



GAME NARRATIVE  
SUMMIT

# It's not fake, it's pro wrestling: Applying wrestling storytelling in games.

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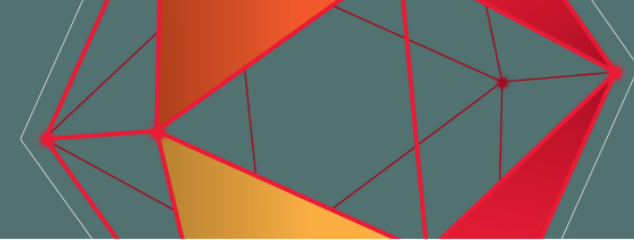
GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE<sup>®</sup> | MARCH 19-23, 2018 | EXPO: MARCH 21-23, 2018 #GDC18



# Who am I?



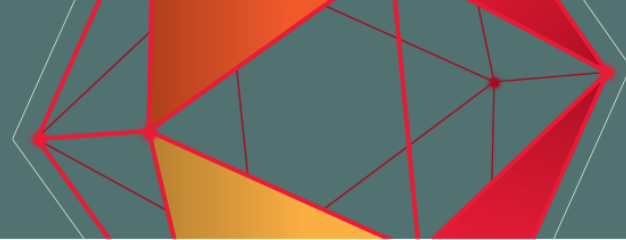


# Wrestling teaches us to...

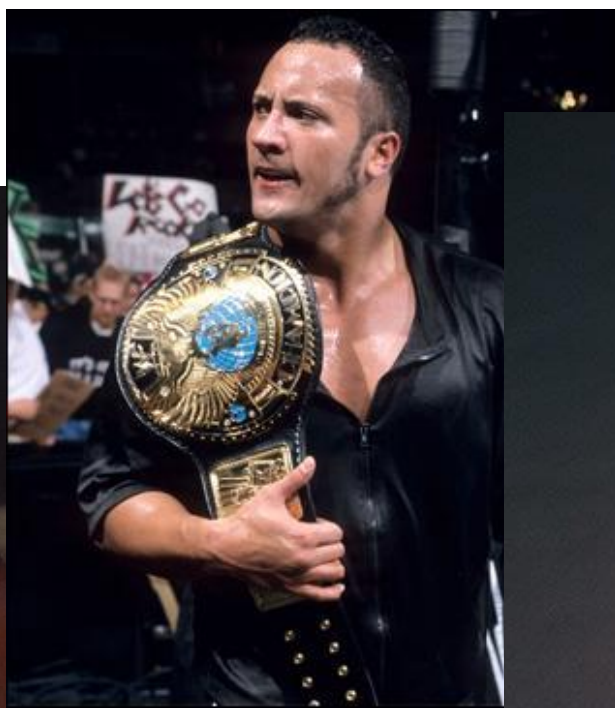
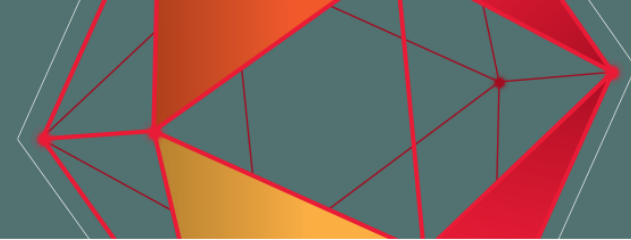
- Keep it simple.
- Bring it from within yourself.
- Do what's logical.
- Plan ahead.



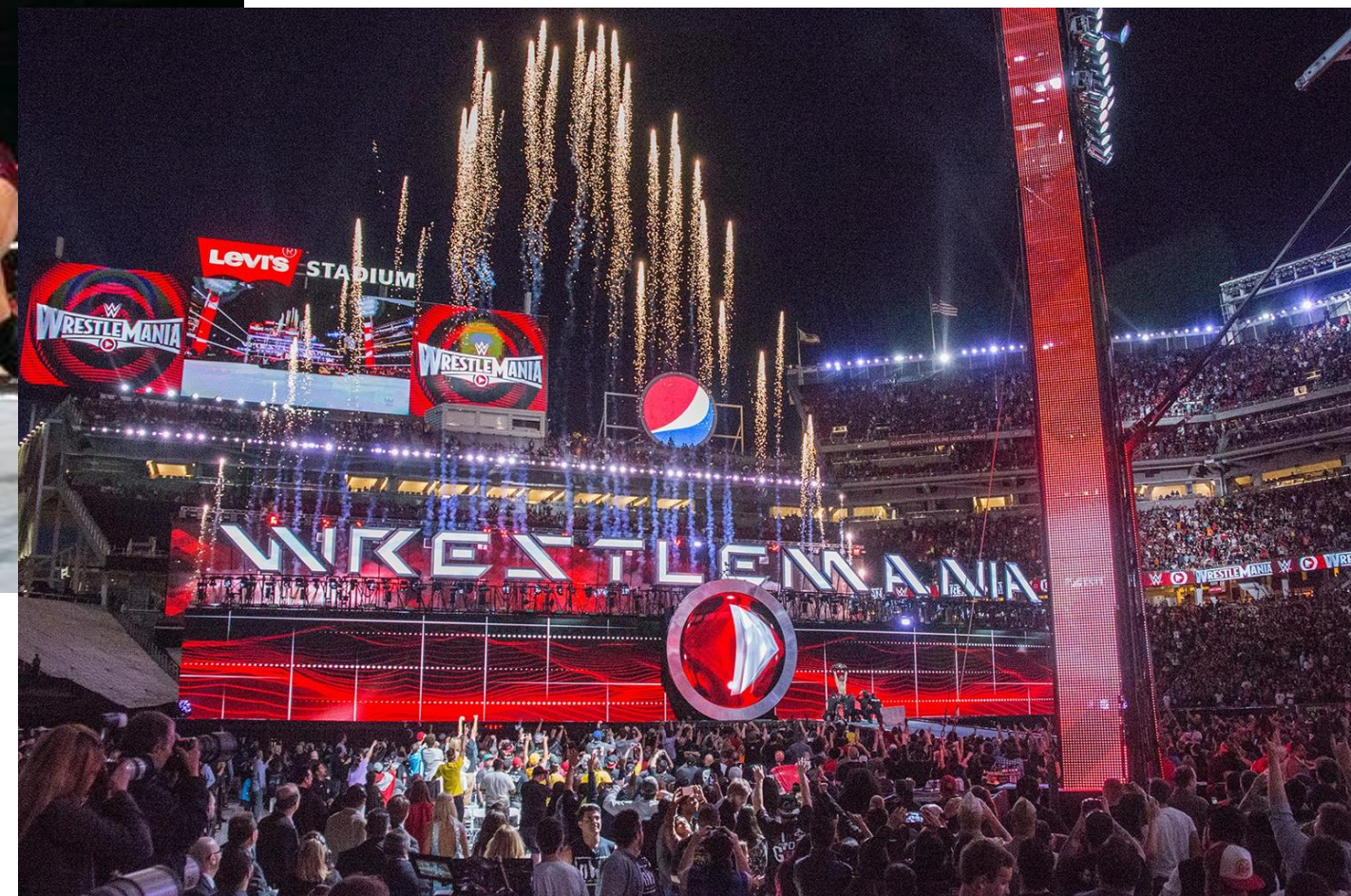
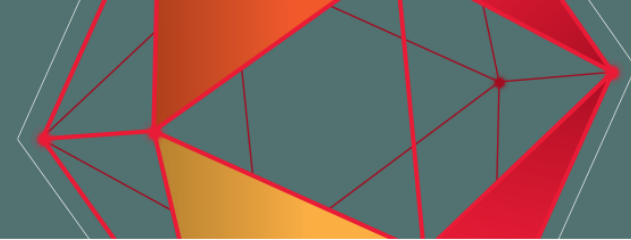










