door games - :P - simulation</td>
<td>Action games in general (2D, 3D, Platformers, FPS, Fighting etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zombie related</td>
<td>Tower defence, puzzle... I don't have a specific favorite.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE FOLLOW UP

• Don’t be afraid to follow up
  • Be Honest and Responsive

How many pieces of equipment have you bought do you think (all classes)?
I’ve attached screen cap of what equipment I got, along with skill tree for each characters. Looks like I remembered my levels wrong D: (sorry!) I’ve be had the chance to buy Sniper’s stuff.

How many times do you think you’ve died?
That’s hard to say, I’ve died a tonnn of times. Probably between 80-150? Mostly in Styx & Tartarus. And then there’s also dying in the Security drone.

How many stages do you think you’ve grinded for gold?
Not sure how to estimate this one... I haven’t really replayed a mission with the intention of grinding for gold, though I find that the New Foloi (Tartarus)

And finally, and this is a long shot, how many “levels” do you think you’ve gained from dying/grinding stages?
I think I was around Lv. 26 & lower after beating Lelantis, and am at around 35, so I guess about 10 levels per character? (After Lelantos, I played the
READING THE DATA

• LEARN EXCEL

• It’s only as good as what you extrapolate
EXACERBATE THE ISSUES

• Then fix it
PART 4

FIX
ISOLATE THE PROBLEMS

• Full Metal Furies was too difficult
COME UP WITH A SOLUTION

• “Make it easier”
  • NOT a solution

• Design a **REAL** solution
  • Less enemy HP, tweak econ, etc.

• Think of the consequences (3-Steps ahead)
  • Effects of your solution
  • Effects that cascade from that solution
  • Effects that cascade from the cascade
IS THIS THE “REAL” PROBLEM?

- Abraham Wald – Hungarian Mathematician
ISOLATE THE “REAL” PROBLEM

• Parsing feedback is both Science AND Art

• Game is too HARD?
  • Yes, but it’s misleading

• Game is too FRUSTRATING?
  • Yes, and this was the main problem
THE ACTUAL PROBLEM

• A stage in FMF takes around 5-10 minutes.
• When a player died, they had to replay the whole stage again
• Even 3-7 minutes of replaying stages was too frustrating (even with XP rewards)
  • So how do we fix this?
SOLUTION

• How do you alleviate frustration?
  • Added a checkpoint system
  • Jury rigged it onto existing camera triggers.
RE-CAP

• Game’s too hard!
  • **False Feedback** - No, too frustrating

• Lower frustration by lowering difficulty!
  • **False Dilemma** - OR we lower punishment

• Game designed for 1-life runs
  • **Pivot** – Add checkpoints

• We’ll have to remake every stage!
  • **Creative Solutions** - Jury-rig off camera
MORE THEN A PROTOTYPE

• If you are good at prototyping you’ll be good at making games.
THANK YOU

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