

Lecture 15:
Final Presentations

Today the students are presenting their final presentations. They went through dry run presentations last week, and were given videotapes of their presentation in order for the teams to make improvements in their presentations.

The invited industry judges have imaginary venture capital of \$10 million to invest. The judges have been instructed to act as real venture capitalists and ask probing questions and decide which game presents the greatest opportunity for investment with the highest likelihood of return.

Introduction and Background of the Judges

Steve Meretzky

Game designer for 20 years.

Chris Canfield

Works at Harmonics Music Systems and works with microphones guitars.

Kent Querk

Independent game designer/developer and has been working in the industry for 10 years.

Rick Goodman

Game designer for 10-11 years. Focused on real time sims.

Tom Lin

He is with Denver Studios and does contract work on NextGen platforms. The company is just out of the pitch phase and has been around for 5 yrs

Tom Walford

Worked at EA, Atari, many others.

The presentations were in the following order:

“Goldworld”

Eight of the world’s greatest cities have vanished. A team is exploring the tunnels that were left in the cities’ place. The team pre-recorded a portion of their presentation that summarized the game. The game tells a story, but also has a language learning component. Goldworld will be a fun game for both casual gamers and hardcore gamers. There’s a translator role whose primary objective is to translate. He can translate the words on an ancient ruin if need be.

Kafka Revisited

Loosely based on *The Trial* by Kafka. The character wakes up one day and realizes he has been convicted of a crime of which he has no knowledge. He has 72 hours to set things straight. There are three primary worlds, Natural, The Law (very Orwellian-sharp lines, dark), and the Underworld (much more abstract). The player has to travel through all these rules. The player decides where the character is and at what times. The adventure game is based on information and doesn't utilize a gun or violence as other games do. The character uses his PDA as his tool to obtain information in addition to interacting with people in their respective worlds. The game will appeal to casual gamers and moves quickly. Players can replay the games and have a completely different experience.

Kafka Questions and Answers:

The game design is short, 72 hours. Why would I play the game again if I know how it ends?

Some players will be interested initially with the wide design. We're hoping for players that will be interested in meandering.

How will you make it clear that there's a wide design?

When you start the game, your home base should be different which will make them curious.

You said there are 3 basic worlds. It's obvious that one of those is the obvious path. How do you rationalize developing the other worlds?

You start in the bureaucratic world. Being out of the bureaucratic world isn't the optimal place to be. There are incentives to go into the other worlds to pick up information. The lawyer gives you advice, and you'll want to go back into the bureaucratic world.

Why invest money that is shooting for a subsection of a subsection of a dying world?

The market we're going for is a broad casual gamer. The Kafka design has worked many times in different media outlets (books, movies, etc.). We're trying to bring the Kafka experience into the interactive world.

Dreamwalkers

Dreamwalkers have the ability to leave their own dream to shake the dreams of others. Cole is the main character and is actually trapped in a wheelchair in the waking world. He was once quite active, but an accident rendered him paraplegic. Sascha uses substances to allow him to have the same abilities as Cole. The players are thrown into the sequence immediately instead of having a slow ramp up phase to get the players interested. Echo is a female player who is trapped in the Dreamworld. The morphae that controls her body is part of a conspiracy.

Dreamwalkers Questions and Answers

You had mentioned some RPG's for games that were part of a series. Do you have any examples of ones that were first runs or not part of a series?

It's worth noting that when an RPG series from Japan are translated over to the US, the first game doesn't perform very well. Going with a publisher with a good track record, these games tend to have high sales. One example is the dot hack series which was a series that was new to the US but had anime tie ins and moved upwards of .5 million copies.

Have you considered getting an "M" rating because of the drug use by Sascha
We've considered it. This aspect wouldn't be emphasized or romanticized. We would be hoping to get a teen rating since it isn't romanticized.

How much time does the player spend in the real world?

The real world is primarily used as cut sequences.

What separates this from other RPG's?

A better concept system, and that we're attempting to create two worlds (dream and waking world).

Starfighters

High Concept is MS Flight Simulator meets X-Wing. It has a long gentle learning curve. Target audience is space SIM players and fight players who want an action packed game.

Starfighters Questions and Answers:

Is there a multi player component?

The focus of the game will be on a more massive level of 32-64 players.

Did you consider licensing a brand for this? Like Star Trek, Star Wars, etc.?

This can apply to various sci-fi worlds. That would have increased costs, but the additional sales would offset that, and it's something we would consider.

What this seems to describe is an Indie game. I would consider dropping the story. Get your battles right and think Net Warrior. This works best as a smaller Indie project, small team, and see if you can get the biggest bang for the buck.

One of the advantages of Microsoft Simulator is that the players want to learn more about the world. How would that apply to a game without a time frame that hasn't been set?

We want to create a very real feeling fantasy world. To some extent that would create an argument for licensing of something like Star Wars because that world has already been created.

The Results

There was a great deal of discussion as some of the ideas were really unique, niche oriented, or had great marketing potential but no one of the ideas had it all.

Overall comments:

Goldworld

Considered the most professional in terms of its presentation and did the best job in explaining the teams. The judges felt the explanation of the team members was very important.

Dreamwalkers

Conveyed a good sense between their concept and the business that was proposed. Judges felt it had some of the strongest commercial potential.

The judges felt Dreamwalkers had greater potential than what the team actually showed. The presentation was not as good as the idea.

Kafka

Had a bunch of concepts. They like that you don't have to pay an IP license to anyone. Kafka was presented in an interesting way, but didn't explain in a convincing way why people would buy the game. The game idea was very convoluted.

Starfighters

They had the most realistic sense of the business model.

Final Results

Dreamwalkers had great potential because the concept was so unique.

Goldworld wasn't the winner because of its lack of defined business structure.

Kafka didn't present the concept well enough.

Starfighters lost a key vote because the niche appeared too narrow.

Winner

Dreamwalkers won because of its originality and a business model that had the greatest potential.

Closing Remarks

The Judges felt the presentations were testimony to an excellent group of students because the expertise of the team members resulted in vastly different, original games from each team.