HOW *NOT* TO GET A JOB IN THE GAME DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

Presented by:

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Intros

The Purpose

"Too err is to be human…."

-Alexander Pope

1. Don't use common sense.

P: Don't use common sense.

- Assume that this isn't a real business.
- Assume that the person first looking at your resume is a person that cares about games.
- Assume that passion is enough.
- Don't pay attention to the games that are out there right now, how they look, what makes them successful/unsuccessful.
- Assume that, after you put a portfolio together and send along, the jobs will just come to you.

Example

Example

Dear Big Huge Games,

My name is **, and I am writing to inform you of a recent foreign regime change. I saw your posting on Gamasutra, and would like to inquire as to openings for your internship program. But first, please, let me clarify my original declaration. My goal is not solely to pursue a career at Big Huge Games. This internship is merely a stepping stone in my ultimate goal of global conquest.

You must understand that I have recently risen to become the leader of a new tribe of people. Consequently, my advisors have informed me that a new nation needs a wise king, and that I would be a fool to run an empire without luxuries. This is why I come to you. I seek guidance, and a steady income, so my people can thrive with wealth, and flourish under my experienced and benevolent rule.

I have gone through the banal motions of attaching my resume as a .pdf to this email. You can find my portfolio linked in my resume, at the bottom of this email, and here: . Now, you must excuse me as I have matters of state to attend to. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

King ** of the Baltimoreans

Example

…I was scanning open projects on … and came across your position for a lead narrative designer. I would like to tell you a little about myself;

I was born in a dark, dingy and dank subway tunnel deep within the bowels of Manhattan Island. Unlike the others of my kind, I gravitated toward the surface for a peek at what lay beyond our world. I had a fascination for colors, smells and sounds; the likes of which could not be found lurking beneath the great city streets. After my early years were spent learning about the world through the works of Tolstoy, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Rice and King; my later years were spent devouring Black, Koepp, Spielberg and Lucas. When I reached the surface I expected to find a magical world filled with heroes, monsters and epic space battles!

One day, I decided to make the move. I packed what little belongings I had and journeyed topside. The sunlight was as blinding as it was dazzling, but when my eyes finally adjusted I found not a magical world, but a world where black and white became color, where nothing was as it seemed. As plain and ordinary as it might have been, it became my adopted home and I knew I would find a way to fit in.

I found I had a great ability for stating the obvious. Doesn't sound like much of a talent huh? Maybe not, but it sparked my own fire of creativity and soon I found that I could play with the written word and convey any number of thoughts and emotions. So here I am, once a tunnel rat and now a writer. I have three beautiful children and a incredibly lovely wife. It's amazing what just a few years can mean in the seasonal changes of a life, and I know that mine could not get much better!...

Example

Hey Lindsey,

Just a follow up on this email. I want to make sure you get all the info ok haha. Let me know if you need anything!

I am definitely interested in this haha. I have attached my answers to the pre-onsite questions and the scanned contract. Please let me know if there is anything else you need.
…So the first week of December will be good for me. I take the LAX airport out of LA to get around haha. My full legal name is…
I look forward to meeting you guys in person. Thank you for this opportunity!

Sincerely, …

Example

 …I am looking for an opportunity to become part of a highly respected development studio such as Monolith. I have been following your company's work for a long time, and one of my personal goals is to help create the next generation of products similar to those that I have enjoyed in the past…

…I am excited about the potential opportunity to work with and learn from the best in the industry at Monolith…

Example

From:
    Sent: Saturday, July 24, 2010 8:37 AM
    To: job-aaq23-1855521341@craigslist.org
    Subject: Finance Director

What percentage of routine, detailed work will I encounter?

Thanks,

***

Example

From: Mike ***
    Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2010 5:26 PM
    To: Jon ***; Lindsey McQueeney
    Subject: RE: Graphics Engineer - XX

The first few months I was here I went through all the résumés we had ever gotten to that point. Someone had opened the résumé fire hydrant from Monster.com, and there were a lot of interesting applicants. One in particular stood out in a similar fashion to xx. <u>The résumé was two and a half pages of single spaced madness</u>. Reading it was like staring into the gaping maw of insanity while Nietzsche whispers nihilistic nightmares directly into your psyche. Unfortunately, I can't find the résumé anymore, but I found an email that contains some of <u>the gems this person listed under their "Skills" section</u>.

