

A report from Game Developer Conference Europe 2009 Jari-Pekka Kaleva

Table of content:

Ascending the Cursed Mountain - The Hollywood Model In Real Life by Harald Riegler, Bob Bates, Hannes Seifert and Hetal Bhuva.....	1
Flower – Design Postmortem by Kellee Santiago.....	2
Alternative Finance and New Development Business Models: Re- constructing the Value Chain by Sean Kauppinen, Risa Cohen, Kai Bodensiek, Nick Button-Brown and Peter Kirsch	2
New Human Machine Interfaces from Europe for Games by Malte Behrmann, Andreas Stock, Ulrich von Zadow, Mike Song and Pasi Pirttiahho	3
Localizing Today, Cost-Aware Quality Models for Market Expansion by Fabio Minazzi, Peter Croonen, Philippe Juton, Rolf Klischewski and Loreto Sanz Fueyo	3
Writing Interactive Narrative for a Mature Audience by David Cage	4
The Current State of Game Development Contracts by David S Rosenbaum, Konstantin Ewald and Vincent Scheurer	5
Digital Distribution by Nils-Holger Henning.....	5
Successful iPhone Product Development Experiences by Paul Bettner Jamie Gotch and Martijn Reuvers	6
Design, Constraints and Integrity by Dino Dini	6
Changes in the Games Industry – Free-to-play vs. Payment Models by Klaas Kersting	6
Choice – The Ultimate Game Mechanic by Peter Molyneux.....	7
Game Design 101 by Christoph Quas.....	7
Business 101 by Mario Wynands.....	8

From Max Payne to Alan Wake – Creating Intellectual Properties the Remedy Way by Matias Myllyrinne

Remedy, that identifies itself more as an entertainment company than a game company, builds its agenda on three principles: focus, people and brand. First principle, focus, means among other that they focus on the company and a game they are developing and on following a strategy and its implementation by cutting 'me-too' features (doing something just because everyone else is doing it).

Second principle, people, means that Remedy tries to get the best people to work for the company. It means follow the strategy and being engaged in its implementation, reducing bureaucracy to minimum by trusting on people, mixing people with different kinds of background with each other during a project in order to boost creativity and following 'the form follows the function'-principle.

'The form follows the function'-principle means that: all tools and technologies built should support the strategy of the company in addition to the game they actually developed for, teams should be kept small in order to be nimble, be capable to fast integration, achieve low overhead and be able to communicate easier, the teams should be scalable in order to achieve higher than average lead, production and direction capacity; and in addition outsourcing, freelancers and middleware should be used as much as possible to reach more flexibility and efficiency.

The third principle, branding, means that marketing is part of a project from beginning (Adding marketing as an after thought is like putting lipstick on a pig). This means that marketing has to be build in games from ground up and industry standard tick box marketing ('the build it and they will come' -strategy) has to die.

Consequently, according to Remedy the seven pillars for building a new IP are the following. Firstly there, has to be a strong lead character. It has to be iconic and easy to get on surface and it has to be deeper than usually in computer games. Secondly, focus has to be targeted to the lead character by using third person perspective. Thirdly, a game has to be made approachable for mainstream gamers (no WW2, dragons or hard-core sci-fi) by scaling difficulty all the time and keeping user interface simple. Fourthly, a game has to be cinematic. It means that a game has to have real world believability and stylistic and cinematic representation, and it has to be remembered that movie realism is not equal to realism. Fifthly, game has to have real world believability, which means that game premiere and setting has to be familiar to wide audience. Sixthly, a story has to be deep and atmosphere excellent.

Ascending the Cursed Mountain - The Hollywood Model In Real Life by Harald Riegler, Bob Bates, Hannes Seifert and Hetal Bhuva

During the production of Cursed Mountain the development of the game was done in a similar way to a movie production. This meant using multiple companies for different tasks instead of doing all the game in one company. Thus the team actually making the game was distributed all over the world (263 people in 16 companies in 14 countries in 17 locations were credited). This does not mean that development would have been done only in low-wage countries; instead development was done, where one could have the most reasonable results.

