More Feelings, Fewer Features

Showcasing Your Indie Game Through Messaging and Video

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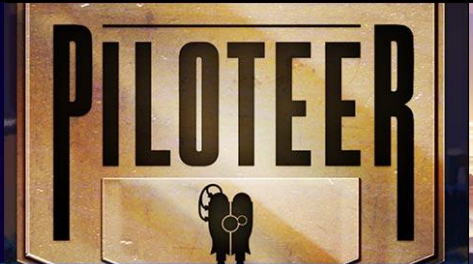
Dana Trebella - Spoke and Wheel Strategy



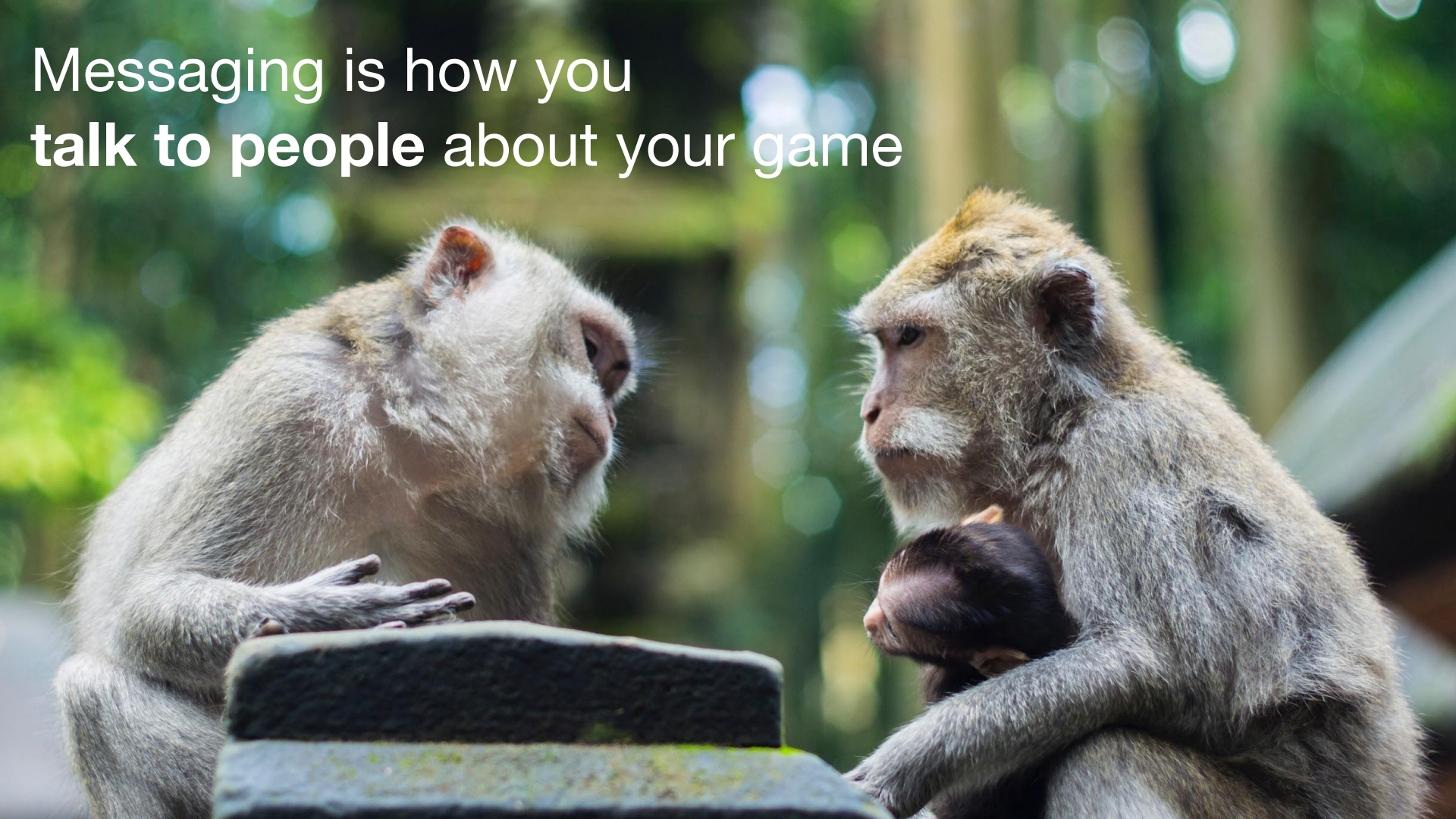
Derek Lieu - Trailer Editor

1. What is messaging?
2. Why you need a good message
3. Common mistakes
4. Things you should do
5. Examples
6. Exercises
7. Lessons & Takeaways

PR & Marketing
Trailers

PR + Marketing + Trailers

What is **messaging**?


