



Everything I Said was WRONG

Why Indie is Different Now

Lisa Brown	@Wertle
Dan Cook	@danctheduck
Liz England	@lizardengland
Rami Ismail	@tha_rami

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REGRETS

Those were the droids you were looking for.



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Redemption!



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Why do we Care?



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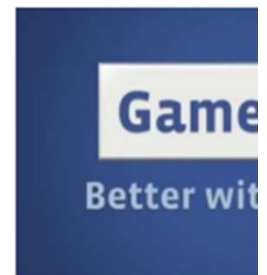


The Future of Social Games: How Facebook is Connecting Players, Developers, & Dollars

By admin
August 3, 2009

Social games have grown so quickly over the past two years, even Facebook is surprised.

Although many of the most widely adopted early apps on the Facebook Platform were games, few



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The Future of Social Games is Mobile

Ryan Klein Oct 12, 2010 - 8:52 AM CST

8 Comments



Japanese social platform maker DeNA is [snapping up mobile game maker Ngmoco](#), in a deal worth up to \$403 million. The acquisition reflects the growing interest in social gaming companies and underscores how mobile is the future of social gaming, much like it's the future for all web services.

LIMITED TIME
FULL PRICE
EARLY PRICE
FEBRUARY



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Digital distribution is the future of the gaming industry, report shows



by FRANCIS TAN — Jul 11, 2011 in MOBILE



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Gabe Newell: Linux is the future of gaming, new hardware coming soon

Valve chief blasts PC market, promises big news is coming next week.

JON BROOKIN - 9/16/2013, 2:10 PM





MAY 15, 2015 @ 11:10 AM

14,367 VIEWS

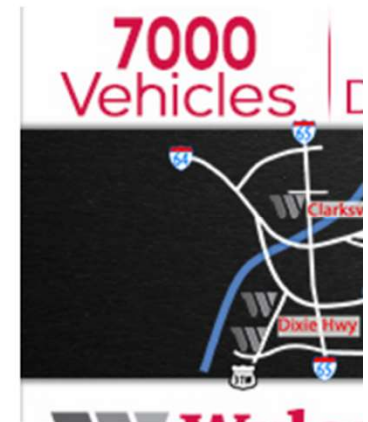
LAST CHANCE: Learn How to Gen

Mobile Isn't The Future Of Gaming (And Consoles Aren't Either)

**Dave Thier**, CONTRIBUTOR*I write about video games and technology.* [FULL BIO](#) ✓

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

Konami, which is going through what one might describe as a tough time, is pivoting. After struggling to keep up with the Ubisofts and Activisions of the world, it's decided that the future of video games lies in mobile, and



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E3 2016 just deemed VR the future of gaming – whether you like it or not

By Joe Osborne June 15, 2016 Gaming

We'll always go where the games are, right?



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Context is Everything



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Lisa Brown





Where I give bad advice:



- Articles
- Social Platforms
- Speaking to Aspiring Devs
- Giving feedback



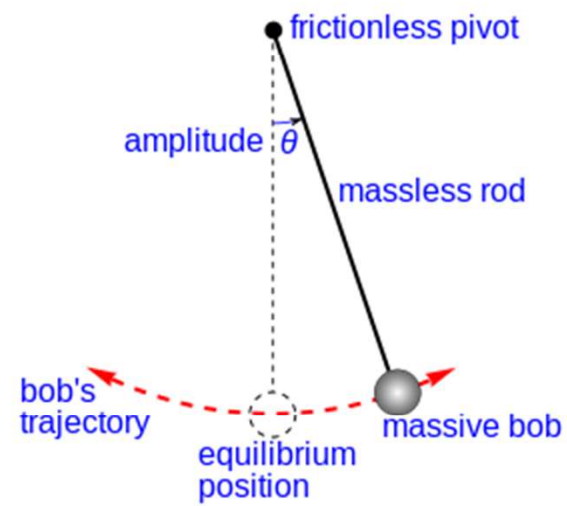
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~~Bad Advice #1~~

Okay advice that was given
irresponsibly and bad in specific
cases as a result of getting too
pendulous #1





- “Q: How do I break into the games industry?”
- “A: Make a game. Congrats you are in the industry”





Why did I give this advice?

- Confidence!
- Narrow perception of “the industry.”
- Imposter syndrome!



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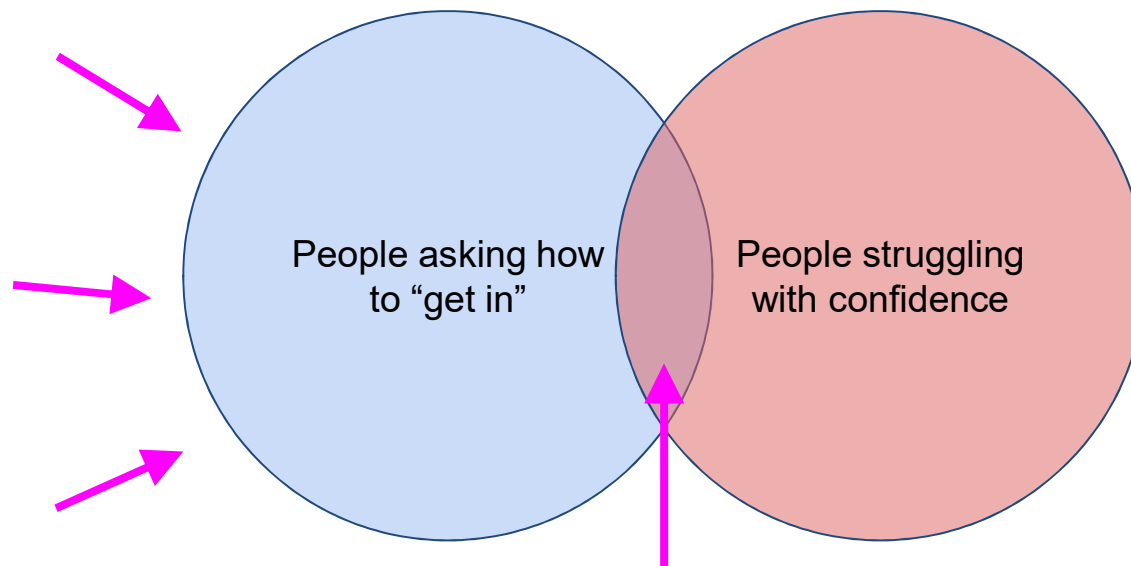


“Make a game. Congrats you are in the industry”





Why was this advice bad?