Basic reason for this experiment is the fact that there are never enough people in a so-called normal production model, when they are needed, but there are always too many people between projects. This forces companies to run many projects at the same time or fire and hire people constantly.

During the production the advantages of the distributed development mode were identified as following: faster than usual production cycle (10 months for pre-production and 19 for development), the documentation of project was elevator pitching (art of getting your point across to an executive in less than 60 seconds), which gave a clear and easy way to communicate a vision on who is doing what; partners succeeded surprisingly well on managing other partner.

On the other hand following issues clearly caused problems in the project: assuming roles and responsibilities among core partners without defining them clearly, the amount and importance of emotions that people, who are passionate to their work, have was underestimated and mismanaged; the dropout risk of suppliers was underestimated and not reacted early enough, the cultural differences between companies were underestimated and in addition a vertical slice was not polished early enough.

All in all, the Cursed Mountain project demonstrates that one cannot over invest on communicating and maintaining the common vision of a project. This means that there has to be a plan for co-ordination on all sides of a project, different roles in a project has to be clearly defined and requirements has to be defined clearly.

This also means that suppliers have to understand their role as a service provider and the company running the project has to prepare to be involved more in the creative process than in traditional outsourcing. Therefore it is important to choose reliable partners, that have to be involved in a project as early as possible and the starting point of production should be flexible in order to have best service providers in the project.

From practical side, the desktop computer conferences were found extremely useful for avoiding lots of trouble. It also helps to work according to one time zone and give open feedback all the time. In addition it is important to have a kick off meeting, where people can meet face to face, because it is important to have physical contact with a team one is going to work with.

In a distributed development model costs are higher, but people really work when you need them. Thus it is more suitable for independent and big players. Consequently most probably the traditional production model will not die, but in future distributed development model will have a stronger role.

Flower – Design Postmortem by Kellee Santiago

Thatgamecompany Ltd tries to push the limits and makes something that has not been done in other games before. The idea of what is hard fun in computer games is often limiting our ability to create games, although new kinds of games are needed to reach emotions. Therefore in Flower the company set as its main goal to create a game that generates feeling of peace and harmony cross culture, gender and age barriers. Therefore the level of reaching wanted emotions was also the main criteria for prototype testing. Consequently the main challenge of the project was to balance between good playability and intellectual goals. Thus play testing had a central role in guaranteeing the success of the project.

Alternative Finance and New Development Business Models: Re- constructing the Value Chain by Sean Kauppinen, Risa Cohen, Kai Bodensiek, Nick Button-Brown and Peter Kirsch

In a traditional publishing model a publisher works with a bank and takes the most of the risk and the profit. The model is considered to be hard on developers and therefore many alternatives for it have been developed.

In project financing there is a wide range of possibilities to complete a game project. Usually, first a financier takes a look in a game and evaluates its chances of success: game concept, project team, other infrastructure behind it and market situation. The investor wants to have as much security as it can to balance risks.

In slate financing (providing finance for a portfolio of games) projects under 2 million euros are not usually financed. That model also needs to have many projects at the same time to secure the risk, if one of the projects fails. Often a developer, pitching developers of the game, might come part of the investment deal. Sometimes also publishers offer investment possibilities on their games for third party. Usually investment funds make money in five-year cycles and IP is kept as warranty for that time. After the cycle ends, some funds return IP to developer for some money and some sell it at open market; some may also want to have a royalty from the IP.

A completion bond is insurance for an investor securing that a project stays in a budget. For a bond, usually size of five percent of a production budget, it guarantees to give money back to publisher, if the project goes off the budget or gets late. The bond secures the completion of the project, because someone looks the game from the perspective of risk, time and money. Consequently this also means that as it gives production support, it also helps a production company not to fall, if the game fails. The bond also helps developers by securing the off-production money after the game has been given to publisher and protects developers from change in scope of the project from publishers' side. As the bond is insurance, it does not have any interest on failure or success of the game after it is finished and therefore IP goes back according the agreement between publisher and developer. In any case developers should secure that money for the completion bond is placed on the top of the project money and not taken away from it.

There are also other funding opportunities (e.g. direct funding from venture capital companies), but the general trend can be described as following: also in future the one who takes the risk takes the reward, and every project and its financing will be unique. When comes owning an IP, it should be remember that only one percent of IPs ever come anything else than one game.

