

Becoming a videogame developer

Agenda

- The games industry
- How to get there

2

False ideas about the industry

- Being a game developer is not a serious job
- You absolutely need a degree to work in games
- You get creative freedom as a game artist
- Only the big-name companies are worth working for
- You can only get a job if you know the right people
- We all drive Ferraris

False ideas about the industry

- A bit of reality:

- ✓ Overtime is omnipresent in the games industry
- ✓ Spreadsheet philosophy in big companies
- ✓ Too little time and too much fear for true innovation
- ✓ Gaming does not = \$
- ✓ The quality of your work is more important than a degree

The best damn job in the world

- The good stuff:

- ✓ You get paid to work with your hobby
- ✓ You get to be creative beyond limits
- ✓ You get to work of the bleeding edge of entertainment
- ✓ You will work in a very laid back atmosphere
- ✓ You are judged on your skills - not education or age

Modding and the MOD community

- Gives you contacts
- Experience with working in teams
- Gain valuable experience
- Building a portfolio
- Don't do it to get rich
- Shows passion
- Highly complex today
- Can almost secure you a job if done right

Getting your name out

- Things you should do to promote your work:
 - ✓ Regularly post your work on popular forums for feedback and self-promotion
 - ✓ Take part in competitions on forums and CG sites
 - ✓ Build and maintain an up-to-date portfolio website and link to it in your online profiles and on screenshots that you release
 - ✓ Team up with others to create custom content for games and spread the word through IRC chat rooms, game news sites and forums

Getting your name out

- If you regularly post your work through the channels I described and if you keep creating content that is good the online community WILL notice you
- Most big forums online are visited by film and game industry professionals and are therefore a perfect place not only for being seen by potential employers and making contacts but also for getting the best possible feedback on your work

Building a network

- Good contacts and networking skills are essential for survival in the industry
- Contacts alone will NOT get you jobs. You still need to kick ass
- You may go directly through your contact when applying for a job instead of going through the long query with Human Resources. Referrals are a big plus
- The chain reaction effect. Second- or third degree contacts can be just as valuable
- Try to get at least 3 contacts in every major location (Copenhagen, Montreal, SF Bay Area, etc...)

9

Building a network

I've made most of my contacts through the mod community, online forums and IRC. I know people in every major location including people at Valve, Crytek, Gearbox, etc. Being well-connected in this industry can be very beneficial for your career.

- How can I make contacts like that?

✓ It's really not that hard. As mentioned earlier on, regularly post work online and try to get people's IMs and chat them up directly and ask for crits and comments on your work.

✓ Do NOT talk to people just so you can use them as contacts. Nothing will piss people off faster than that and it will make you look like a jerk. Build friendships.

Building a network

Where to start:

- ✓ Spiludvikling – Best general game dev site in danish
www.spiludvikling.dk
- ✓ Polycount – A 3D/2D community
www.planetquake.com/polycount
- ✓ CGTalk – A 3D/2D/VFX community
www.cgtalk.com
- ✓ Mapcore – A game design community
www.mapcore.net
- ✓ 3dMaxer – Denmark's biggest modelling forum
www.3dmaxer.dk

11

Creating a killer portfolio

- Introduction :

The portfolio is your ultimate selling point. This is where degrees and credentials are outweighed by the quality of your work. Your portfolio is essentially what will get you jobs, or keep you from getting jobs.

There are many “golden rules” to creating a successful online portfolio that attracts potential employers. Keep these rules in mind when you create your portfolio and be very critical with yourself when you do so.

Creating a killer portfolio

- The golden rules:

- ✓ Keep it simple and easy to navigate

- The purpose of a portfolio is to present your work and your contact info. No artsy flash menus please.

- ✓ No splash pages

- The first thing a visitor should see on your site is your work. Don't tease, satisfy.

- ✓ No obscure plug-ins or unnecessary popups

- Don't make the visitor download stuff before he can view the content of your site. Popups are annoying.

13

- ✓ Be specific about your desired position

- The industry is requiring more and more "specialists" and less and less "generalists".

Creating a killer portfolio

- More golden rules:

- ✓ Multiple layers = bad

Splash page → News page → Portfolio page → 3D Art → Charters →
Man with Axe thumbnail → Man with Axe enlarged.

- ✓ Vague thumbnails = bad

A thumbnail exists to offer a *relevant* preview of a larger image.

- ✓ Bad lighting

Why would I want to hire you if your work is so badly lit for me that I can't even see it?

- ✓ Keep personal stuff and your portfolio separate

Your portfolio is not a place to talk about what bands you like and what you do in your free time. A portfolio is not a personality test. A job interview is.

The job interview

- Your work is good enough
- Personality and chemistry
- Usually 3 key persons: HR, team lead and specialist
- Dress casual
- Be calm and talkative
- Sample questions:
 - What games have you played recently?
 - What are your weak /strong points?
 - Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

15

What to do once you are in

- Random tips
 - ✓ Keep doing sparetime projects and keep an up-to-date portfolio
 - ✓ Your first job should be about experience, not money
 - ✓ Don't jump ship too often
 - ✓ Earn respect
 - ✓ Keep working on your skills. Keep improving. Keep seeking new challenges!
 - ✓ Don't let crunch ruin your personal life. Whatever they tell you, it's not worth it.

IO Interactive

- ✓ Founded in 1998 by a group of 7
- ✓ Denmark's biggest studio
- ✓ About 230 employees
- ✓ Located at Kalvebod Brygge, Copenhagen
- ✓ Satellite studio in China
- ✓ Outsourcing partners around the world
- ✓ All titles have sold more than 1 million copies



IO Interactive

- Average age: 31 years old
- 87% men, 13% woman
- 20 new employees per year
- Less than a handful leave each year
- 5 games released since year 2000
- Developed the following brands
 - ✓ Hitman
 - ✓ Freedom Fighters
 - ✓ Kane & Lynch
 - ✓ Coming up: Mini Ninjas

Other notable danish studios

- Deadline
- Zero Point Software
- Zentropa Games
- Guppyworks
- NDS
- But there is so much more than just this! Technology, web games, mobile games, related industries, etc.

Q u e s t i o n s ?