Game Design Document (GDD)

Rongkai Guo
Why Documentation?

• The purpose of design documentation is to express the vision for the game, describe the contents, and present a plan for implementation.

• Good and Bad comments
The Benefits of Guidelines

• Elimination of hype
• Clarity and certainty
• Ease of drafting schedules and test plans
• Varying from the guidelines
Documentation

• Concept Doc
  – Very small (2 or 3 pages)
  – Only has the core concepts

• "Sales" Doc
  – To obtain financing

• Functional Specification
  – Much larger
  – What the game is supposed to do

• Technical Specification
  – How it should do it

*Part of the design doc
Elevator Pitch

• Elevator Pitch
  – Should be able to describe the game in 2 or 3 sentences (or less)

My game is a cross between Borderlands 2 and My Pretty Pony in which the players hunt pink ponies from Hell.

+ = fun
General Concept Docs

- Story
- Characters
- Environment/Level
- Gameplay
- Art Description
- Sound
- User Interface and Controls
Sales Doc

• To obtain money
• It has much of the Concept Doc in it, plus
  – A Market Study
    • Are there other games that are similar?
    • Did they earn a lot of money
    • Are there other games that are going to launch at the same time?
  – A budget
    • How much to develop
    • How long will it take?
Formal Design Document

• 2 sections
  – Functional Specification
  – Technical Specification
NDAs

- Non Disclosure Agreements
  - Agreement not to steal ideas
  - Don’t worry about signing, but read
  - It’s very common
Examples

Any Alternatives?

- Jagex's James Sweatman thought central design documents don't always work, and the alternatives available.
- University always teaches how to write the best documentations. Why?
- Any bad experiences?
Reasons from James Sweatman

• They make too many assumptions
• They are always out of date
• No one reads them
• They are too rigid
• It doesn't allow for failure
James Sweatman's the alternative

***NO escaping documentation!

- Keep it light early on
- Keep it agile
- Keep it collaborative
- Research and record
- Don't do it in Word
• There is no design utopia!

• Always do your own research

• Or research with me 😊
What we need:

- The Name
- The desired audience
- Desired length of play
- Targeted platform
- Elevator Pitch
- The story (one paragraph)
- A description of what the player can do
- Game Art
- Plan/Schedule
- NDAs