When it comes to alternative financing, it should be remembered that most of the self-publishing deals are actually co-publishing deals, where developer goes equal to financier, and thus they require lots of work from the company on bigger games. In the end having financing is all about being the best (the best history, the best background, the best game etc.). One has to be able to tell the financier in two minutes, why the game is great (not me too game, why it is special, why it is successful and why you are the best creator for it).

New Human Machine Interfaces from Europe for Games by Malte Behrmann, Andreas Stock, Ulrich von Zadow, Mike Song and Pasi Pirttiaho

As Wii has demonstrated new human-machine interfaces are relevant to markets and therefore now there are more and more new platforms and models coming. It should be remembered that the new human machine interfaces offer possibilities for European companies to conquer larger market shares, e.g. Ball-it, Archimedes solutions, Scoreloop and Digivinner. Wii is a good example from the fact that it should always been looked what is going on in the whole world, not just in USA.

- Ball-It has developed "Blobo," a spherical computer controller. The Blobo is shaped like a ball and can be held in a palm. The controller can be used to control games, etc by shaking it and pretending to throw it.
- Archimedes solutions develops interactive presentations systems. They offer among other a session desk making it possible to play together, share information or experiencing vividly presented content over a motion-sensitive desk. Company also develops interactive tools for science museums.
- Scoreloop develops the infrastructure technologies to help their partners improve the gaming experience with global high scores, player challenges, and by connecting friends by leveraging social networks. Real player challenges let users pit themselves against friend or foe, keeping them coming back for more. Not only will they play more often, but they'll also invite their friends to join in on the fun. In the future money comes from a community playing games against each other, not from the games themselves. And public and private zones come arenas for them. In the future money comes from a community playing games against each other, not from the games themselves. And public and private zones come arenas for them.
- Digivinner has developed a new low-cost 3D camera which is able to track up to 15 objects as long as their remain within a 5 meter radius.

Effective In-Game Advertising Placements – The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly by Brian Blau

In-game advertising means in practice branded spaces within a game. These spaces are either in game (while playing) or out-game (in menus etc.), either static/integrated (not changing after created during the development of a game) or dynamic (can be changed over the internet connection). Thus game developers should think their in-game space as valuable real estate they can have revenue from. For game player this means cheaper games and new knowledge about brands.

In order the in-game advertising to be effective: the brands should be provided with positive light while playing, the visibility of ads has to be tracked and reported and the ad-space opportunities of the gameplay has to be maximized without having a negative effect on gameplay. This means that design of aesthetics of ads in gameplay is the ultimate measure of success.

The ad design itself consists of five different parts: layout and placement, look and feel, behaviour and implementation, coding and testing, and team collaboration and process. As ads are influential part of the game, it is important to include both sides (game and advert) in design process.

A design process for in-game ads should be fit in a development schedule. In the kick-off of a game project: performance goals per an ad contract should be reviewed, an effective ad strategy should be coached and inventory (game look and gameplay) should be analyzed. Based on this an ad strategy should be created for the design of the ads in the game and design process itself should be done in collaboration with developers, producers and representatives of publishing team. SDK (Software Development Kit) and technical integration of ads should be always part of the game. There has to be a possibility to test tools and sample ads. Also an ad documentation has to be developed for art teams. In addition it is important that all bugs are fixed before the release of the ad system.

An effective ad strategy secures that impression of ads is secured. For billboard ads this means size (at least 1,5% of screen at any angle with texture dimension from 256 to 1024), visibility (time on screen during playing a game, e.g. 10 seconds in multiple locations and multiple game sessions) and angle (65 degrees to camera, readable). Usually ad deals consists collection of creatives (banners, billboards etc.) in a game, amount of them delivered over time and impression goal.

This means that as ads have to be placed on players' path in a game, the design of a game can directly effect to the revenue. The types of the in-game advertisements can be e.g.: billboards and signs, overlays and menu items, computers, rich media, 3D ad objects (e.g. cars) and text.

