

Starting Your Career in a Post-Pandemic World

Lynette Fernandes (Bradley University)
Nathalie Galla (remote control productions)
Dennis Gilham (Electronic Arts)
Sanjay Madhav (University of Southern California)
Luke Piazza (Illumix)
Adinda van Oosten (Hanze University and Acreates)

#GDC23

SANJAY: Hello! My name is Sanjay Madhav. I'm an Associate Professor of Practice at USC, and I'm also a video game programmer. I'm honored to share the stage this afternoon with everyone.

Before I start, please remember to silence your phones and fill out your session evaluations after the talk. We've set aside a good amount of time for Q&A at the end, so please save any questions until then.

Breaking into the game industry has always been challenging. But the onset of the COVID pandemic has caused some seismic changes and today we're going to focus on some key areas on how to start your career today.

It's tough out there

EA lays off 200 Apex Legends QA testers during unscheduled 5-minute Zoom call

343 layoffs affected 95, including top directors

Take-Two confirms layoffs, reported to affect Private Division and more

Meta is laying off 10,000 more employees in a series of cuts



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Things are especially tough right now with the economic landscape, with all the layoffs that are happening. But don't lose hope! While there isn't a magical sword we can give you to vanquish the job search boss, our hope is that our collective wisdom will get you well on your way.

What's Changed?



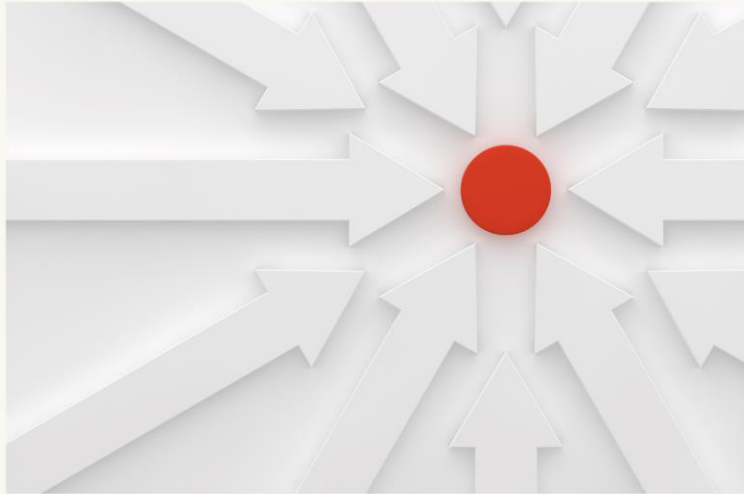
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So, what's changed?
Sorry, the GDC folks insist we put in at least one meme into
our talks.

Areas of Focus

- Getting noticed
- Navigating the hiring process



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We're going to focus on a two areas today.

How has getting noticed changed? How do you network? How do you build a strong portfolio website?

What about the hiring and interview process? What should you expect? What are some ways to prepare yourself? How do you succeed?

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Getting Noticed



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So one common question is how do you get noticed? You want to be the penguin that stands out!

The first thing is to network so that you get to know people and learn about job opportunities that come up. I'll turn it over to Adinda, who's going to talk about her experiences networking online, specifically on LinkedIn and Discord.

The GDC logo is in white, bold, sans-serif font.

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Networking with LinkedIn and Discord

Adinda van Oosten
Educator & Freelance game journalist
Hanze University and Acreates

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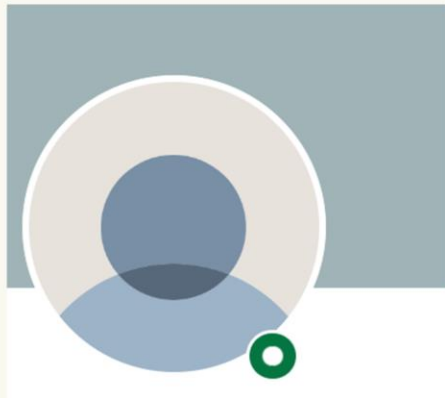
Hello everyone, my name is Adinda I am a teacher and freelance game journalist, and I am going to be...

Confession

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bloody honest right now...I despise networking. Being anti-networking is my superpower, but even though I don't like it I understand how it works very well.



+ No profile details

In early 2020, this was my LinkedIn profile (show empty image). In fact, I had a scholarship to attend GDC face-to-face in March 2020. And, I honestly was going to come to GDC with this profile. LinkedIn at that time did not matter to me.



At the onset of the pandemic, I was teaching game design courses in Hong Kong. Suddenly I found myself in a foreign country without a job, and without a functional LinkedIn profile and my dislike for networking. I moved back home to Europe and tried to make my freelance business work with Facebook. But, guess what? I needed a functional LinkedIn profile.



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Why have I spent a chunk of my talk telling you this?
Because I was tired of this...

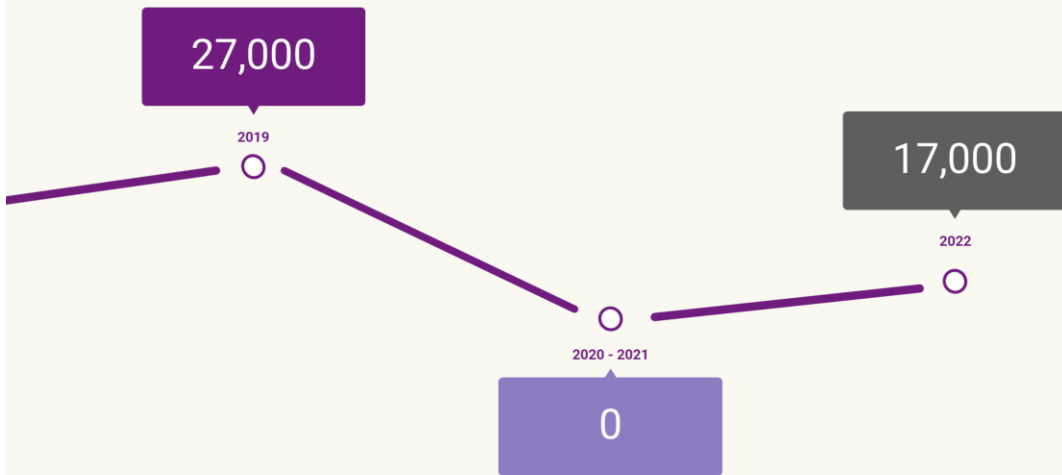


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And NOW every single day I see at least one serious job offer with high potential on either LinkedIn or on discord groups connected to the industry.
Guess who updated her LinkedIn profile and started learning to network on Discord? Moi

In-Person Conference Attendance



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Before I will give you the best tricks, let's go back and analyze a prominent game conference attendance graph. Like, what can we notice?