More specific questions:

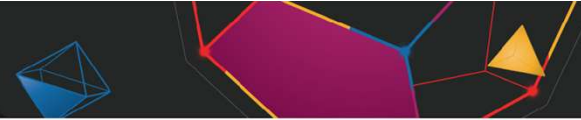
- How can I make a sustainable business making my own games?
- How do I get to work in [x] studio?
- I want to make a game but don't know where to get started, plz help?
- How do I feel like I belong to the "indie" community?



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"Make a game. Go get it. You are in the industry"

NOT HELPFUL





Privilege Check!





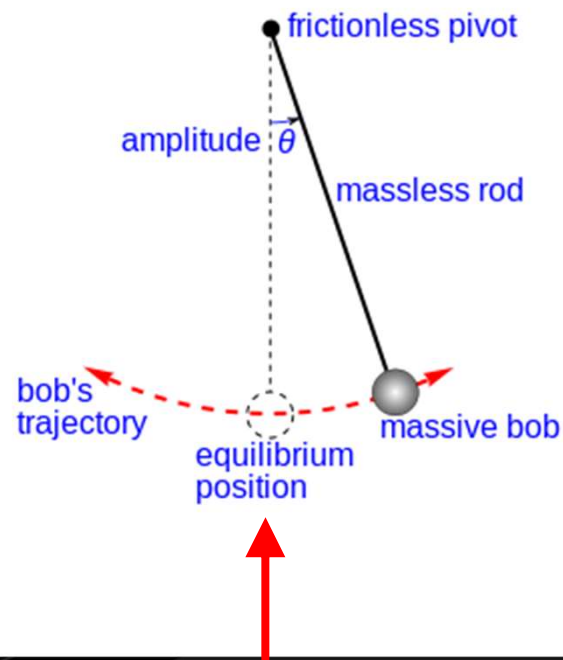
Revised Advice

- Ask for s





It is too hard for
mere mortals
such as you to
get in!



Just make a
game and
you're in



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Bad Advice #2



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“Game jam games are great for your portfolio”



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Why did I give this advice?

- People afraid to take the jump
- First projects were too big
- Get students to do more than homework





When is this advice bad?

- ROBUST project work more common in game schools





When is this advice bad?

- Game jams are different now



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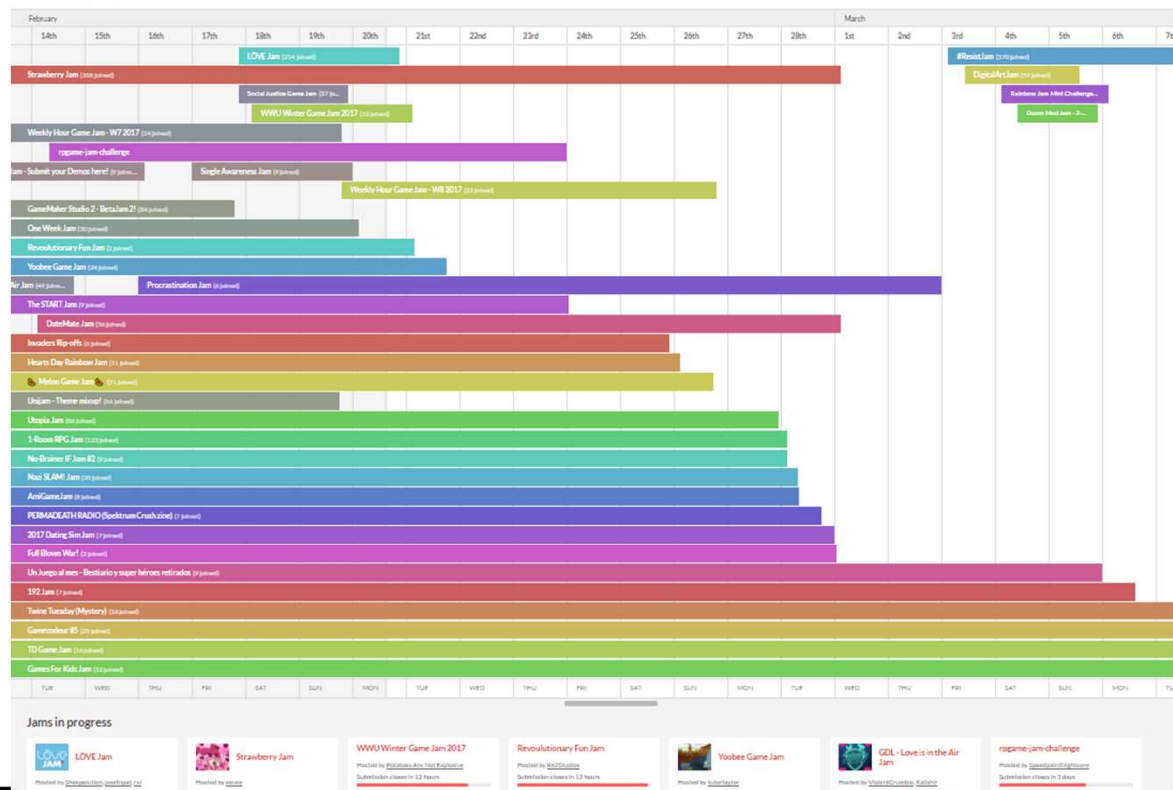
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Game jams on itch.io

itch.io is a place for hosting and participating in game jams online. Anyone can start hosting a game jam immediately. Here you can find some of the game jams that are going on. 12901 games have been created for jams hosted on itch.io.