Messaging is how you
talk to people about your game

A trailer is how you
Show people your game

The **Experience**

The **Feelings**

Communicate **the experience**
And **the feelings** in your trailer

Why you need a **good message**

Your message **focuses** your marketing

Your message
is your **filter** for
marketing

Your message **helps other people share and advocate** for your game

Your message affects

- Website
- Press kit
- Press emails
- Store page
- Interviews

- Social Media
- Screenshots
- Animated GIFs
- Trailers

- Procedurally Generated Levels
- Boss Battles
- Permadeath
- Upgrades
- Hours of Content

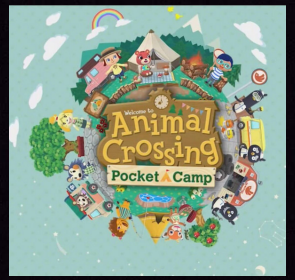
Procedurally Generated Levels

Think With Portals

Common **Mistakes**

Don’t describe using a mix of other games

+



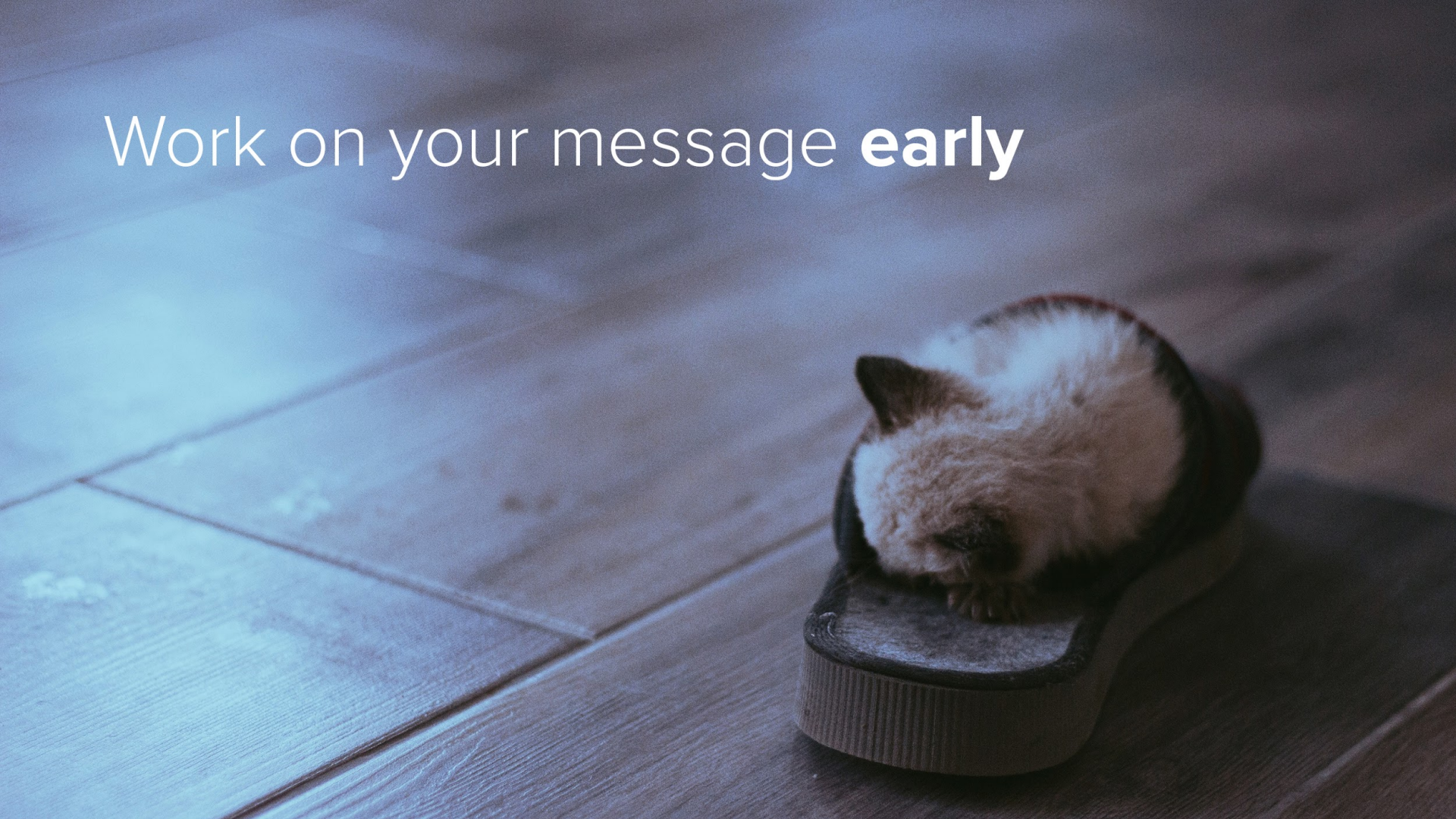
Don’t just list game features

- 10 boss battles
- 50 Levels
- 200 weapons
- 30 hours of content
- Hundreds of unlockables

Don’t rely on game lingo & genres

- Metroidvania
- Rogue-like
- Procedurally generated
- Immersive Sim
- AoE Attacks
- First person shooter
- Point & Click
- Action RPG

DOs!