Well, of course no in-person attendance in 2020 and 2021 but there has also been a decrease

10,000

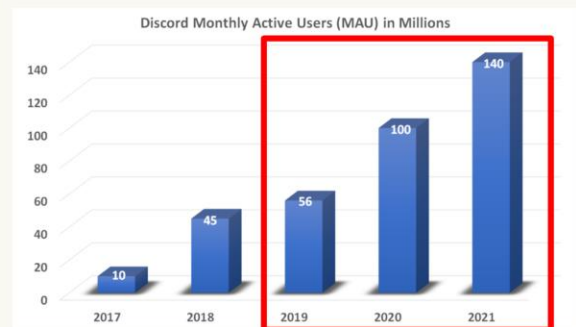
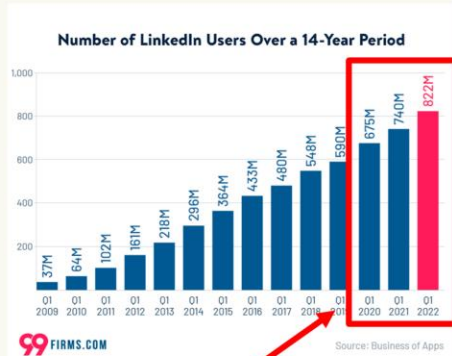


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...of 10.000 visitors in the year after. The notable declining attendance is a trend at professional events all around the world.

Leveraging Online Networking



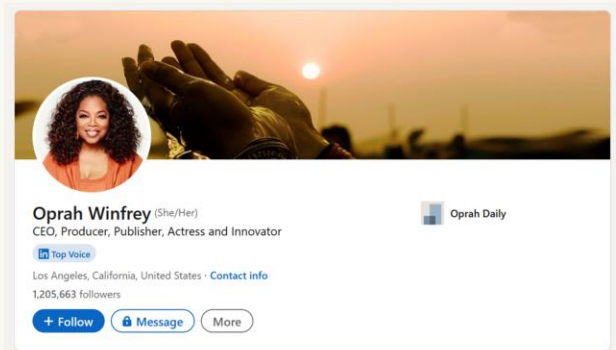
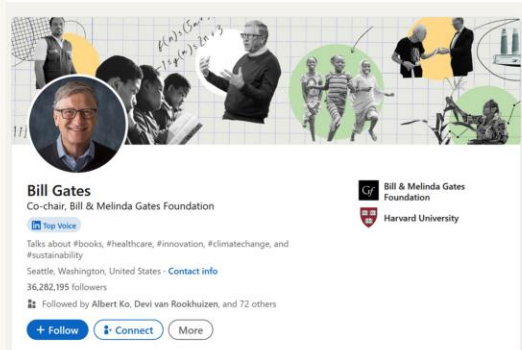
But what's not declining is the LinkedIn and Discord usage.

So, Now What?



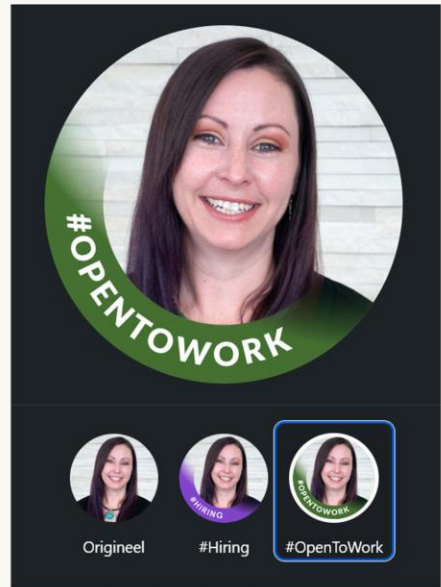
We need to accept that if you don't want to miss out you need a linkedin profile.

1: Your profile is important



Your profile is the first impression you make. You need a photo, background and a headliner that shows you are business ready. Attracting recruiters attention with a strong concise resume is the goal.

Let Recruiters Know



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Also very important is to use the search for work banner so recruiters can find you in their search. So if you have not done that right now is this your first homework assignment!

2: It's not about you



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Next it's not about you. My ability to create a strong network was directly related to my ability to show empathy, curiosity and reconnect.

3: Everyone is cool

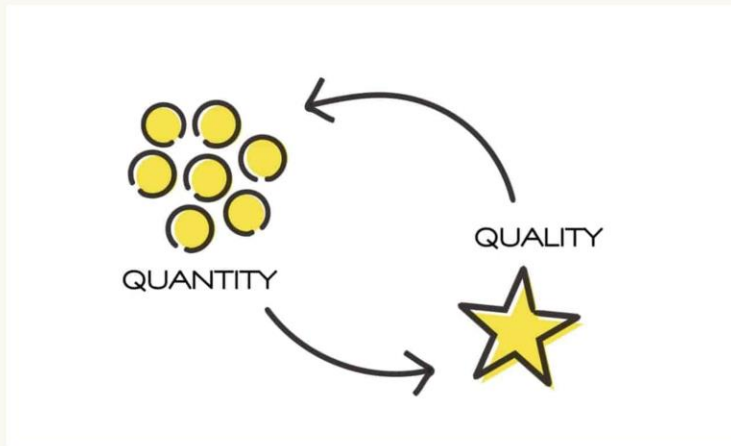


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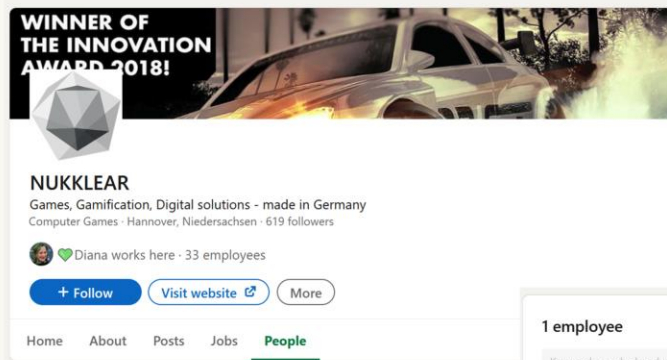
Cool people are all around you. If they are not cool now, do not underestimate their ability to be cool later. Remind yourself after our talk to get to know the people sitting next to you right now!

4: Quality over Quantity



Quality matters over quantity. For example the developer of please touch the artwork liked my former interview and by this like he already notified he liked my content. So, I checked his profile thought he was cool and sended him an invite and we had a really cool interview afterwards. Or I recently connected with a developer based on an article he was named in and thought that he had such an interesting view and thanked him for his insight. Let me tell you that genuine interest will make that you can connect with anyone. Same principle works on recruiters.

Homework



So, I will give you homework: find your favorite game company and check out who the recruiters are and send them a message not based on 'I want a job' but on something you share with them as connecting is all about finding that mutual connection and showing interest.



Quality of your connections is also what will influence your online reach because the algorithm of LinkedIn has one of the most unforgiving algorithms compared to other social media. LinkedIn doesn't take you serious with less than 500 contacts. But if you have 500 contacts who don't engage with you, you will be washed out of other people's algorithm and mind. The posts with the most reach are either educational sharing resources or appreciation posts. For example I received a public speaking invitation after sharing my interview content.

Discord groups



Personal favorites:

Woman in Game
Indie Developer Stammtisch
Event discord groups

!! - But there are many, many more - !!

Let's talk Discord. Along with Woman in Games and Indie developer Stammtisch I like the game conference discord groups. These are private but if you join them once by going to their conference you are in forever and these groups have a lot of professionals in it. Mostly they will be only busy during the restart of the event, but sometimes some high value joboffers will pop up or some other signal calls



A lot of channels
Weekly discussions
Valuable job offers
Supportive community
Mentors

I like to highlight Woman in Games as they hold weekly discussions keeping everything engaging in a refreshing way and holds many channels on different topics, it also shares a lot of valuable job offers and the community is very supportive.



