gHarmony: Networking Your Way Into Acquiring Your True Love Job Match

Speaker: Lindsey McQueeney, Big Huge Games/ 38 Studios LLC
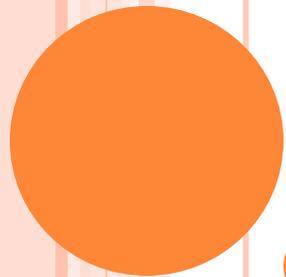
INTRO, FORMAT & INTENT

"It's not you, it's me…"

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

- **practice of gathering of contacts:** the process or practice of building up or maintaining informal relationships, especially with people whose friendship could bring advantages such as job or business opportunities (Encarta® World English Dictionary)

PASSIVE VERSUS ACTIVE NETWORKING

- **passive:** gathering contacts and making friends informally and without the singular purpose of getting your foot in the door immediately

- **active:** seeking out immediate business contacts with the formal purpose of establishing relationships that will be advantageous to your career
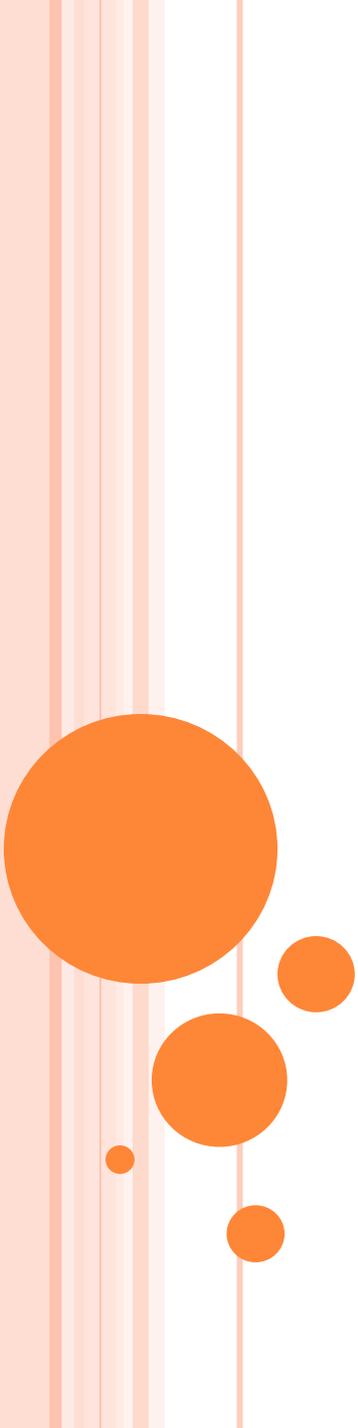
TOP FIVE BEST WAYS TO NETWORK

Consider every interaction an opportunity…

…Use it wisely.

#5 – APPLYING DIRECTLY*

- gamedevmap.com
- job portals and direct portfolio submissions
- resume submission at events
- job fairs – school & professional (CS/QA)
- interviewing and job testing
- internal position within the industry

EXAMPLE – APPLYING DIRECTLY

- **meet** your humble host**, Lindsey**

EXAMPLE – APPLYING INTERNALLY

- **meet Joe**, one of our Lead Designers

"I first got into QA through an acquaintance that I had met at the arcade playing Tekken…there are two details worth noting on how that came to pass:

First is that I didn't wait for the "right" moment before asking for his help. Within 5 minutes of learning that he worked as a level designer, I politely asked him to assist me get into the industry.

Second is that he was someone that I respected and felt would be a good mentor. There's about 5 people who worked in the game industry that I *could* have approached at that time, but either through their attitudes or social cues, I could tell that it might not be the best thing to be associated with them.

EXAMPLE – APPLYING INTERNALLY, CONT.

In the first 2 years, I worked in QA at both a big publisher and a small developer. Within a few days of working in the isolated QA department at the big publisher, it was clear that my chances of getting into design were much stronger at the smaller developer.

The smaller developer, QA was treated more as part of the team. There were opportunities for me to play games at lunch with the dev team, take on new responsibilities, and stay around after work to learn the software and tools (it's always great advice to make friends in the IT department). The easy part about getting into design was a matter of paying attention to who the truly good developers were, and ask for their help.

EXAMPLE – APPLYING INTERNALLY, CONT.

In my case, I took every chance I could and talked about combat balance with the combat designers, production methods and leadership with the producers, streaming and memory with the programmers, and so on.

The difficult part, and this is where I see most people fail, was putting in lots of time to do work for free. It's one thing to ask for help, and talk about game development. But you only really learn by doing work, making mistakes, and doing more work. I did anything I was asked (painting walls, ordering food, moving cubicles), and a lot that I wasn't asked (building multiplayer levels, configuring the QA network for multiplayer, designing save-load flow charts)."

#4 – ONLINE BUSINESS/SOCIAL NETWORKING

- LinkedIn profile pages & groups
- Twitter, Google +, Facebook, etc
- BranchOut and other business networking apps
- digital networking sites
- YouTube
- blogs
- gaming

EXAMPLE - GAMING

- **meet John**, one of our Lead Designers

"In college I spent all day playing Age of Empires II online instead of going to class. I joined up with one of the more famous clans (guilds), and one of the members of that clan wrote up beginner strategy guides that were posted on one of the fansites for the game.