Host your own jam



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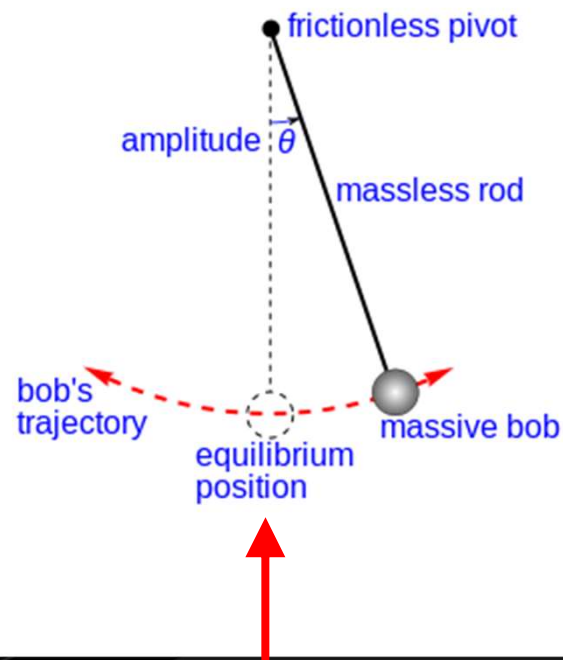
Revised Advice

- Game jam games make good supplementary portfolio material, but you need to have something to show off your skillz





Getting stuck
on big projects
that go
nowhere



ALL GAME
JAMS ALL
THE TIME
EVERY DAY



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Bad Advice #3



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“It doesn’t matter what programming language you learn”



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Why did I give this advice?

- Posturing is silly,
do not fear it





When is this advice bad?

- Doing a disservice to certain types of potential programmers





External fragmentation



Total free memory available for allocation.



Dynamically allocated
three blocks of memory (A, B, C).



Out of these three continuous blocks of
allocated memory, consider that the middle
block B is released. It is not possible to use
the freed block B, if the memory to be allocated
is larger than the size of block B.



LOADING



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< 90 fps



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“It doesn’t matter what programming language you learn”





“It doesn’t matter what programming language you learn and anyone who says otherwise is worthy of mockery”





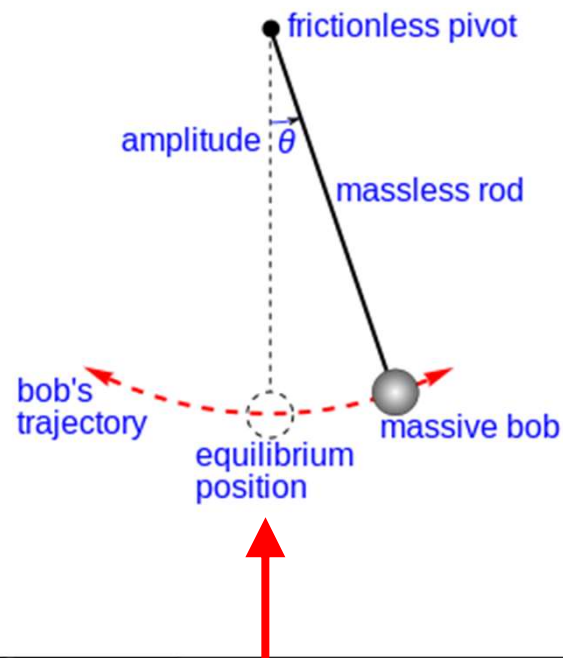
Revised Advice

- Get their goals and context before advising





C++ is the
one true
programming
language and
all others are
garbage



All languages
are equal and
if you say
otherwise
you are to be
mocked



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Bad Advice #4



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“Group brainstorming is the optimal way
to generate creative ideas”



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MUSINGS ON GAME DESIGN

SUCCESSFUL MODERATION
OF BRAINSTORMING
MEETINGS

🕒 JUNE 8, 2011 👤 WERTLE 💬 1 COMMENT

Originally written for [#AltDevBlogADay](#)

I think the game development community has done a pretty good job of sharing resources and ideas and tips and tricks on effective brainstorming. However, it's one thing to tease out of your brain all the fantastic and creative ideas you could ever ask for; getting the same thing out of a group of people in meeting-form is a slightly different animal.

Have you ever been in a brainstorming meeting where people sort of sit around and spit out ideas, but by the end of it, no one is sure if anything was really accomplished, and you have the uneasy sensation of having just poured a bunch of creativity into a black hole? I hate that feeling! Brainstorming meetings should not yield that feeling, they should produce a bunch of really awesome and useful ideas for the problem at hand, and everyone should leave *feeling like they have accomplished a great feat and made strides in whatever*





Why Group Brainstorming Is a Waste of Time - Harvard Business Review

<https://hbr.org/2015/03/why-group-brainstorming-is-a-waste-of-time> ▼

Mar 25, 2015 - In fact, a **great** deal of evidence indicates that **brainstorming** actually harms ... **Studies** have found that the number of suggestions plateaus with ...

Brainstorming Doesn't Work -- Do This Instead - Forbes

www.forbes.com/sites/rochellebailis/.../brainstorming-doesnt-work-do-this-instead/ ▼

Oct 8, 2014 - In the average **group brainstorming** session, most of us follow a set of ... **Studies** show that many participants of a **brainstorming** session either ...

Brainstorming Doesn't Work; Try This Technique Instead - Fast Company

<https://www.fastcompany.com/.../brainstorming-doesnt-work-try-this-technique-instea...> ▼

Jul 29, 2014 - Then you know **brainstorming** needs an overhaul. ... In her **studies**, Thompson found that brainwriting **groups** generated 20% more ideas and ...

Why Brainstorming Doesn't Improve Productivity or Creativity ...

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/.../why-brainstorming-doesnt-improve-productivit...> ▼

Apr 10, 2012 - **Brainstorming** is a widely used technique for **groups** to develop ... **shows** that **brainstorming** may not be the best strategy to generate unique and varied ideas. ... This study and other **studies** have also shown that taking a break ...

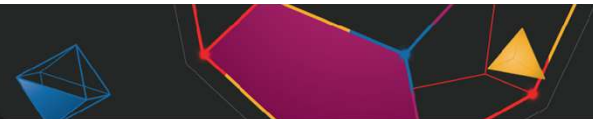
There's a Better Way to Brainstorm – Association for Psychological ...

www.psychologicalscience.org/news/minds.../theres-a-better-way-to-brainstorm.html ▼

Mar 15, 2016 - The **team brainstorming** session is a common way for drumming up ... of the University of Texas at Arlington has **studied** creativity in **groups**, ... Our research about virtual live online brain writing in real time **show** similar results

A Better Way to Group Brainstorm - Lifesaver





Original Articles

Productivity Loss in Brainstorming Groups: A Meta-Analytic Integration

Brian Mullen , Craig Johnson & Eduardo Salas

Pages 3-23 | Published online: 07 Jun 2010

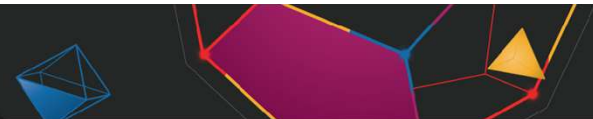
[Download citation](#) http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp1201_1[Citations](#)[Metrics](#)[Reprints & Permissions](#)[Get access](#)

Abstract

This article reports the results of a meta-analytic integration of previous research on productivity loss in brainstorming groups. The following patterns were observed: Generally, brainstorming groups are significantly less productive than nominal groups, in terms of both quantity and quality. Stronger productivity loss was demonstrated in the context of (a) larger groups, (b) experimenter presence, (c) tape-recorded vocalization of contributions (vs. writing of contributions), and (d) in comparison to a nominal group of truly Alone individuals (vs. a nominal group of Together individuals). These patterns are (a) highly consistent with predictions derived from social psychological explanatory mechanisms, and (b) only marginally consistent with procedural explanatory mechanisms, and (c) highly inconsistent with economic explanatory mechanisms. This article considers the implications of these patterns for the use of, and for future research on, brainstorming.