It should always be remembered that ads in a game can be a sensitive subject for a publisher and therefore information has to be circulated, all documents have to be provided and the communication has to be facilitated. One should always take care that there is not in the end too many ads in a game, ads fit in a game environment, ads may change and ads fit to the game genre and its target group.

Localizing Today, Cost-Aware Quality Models for Market Expansion by Fabio Minazzi, Peter Croonen, Philippe Juton, Rolf Klischewski and Loreto Sanz Fueyo

As the result of economic crisis publishers are looking carefully how they use every penny in their production. Consequently before the crisis there were eight to twelve deals all the time for companies localizing games, now, as it is difficult to find exporters for games, games are localized for smaller amount of languages (usually German and French; Spanish, Italian and Dutch are lacking behind) and sometimes only part of the game material is translated.

Unfortunately developers and translators are still living in separate worlds. It should be noted that the most expensive part of the localization is the internal testing of it. Distribution and developing a localized version itself is quite cheap. Thus in order in to make localization successful, the code has to be made ready for localization (e.g. Arabic is written from left to right and text motor has to be gender aware). Thus the localization partners should always be involved in a project from beginning, because the needs of the translation should be taken account at early development stage and the feel of the game has to be communicated to the translators as well as possible.

In order to make translation more effective, a translation memory system should be used. It might make text to sound monotonous, but in the end it is better for users, because terms will be more accurate (wizard is wizard, not a magician). Though this should be handled with care to avoid machine like translation. Also centres of translating excellence should be created to make greater flexibility possible in translation. It should also be remembered that there is no proper rules for subtitles in games as there are for films

As game developers tend to make decisions on what languages the game will be translated at last minute, good tools would be needed to add changes in the source text at late level of game development, as well as possibility to see the translated text alive on the game while translating it. Also use of variables should be avoided, as for translator translating 500 sentences is easier than translating one sentence with 500 variables. It would also be possible to use more symbols, but unfortunately e.g. in USA everything have to be explained by using words for cultural reasons.

Community localizing might be a solution for some games, but not for all, as it is a huge risk for publishers, because poor quality of translation is potentially a huge risk for their IP. Thus in general, translators specialized on game localization should be used, because normal independent translation studios are not used to the needs of outsourcing.

Going global will be an essential part of the business models of the future. And going global means going local, as children and elderly need localized products. It should be also remembered that it just is less entertaining for many to play a game on a foreign language. In addition publishers should be rewarded from localization by e.g. public funding, as unfortunately public does not necessary demand excellent translation from localized games (e.g. in Germany translators are not really respected and do not have their part of artistic prestige).

Writing Interactive Narrative for a Mature Audience by David Cage

The reason why we now talk so much about emotions is the fact that demographics of gamers have changed. Today about 40 percent of people playing computer games are females, 75 percent are over 18 and average age of them is 35. But at the same time games have not really changed during last 20 years, although also game designers are getting older.

Emotions can be divided in two groups: primitive emotions and social emotions. The primitive emotions are emotions like fear, aggressiveness, excitement and frustration etc. In general, the emotions about survival, the emotions with strong body response. The social emotions like empathy, happiness, sadness, jealousy, anger and shame are about sharing emotions. In art emotions exist to trigger emotions, as humans like to feel. It does not really matter, if emotions are pleasant or unpleasant. Therefore art (and entertainment) can be seen as emotion simulator and that is the reason why most of the art forms offer depth and meaning.

So far computer games have focused more on the primitive emotions, because they are easy to trigger, they work very well for kids and teenagers and they work well in patterns. Consequently most games have no meaning, as their stories are very basic, violence is usually only motto and they do not really have anything to say. Also the narrative structure of games is broken. Normally story and action progress simultaneously, but games work like game movies, where narration is in the beginning and action comes after that; no one really cares about the story.

Today games' characters are caricatural, as they usually have clear and simple goals. They show from they look what they are and in addition they are created to look cool for teenagers. In movies characters have background, believable and motivated reasons to act, relationships, narrative and emotional arc – in general they are created to generate identification and empathy.

Thus it can be said that games' art is mediocre compared to movies, but luckily there are at least some games that are comparable.