Video - networking
Channels on theme
Entertainment Channel
Job offering/hiring

Another one of my favorites is the Indie stammtisch their discord became really active and they hold monthly video carousel networking events which I join occasionally to stay connected.

Discord takeaways

1. casual and spontaneous
2. Use the reply feature to avoid excessive scrolling.
3. Identify yourself
4. Use for fast resources and frequent job postings.



So some discord takeaways:

Great for casual and spontaneous conversations. As most groups are very active use the reply feature to avoid excessive scrolling. Find a way to identify yourself. A successful game dev in Europe has mastered it as she often uses a green heart in her reactions on discord and also use the same green heart on her linkedin! A lot of groups provide great free resources and job offers.

Building a Strong Portfolio Website

Sanjay Madhav
Associate Professor of Practice
University of Southern California

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SANJAY: Thanks, Adinda.

Networking certainly is important to learn about what job opportunities are out there. But as you start putting together materials for applications, one key part is a strong portfolio website.

Do I really need a portfolio site?

YES

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Now you might ask “do I really need a portfolio website?”

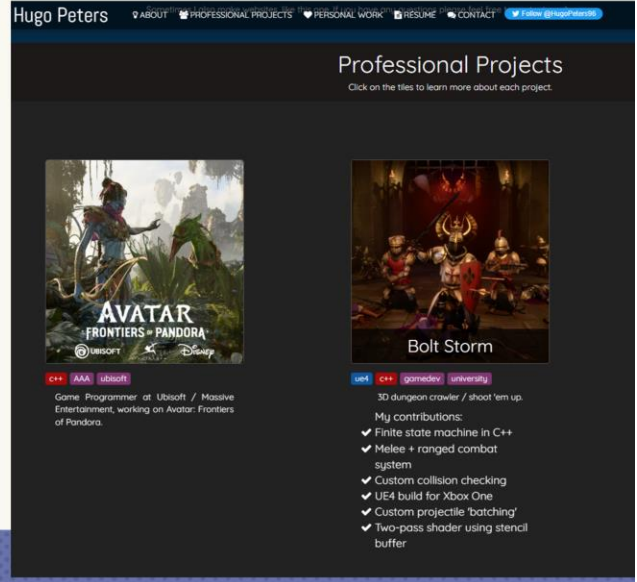
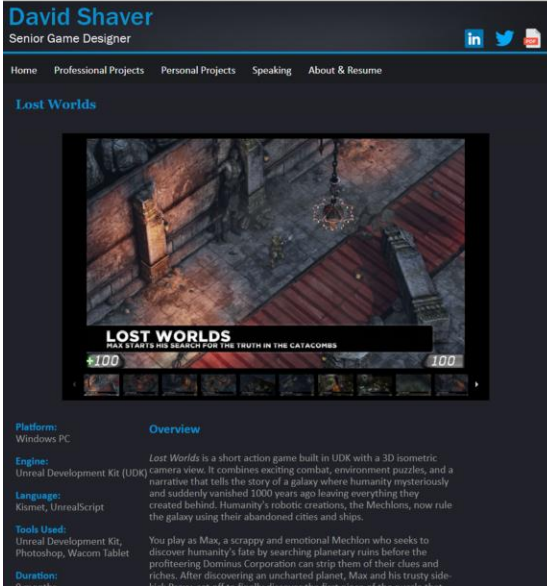
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Yes, you do!

In the past, the advice for some disciplines like programming was that you don’t need one. However, in today’s job market, a portfolio is critical to stand out.

It gives you one spot to show your best work.

Look at examples!



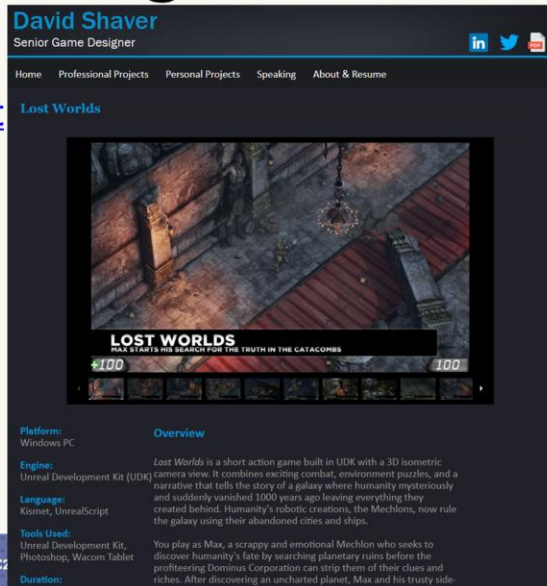
Ok, so you need a portfolio – what should you put on it? Find example portfolios for your discipline.

Critique them – what seems to work well? What do you think needs work?

Since there's lots of information out there about artist portfolios, I'll instead show you a designer and a programmer portfolio I like.

Sample Designer Portfolio

David Shaver
davidshaver.net



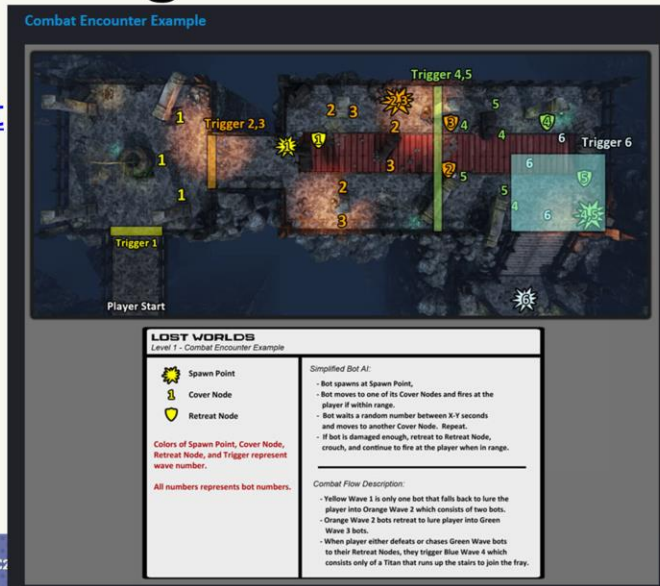
First up, here's an example of a game designer portfolio by David Shaver.

While he has lots of examples of his more recent professional projects, he also has examples of his older personal projects.

I like how for each of these, there's a lot of detail about what tools were used, what was worked on, and so on. There's screenshots, videos, and even a download for a playable build.