People

[Art](#)
[W](#)
[Ef](#)
[M](#)
[Pr](#)
[Id](#)[Wc](#)
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Original Articles

Productivity Loss in Brainstorming Groups: A Meta-Analytic Integration

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People

[Art](#)
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Analytic Integration

Brian Mullen, Craig Johnson & Eduardo Salas

Pages 3-23 | Published online: 07 Jun 2010

Download citation <http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532>

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Abstract





Wait a minute...

Analytic Integration

Brian Mullen, Craig Johnson & Eduardo Salas

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SUCCESSFUL MODERATION OF BRAINSTORMING MEETINGS

© JUNE 8, 2011 | WERKLE | 1 COMMENT

Originally written for [#AltDevBlogADay](#)

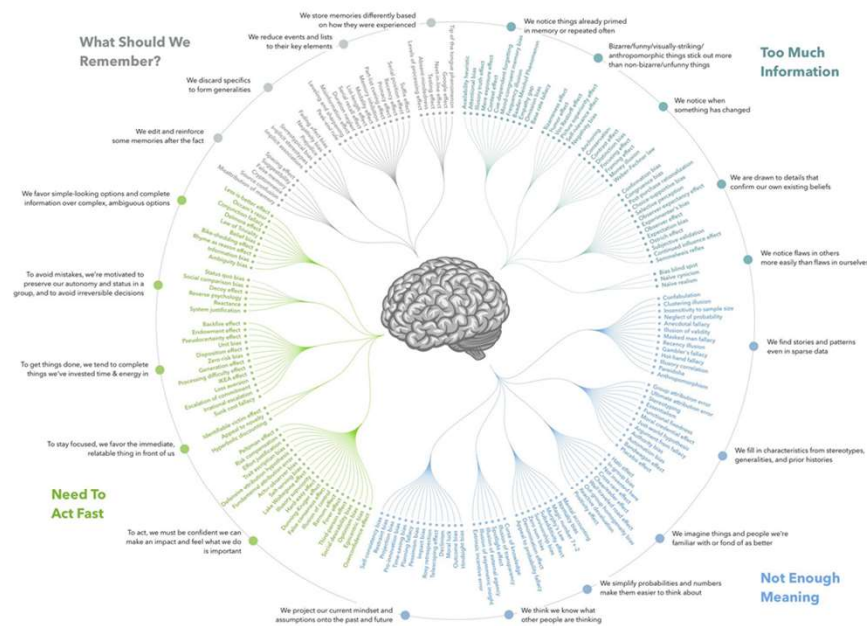
I think the game development community has done a pretty good i

Abstract





COGNITIVE BIAS CODEX, 2016



ALGORITHMIC LAYOUT • DESIGN BY JIM • JOHN MANDOGIAN III // CONCEPT • METICULOUS CATEGORIZATION BY BUSTER BENSON // DEEP RESEARCH BY WIKIPEDIANS FAR • WIDE





“If you want to assert a truth, first make sure it’s not just an opinion that you desperately want to be true”

- Space Dad





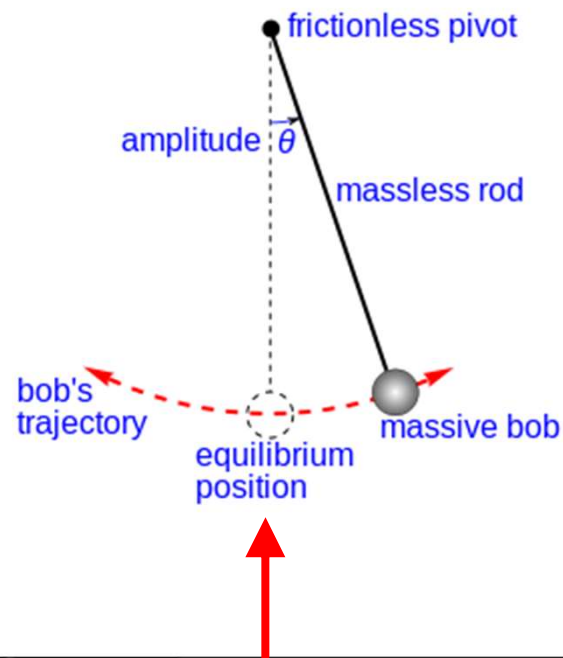
Revised Advice

- Brainstorm problems
- Give individual time for solo solutions
- Share and discuss solutions





Auteurs only



The one
ultimate way
of generating
creative
ideas!



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Tips for Advice-taking



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Advice-taking Tip #1

Be suspicious of “How to Success” stories





Advice-taking Tip #2

Realize people might have had success IN
SPITE OF the things they did and not
BECAUSE OF them

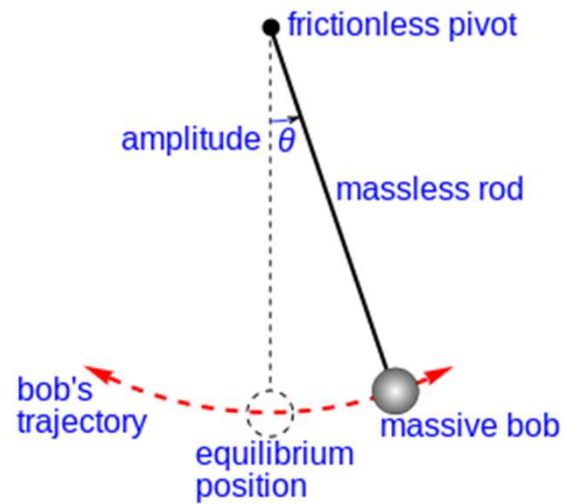




Advice-taking Tip #3

Mind which voices you aren't hearing





Context is everything! Mind the pendulum!