When games for mature audiences are created one has to make a decision between the primal and the social emotions, between toys and art, kids and adults, sand box and roller coaster, journey and achievements (for kids achievements work, for adults the goal is in journeys) and traditions and new paradigms (why games have to become more difficult as you progress).

Consequently the main paradigm of game has to be redefined. Game developers should assume that they are creating games for adults, not for teenagers. Game experience has to be redefined as a journey and not as a challenge. Developers have to get rid of patterns. Rules have to be broken to create new paradigms. Games are art, not toys. Interactive story telling is the answer for all of this and for that we need following rules.

Firstly, free your minds. Place creativity at the heart of game and do not follow trends. Instead follow instincts and open games to all emotions. Put narrative at the heart of experience and offer experiences that bear meaning. In addition, dare to evoke new themes and understand the importance of the characterization.

Secondly, find new answers. One has to rethink interfaces and make them contextual. One has to think narrative, emotion and interactivity at the same time. Game developers have to invent their own narrative grammar. And most importantly, non-creative people have to be kept out from a creative room, game designers have to become authors and good interactive writers have to be trained.

Thirdly, forget technology. Technology is just a tool, not a goal. Believable vehicles for emotions should be created instead.

Fourthly, be proud of who we are. One should stop making stupid games and prove that we are an emergent culture. This means that censorship has to be taken to normal standards (same rules for games than for movies and television),

Fifthly, be ready for new business-models. E-distribution is happening now. People want new formats and thus it is game developers' responsibility to be creative, ambitious, early, patient and innovative with business models.

Sixthly, have courage and patience: evangelize publishers, evangelize press, evangelize the market, be ready to lose your core audience and have enough time.

Because it is difficult, risky and painful, no one lives by these rules at the moment. The game industry is at the moment in a crossroad. It can either become comics (only for teenagers and have very limited market), movies (different games for different audiences) or a Pixar model (being creative, original, visionary and is creating trends instead of following them)

Comment by Jari-Pekka: As digitalization is highly changing the borders between different kinds of art forms, the crossroads model is unlikely to happen. Most probably, as a result of digitalization, moving images, cartoons, text and interaction will be mixed up so well with each other that traditional borders between arts will disappear although art institutions will fight strongly against it. Also, if game designers really want to become authors they should really start to celebrate interactive media artists as they already have a status in the margin of art field. By using their artistic prestige it would be much easier to bring rules of cultural production (prestige as capital etc.) also to the field of computer games.

The Current State of Game Development Contracts by David S Rosenbaum, Konstantin Ewald and Vincent Scheurer

Digital shift changes things in computer game industry and developers have to find ways to benefit from new business models.

Developers' interest on online games varies from country to country. This is understandable, because at the moment there are some dangerous bottlenecks in mobile game industry (e.g. the contracts of Apple, and only one medium for distribution for games, too many games for good ones to be noticed from the mass etc.).

It should be remembered that exclusivity is not that important in digitally distributed games as in traditional games, because on digital distribution one has many platforms to distribute games. This provides new opportunities for good revenue deals, although there is a strong downwards-prizing pressure on online platforms. As the example of steam shows, digital sift also offers possibilities for constant revenue from older games.

Comment by Jari-Pekka: this might mean that as in the field of literature there will be two kinds of game developers: those who make games that sell well over long period of time and those that make games that sell a lot over short period of time.

In the beginning of computer game industry it took time to have a marketing budget for traditional games, now online games are facing the same challenge. Luckily, unlike Apple, distribution system based on PC is ready for some marketing quite quickly.

In computer game industry it is quite challenging to define quality and thus it should not be mentioned in contracts. Usually quality is either linked to the delivery of game or to good reviews. The problem is the fact that publishers' editorial changes can also cause bad quality, thus quality also depends on a partner you are dealing with. In addition, game reviews do not take account the budget of games, and also some genres have poorer scores than others, but one has to accept that critic scores are here to stay.

Agreements usually give a publisher power over distributors considering when developers will have creative rights to their works. At the moment public does not really know, who creates the games. When developers get as famous as film directors and their brands, they will also have more power. Unfortunately contracts will not provide more power to developers in near future

Meanwhile time of getting a contract is getting longer and longer. Some developers are even forced to work without a contract. For them it is not matter of refinancing, it is huge risk to start without a contract to protect you. Thus at least a short form of agreement should be always created.