Sample Designer Portfolio

David Shaver
davidshaver.net



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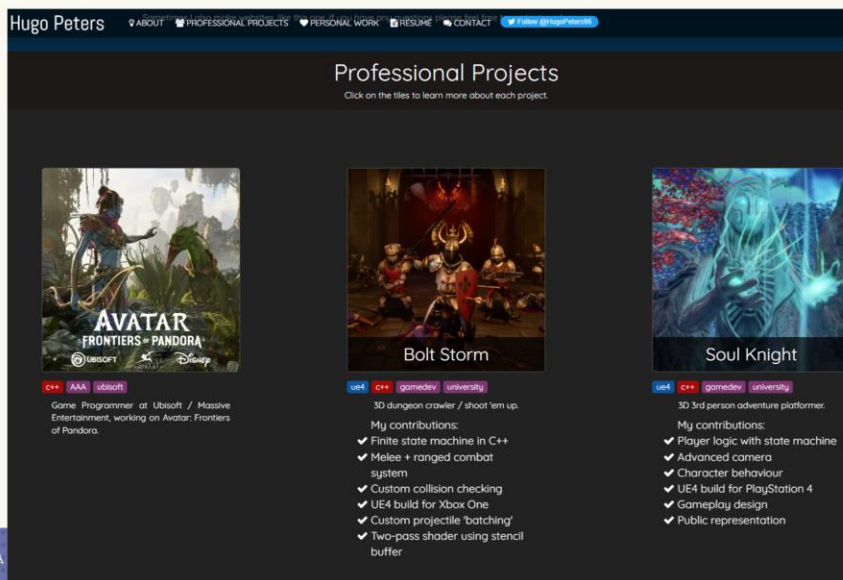
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But what I **really** like is how the site shows the thought process behind the design decisions. There are a lot of diagrams of different parts of the game design, schematics of the levels, and so on. It makes you understand how thorough and comprehensive the design process was, which will impress any prospective employer.

Showing the process, not just the outcomes is an important part of any portfolio.

Sample Programmer Portfolio

Hugo Peters
hugo.fyi



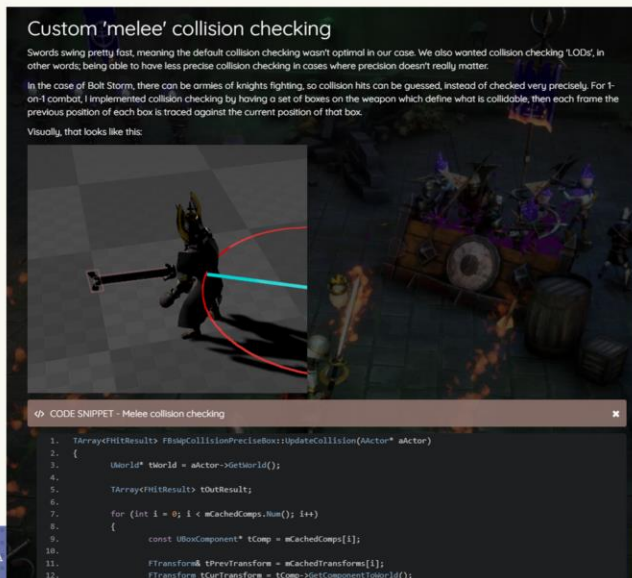
How about for programming? Here's an example of a programmer portfolio by Hugo Peters.

I like how the home page has quick summaries of each different project including specific details of the contributions.

It's important that you also clearly articulate **what** your contributions were on group projects.

Sample Programmer Portfolio

Hugo Peters
hugo.fyi



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Looking at the project pages, there are a lot of details and visuals about the features. There even are code snippets included in here.

While you don't necessarily need to go this in-depth for your portfolio, I like the idea of showing small code snippets rather than just saying "here's the full source code for my game" which, realistically, most people won't go through.

Ok, so those are some examples – thanks to both David and Hugo for letting me share.

Rules to follow

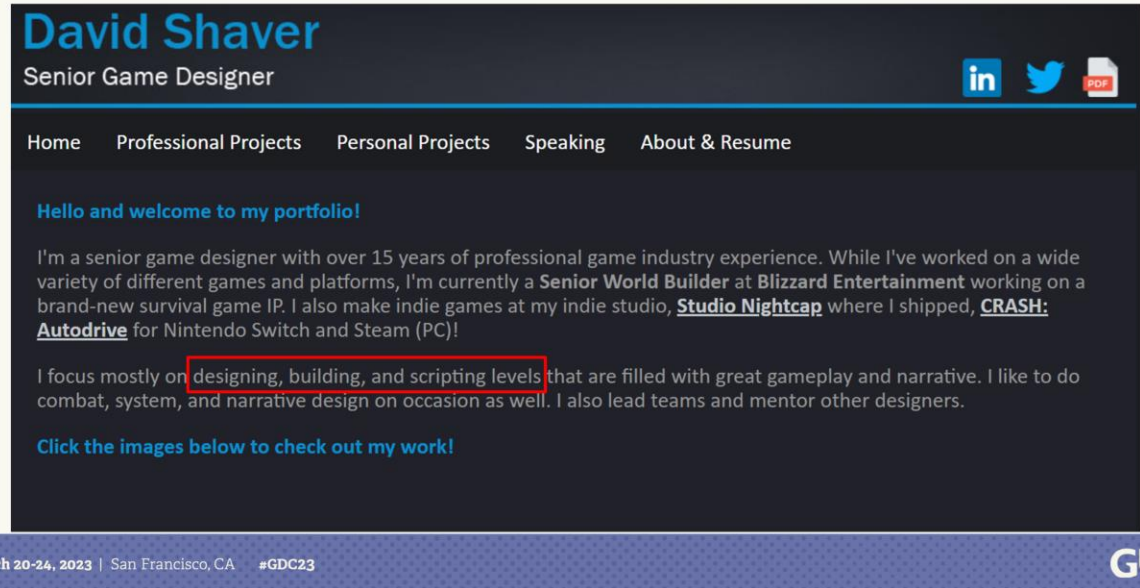


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So as you start working on your portfolio, here are some rules to keep in mind...

Have a clear narrative



Have a clear narrative of what you are good at.

For instance, on David's site the focus is on

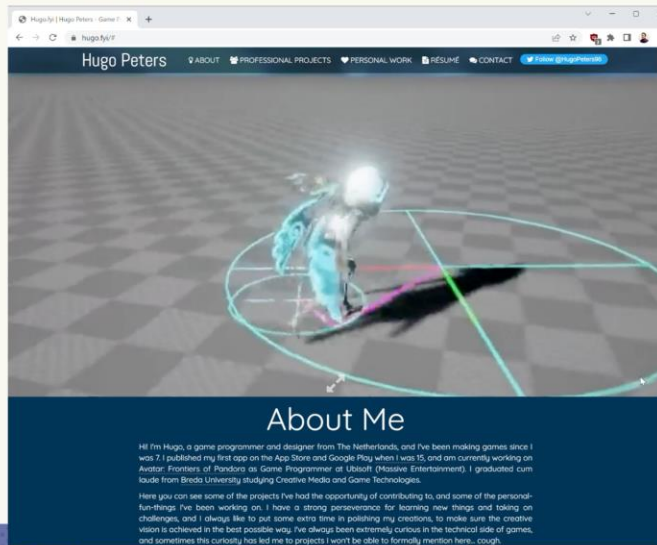
CLICK

"designing, building, and scripting levels." All the top-billed projects illustrate this.

As another example, if you're an aspiring graphics programmer, I want to see your graphics projects. The board game you designed might be fun, but it doesn't speak to your graphics abilities.

Remember you don't **have** to include every project. Exclude projects that make your narrative unfocused.

Lead with your best work



In a similar vein, make sure your most impressive work goes first.

For example, on Hugo's site, the first projects listed are the largest ones.