Everything I Said was WRONG

Why Indie is Different Now

Lisa Brown	@Wertle
Dan Cook	@danctheduck
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Mistakes were made

When you followed my advice



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SPRYFOX

Daniel Cook

Triple Town
Alphabear
Steambirds
Road Not Taken
Beartopia



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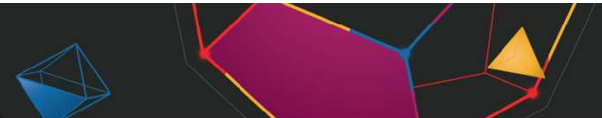
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LOSTGARDEN



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1. Make your game F2P (2005)



LOSTGARDEN

**You should follow
Lostgarden**



Home About Essays Art Contact

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2005

A Game Business Model: Learning from Touring Bands

Most metropolitan areas sport a wide array of bands that eke out a reasonable living by touring about the nearby countryside. At every stop, they get a bit of cash from the till, sell a handful of t-shirts and maybe even an album or two. If they are good, they build up a sizable population of groupies that worships the ground they walk on and follows them from show to show.

Very few people outside of the circle of fans know who these bands are. Yet the moderately successful bands make enough to get by and a few even manage to prosper. These bands do not sell a product like their mass market Brittany Spears brethren. Instead, they survive by providing a service to their devoted fan base.

Over the past several months I've been tracking several successful online game developers who operate in a similar fashion. Each operates profitably, employs a small staff and appears to be growing. Their names include Jagex, Iron Realms, Three Rings and Iron Will games. Chances are that you've never heard of them.

This essay is about illuminating a successful, alternative, business model that has the following key characteristics:

- Supports large numbers of independent game titles in a low competition environment.
- Is amenable to bootstrapping and thus avoids the need for large publishers, money men or other controlling interests.
- Encourages unique pockets of innovation.
- Offer an opportunity for sustainable, lower risk profits for a small group of developers.

Welcome!

You've found a rare treasure trove of readable, thoughtful essays on game design theory, art and the business of





- Games as services break feast or famine cycles of retail
- They reduce the power of publishers
- They increase the power of developers
- They create tight connections between creatives and their community
- They can be hugely profitable





But...

- They require specialized knowledge to build well.
- Thousands of ways they can go wrong.
- They don't work for every game. Or team
- Evolved into its own ecosystem






Lesson

The hot new thing is never a panacea.








2. Make your game multiplayer (2013)



LOSTGARDEN


Type your search and hit enter

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2013

Multiplayer Logistics

How do we get players to play together in a manner that fits their schedules? This is a key logistical challenge a designer faces when building multiplayer games.

The promise

We are seeing a blossoming of innovative multiplayer systems. In previous eras there were a handful of default models that games might use (matches, play-by-mail). Games today exist on a spectrum from fully concurrent to fully asynchronous and everything in between. A game like Dark Souls is predominantly single player, but includes interactions that are asynchronous (the leaving of messages and deaths) or fully concurrent (the joining of another player into your game for PvP or Coop.)

We are entering a golden era of multiplayer gameplay. Server costs are falling dramatically with the advent of cloud computing. Broadband internet and always on mobile connections are spreading rapidly across the globe. Business models like in game payments, crowd funding and service-based gaming are evolving to the point to financially support a broad range of long-lived communities. Designers are playing with these new capabilities to invent new forms of multiplayer gaming.

The challenge

However, multiplayer is both expensive to build and has a high risk of failure. Often teams invest 50 to 100% of their development budget into creating a multiplayer mode. It seems worth it. During development, the team plays every Friday and has so much fun they are convinced that multiplayer is what will turn their game into the next League of Legends or Counter Strike.

The real test occurs when the game faces a live population of players. Upon launch, multiplayer





- Better retention
- Community!
- Bringing people together is a good thing





But...

- More expensive
- More design risk
- More technical risk
- Basically expert game development





Lesson

Ask: Does the audience have the skills?





3. Go Cross platform

- Multiple shots on goal
- Multiple revenue opportunities





But...

- We took a strategy game to Facebook. Not a fit.
- These platforms have their own style preferences.
- Early in the platform's life, they aren't apparent.
- It is easy to get a mismatch, especially w new designs



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Lesson

Sometimes low information bets fail








4. Build a portfolio since most games fail



LOSTGARDEN

Type your search and hit enter

You should follow
Lostgarden



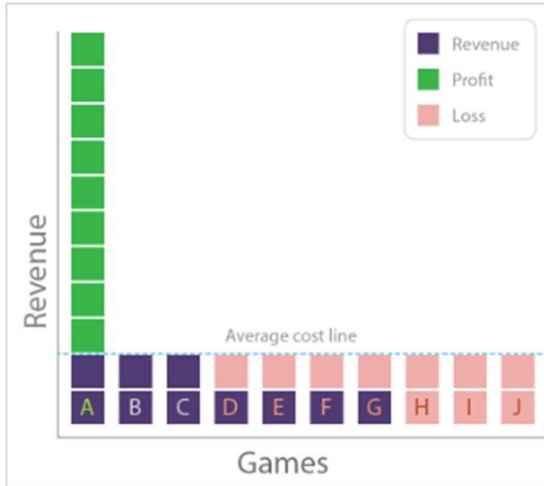
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SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2015

Minimum Sustainable Success



Game	Revenue	Profit	Loss
A	High	High	No
B	Medium	Low	No
C	Medium	Low	No
D	Low	No	Yes
E	Low	No	Yes
F	Low	No	Yes
G	Low	No	Yes
H	Low	No	Yes
I	Low	No	Yes
J	Low	No	Yes

Let's dream for a moment about sustainable game development.

Game development is inherently unstable. Technology, markets, profit margins and teams shift





- Most games fail
- Your successes need to pay for failures.
- Aim for 5X return on costs to declare success.





But...

- New devs took this as meaning even their break even games were “failures masquerading as success”.
- It came across as “you are all going to fail. And shouldn’t try.”