Consequently it can be said that battle days of agreements are coming back with sequels that practically give IPs to publishers. In the same way as one has to narrow the time periods and themes for competing products in contracts, one has to be also careful that agreement does not forbid from developing any game at all. Arbitrations should be avoided as long as possible, because they are very expensive. In UK and USA it is usually more expensive than going to court, but on the other hand they are also more private than courts. It should be remembered that going to court in Germany is quicker and cheaper than in USA.

Digital Distribution by Nils-Holger Henning

There is a heavy competition in hardcore online games and casual online games, but between them is a huge gap, which is Bigpoint's market segment.

Everything has changed during 1990s and 00s. During those years our life has become digital. Therefore it can be said that the future is in digital competition. This means that traditional product release expenses have completely been eliminated. Therefore time from the end of production to markets can be reduced to minutes instead of days, which leads to higher profitability per unit, higher volumes and lower costs. All one has to do is convince customers that one's products are worth to pay. One should also be prepared to fact that today customers react and give feedback fast.

There is triple win principle for success: content (free for big audience), monetary valuation (making profit out of the traffic by ads and simultaneously establish continuous transactional revenue systems) and community (keeping it attractive). One should also play fair, e.g. Bigpoint directs part of their traffic to their partners.

This is basically same model as giving away free razors and selling blades. All games are free, but money comes partly from advertising and mostly from virtual items and subscriptions to premium accounts. Already the profit margins for successful online games exceed the traditional retail products. Online games are also hard to steal for pirates. Average budget of online games was first very cheap, but now static browser games can cost more than million euros. But consumers are ready pay, as there is a change in the game playing and the buying habits of customers, and this changes the business models and power structure of the whole industry.

At the moment paying systems form a barrier that limits growth. For every target group there has to be a right medium of paying, especially premium SMS is excellent for young audience.

One has to take care of protection of minors, for example by building limitations and monitoring. But in the end, the parents are those who give the budget for their children.

Successful iPhone Product Development Experiences by Paul Bettner Jamie Gotch and Martijn Reuvers

In order to prepare himself or herself for iPhone development, one should keep in mind that iPhone is not dedicated for gaming: the OS X is running in the back all the time, and there is no RAM to be used always. There is also a 10mb download limit from phone network, one should stay under it and remember that Apple adds always 300kb to one's application. In addition one should do testing in all generations of iPhones, iPods and OS X versions. And one should also make sure that game goes to safe mode, when a phone call comes.

An application for the iPhone can be easily done 1-3 persons teams. The certification process of iPhone is very light, thus it will not do testing for him or her, but at least it allows one to update content all the time. One should remember that there are only 100 vouchers to be shared for pre-release reviews; use of those has to be planned carefully. It is also worth to note that releasing an update to a game, makes the game appear under 'new'-category in AppStore.

Lots of customers want to see some kind of trailer of a game they are paying, but there is no point on releasing a light version of the game. Customers also need some support (e.g. for updating the game), as the AppStore does not work perfectly.

Currently there seems to be race to the bottom with prices in Apple Store. At the moment 99 cents is the must; apart from big IPs. Thus one cannot raise prices, but it is already bad to lower prices, because it makes customers unhappy. In general, compared to other platforms iPhone games should always be designed for mature audience. There is not also good tool to debug games very quickly and therefore unit testing should be done well. Bigger updates are better than smaller updates every now and then. It is also better to release game first and add well-balanced content constantly to it.

Design, Constraints and Integrity by Dino Dini

The answer to a question, what is design, is that it is management of constraints. Constraints give the form to design. Design is a collection of decisions that create a set of constraints which give a concept to its identity.

Constraints are either negotiable (a constraint that maybe applied or not depending on circumstances) or non-negotiable (a constraints which, if broken, would cause a significant change to the identity of the design). In the beginning everything is negotiable (time, budget, specification), thus first one has to identify and select non-negotiable constraints and while negotiations negotiable becomes non-negotiable and identity of the design increases.