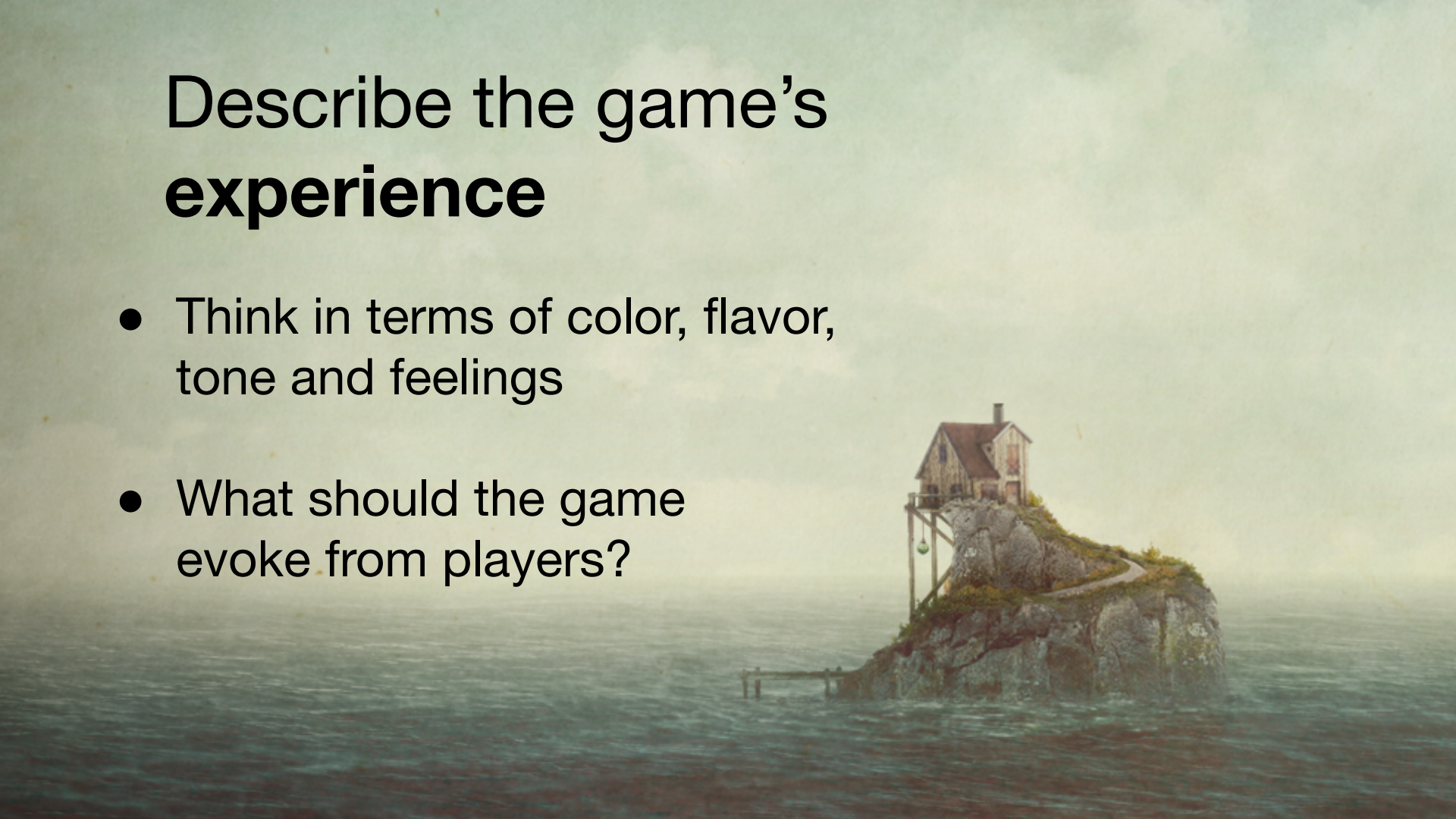

Work on your message **early**

Your message **guides the design**

Iterate on your message

Describe the game's **experience**

- Think in terms of color, flavor, tone and feelings