Lesson

Expert advice is often overwhelming





Everything I Said was WRONG

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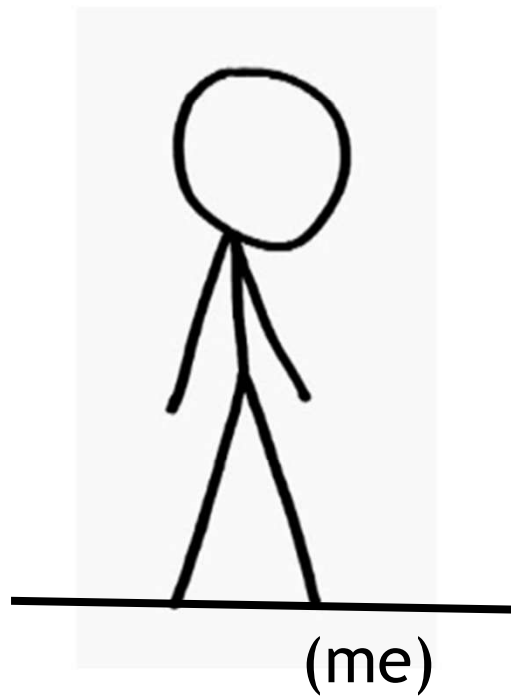
Everything I Said Was Wrong

How Indie Is Different Now

Liz England, Game Designer at Ubisoft



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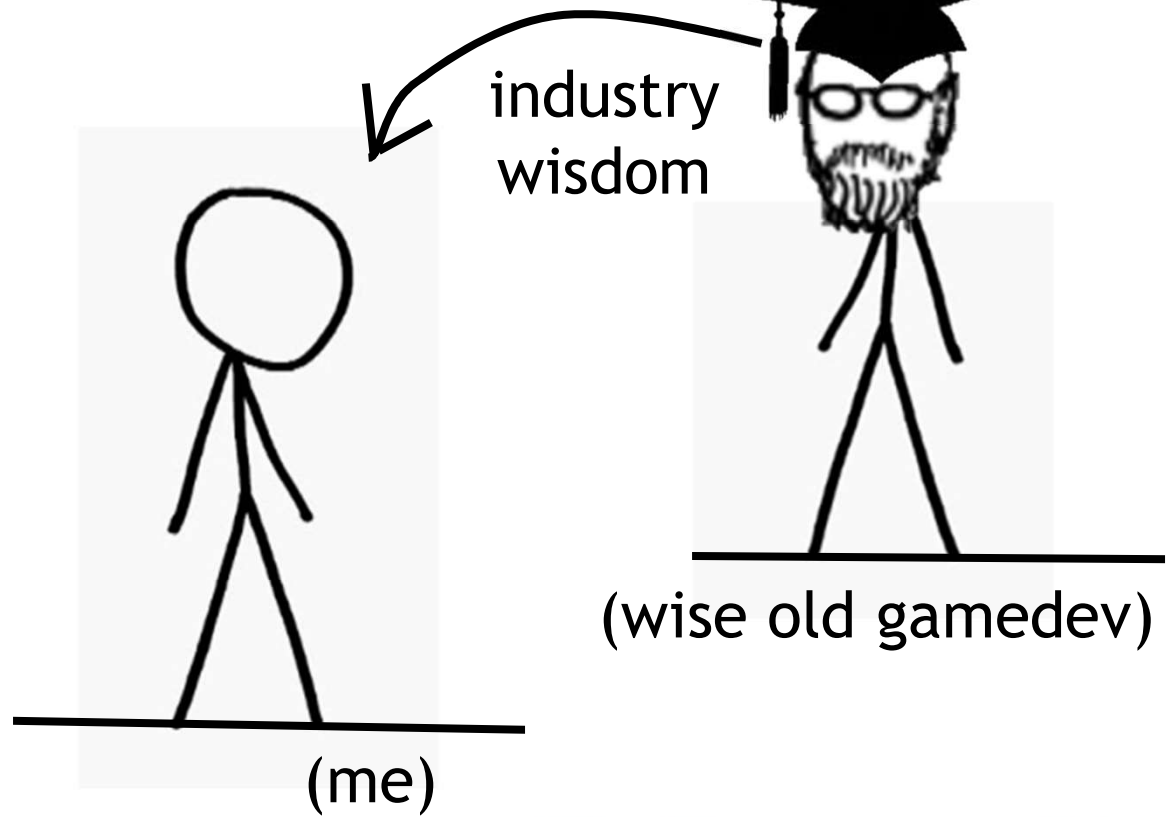
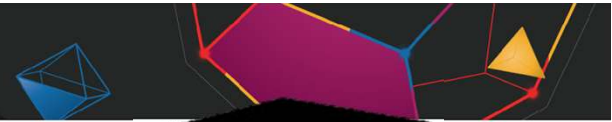


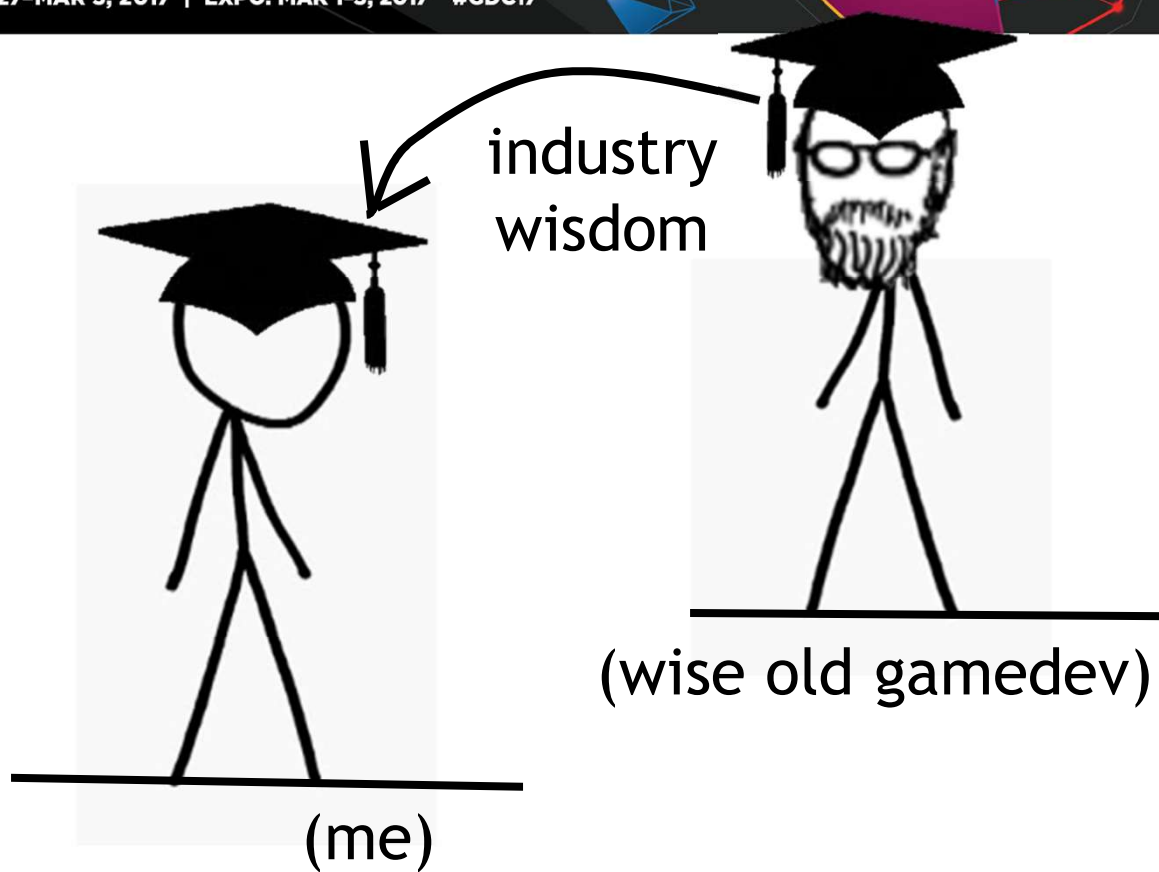
(me)