When it comes to non-negotiable constraints, human beings are very good at detecting whether something has integrity. We like things that have a strong identity and that requires a strong integrity. Thus also successful designs demonstrate a strong identity. It should be remembered that integrity does not guarantee success, but lack of it causes failure.

Integrity comes from questions like: how well something maintains its identity (maintains its form)? A successful design always has integrity, because lack of integrity is a result of loss of identity. Strong identity is essential and without integrity constraint is nothing. Thus the non-negotiable constraints should be chosen well, and one should stick to them. If you have to change them, do it with full consideration of how that will effect to the identity of your design.

Changes in the Games Industry – Free-to-play vs. Payment Models by Klaas Kersting

The full price retail is coming to the end. Alone in USA sales have come down 29 percent. The whole retail market is a systematic error: dominance of retailers, bigger projects bring bigger risks of failure, it is a hit driven business, the markets are crowded, it offers only one-time earnings and distribution rules content.

The Internet is a dispersive power as it gives access to media to everyone and concerns everyone (print, TV, music etc.) Consequently the cost of distributing content and software has fallen to zero. This means that it's all about customer again. Customer wants have what he or she is looking for as easy and fast as possible. Then he or she wants to try it and pay a fair price of it.

This is a challenge for computer game industry as it must be as easy as possible to find and buy the games. Now player is forced to register the game online, to activate the game online, to install other software to play the game, to play the game on only one platform, copy protection etc. All this is not making playing easy at the moment. As iTunes (fair price, easy to

pay, even easier to pay again, easy backup, easy way to get and manage music, different bundle sizes) has demonstrated meeting the challenge pays off.

Consequently in future the gameplay will be in the centre of the focus. Where as business models will be based on full prize retail combined to subscription, full prize retail combined to timecards, only to subscription only to time cards or free-to-play.

Some say Free-to-play is not a business model and it is true. Free to play is the beginning of the new business models. People are e.g. buying for virtual stuff for: faster game progress, enhanced game experience, individualization or vanity. A good example of this is Framville in Facebook. It should be noted that especially Asians are in to free-to-play.

Therefore in future all business models will be present, but the relevance of them will shift, as Free-to-play will become dominant. Even WoW will be a browser-based game in some years

Choice – The Ultimate Game Mechanic by Peter Molyneux

For Molyneux word 'choice' means allowing people to feel to be in control, allowing unique experiences, increasing players emotions, giving more unforgettable moments and focusing on things what people are most likely to do in the different parts of the world. Therefore, the outcome of the choice should not be too unexpected, totally separate threads should not be branched instead of a wave, gameplay should not be forgotten and one should not spend too much time on small choices.

In Fable every choice has a consequence. The effects of those choices were created by simulation, rumour systems and regions. The biggest choices were enabled by emotional bonds (like the one with a dog).

In Fable 3 the same format could not be used anymore, because players must be always be surprised and expect unexpected. Choices and consequences have still a big role, but the game is bold with the game mechanics, it questions its foundation stones with story and drama. The game will make the player to rule, because they want to reach the feel of power. Choices made by the player will effect to the whole kingdom and the power will corrupt as the choices are made between poverty and greed, tyranny and compassion and progress and tradition. There will be totally new game mechanics for this, called Judgements

Game Design 101 by Christoph Quas

Game design is not just about having ideas. It is about building up games that can be synthesised, distilled and done in time with limited resources. The best ideas are found by brainstorming in early concept phase. If you share ideas with other in the production team, you receive feedback and at the same time explain the concept of the game to members of your team.

Selling ideas (also known as pitching) is essential in pre Game Design Document (GDD) phase. GDD itself should be done well, as it the only way to avoid failed projects. For bigger projects, creating a GDD forms the biggest work in the project. GDD should always be the art and craft of efficient communication. It should be made by thinking elementary and it should adapt to your target groups' needs (the users of the GDD).

During the project the motivation and directing is important. The vision has to be kept and the lighthouse of it in the company can only be the designer. Some say also producer can be in charge of it, but they tend to think a little bit too pragmatic. Thus the team of those two is the best combination. Especially vision has to be communicated clearly; overview and monitoring of it should be done carefully.