·   *"I'm generally abreast of what's going on and history bears an uncanny insight to know what is on the horizon and when things are moving from speculation to spectacular. The best example is the Internet. I coined the phrase "The World's Biggest Secret Club" when it was. I knew it was on the verge of ubiquity and moved into the publishing world – guiding a large publishing house toward the Internet and relevant technologies. As a result, I not only aided the public's knowledge of the Internet but provided a strong publishing line…"*

·   *"first American to obtain and solve Rubik's Clock – 1988."*

·   *"juggling – at one time I achieved seven-balls (two hands), five balls in one hand."*

·   *"solving newspaper crosswords in ink – e.g., NYTimes."*

·   *"successful one-man team at various trivia contests. Also, NTN Hall-of-Fame 5+ million points when I stopped playing five years ago." [NTN is that video trivia they have in sports bars]*

<u>So if we ever need someone who's a world class juggler who also happens to be a Rubik's Clock pioneer, I might have the perfect candidate</u>.

S: Use common sense.

- This presentation would be moot if we didn't see this all the time.
- Video game development is actual work. And it's hard work.
- Look at your portfolio the way you would if this were someone applying to your game company.
- Proofread, spell check, try to use proper grammar.
- Be realistic and honest.
- Be prepared.

2. Circumvent the Process

P: Circumvent the Process

- Try to get in through the back door.
- Spam game developers, stalk the office, call when asked not to call.
- Apply for jobs that you aren't qualified for.
- Don't send samples or cover letters when requested.
- Over-blow your experience.

Example

From: applications@38studios.com [mailto:applications@38studios.com]
    Sent: Monday, July 26, 2010 7:16 PM
    To: jobs
    Subject: Job Application: Senior Environment Artist (ART0006)

Job Opening: <u>Senior Environment Artist</u>
    Requisition Number: ART0006

    Applicant: XX
    Email Address: XX@yahoo.com
    Telephone:
    Address:.
    City: Providence
    State/Region: Rhode Island
    Zipcode: 02907
    Portfolio/URL(s):
    www.xx.com
    Where did you hear about the opening?: corpwebsite
    Years of experience?: <u>0-1 yrs</u>
    May we contact your current employer?: Yes
    Are you actively interviewing elsewhere?: Yes

Example

Objective: To obtain an internship where I can continue developing my analytical and technical skills while improving productivity and efficiency at an established IT company.

Work Experience: Internship, ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

Senior Credit Manager, ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Supervised sales production for the branch.
Responsibilities include:
- Implemented the Supreme suite of bank software for the branch.
- Lead and taught Core Sales for the district.
- Compiled and prepared all branch financial documents and reports.
- Worked directly with customers to resolve issues.
- Received employee of the month award on four occasions.

Senior Loan Officer, ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Worked way up through company eventually to Sr. Loan Officer. Was consistently a top producer in each role.
- Ran orientation/training program for all new hires.
- Worked as a team leader reporting directly to Sr. VP, ensuring productivity, solving complex customer problems, and mentoring.
- Responsible for all aspects of the lending operations including determining creditworthiness, processing, and underwriting.
- Documented and educated staff on company policies in accordance with State & Federal lending guidelines/regulations.

Education: B.A., ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Minor: Communications
Rhode Island College, Providence, RI

A.S., ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Johnson & Wales University, Providence, RI

Proficiencies:
-OS Platforms: Windows XP, MacOS
-Microsoft Office 2007 Application Suite
-Visual Basic programming
-Networking
-Java

Other Info:
- Member of Delta Epsilon Chi (DECA), Johnson & Wales University
- Volunteer at Arthur J. Tredeau Center, Warwick, RI
- Volunteer at the Hope Settlement House, Providence, RI
- NCAA Varsity Wrestler at Johnson & Wales University

Example, cont.

- **Job Opening**: Game Designer
  Requisition Number: DES0001

  Applicant: XX
  Email Address: XX@gmail.com
  Telephone:
  Address:
  City:
  State/Region: PA
  Zipcode:
  Portfolio/URL(s):

  Where did you hear about the opening?: corpwebsite
  Years of experience?: 1-3 yrs
  May we contact your current employer?: Yes
  Are you actively interviewing elsewhere?: No

S: Follow the process.

☐ Find legitimate and non-annoying ways to meet developers.