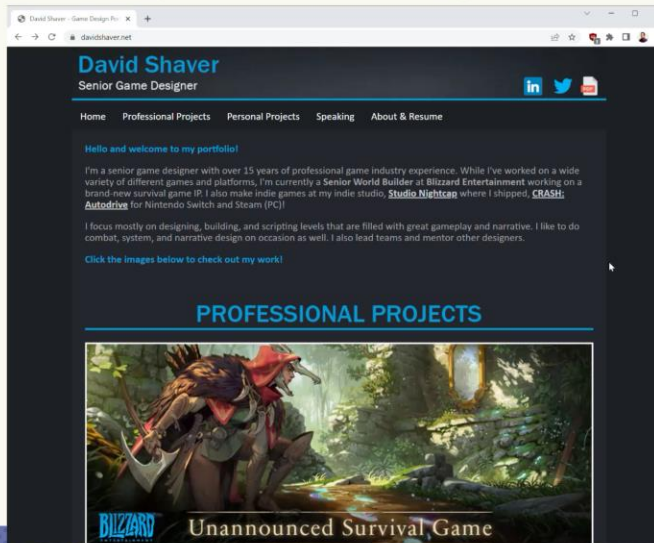
CLICK

And don't just throw in all your work. Pick the 3-6 things you're most proud of and focus on that.

Video link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c6bE07qdpiR8Wq42YnFLmi0gx07YgNJh/view?usp=sharing>

Make it easy to navigate



You also want to make your site easy to navigate.

Don't require lots of scrolling and clicking to be able to see your work. Every click makes it take longer to look at your work.

David's site is a good example of this –

CLICK

from the main page you can quickly see the projects and in one click get more information.

Video link:


<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c69BACOmQ147TsaYh7EMIVkZ00tCohKm/view?usp=sharing>

Show the process

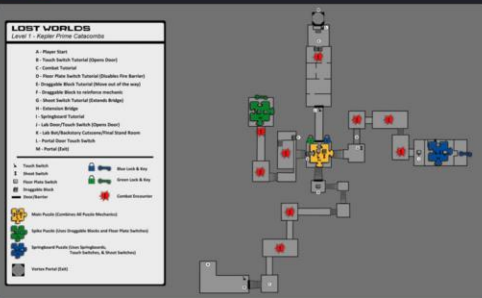
Detailed Info

Lost Worlds grew from a simple level to becoming the first level of a full-blown game complete with gameplay mechanics, tutorial, voiceover, and cutscenes. From start to finish, it takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The level and story are designed around the default UDK assets (robotic characters, ancient ruins, sci-fi themed assets, etc) so that I could focus on game and level design and not asset creation.

The rest of this project page merely highlights what I did for this project. For a detailed look, complete with documentation of my process and methodology, please look at my Design and Analysis document here:

 [LostWorlds-DesignAnalysis.pdf](#)

Level Map



The screenshot shows a top-down view of a level map for 'LOST WORLDS'. On the left, there's a legend box with two columns of icons and labels. The first column includes: Power Switch, Touch Pad, Touch Pad Tutorial (Spikes Room), Spingable Block, Spingable Block to activate mechanism, Spingable Bridge, Entrance Bridge, Spingable Tunnel, Lift Base (Power Switch), Lift Base Mechanism (Control Panel), Portal Door Touch Switch, and Portal Story. The second column includes: Blue Lock & Key, Green Lock & Key, Control Console, Main Puzzle Controller (All Puzzle Mechanisms), Spike Pads (Green Spingable Blocks and Power Pad Switches), Spingable Pads (Green Spingables, Green Switches, & Power Switches), and Hidden Portal (Key). To the right of the legend is the actual level map, which is a complex arrangement of grey rectangular rooms and corridors. Various colored icons (red, green, blue, yellow) are placed throughout the map, corresponding to the legend. A small robot character is visible in one of the rooms.

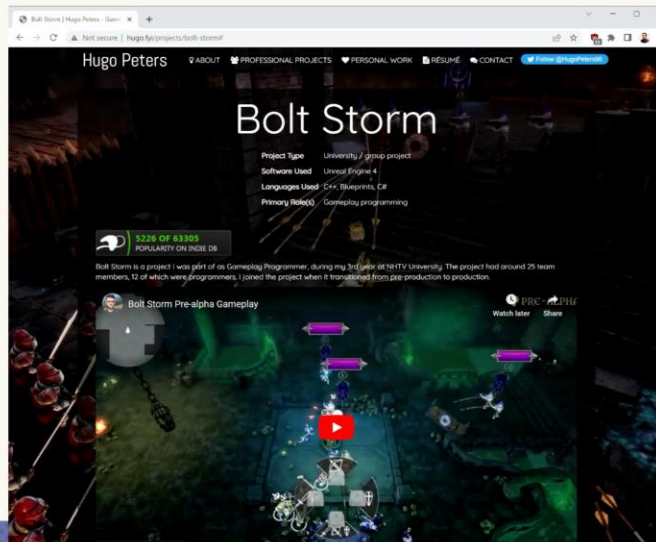
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Making big games is a long journey and having insight into your process is invaluable.

Remember that for larger projects, this includes being very clear about what parts you worked on.

Pictures, videos, playable builds



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Finally, I want to see screenshots of your games at a minimum. Videos are good, too. But playable versions are best.

Both of these portfolios use videos and animations quite a bit.

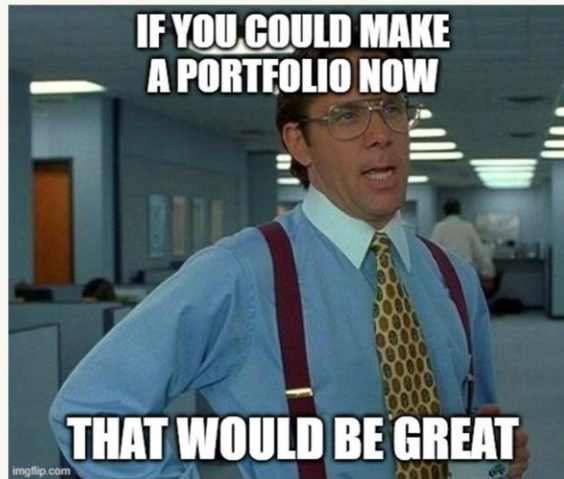
CLICK

Just make sure to keep your load times in check.

Video link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cBQ7VwQHZEUCA-7dsQBKwgDiLpdywEf7/view?usp=sharing>

Ok...but how?