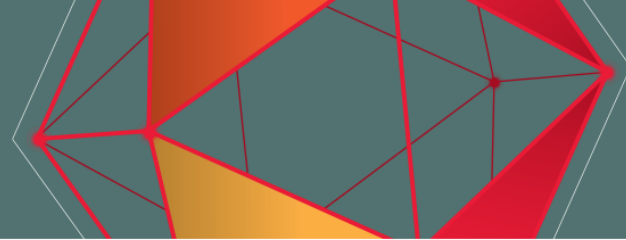




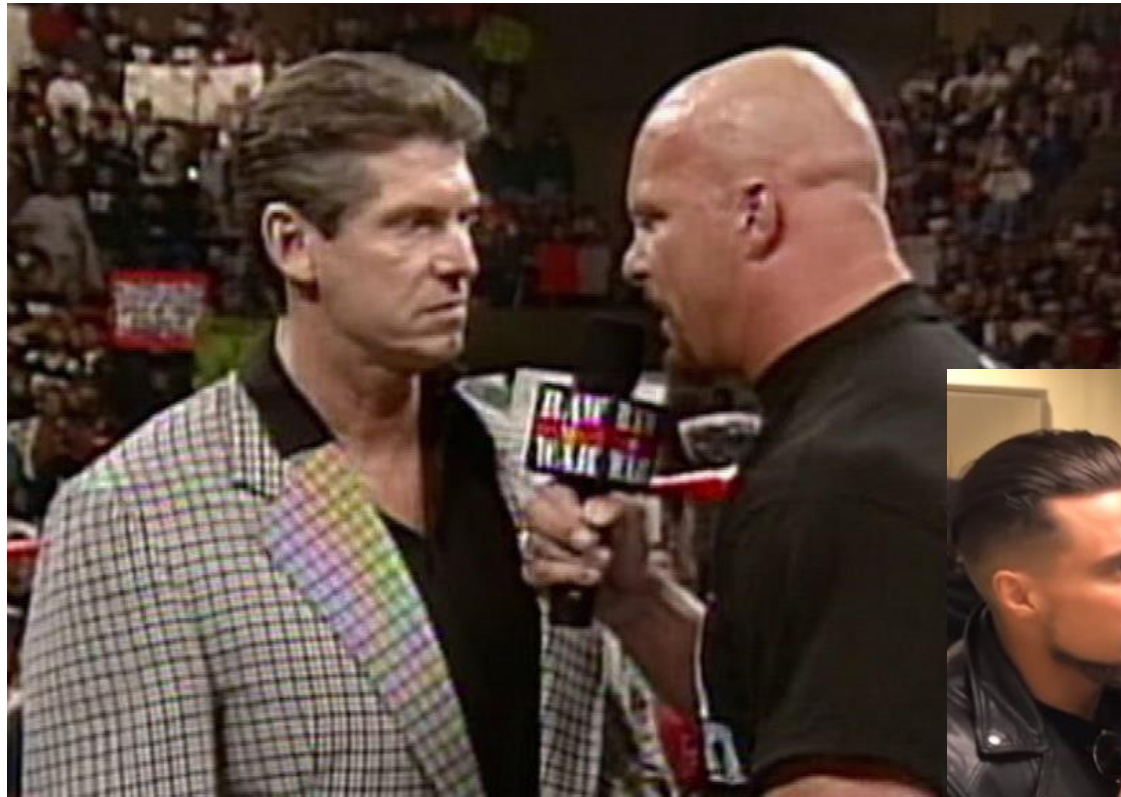
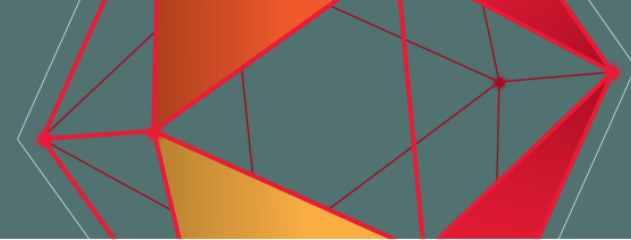