Brian Reynolds, who had been lead designer for … was going to open up a studio that made RTS games… He had a few months between the jobs however, and he spent that time playing Age of Empires II online. He read the strategy guides, and messaged us about joining our clan. We all knew who he was … and after a quick tryout, we let him join.

EXAMPLE – GAMING, CONT.

I played dozens of games with Brian, and got to know him a little bit as well as more about the industry in general. Eventually we both stopped playing (him to start a game studio, me to actually focus on finishing college), but when I saw that he opened up a new studio, I thought there was a good chance they would need QA testers by the time I graduated college.

Fast forward two years, and that's exactly what happened. I saw a posting on one of the… fansites that there was an opening for a skilled RTS player at Big Huge Games, and I applied that night. By the end of the next day, I was hired (being able to tell the guy hiring you that his CEO can vouch for your RTS skills is a big plus).

EXAMPLE – GAMING, CONT.

When I started testing I got whatever the QA manager needed of me done, but I also spent time before and after work learning as much as I could about the game. I also made myself available for any side projects that came up, whether they were design or production oriented...It helped that I got to play the designers at the game often, and got to suggest changes to make it more balanced.

When a need for another designer came up, I had already proven my case: I could do the job, I put in extra effort, and I was extremely passionate. I also made sure not to slack at my QA job ... If you can do all that, then all you have to do is wait for the right opportunity, and don't give up."

#3 – GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

- education and alumni groups
- game development clubs & competitions
- modding communities
- digital art communities & competitions
- IGDA, WIGI, etc
- volunteering - community management, events, or beta testing
- forums

EXAMPLE – IGDA

- **meet Morganne,** Software Engineer

#2 – CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

- developer conferences (GDC, GDC Online, Gen Con)
- consumer conferences (PAX, E3, ComicCon, etc)
- university-hosted events
- networking events/parties and meetings
- developer open houses/portfolio reviews

EXAMPLE – CONFERENCES (& TESTING)

- **meet Ben C.**, Artist
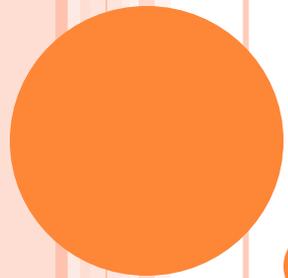
BEST WAY TO NETWORK

#1 – YOUR FRIENDS

EXAMPLE - FRIENDS

- meet half of 38 Studios LLC
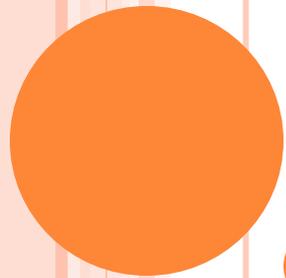
FIVE WORST WAYS TO NETWORK

TOP FIVE **WORST** WAYS TO NETWORK

5. inquire through inappropriate means

4. have someone else do all the leg work for you

3. make promises that you don't keep

2. lie

1. point fingers or take it personal
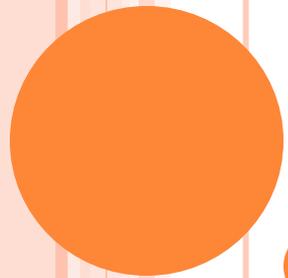
FINAL NETWORKING THOUGHTS

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE NETWORKING

- think optimistically and act diligently
- define your goal
- use every opportunity (wisely)
- be a part of the community
- do your homework
- don't be "that guy"
- be memorable - in a good way
- make a good business case for yourself
- provide memorabilia
- follow through & follow-up
- share the love and return the favor

EXAMPLE – FOLLOWING UP

From: Concept Artist

Just found out that 38 Studios acquired Big Huge Games. I'm greatly gladdened that the awesome studio that is BHG is not going down the "big-game-company-freaking-out" drain. Looking forward to the projects you guys are hatching out! ~****

From: Lindsey McQueeney

Yes, everything worked out well!

Hey, I was wondering, how are things going where you are at? Are you happy there? I don't know exactly how things are going to pan out here but I'd love to talk with you again sometime soon about maybe a position in… Your style would actually match both studios, I think you'd really like both of the projects. If you are happy where you are, though, no worries, there will always be more chances in the future. You think about it and let me know.

Good to hear from you! I hope you are learning a lot! ~ Lindsey
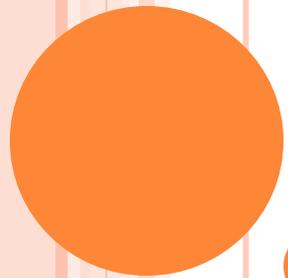
SO NOW WHAT?

Your work never ends.