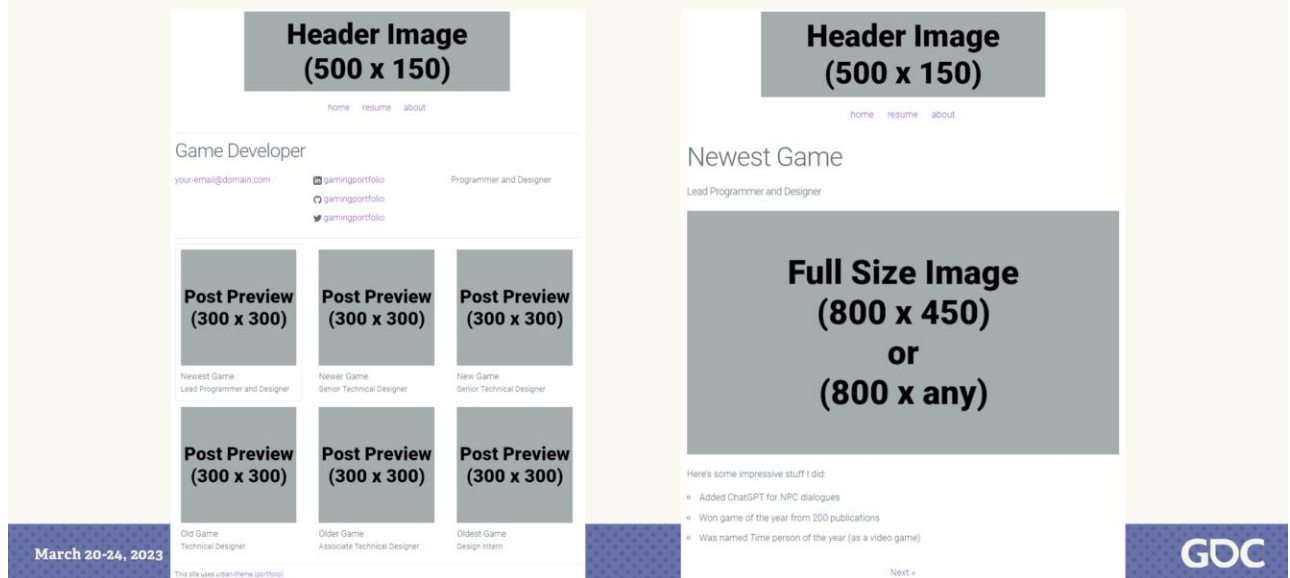
Alright, so we saw some examples and learned about rules to follow, but how do you actually build the portfolio **website**?

Where to host?



Where should you host? There are a lot of paid options, but for **free** hosting, use GitHub Pages. Now, one problem with GitHub Pages is that if you have no prior web experience, it can be a little daunting to get setup. But I have good news – I've solved that problem for you!

I made a template



I made an easy-to-use template for a GitHub Pages portfolio. It has a home page with a grid showing your work. Then, each project has its own separate page. It's quick to navigate with only 1 click from the main page to a specific project.

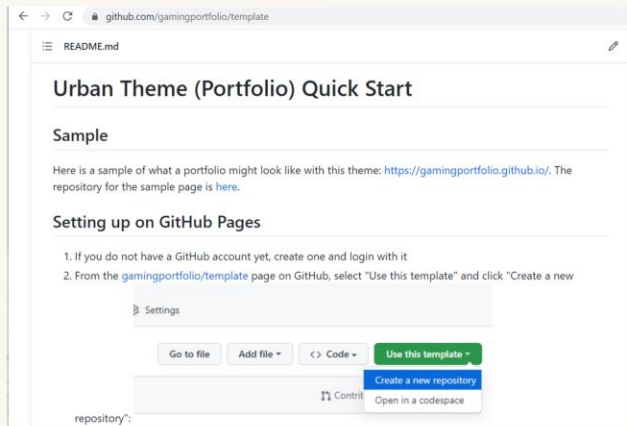
CLICK

It's easy to change out all the images, projects, and include however much detail you want on each project page.

Where to get the template?

Template and instructions:

<https://github.com/gamingportfolio/template>



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So where do you get it?

Go here on GitHub! (The QR code leads to the same place).

The template does not require any knowledge of web development or coding.

CLICK

There are detailed instructions you can follow to set up your site, and a discussion forum if you have any issues.

We'll put the QR code up during Q&A, also.

Alright. So, you have a strong portfolio and learned about exciting job opportunities through your networking.

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Navigating the Hiring Process



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The next challenge you'll face is navigating the hiring process. First up, Lynette Fernandes is going to talk about how she survived 32 interviews in less than 3 months.

Acing the Remote Interview

Lynette Fernandes
Instructor in Residence
Bradley University

#GDC23

SANJAY: Alright, so once you're sending out applications to companies that you're interested in, the next hurdle you'll run into is the dreaded remote interview. Lynette Fernandes is going to fill you in on how to succeed.

LYNETTE: Hi! I'm Lynette Fernandes. I'm a professor at Bradley University, I teach Game Design & Programming. I'm very happy with my job but it took a lot for me to get here!

Interviewing From Home

32

companies
in

2.5

months

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LYNETTE: In 2021 I interviewed with 32 companies in the span of two and a half months! 32 companies! So at least 32 initial interviews and several of them had successive interviews as well. Interviewing from home is no easy task! In all honesty, I hated it!

According to the Bureau of Labor statistics 27% of job seekers get a job offer after submitting up to 10 applications.

It's a numbers game - I played it!

Let me share some key points from my experience.

Interviewing From Home

Some interviews went really well but no job offer



LYNETTE:My experiences

Most interviews went really well but I didn't get any job offers. Why? I have no idea. I asked, but to no avail. How do I know how to improve. I'm a big fan of communication, it should work both ways.

Interviewing From Home

Some interviews were just awful!



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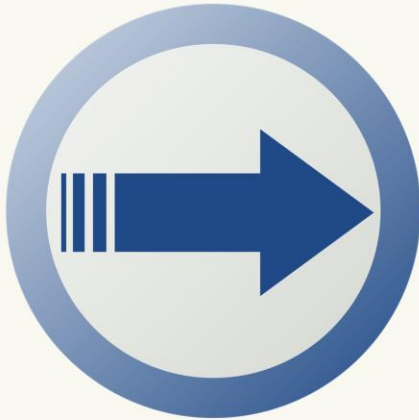
LYNETTE: Some interviews were just awful. Why? Failed preparation on the interviewer's side. Repeating interviews questions from the previous interview, didn't know who I was, didn't know what position I was actually interviewing for!

Some were just a bad experience based on how I was treated. I'm a triple minority - female, person of colour, immigrant. One of these things probably affected my interview. Some failed at proper communication - incorrect date and times, ghosting, incorrect information regarding interview topics.

"Being ghosted or playing the Waiting Game! How many times did that happen, I want to say about 20 percent of the time. I understand people get busy but I'm a big fan of communication, it should work both ways."

Interviewing From Home

What did I do?