# And in the bizarre world of 2018...

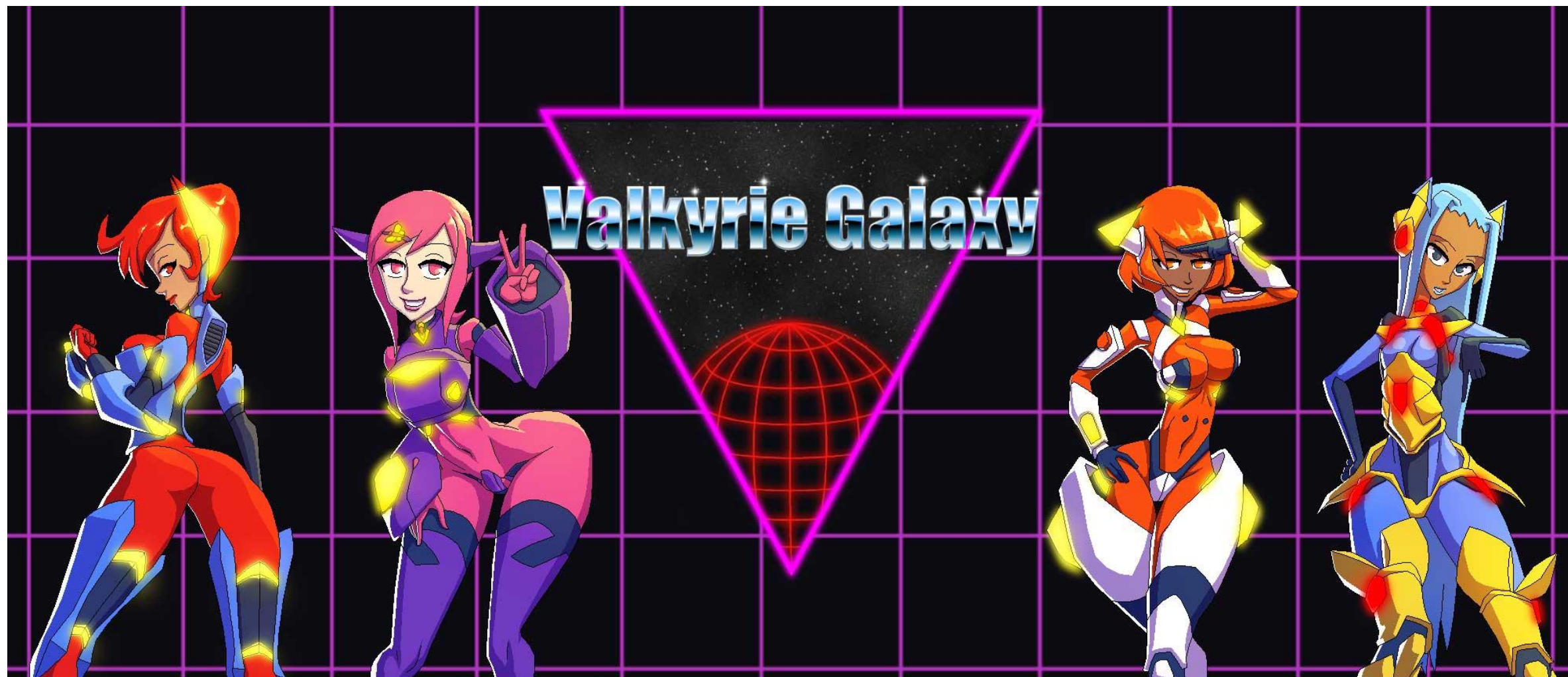
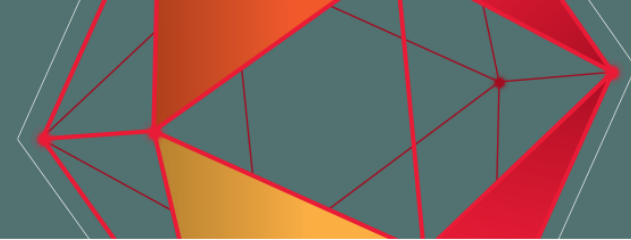












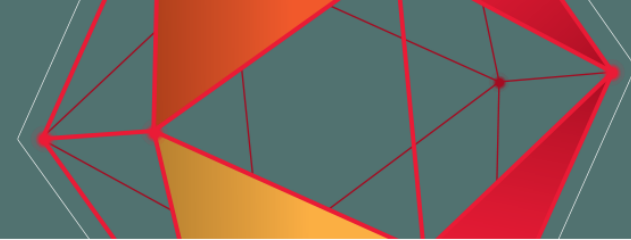




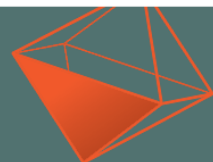
# Had to add some dialog to our game

- We wanted to write some colorful dialog that would be displayed after each round.