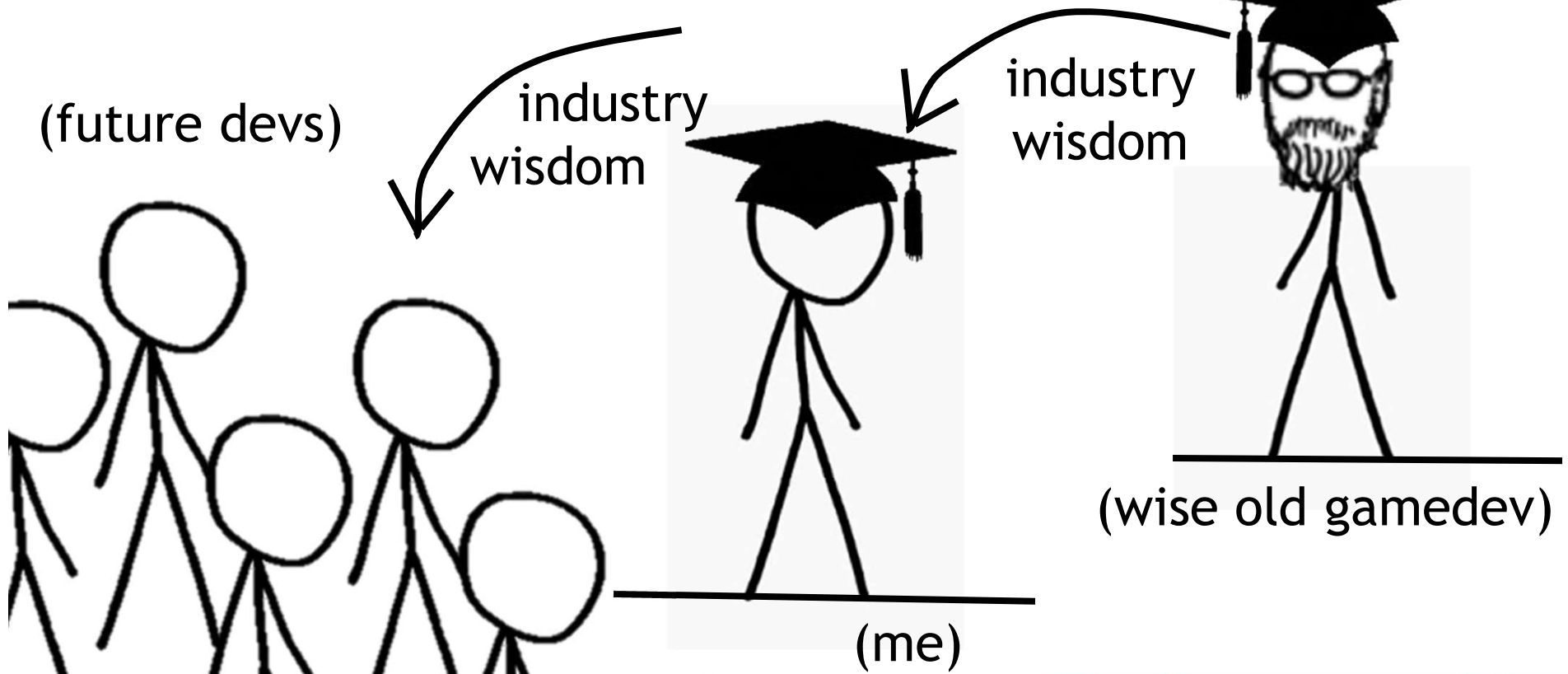
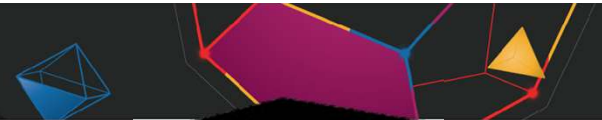