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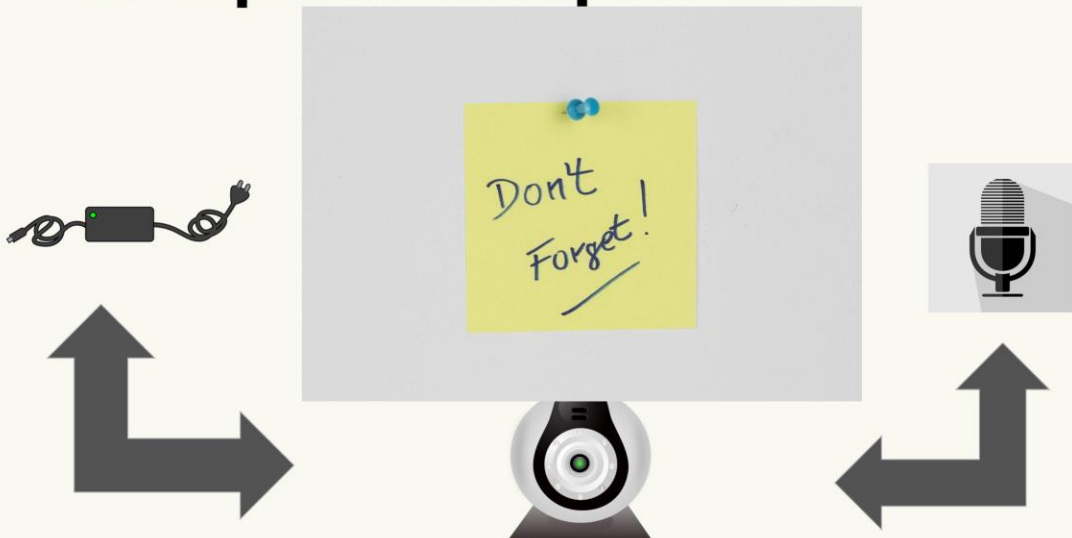
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LYNETTE:What did I do?

I moved on. I was upset - but I picked myself up and concentrated on the next interview

Let me share basic tips on some interviewing practices that helped me!

Workspace Setup



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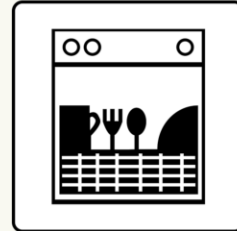
LYNETTE: First and foremost, having a good workspace is very important. Have a dedicated space where you can set everything up.

Keep your background clear - mine was gorgeous brick wall in my loft, which proved to be very distracting to the interviewers, actually to anybody on video. While it was beautiful, it was taking away from the conversation at hand. I changed it to a simple single colour curtain - this allowed for more focused conversations.

Don't forget to test your equipment ahead of time (one day and thirty minutes beforehand). Plug your laptop in, don't risk it dying on you halfway through. Make sure your camera works, check your lightning, your speaker and mic work, and that they ALL work together! Don't play the "can you hear/see me" game during your interview.

Once this is out of the way, you will be more at ease to focus on the questions.

Things To Note:



LYNETTE: Make space for a glass of water - you don't want to run the risk of dry mouth or a cough during the interview. Little side note - sing before your interview! It opens up the vocal cords and loosens your muscles. You're less likely to run the risk of dry mouth :)

Most of us have people or pets in our living spaces. It is important to not have any distractions during interviews. Plan to keep pets away, if possible have a friend take the pet, or put it in a separate room.

Create a quiet-time sign so others know you're not to be disturbed. Explain what it is to your kids, give them the responsibility to respect it.

Don't have laundry running in the background, or the roomba, or the dishwasher. Keep your space clear of audible distractions as well.

Know Your Routines



Time Management

- Plan your interviews away from busy times of your day
- Don't schedule back to back interviews
- Take breaks
 - Step away
 - Recharge
 - Mentally prepare for the next interview



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LYNETTE: You know your routines well. You know your cohabitants' routines, your pets' routines, your noisy neighbour...

Plan your interviews away from busy times of the day - If you know your kids come home at 4pm, maybe stay away from scheduling an important interview at that time. Not everything is controllable, do what you can.

Don't schedule back to back interviews. Some may run long, give yourself buffer time. That being said...

Take breaks - don't schedule back to back interviews. Give yourself time to step away, recharge, mentally prepare for the next interview

Your attitude and frame of mind during interviews speak volumes. If you are discombobulated, it will show through, you don't want this.-

Dancing helped me clear my mind and loosen me up.

Physical Presentation

Present yourself well

- Makes you feel better
- Professional mindset



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LYNETTE:

Let's not forget your physical presentation. Most likely you will be on video. Make sure you present yourself well. Dressing up also helps put you in a better, maybe more professional mindset. If you dress frumpy, you're more likely to feel frumpy.

Set The Stage

Have Material In Front Of You

- List of questions you want to ask
- Have pen and paper to write notes
- Post-its on the side of your screen



LYNETTE: Let's talk about physical material you should have in front of you. Don't fumble and appear disorganized. Show how together you are.

Have a list of questions to ask the interview, do your homework, come prepared.

Have a pen and paper to take notes, this shows you're paying attention.

A neat trick I did was put post-its on the side of my screen.

Mine said "Talk Slower". I get excited and tend to talk very fast, I needed to remind myself to slow down! Another one I keep on my screen is "You are NOT hungry!"

I survived 32 interviews, don't be afraid to go out in the world and give it your all.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Luke Piazza
Systems & Content Designer
Illumix

#GDC23

LYNETTE: And now I'm going to turn it over to Luke who's going to talk about handling feedback.

LUKE: Thanks Lynette! So as you can see in my title I'm a Systems and Content Designer which basically means I get paid to think, ideate, and write. As you might imagine feedback is about 90% of my day to day so I thought I'd throw my hat into the ring on the conversation.

Feedback Can Feel Scary!









Bruce Wayne

11:27 AM Today

Feel like this is vague and redundant. Either change it to something more meaningful or just remove it.

-I first want to acknowledge the fact that feedback can feel quite scary at times! I'm certain I'm not the only one in this room who has worked tirelessly on an idea and have spent countless hours coming up with the perfect design, the perfect system, the perfect mechanic to just make the best game ever. You send off your docs and boom! What feels like a total gut punch of a comment comes in and it just knocks the wind right out of your sails. Well it's something that's bound to happen at one point or another and it's something we want to make sure we're ready to deal with because..

Feedback Can Be Overwhelming!

<p>Logline: As an insect rescue officer, traverse a perilous world in a tiny hot-air balloon propelled by a match, attempting to rescue as many creatures as possible and bring them to safety.</p> <p>Synopsis: A casual 2D side scrolling adventure in which experiencing the cute visuals and saving your bug friends is the main draw.</p> <p>Backstory: A small bit of rain fell down stranding some bugs in the water. You, as a bug rescue officer, must guide your hot air balloon to help bring the bugs to safety while making sure to not run out of matches <u>before you land in a safe area.</u></p> <p>Gameplay Experience/Loop: A 2-D side-scrolling game where you control a hot air balloon attempting to rescue <u>people</u> and bring them to safety while making sure you have enough matches to get to where you need to go.</p> <p>Mission Statement: To create a feel good game that is calming and <u>fun to play.</u> Not too hard but also just enough challenge to engage the player in beating the levels.</p> <p>Mechanics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Match Meter- Allows players to move up at cost of a limited amount of "fuel". <u>If fuel is depleted,</u> you have the option to restart the level go back to the main menu.• Matches- <u>Increases fuel amount</u> when collected• Save bugs- Bugs appear throughout the level that you can take with you by touching them with your basket. Certain amount of bugs per level to save <p>Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moving upward is constrained by "match meter"• Left and right movement <u>not resource-constrained</u>	<p> Bruce Wayne 11:27 AM Today What kind of insect?</p> <p> Bruce Wayne 11:29 AM Today Would clarify that this is supposed to mean the finish line, not just any area.</p> <p> Bruce Wayne 11:27 AM Today In the log-line you mentioned you'd be saving other bugs. Is it bugs or people you rescue?</p> <p> Bruce Wayne 11:27 AM Today Feel like this is vague and redundant. Either change it to something more meaningful or just remove it.</p> <p> Bruce Wayne 11:27 AM Today I assume you mean fully depleted?</p> <p> Bruce Wayne 11:28 AM Today By how much? Will players need these matches to complete each level or is it just a safety net?</p>
---	---

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It's inevitable and can even be quite overwhelming. The example above is a document of a design spec I worked on for a personal project a few years back. It was the basic GDD for a game jam I worked on with some friends and as you can see with the comments it got torn to shreds.