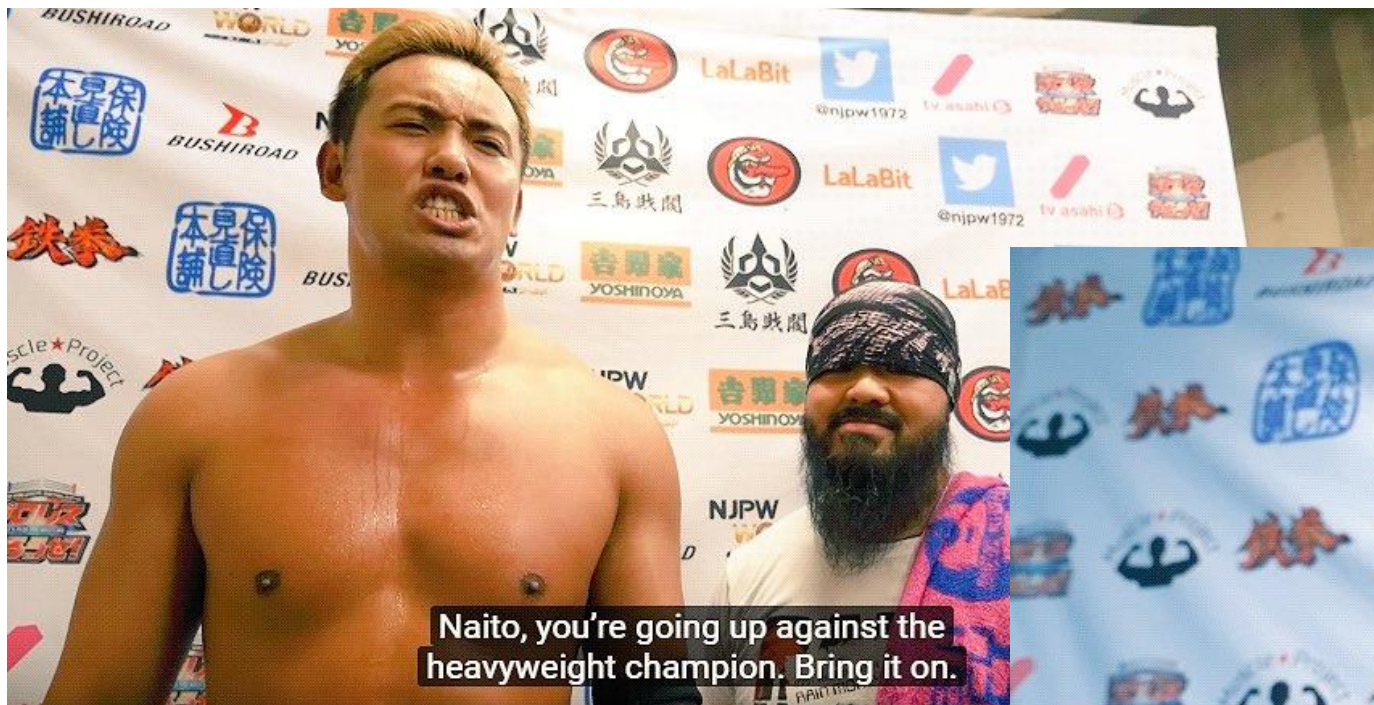
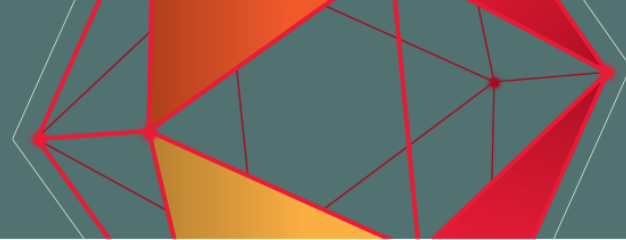
















# Would this approach work for our game?

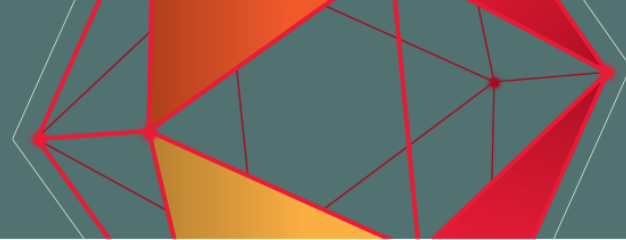




# We found out that...







# Wrestling is great for storytelling.

- Easy to implement guidelines for efficient storytelling.
- Help streamline narrative integration in games.
- Can be apply on several areas of a game.





# Let's get one thing straight.

- Wrestling is **not fake**....
- It's a **work**.







# There's only one thing in wrestling that's fake.

- The finish.
- The idea that the outcome is real.
- Sells the audience the fact that the win is everything.





# How does wrestling tell a story?

- Characters.
- Promos.
- Ring psychology.
- Angles.







# Characters







# What makes a good character?

- Appeal to a wide audience.
- Relatable.
- Believable.

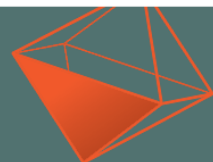






# How to make a good character

- Keep it simple.





# Two types of characters

- The hero A.K.A. The “Babyface”.
- The villain A.K.A. The “Heel”.