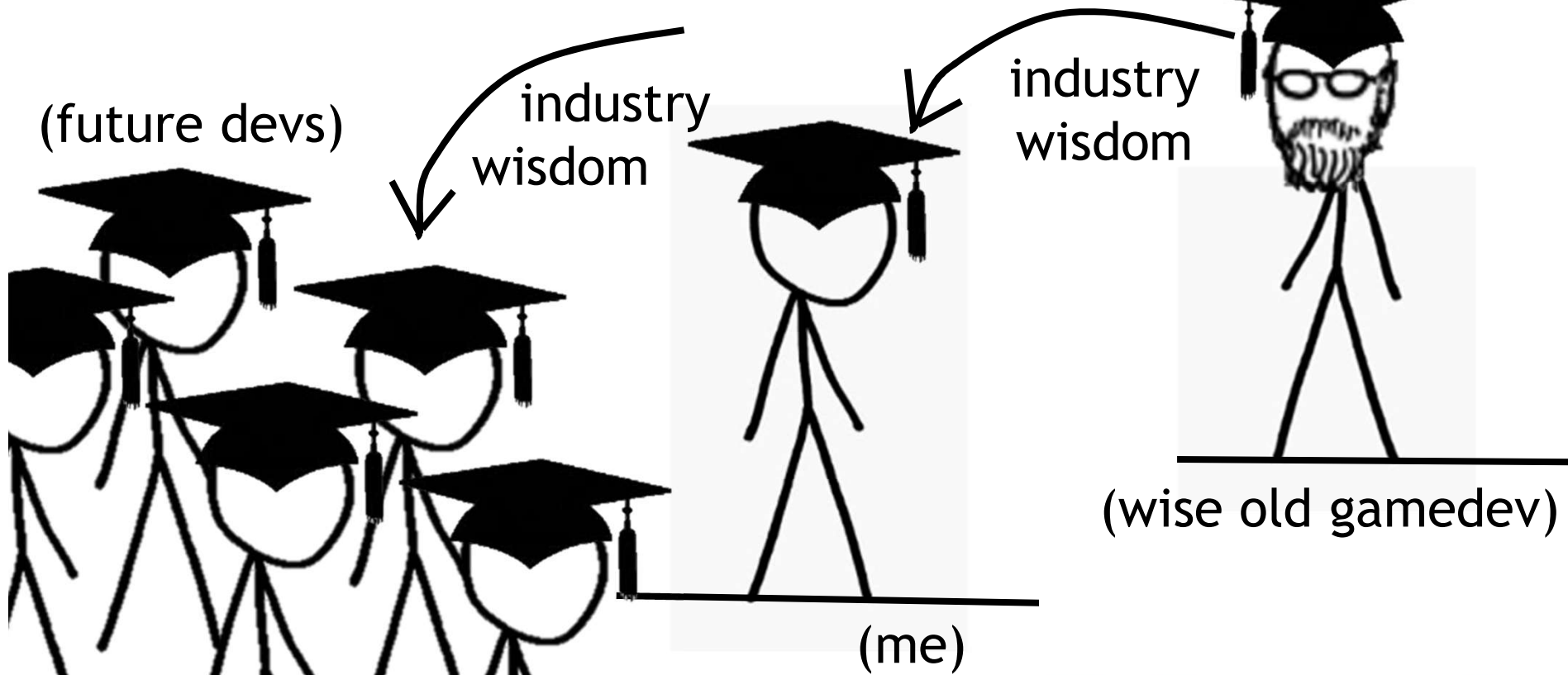
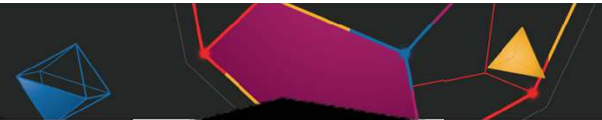
(wise old gamedev)











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**"All that matters are your skills.
Just do good work and you will succeed."**



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"All that matters are your skills.
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"You will have to crunch."



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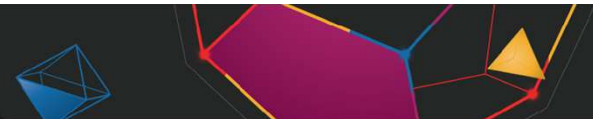
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**What kind of game industry
do I want to have in 30 years?**



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**"All that matters are your skills.
Just do good work and you will succeed."**



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"All that matters are your skills.
Just do good work and you will succeed."

It's not just your skills that matter, but also who you know, where you live, what language you speak, your gender, your skin color, or whether you even know about an opportunity in the first place.

Focus on the factors you can control and if you don't succeed, it is not necessarily your fault.



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"You will have to crunch."



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"You will have to crunch."

You do not have to crunch. There are successful developers and successful games that do not involve crunch.

If you don't have that privilege, you can still mitigate how bad crunch is rather than accept it. You can help make

production cycle, develop methods

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"I got to where I am by suffering, and so should you."



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"I got to where I am by suffering, and so should you."

**It's my responsibility to help improve this industry
so that the problems I face are not the same ones
the next generation face.**



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**"Don't make games for the money.
Make games because you have passion."**



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"Don't make games for the money.
Make games because you have passion."

You can't eat passion.

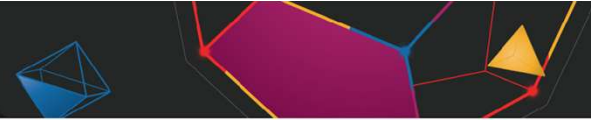
**Don't be afraid to ask people to pay you for your
work. You deserve to be compensated fairly for your
labor.**



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"A thousand other people would kill to have your job."



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"A thousand other people would kill to have your job."

Be thankful you get to do something you love for a living, but never let yourself be satisfied by the status quo.



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"People who burn out just aren't able to cut it."



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"People who burn out just aren't able to cut it."

Burn-out is not a sign of weakness. It is a symptom of depression and it can affect anyone.

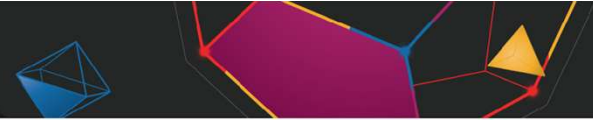
When our peers and friends suffer from burn-out, we should support them as they recover. We should take lessons on what triggers burn-out and do our best to eliminate them from our work.



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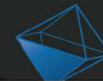
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"If you aren't willing to make a few personal sacrifices,
maybe this industry is not for you."

**There's no contract you sign, no bargain with the
devil you make when you enter the game industry
that says you cannot have a happy, full life.**



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Everything I Said Was Wrong

How Indie Is Different Now



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Everything I Said Was Wrong How Indie CAN BE Different Now



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Everything I Said was WRONG

Why Indie is Different Now

Lisa Brown	@Wertle
Dan Cook	@danctheduck
Liz England	@lizardengland
Rami Ismail	@tha_rami

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RAMI ISMAIL



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ALL ADVICE IS BAD

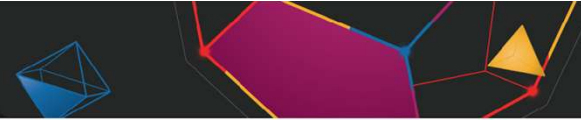


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PERSPECTIVE & HINDSIGHT



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THERE WILL BE LOSERS



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YOU DON'T GET TO PICK



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BAD ADVICE IS GOOD



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MAKE GAMES?

