10 STEPS TO CREATIVE PROTOTYPING

1. MAKE CHANGE

   • "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

• 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

• Prototyping is about rapid experimentation
• Make Editable Values
• Don’t stop at “it works”
6 STEPS TO CREATIVE PROTOTYPING

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
PREP

THE PLAYTESTING CHECKLIST
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

- 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:

[ ] Role-playing games (RPG)
[ ] Coop, indie
[ ] MMORPG (MMO or RTS)
[ ] Other (specify):

In general I prefer games that are:

[ ] Easy
[ ] Medium
[ ] Difficult

I believe that I am:

[ ] Beginner
[ ] Medium
[ ] Pro

RESULTS
THE FOLLOW UP

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

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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