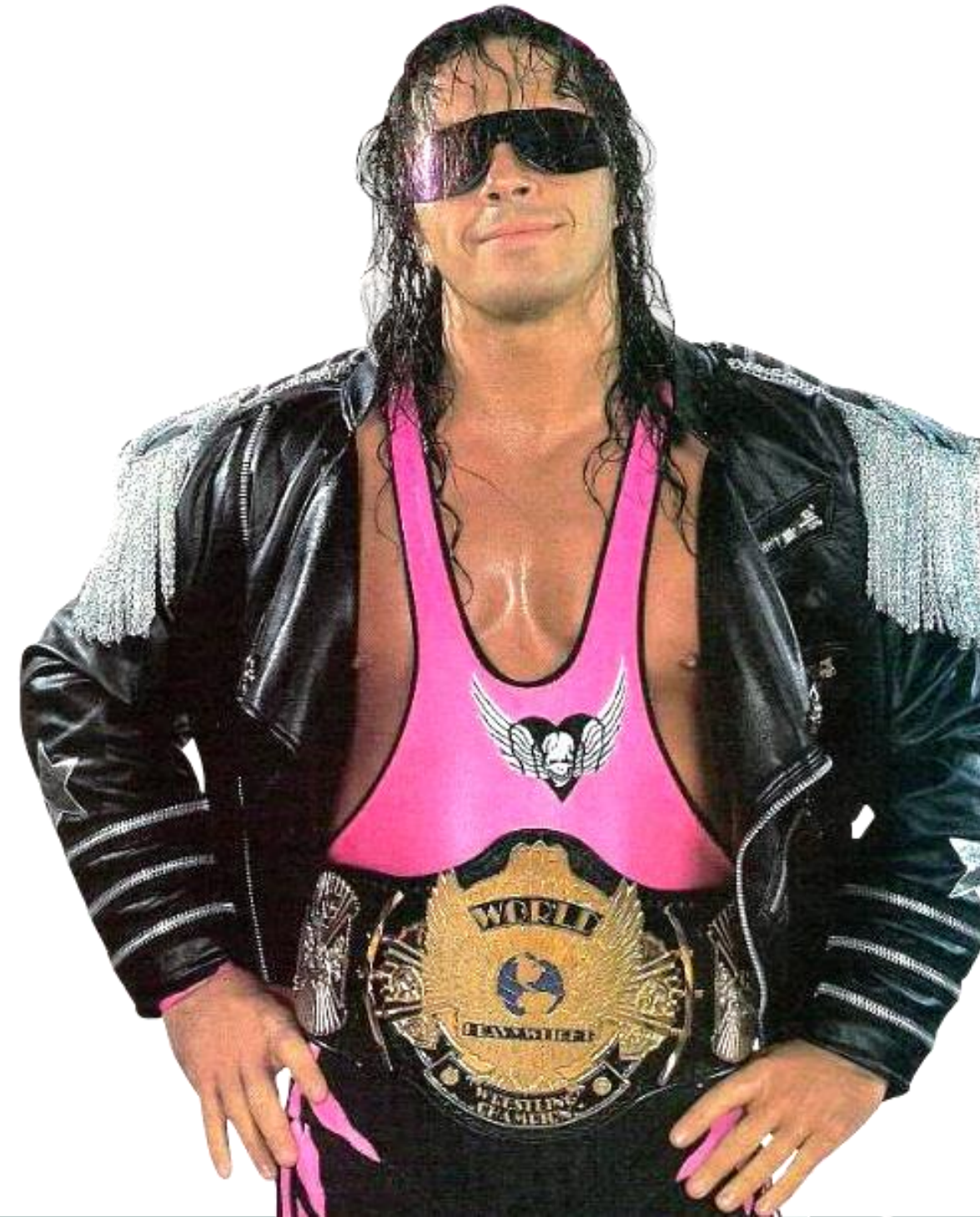






# The babyface.

- Larger than life.
- Likable qualities.
- Winner.
- Underdog.





# The heel.

- Dislikeable qualities.
- Only cares about winning.
- Despicable actions.
- Winner.







# How to make a good character

- Bring it from within yourself.
  - Likable/dislikable traits.
  - What qualities do you have that closely resemble them.
  - Amplify them.





# How to make a good character

- Properly portray your character.
  - Body language.
  - Vocabulary.
  - Actions.







# Tetsuya Naito



(Take it easy)





# Tetsuya Naito



(Take it easy)







# Tetsuya Naito



(Take it easy)







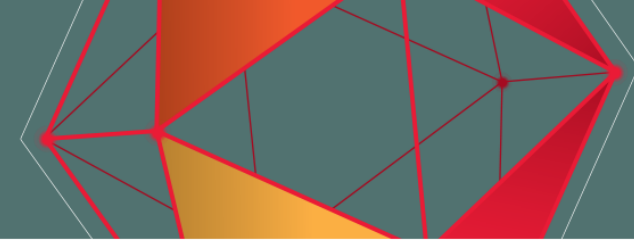
# Tetsuya Naito



(Take it easy)



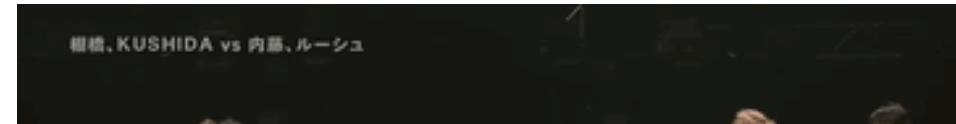




# Tetsuya Naito

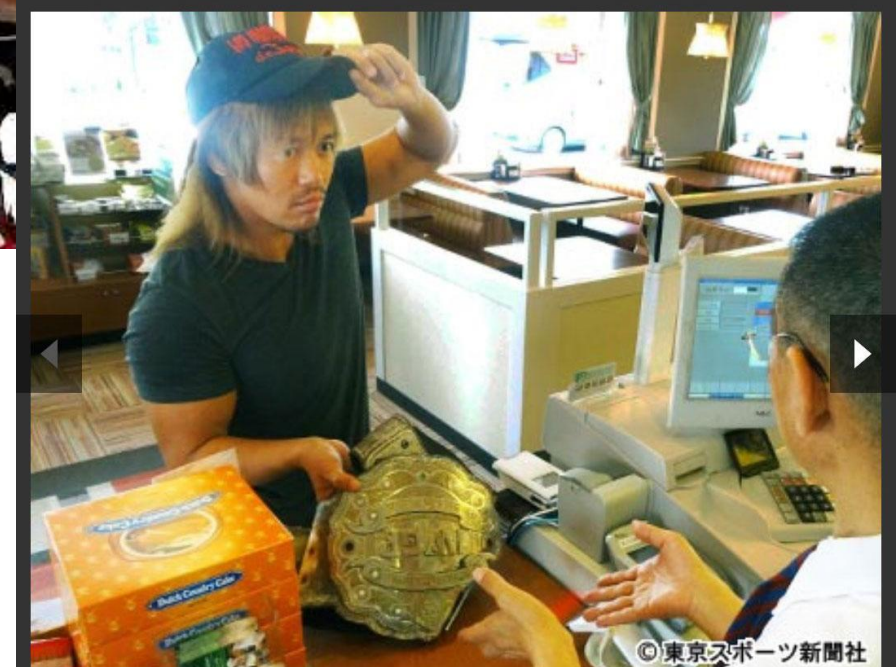


(Take it easy)



Naito rampant to put IC's belt at checkout instead of coinage ...