☐ Every studio is different and therefore has different rules and processes.

☐ Read the job description and follow the instructions.

☐ Apply for what you are qualified for.

3. Do as little as possible.

P: Do as little as possible.

- Send out mass e-mails.
- Don't check to make sure that your links work.
- Reapply but don't send anything new.
- Assume that making one cover letter or one portfolio for every job you apply for will cut it.
- Don't research or play the games of the company(s) you are applying to.
- Expect a recruiter to do the job for you.
- Sit and wait and do nothing in the meantime.

Example

This page is under construction...

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S: Specialize, Update, Evolve.

- Make sure that your links work.
- If you do not have a link, be sure to attach a digital portfolio.
- Most companies no longer accept hard portfolios.
- Play the studio's games where you can.
- Specialize cover letters, resumes, portfolios for the studio or position you are looking for.
- Cover letters are an awesome. Use that opportunity (wisely).
- Don't reapply until you have something new to show.
- Continue to hone and grow your skill set.

S: Specializing

General Applications

☐ Have more than one portfolio or resume if needed.

☐ Send (good) samples where ever possible.

☐ As much as possible, everything should be digital.

General Applications cont.

- ☐ Include a specialized cover letter to the company.
- ☐ Specialize your resume to the position.
- ☐ Resume objectives aren't necessary.
- ☐ Call out skill set and also your <u>level of proficiency</u>.
- ☐ Highlight industry experience above all other exp.
- ☐ On school projects, be clear on what *your* actual responsibilities were.
- ☐ We may check references.

Art - General

- If you want a position in game development, make sure your portfolio speaks to that (versus film)

- Try to specialize your portfolio to the position you want (Environment/Character/Modeler/Texturer)

- Do not include WIP in your formal portfolio sheet submission (separate section or blog is fine).

- Having some skills in both Max and Maya is helpful.

- Experience hooking up assets in-game/in an engine is helpful.

Design - General

- Show, don't tell.

- Be willing to champion your design decisions and philosophies.

- Also be willing to discard them.

- Have a voice but always remember who you are speaking to.

- Design titles mean different things to different companies.

Programming - General

- Expect a test.

- Samples of code or games are good.

- Think about what area of code you might have an interest in, Tools, Gameplay, Graphics, Physics, Audio, UI, Core/Engine, Platform, Server, Client, Web, Systems, etc.

- Be honest about your proficiency level.

- Languages can be studio specific but strong C++ is usually still a must.

- Middleware implementation and other languages are a plus, as well as experience coding for different engines.

Internal Production

- An understanding of different methodologies is must, agile/scrum, waterfall, etc.
- An understanding of different tools is required – Excel, Project, etc.
- You should understand how a Producer is meant to function on the team.
- You should have a good understanding on what a Producer should know about on any one project.
- Producer vs Designer vs Executive Producer

Audio

- Have a demo. Obviously.

- Make it game centric.

- Be skilled in technical Sound Design

- Be familiar with FMOD, Wwise, Sound Forge, Pro Tools, etc and also with hooking up assets in a game engine.

- Be prepared <u>not</u> to do any composition work.

QA - General

- QA is a legitimate discipline in game development and taken very seriously.

- QA can function differently on different teams – can be separate or immersed, generalist or specialized.

- Be organized, be methodical, be ready and up for tedium.

- Technical writing/documentation skills are helpful, also, as well as a general knowledge of game development.

- If you start in QA but are not looking to continue your career in QA, you must be actively taking steps to move into a different discipline.

4. Follow the path of most resistance.

P: Follow the path of most resistance.

- Make it a scavenger hunt to find links to your portfolio.
- Have no links at all!
- Ask if we want to see your portfolio.
- Bury your best work at the bottom of the page or amongst incomplete/substandard work.
- Add a lot of fuzz on your resume and portfolio to beef it up.

S: Make it easy.

- Your link should be easily identifiable on your cover letter and should be clickable.

- Your resume should highlight industry applicable experience. Your skill set should be readily identifiable.

- Resumes should also only be one page.

- Two clicks or less should take employers to your best work.

- Section out and organize.

- Have a separate blog for WIP – and talk about what you are learning on that piece.