Only in smaller productions game designer can be in charge of practical issues like level design, scripting or storyboarding and writing (most commonly the most unprofessional part of the production). Usually it is the management that is taken care by the game designers (at least senior or leading game designers), which means leading a design team, being a link to the project management and creating roadmaps and schedules. Usually communication to publisher and press is taken care by project lead.

It takes talent, skill, experience, creativity and understanding the state of art in business to be a good game designer. This requires flexibility and adaptability, ability to motivate, communication skills, thinking visionary and being pragmatic (hardest part) and autonomy and teamwork.

Thus designing is a tough job, because not every game you make is a game you want to play, you are under pressure, you are right in the line of fire (thick skin helps and being able to stand against the wind), working overtime is just normal, you are the project from cradle to grave, no holidays (usually between projects, but when you take it serious you do not have much time for own life), 90 percent of the work is paper work and nobody wants to read your paper work (motivate yourself, no one will ever tell you, if you do good job).

On the other hand design is damn cool job, because every day is different, you are the central hub of the production, it's a very team-oriented, social job, you get touch with totally new field of knowledge, thousands of people might enjoy your work, you can make the change and you can see your dream realized.

If one wants to get to industry, one should let the company feel that you want to work for them. Thus good questions in interviews consider health insurance, overtime payment, benefits and bonuses, vacation policy and sick leaves.

One should not forget to create business cards and good portfolio. One should stay true to himself or herself and not lie. One should stay positive, that is the way to make your way.

If you want to keep your work in a company, one should remember that experience counts, one should always do a bit more than expected, one should show that he or she cares, one should temper his or her ego and one should remember to be loyal.

Business 101 by Mario Wynands

There are nine lessons in running the studio. These are principles and tools to consider and apply.

Firstly one should build a business, not a game. Successful game is not necessarily a successful company. For a good business a long-term view is needed. The work has to be sustainable and for that someone has to be responsible for business. A three years strategic plan should thus be created and kept up to date and it should be communicated to staff regularly.

Secondly, people are one's biggest asset and biggest cost. They are the ones who either make it or break it. Bringing wrong people in is extremely costly and thus a formal recruitment process should be created to recruit team of experienced, communicative and personable and proactive workers who are inherent talents. The staff should also be worked to retain and develop. For all this one should read a book called Good to Great by Jim Collins.

Thirdly, the cash flow is the king. For this timing is the key. One has to plan his or her cash finance in order to have forward knowledge on when you will need money. Thus 24 months cash flow projection spreadsheet should be created and kept up to date. This also means checking proposed payment schedules against projections and organising credit facility before you need it.

Fourthly the risk should be spread. One should not rely only to one source of money, because projects, publishers, platforms or even currencies might fail. Thus one should create resource plan for moving to multiple projects and engage with multiple publishers. Also discuss foreign exchange accounts and do hedging with your accountant or banker

Fifthly invest in reflecting and improving. Look at your efficiency, quality and creativity, because it will lead to increase in profitability and staff satisfaction. Therefore do post project reviews, maintain list of issues and improvements, assign resources and manage expectations

Sixthly publishers are not evil, if you do not let them be. "Evil" usually just is habits and process they are implementing. Pay attention to contracts, feature creeps, milestone approvals and payments. For that one should have a lawyer specialized in computer games, ensure that there is a change request process in contracts, have automated bank payment notifications and outlooks reminders for invoices and milestone due dates as well as follow up after grace period.

Seventhly earning royalties is about mechanism, not about the size of the number (royalty percentage). Thus newer negotiate the number without a net receipts definition and recoup mechanism. One should create a model for deductions, royalties and recoup for each contract before starting a negotiation and seriously consider proposing recoup threshold.

Eighthly brand awareness is important. One should create a PR list and use it to make press releases about newsworthy items. One should get a logo and URL in the game where possible and undertake interviews and opinion polls

Ninthly, community can provide significant leverage, because then consumers can share your story. One should remember that a community is fast to set up, it takes long time to build it and it is quick to anger. Thus one should start community forums (twitter, Facebook, etc.) and keep community informed and encourage community to spread the word; cross promote.