- What should the game evoke from players?



Show people **video** of
your game being played

Tell the player **what they'll do**

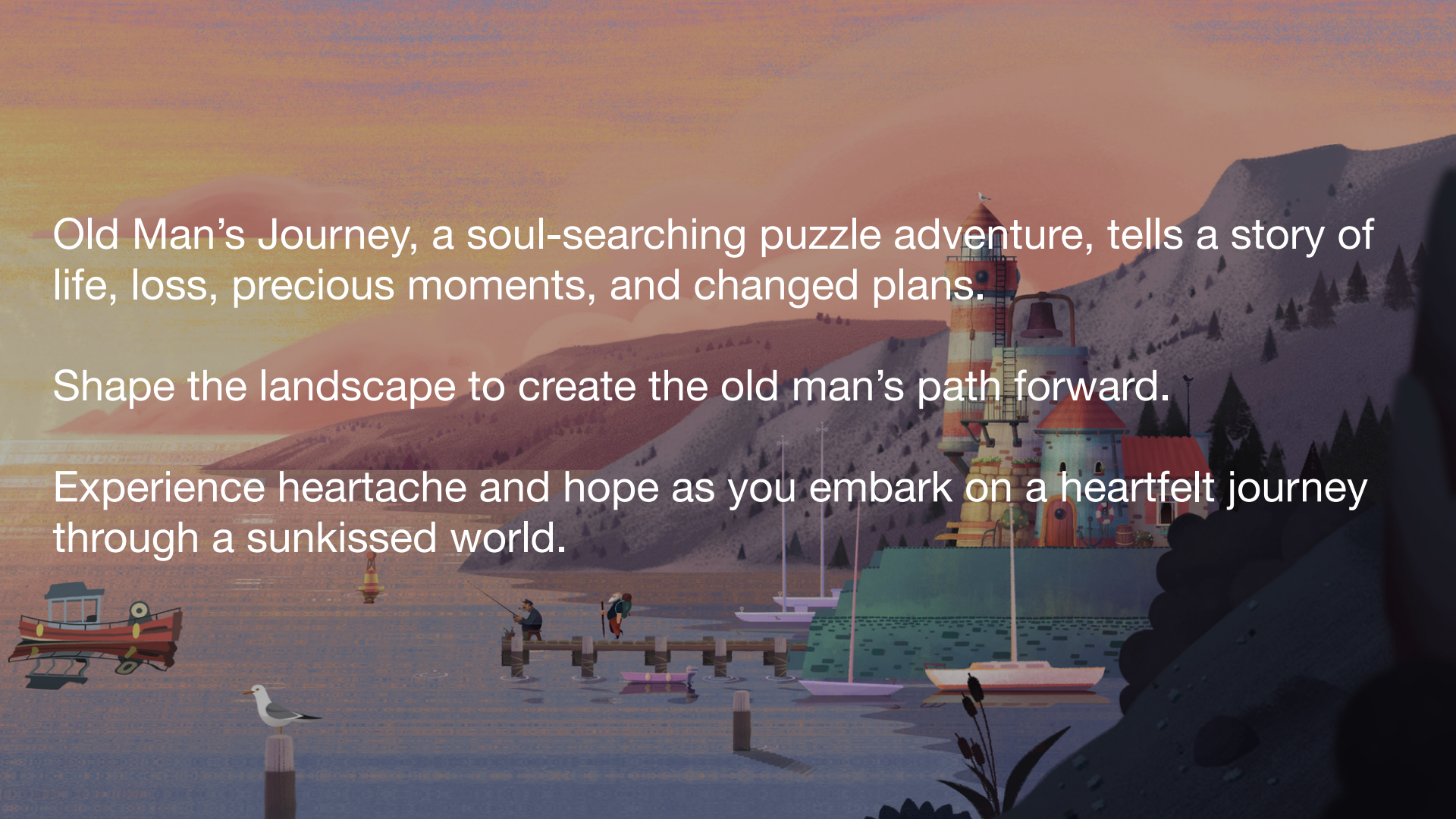
Keep Your Description to **1 - 4 Sentences**