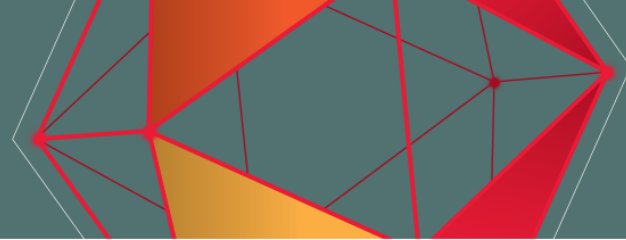
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Naito rampant to put IC's belt at checkout instead of coinage ...





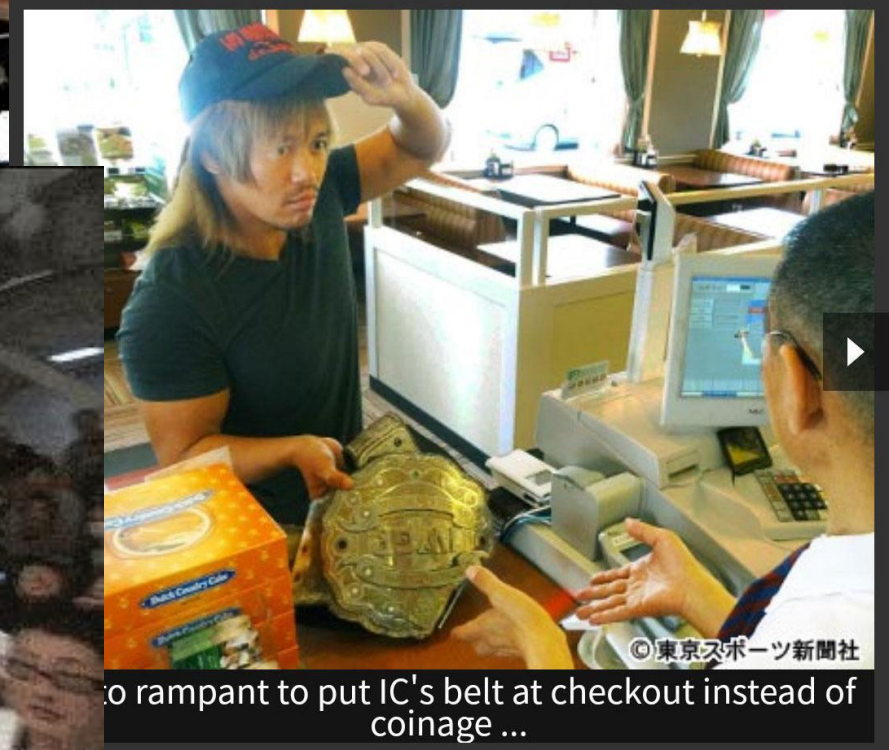


# Tetsuya Naito



Naito rampant to put IC's belt at checkout instead of coinage ...

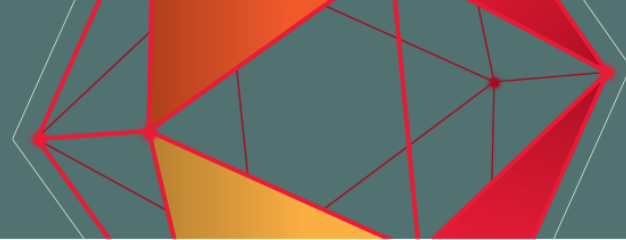
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to rampant to put IC's belt at checkout instead of coinage ...







# Promos





# Promos.

- An in-character interview or monologue.
- Move the story forward.
- Get the audience involved in the conflict.







# Promos basic guidelines.

- Have a base.
  - Know the key bullet points.





# Promos basic guidelines.

- It's not acting, it's reacting.
  - React to your current situation.







# Promos basic guidelines.

- Keep it simple.
  - What you would say if your current situation was real?
  - Get straight to the point.





# Promos basic guidelines.

- Don't be clever, be real.
- Have an emotional conversation from the heart.







# Promos basic guidelines.

- Make it colorful.



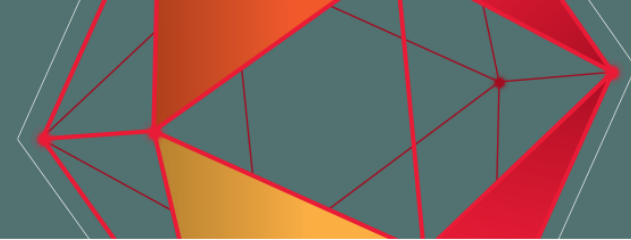


# Promos basic guidelines.

- Don't bury your opponent.
  - Attack your opponent's weaknesses but never hit too close to home.







# Babyface promo.

- Why face is mad at the heel.
- What is he/she going to do to get even.
- Say what people wish they could say.





# Heel promo.

- Lie.
- Exaggerate.
- Be egotistical.
- Piss people off.







# Ring psychology





# Ring psychology.

- Telling a specific story in a ring.
- Get the audience emotionally involved in the match.







# Ring psychology.

- Heel's job is to get a babyface over.
- Babyface's job is to get over.





# Basic ring psychology guidelines.

- Revolve around finishers and body parts.
- Keep it simple.
  - Just do what's logical in your current situation.







# 7 deadly steps.

1. Babyface Shine.
2. Heat spot.
3. Extensive Heel Beatdown.
4. Hope Spot.
5. Double Down.
6. Comeback.
7. The Finish





# 7 deadly steps.

- Babyface Shine.
  - Demonstrate that if all things were equal the babyface would win.







# 7 deadly steps.

- Heat spot
  - Heel will cheat or take some unfair advantage.





# 7 deadly steps.

- Extensive Heel Beatdown.
  - Heel dominating and beating the babyface.







# 7 deadly steps.

- Hope Spot.
  - Give the audience hope that the babyface will survive the previous beatdown.





# 7 deadly steps.

- Double Down.
  - Both babyface and heel trade big moves back and forth.







# 7 deadly steps.

- Comeback.
  - The babyface figures out what to do to turn the match around. Build up to the finish.