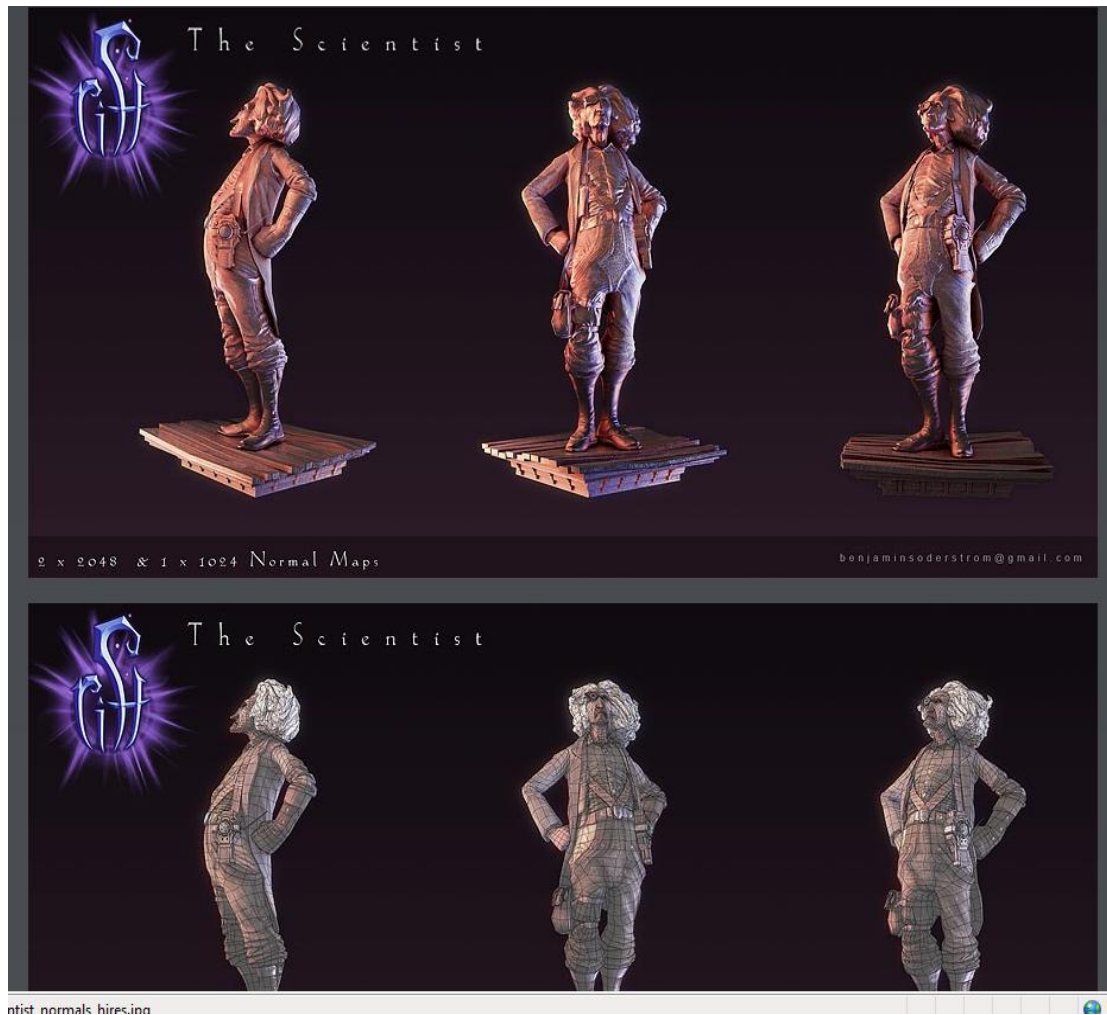# Example

Example