- Brief and colorful is ideal
- Get to the point quickly and succinctly
- Have a quick one-liner or elevator pitch, with a few more secondary sentences, if folks are interested
- Leave people wanting more

Tips for a good trailer

- Brief and colorful is ideal
- Get to the point quickly and succinctly
- Focus on the hook, put additional things to support the main point
- Leave people wanting more

Examples



Old Man’s Journey, a soul-searching puzzle adventure, tells a story of life, loss, precious moments, and changed plans.

Shape the landscape to create the old man’s path forward.

Experience heartache and hope as you embark on a heartfelt journey through a sunkissed world.

HOLE DOWN

A delightful ball bouncing spectacle.

Announce Trailer

Open world adventure
Every choice matters
Decipher language

Story Trailer

History is a science
You're an archaeologist
Decipher a language
Put together a history

SUNLESS
SKIES
SAIL THE STARS. BETRAY YOUR QUEEN. MURDER A SUN.

SUPERHOT
The FPS where time moves only when you move

neo cab
NEW PICKUP
An emotional survival game

A mystery set in the Wyoming wilderness, where your only emotional lifeline is the person on the other end of a handheld radio.

A Peculiar Little Adventure Played in 60 seconds

A Dystopian Document Thriller

Exercises to help find your message

Exercise:

What are the emotions you want the player to feel?

Exercise:
How would you describe the experience of playing the game?

Exercise:
What makes this game different, really?

Exercise:

Can you describe your game in three words?

Exercise:
What are you most proud of about the game you're making?

Exercise:
Why were you motivated
to make this game in the first place?

Exercise:
Keep asking “**Why?**”

Words to avoid

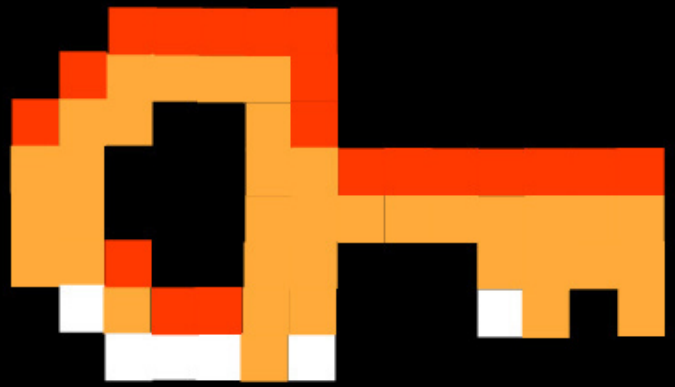
Fun
Unique
Nostalgic
Satisfying
Interesting
Ultimate

Immersive
3D/2D
Epic
Innovative
Scary
Dangerous

Focus your trailer around
what is unique about your game

Try to **show** the idea of the message **without spelling it out**

Lessons & Takeaways



Messaging is a **key part of the process**

Messaging simplifies by providing **constraints** and **focus**

Always refer back
to your message,
it is **your guide**

Workshop your message

Show people video of your game **early**

Coordinate your message and your videos

Thank you for coming!

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