# 7 deadly steps.

- The Finish.
  - The ending sequence.  
Heel or babyface wins.







# 7 deadly steps.

1. Babyface Shine.
2. Heat spot.
3. Extensive Heel Beatdown.
4. Hope Spot.
5. Double Down.
6. Comeback.
7. The Finish





# 7 deadly steps... of the hero's journey!

1. Ordinary world.
2. Call to adventure.
3. Test, allies, enemies.
4. The ordeal.
5. Reward, seizing the sword.
6. The road back.
7. Resurrection.







# Angles





# Angle

- Fictional storyline.
- May last anywhere from a single match up to many years.
- Main goal is to make stars out of the people involve.







# Angle guidelines.

- Keep it simple.
- Think long term.
- Be flexible.
- React to previously confrontations.





# Tanahashi vs Okada

- The battle for ace of NJPW
  - January 4, 2012 - January 4, 2016.







# Tanahashi vs Okada

- The battle for ace of NJPW
  - Multiple series of matches.





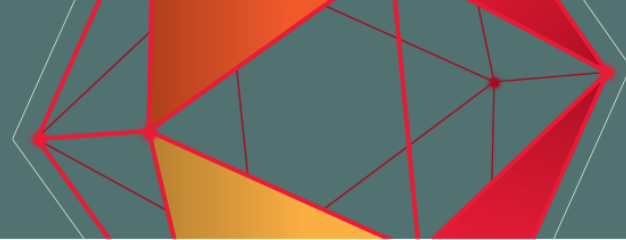


# Tanahashi vs Okada

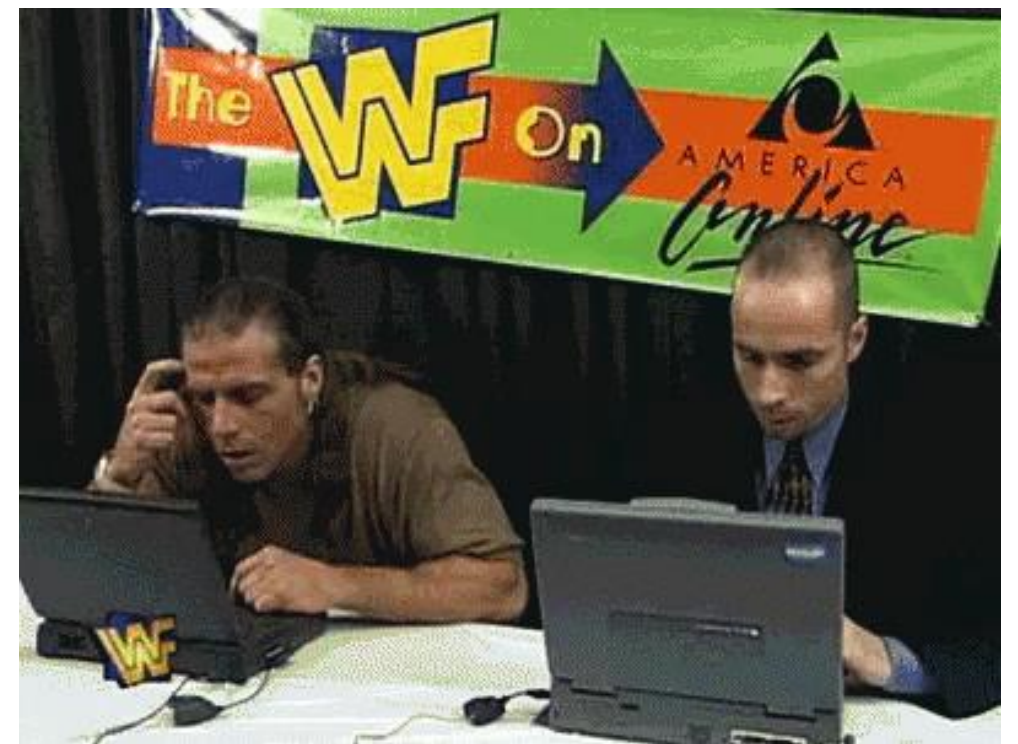
- The battle for ace of NJPW
  - Transitioned the position of Ace from Tanahashi to Okada.







# Implementation in video game development





# Re-defined characters as face or heel.

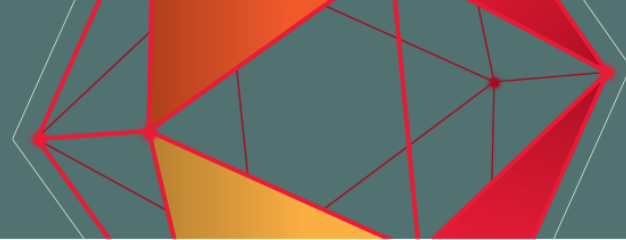
Babyface



Heel







# Gave each character appropriate traits.

## Babyface



- Ace
- Determined
- Noble
- High morals

## Heel



- Diva
- Selfish
- Narcissist
- Brat





# Started planing angles.

- Decided on recurrent actions to emphasize
  - Observing what player were doing during events and game testing.
  - Identified what mechanics could lead to in-game conflict.







# Applied ring psychology principles.

- Keep track of events during rounds.
  - Who did what to who.
  - How many times.
  - What part of the ship.