COVER LETTERS & RESUMES

- have both, one page each
- business cards should be mini-snapshots of you
- cover letters can separate you from the pack (for better or for worse)
- specialize your resume to the position
- call out skill set and also your level of proficiency
- highlight industry experience above all other exp
- on team projects, be clear on what *your* actual responsibilities were
- we may check references

EXAMPLE – COVER LETTER

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 – COVER LETTER

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 – COVER LETTER

- **Meet Meg,** Executive Assistant

"How cool would it be if" you could have an administrative rock-star working for you? I hope I can answer that. I believe I would bring a fresh, enthusiastic and energetic perspective …

Being a complete video-game fanatic and member of Red Sox Nation, I've of course followed the development of 38 Studios in the news, but it was at the … that I got to see how exciting things could be first hand. I was amazed and impressed not only at the progress of Kingdoms of Amalur and all of the promise that it shows….

Currently, I'm am a Senior Administrative Assistant at … If my title wasn't long enough, the list of activities I've managed to get myself into is even longer. In a typical day, I could be handling everything from …

EXAMPLE - COVER LETTER, CONT.

A theme I've picked up on from reading about 38 Studios and attending PAX East was that you're working to create a game that not only works, but improves upon all those things that frustrate gamers. That seems to be my specialty in my own field – to find things that drive my co-workers crazy and find ways to improve them. I've lead projects …

So why do I consider myself an administrative "rock-star"? I work hard to make my co-workers' lives easier; never saying no to an opportunity to lend a hand to a project, or dig in and learn something new. I think I've developed a reputation of being the go-to person to get things done in a creative, efficient and pleasant way. Also …which is why I think an administrative position in your company would be an excellent fit. If you happen to agree with me, I look forward to hearing back from you to see what kind of "what if's" we can take on together.

PORTFOLIOS

- have more than one portfolio or resume if needed
- include your portfolio link everywhere
- break out your work
- as much as possible, everything should be digital
- show, don't tell
- blog out your process
- make note of your digital presence

INTERVIEWING

- get excited!
- practice, practice, practice
- be prepared to answer tough questions
- ask who you will be interviewing with and confirm dates and location
- provide concise but appropriately detailed answers
- turn all negative experiences into positive ones
- follow up with a thank you – even if you didn't get the job

REJECTIONS

- don't take it personal
- 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
- be open-minded & think positively

REJECTION - EXAMPLE

To: Lindsey McQueeney

Subject: Concept Artist

Thank you, Lindsey, but I'm already employed as a sandwich artist, so I couldn't have taken the concept artist position anyway. I can eat my art, can your new concept artists do that. I don't think so, Lindsey.

REJECTION - EXAMPLE

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.

Rejection - Example

- **Meet Ian**, Lead Designer

"Before I got my start in the games industry, I spent several years working on … a huge mod project …Unfortunately, even after completing my degree … and getting lots of positive game media attention… I was still unable to get my foot in the door anywhere in the game industry. My animation reel wasn't impressive enough for an animation role, entry level game design jobs are extraordinarily rare, and it's very hard to get your foot in the door with a QA position unless you happen to live near a developer or publisher…

What ultimately got me into the industry was persistence…I started working full-time in a job unrelated to the games industry, but in all my spare time I remained focused on the goal of becoming a game designer. I … applied for every game design job that I thought I had any remote chance of landing. I continued work on my mod. I continued to polish my resume and cover letters. I picked up other games' toolsets and learned what I could of them. I kept on applying to positions, and I kept getting ignored or rejected.
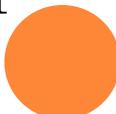
REJECTION – EXAMPLE, CONT.

Finally I sent in my resume to …, a startup studio in the Boston area, who were conveniently working on my favorite genre (RPGs). Like all the other studios, they ignored my rookie resume and I heard nothing back from them. But then I spent a little time searching and I found out the name of their general manager, and I managed to find a direct phone number for the office.

I called the office, then spelled out the name of the GM… in their phone system to get his direct line. And I left him a voice mail. In the message, I introduced myself, I acknowledged that they'd already received and ignored my resume, and then I insisted (politely) that they had made a mistake. I promised the GM that I was exactly what they needed in a designer and that I deserved a second look, and I promised to fly myself from Missouri to Boston on my own dime if they'd just give me 30 minutes of their time to show them my work.

REJECTION, CONT.

Jeff called my back the next day, an interview was arranged (and no, they didn't make me pay for travel), and after a grueling 13-hour day of interviews and trying to learn their level design tool and prove my skills in one sitting, I got an entry-level job as a level designer. I've been doing game design ever since, and I don't regret a moment of it.

It took a long time, but in the end, persistence paid off."
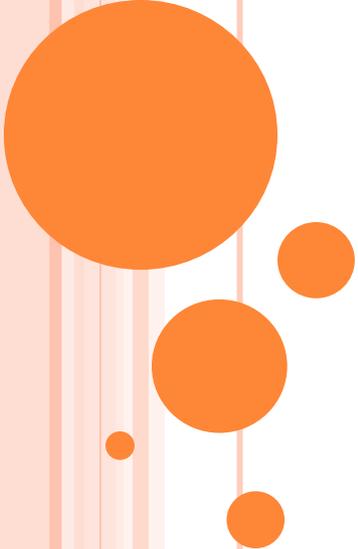
QUESTIONS?

for a copy of the panel:

jobs@38studios.com