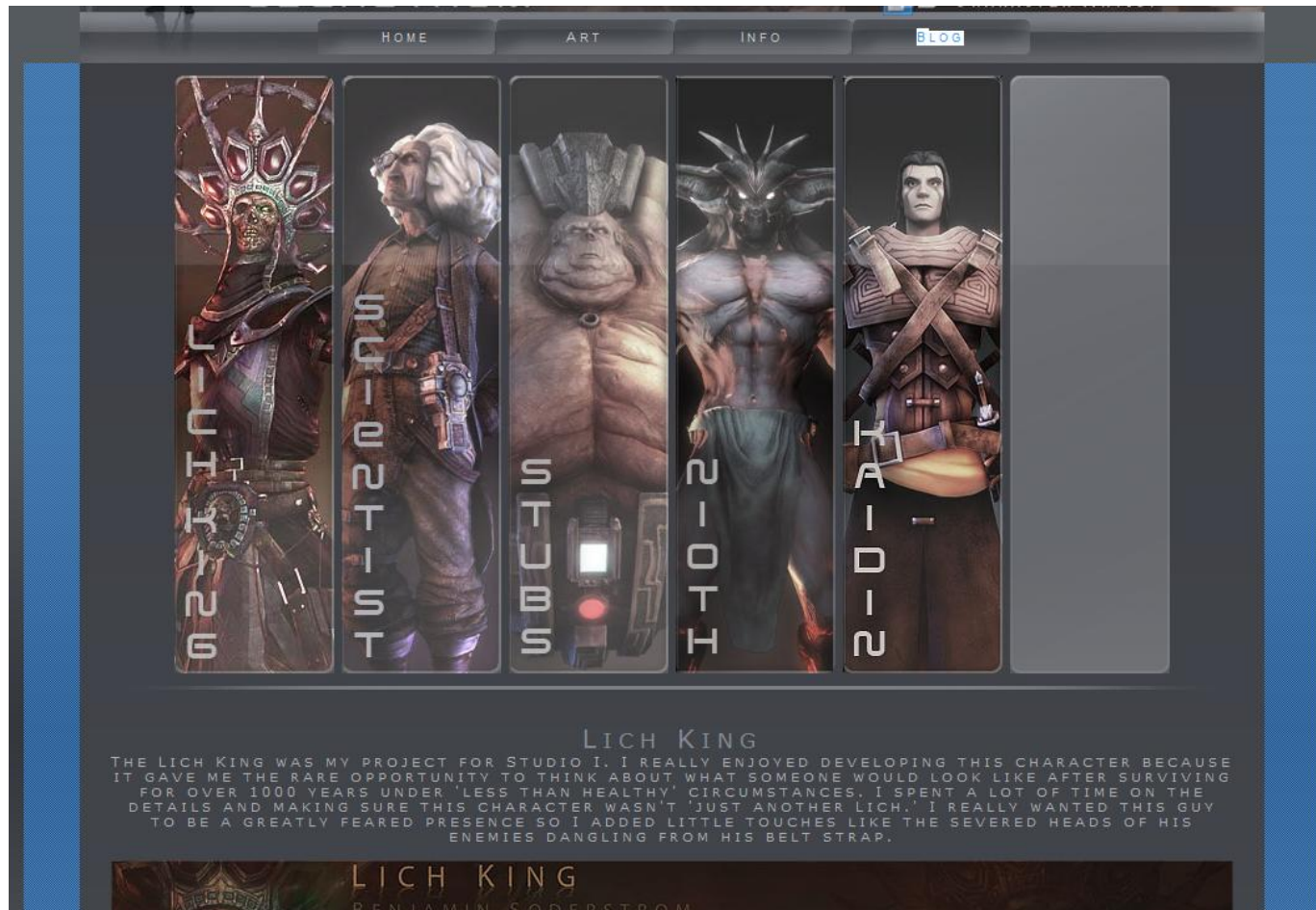
Example cont.

Example cont.

Example cont.