# Generated promos.

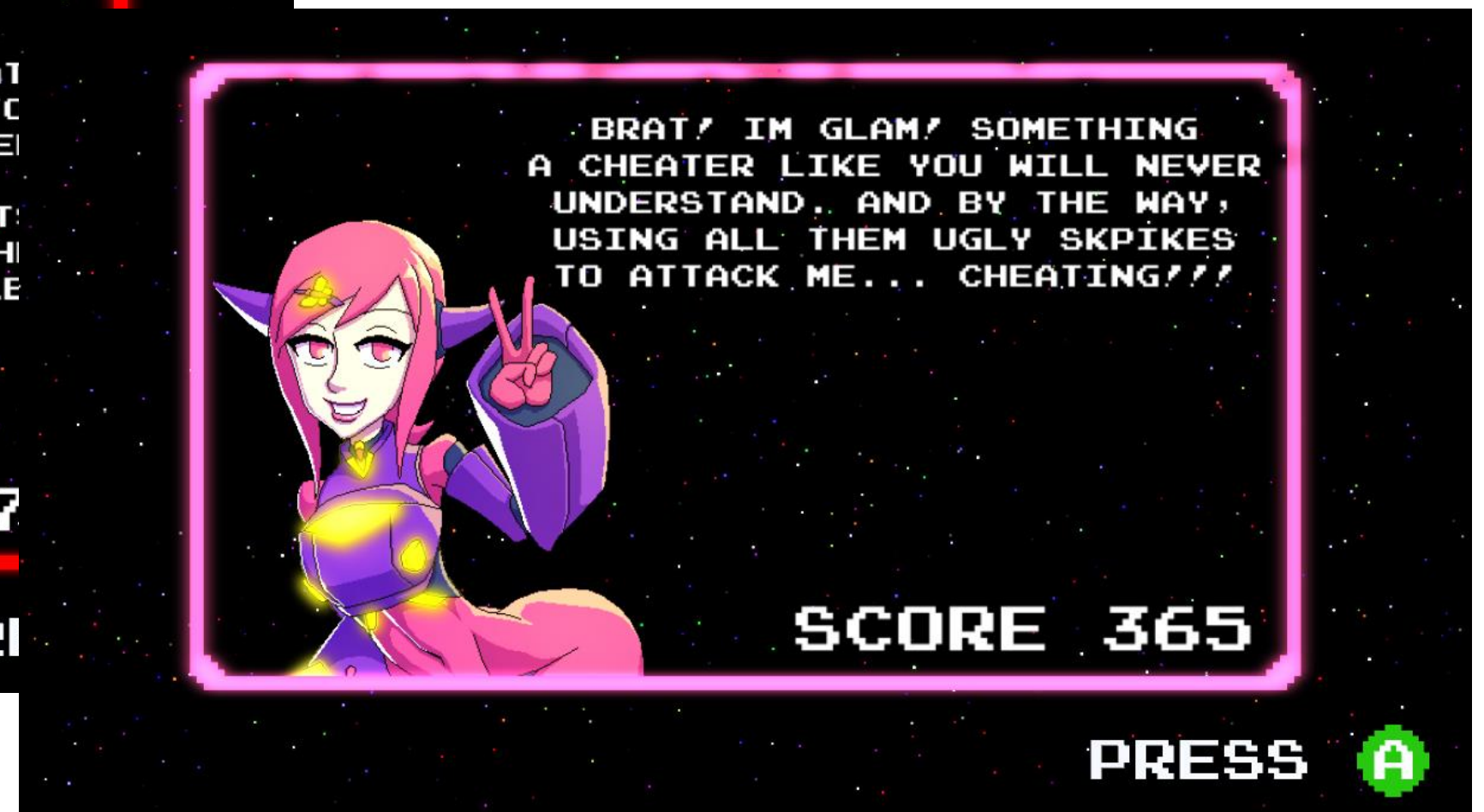
- Combined our event tracking system with Ink to generate end of round dialog that adapts to each round story.







# Generated promos.





# Other Applications.

- Characters & Promos.
  - Characters.
  - Dialog.

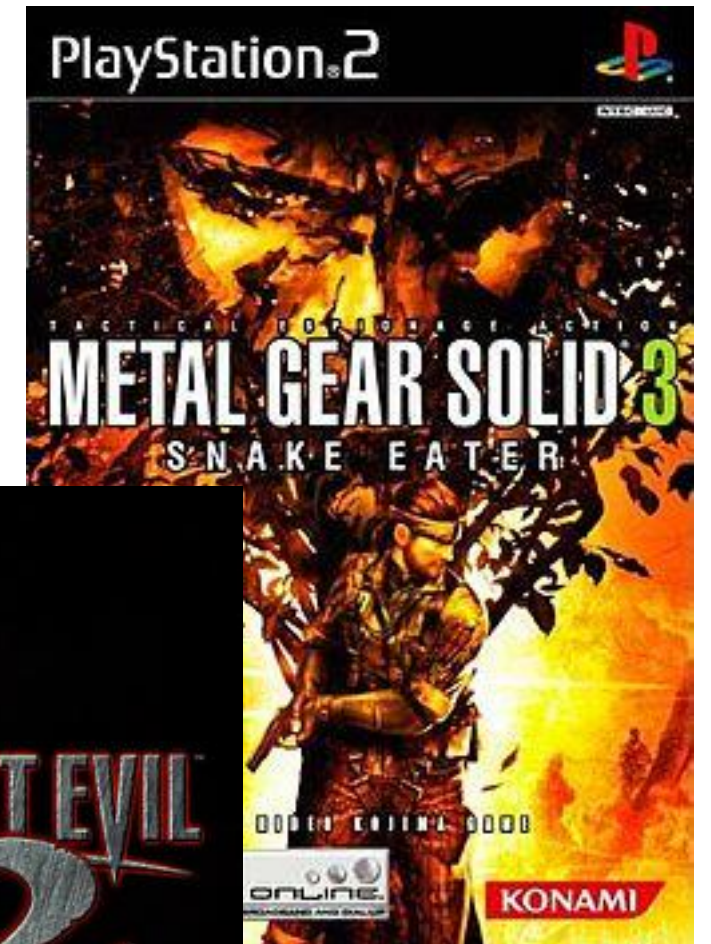






# Other Applications.

- Ring psychology & Angles.
  - Mechanics.
  - Level design.
  - Boss battles.
  - Story.





# What we learned.

- Keep it simple.
- Bring it from within yourself.
- Do what's logical.
- Plan ahead.







# Thank you and remember...



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