Example cont.
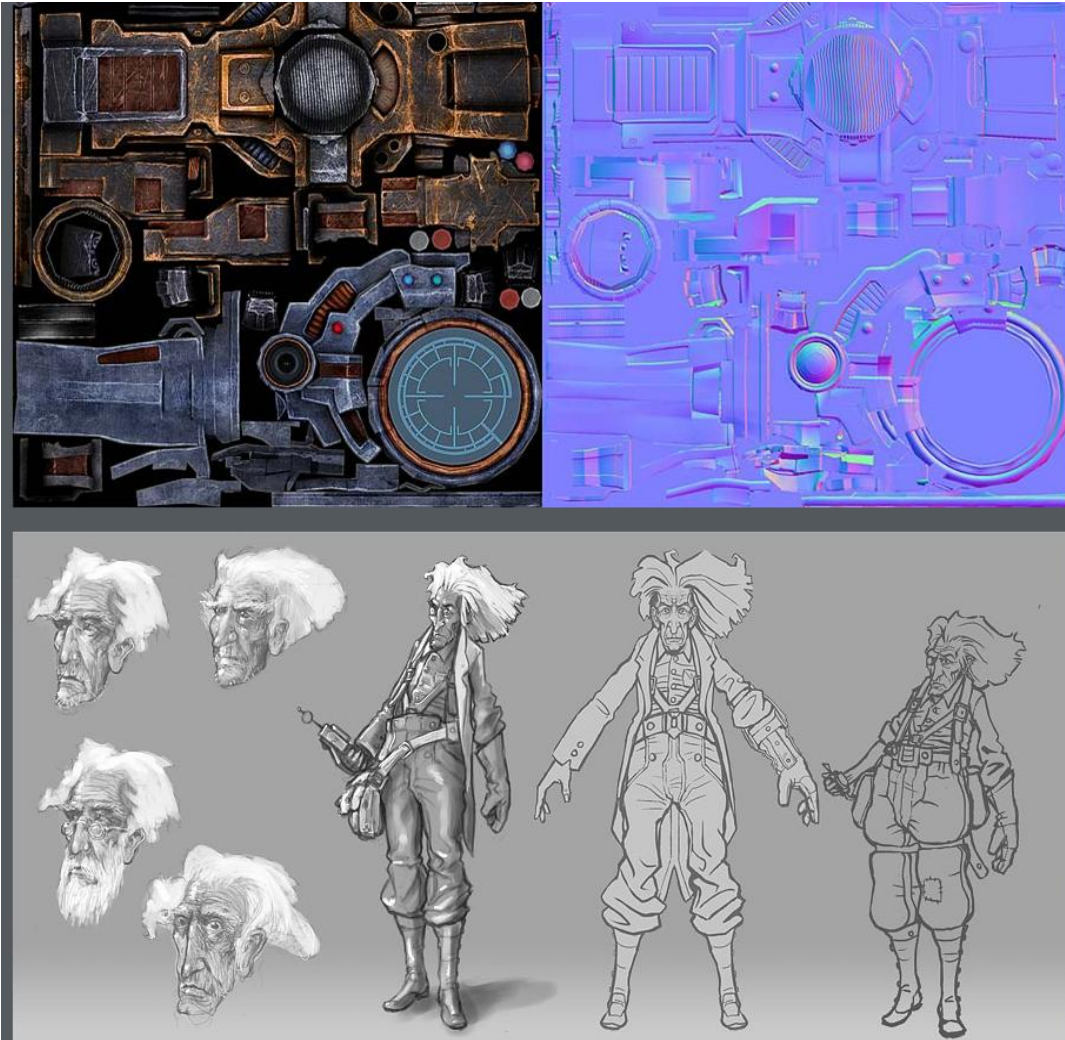
5. Make a poor or no first impression.

P: Make a poor or no first impression.

- Add me to your Facebook page with the intent of asking for a job.
- Get the company name and/or projects wrong.
- Be cocky, jaded, rude, pushy, overly quirky.
- Take liberties with your digital presence.

Example

Hi,Big Huge Games:

 i'm a senio illustrator,concept artist,and very konw myth,also do gamedesign and world outlook design.

 i like your game style,and the game.

 my artwork win …. masteraward and inculd in many artbook,like…,....

before, i design finlished a card game and do many concept for it.

more detail about me in the resume.

and my artwork portfolio link in cgtalk in this:

wish can join your cool team~do my best Imagination.

Example

Example

From:
Sent: Monday, June 07, 2010 8:24 PM
To: jobs
Subject: Job

Hello,

This message is for Curt Schilling himself.   I don't know if he'll ever get to see it, but I hope someone can bring it to his attention.

My son is disparately seeking employment.   He graduated from **, with a Bachelor's of Arts in Game Design.   He's a great kid and just needs his first break to get into a good company.   He's applied to many places, but everywhere is looking for experience and out of college you don't have much experience.   He would be such a good employee.   He loves anything to do with video games.   He just needs a chance to prove himself.

He lives in **, so it wouldn't be far to travel to work or he would even move closer.   I believe he has applied for a position at 38 Pitches before, but did not hear anything.   He would so love to be working in his chosen profession.   He's very passionate about video games since he's been two years old.

You can contact him at the following if you would like him to send in a resume:

**

Thank you so much, Mr. Schilling, for any attention you can give this matter.   I know you are a very busy man with all the good you do.

Sincerely,

A very concerned mother,

**

----- Original Message -----
From: Gavian Whishaw
To: Curt Schilling
Cc: ***
Sent: Wed Jun 09 23:18:34 2010
Subject: FW: Job

I had to reply, it was too much.

From: Gavian Whishaw
Sent: Wednesday, June 09, 2010 11:17 PM
To:
Subject: RE: Job

Hi **

** has actually applied 8 times so far. I can appreciate the anxiety of trying to find a job in today's economy but you should know it is very difficult to get into the game industry even with experience. That said, I can give you (and by extension **) some advice. I can't say it will help him find a job but it will, over time, improve his chances.

-        His resume is terrible. He should take out all the little graphics elements and page border treatments.

-        He has lines like "designed fully custom made playable game levels" etc but he does not discuss them or provide examples to them online.

-        He says he has worked with Unreal but does not explain what he did with it in any detail.

-        He generally can go into better detail about the experience he does have from school and from working on his own.

-        A lot of the things he lists as qualifications are just statements – he should delete them and spend that space discussing what he did in school, current games he plays, etc.

-        For the beta experience he should give dates as to when he was in those betas.

In general, the industry looks for:

Passion: You have to love games, entertainment, and building products. …
Another great way to get into the industry is to work on mods …
He should have his own website with his portfolio on it as well, linking to all the projects he is working on in his spare time. …
Finally, this is a great book about getting a job in general…

Please feel free to pass this advice onto ***.

Hope this helps and best of luck.

Gavian Whishaw

Studio General Manager

S: Make an appropriate splash

S: Make an appropriate splash.

- Less is more. You can't take things back but you can always provide more.
- Include only your best work.
- No need to bog down your site with overly flashy demonstrations. The work should stand on it's own.
- Give us time to take a look and follow up. No need to impatiently check in.
- Have appropriate pride in your skill set and portfolio.
- Keep your enthusiasm & excitement (or lack there of) at a healthy level.

Interviewing

- Practice, practice, practice. Cultural fit is important.
- Practice with friends, family, in front of a mirror.
- Be prepared to answer tough questions.
- Learn to turn all negative experiences into positive ones.
- Practice given concise but appropriately detailed answers.
- Ask who you will be interviewing with and confirm dates and location.
- Get excited!
- Follow up with a thank you – even if you didn't get the job.

6. Assume that it's all fun and games.

Assume that it's all fun and games.

- Come in with plans to pitch your game idea or revolutionize the current game being developed.
- Tell a company how you could do it better.

Example

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a 28 year old Father of two. I, like many men, stay home during the day with my youngest son **, while my wife goes to work and oldest son ** attends school. After the burnt toast and kisses are exchanged, little ** and I dive into our gaming. He jumps on the old XBOX with** best game for the first wheel **. For three he's very good. I sit at the Laptop and play a few hands of poker before sliding into that "spot". ** for the 360, game of the decade if you ask me. Is their an award? 28 for 12, not a bad start. After a slow climb to the top of the hill ** is screaming for a high five after defeating the clones on the **. After lunch ** takes his nap and Daddy puts in the most corrupting game of the century, **. I've been playing these games since the Ming Dynasty it feels like. After **-Dog gets home from school, it's a fight between the controller. For eight he's a sure shot. "Ting", head shot from the across parking lot in Broadcast. "Want some more?" I love the sound of his banter.

See the point I'm trying to make is, we are a video game driven house hold. From Nintendo to Sega to SNES, Game Cube, PS2, PSP, and the above mentioned. I have been playing video games since Aztec Temple for the Commodore 64. XCOM for the PC broke all grounds with GOD games. No award for them. <u>I would like to test games, my kids would like to test games, and we would like to BLOG about it and be known as "The Testing Fam". And of course, get paid for it. Maybe a spread in a gamer mag. What would it take?</u>

S: Be realistic.

- The industry is competitive.

- If your portfolio is nowhere near the quality of the games that you are playing, then you might not be ready.

- Passion is a must and a non-question – everyone in this room has it.

7. Be unwilling to consider any opportunity.

P: Be unwilling to consider any opportunity.

- Don't attend networking or industry events.
- Assume that internships, opportunities in QA or in Customer Service are beneath you.
- Hold out for a higher paying job in lieu of accepting an offered position.
- Assume that education displaces experience.

S: Be open-minded.

- It may take time to get your foot in the door.
- It's all about taking every opportunity, both in your portfolio and also in order to get your foot in the door.
- Formal training is awesome. But it doesn't replace actual industry experience.
- Internships are a legitimate way to gain valuable experience.
- QA is a great first step – but it isn't enough.
- The key is to find passion in any opportunity and remember the point of it all.

8. Take it personal.

Take it personal.

- Take constructive feedback as some slight on your passion or skill set.

- Send rebuttal letters to show us who's boss.

- Bad talk after receiving a rejection.

Example

- ----- Original Message -----
  From:
  To: Aurelia Laff
  Sent: Sun Aug 23 22:38:49 2009
  Subject: RE: Updated Resume. - with an additional thought.

  I've been talking with Curt about internship possibilities and he mentioned there's not much room at all, so yeah, I knew that there's nothing you can offer me. Out of the interest of full disclosure; the additional inquiries were all different, lowering their previous request in hopes of resume building. My intent wasn't to bug you. Also -- I don't consider myself an entry level candidate via accomplishments; but perhaps in terms of previous job experience.

  Having created numerous film and video works being recognized in film shows all over --> I know just as much, if not more about story-boarding, structure, blocking, cinematic storytelling than anyone that's working for you in your cinematic department. That's just a fact -- I'm a dean's list cinema graduate of one of the biggest north eastern avant garde film school's. We learn cutting edge production and analytical information for four years.

  I do know quite clearly that I'm not what you're looking for, though I think it's a bit debasing when you reply to someone as 'entry level' when you've not taken the time to listen to any of their music composition or watch any of their visuals.

  This isn't mean to be rude because you're 'denying' me, I'm just trying to defend myself from a somewhat demeaning and disrespectful term. I'm sure you understand.

Example cont.

- **From:**
  Sent: Tuesday, July 28, 2009 7:54 PM
  To: Aurelia Laff
  Subject: Updated Resume - with an additional thought.

-

- Alaff,

  I know you love nothing more than to see a shiny new resume in your inbox, so here's my updated one for you.

  P.S. As I was sending this I thought to myself about the name 'Alaff'..

  I realize, the origin in which this email address came from was Curt. Curt Schilling a busy man. Perhaps he was being a nice guy in giving me a hiring managers email, or perhaps, *perhaps maybe, Alaff, stands for "A laugh".*

  Where the countless beggars and job hungry kids send their resumes to enter a darkened void, perhaps occasionally accompanied by a few laughing employees standing around watching the inbox during their lunch break; chuckling about viewing the masses attempt to get a job in the industry!

  Or maybe not.

  Cheers regardless,

Example

LinkedIn

** has sent you a message.

Date: 6/09/2010

Subject: RE: in town

Lindsey,

You will meet me one day Lindsey. Because i am going to work in the gaming industry whatever it takes. You are missing out on the chance of a lifetime.

On 06/09/10 6:21 AM, Lindsey M wrote:

**,

Thank you for your interest in Big Huge Games. Unfortunately, your experience and style are not a match for any of our current openings so unfortunately we will not be moving forward with the interview process at this time. I will keep your portfolio on file and will not hesitate to reach out to you in the event that we find a match with any future openings.

Thanks again for taking the time to apply. I wish you the best of luck.

Lindsey

On 06/08/10 8:43 PM, ** wrote:

Lindsey,

Ill be in the area the 16th of this month if you would like to meet and talk. I have some experience with designing enviornments for game play. I enjoy the work ive done and I am willing to do whatever it takes to become part of big huge games! Here is my website: www.**.com, Thank you! please reply

**

<ins>View/reply to this message</ins>

S: Understand the point.

Understand the point.

- Recruiters don't know a lot about one thing but know a bit about everything.

- We are here to help. Believe it or not, we want to hire you.

- Assume that most feedback, even if it's what you don't want to hear, is meant to be constructive.

- Game development isn't for everyone. And that's okay.

- Remember, this is a small industry.

Rejections

- Take a few steps back.

- First, research the company.

- Double check the job description.

- Take a good look at your portfolio.

- Be honest with yourself.

- Ask for help.

- Think positively.

9. Don't ask questions.

Don't ask questions.

- So, questions?

THANK YOU!