But fear not as I'm here to equip you with the formula needed to conquer your toughest of feedback in a simple and effective manner though...

Feedback Response Formula!



And that is the Feedback Response Formula. This is a formula you can use in situations where you agree disagree or anything in between. So let's break it down step by step.

Feedback Response Formula!

Acknowledge = Reiterate feedback given

First, agree or disagree, acknowledge and reiterate the feedback

Feedback Response Formula!

Acknowledge = Reiterate feedback given

Explain = Clarify your answer/solution

Next, clarify your proposed solution to address the feedback

Feedback Response Formula!

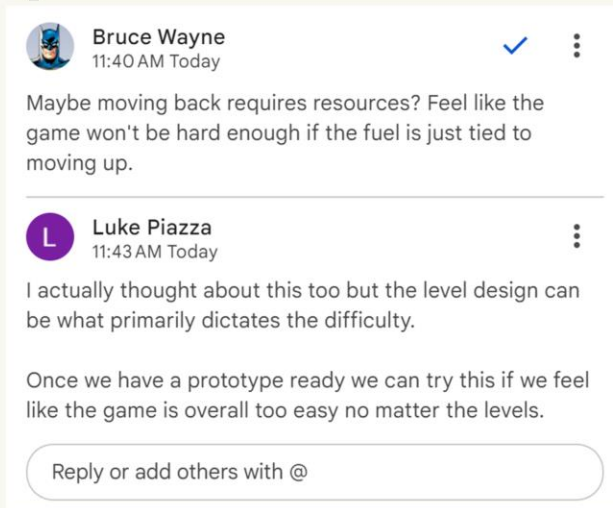
Acknowledge = Reiterate feedback given

Explain = Clarify your answer/solution

Consider = How the feedback relates to your solution moving forward.

Finally, consider the implications of your changes

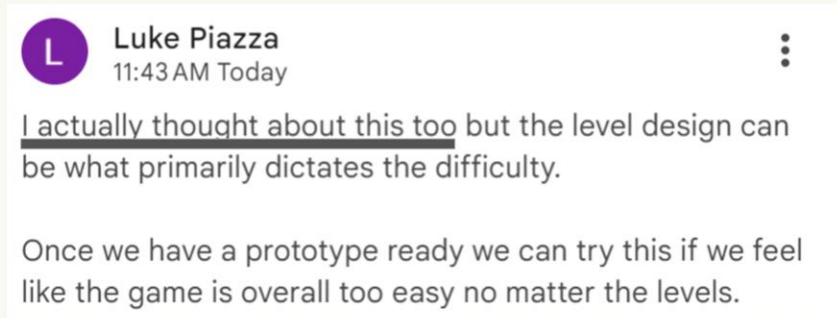
An Example



In the above I was given the feedback to add a mechanic to possibly help increase the difficulty of the game. While it was a good thought I didn't think it would really help enhance the gameplay so I pushed back. I was confident in my initial design so I politely pushed back.

The Feedback Formula

Acknowledge



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-Let's dissect this and understand formula.

-First I acknowledged the idea. It's important to let the viewer know they've been heard and that you might have even already thought through what they've said. Shows that you've put in the time and work to make your initial design.

The Feedback Formula

Acknowledge

Explain

 **Luke Piazza**
11:43 AM Today

I actually thought about this too but the level design can be what primarily dictates the difficulty.

Once we have a prototype ready we can try this if we feel like the game is overall too easy no matter the levels.

-Next I clearly laid out why I didn't think the change was necessary. The other designer recommended an added mechanic but I responded that the level design could suffice for difficulty,

The Feedback Formula

Acknowledge

Explain

Consider



Luke Piazza

11:43 AM Today



I actually thought about this too but the level design can be what primarily dictates the difficulty.

Once we have a prototype ready we can try this if we feel like the game is overall too easy no matter the levels.

-Finally we want to emphasize with the feedback. We don't want to be rude and outright dismiss someone or at the least if we are to do so in a polite manner. I made sure to let the commenter know that if my solution wasn't feeling adequate we could for sure come back and try this option.

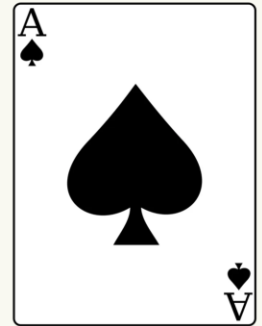
The Design Interview

Q: *"Pick a game that can be played with a deck of 52 + explain the rules"*

A: War

Q: *"Tell me how you'd improve upon it?"*

A:...



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Let's take this into a more professional point of view.

When I got to my second round of interviews it was over 4 hours and close to the 3rd hour I met with my lead designer for my design test. I was asked to pick a game that can be played with a deck of 52 cards and explain the rules.

I decided on war because I knew it would be very quick and easy. This was an excellent idea by the way.

I was then prompted to explain how I'd improve upon the game.

The Conversation

(Luke) "Add a betting mechanic where players can bet money before a card is drawn. The other player can choose or deny the request. Can add a level of risk reward."

I proposed introducing a betting mechanic.

The Conversation

(Luke) "Add a betting mechanic where players can bet money before a card is drawn. The other player can choose or deny the request. Can add a level of risk reward."



(Interviewer) *"What if the players don't have money on them, don't have exact change, or don't feel comfortable?"*

But my interviewer brought up the concern that what if players don't have change or don't feel comfortable betting?

Let's see how I applied the feedback formula in my response...

The Feedback Formula in Action!

Acknowledge

"Good point. Definitely no way to ensure people will even have cash on them,

First, I acknowledged the concerns voiced in the feedback. In this instance we're even agreeing with the points being made.

The Feedback Formula in Action!

Acknowledge ***Explain***

"Good point. Definitely no way to ensure people will even have cash on them, nevermind exact change. How about instead of betting money players will bet x amount of their next cards.

After the acknowledgement, we explain our new solution.
What if the players just bet the cards in their deck?

The Feedback Formula in Action!

Acknowledge

Explain

Consider

"Good point. Definitely no way to ensure people will even have cash on them, nevermind exact change. How about instead of betting money players will bet x amount of their next cards. This keeps the ecosystem entirely contained in the game itself. No external items required."

Finally, we consider the impact of our proposed change. It will make the game self-contained.

Wrap Up

We were scared - Feedback can be scary and overwhelming!

We learned - Formula: Acknowledge / Explain / Consider!

We are confident - Agree or disagree we have ways to succeed!

Feedback can be scary! But by using the feedback formula, you can gain confidence in how you respond to feedback

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Advice for Career Changers

Dennis Gilham
Senior Technical Product Manager
Electronic Arts

#GDC23

LUKE: Now I'm going to turn it over to Dennis

DENNIS:

NYIT '15: B.S Electrical & Computer Engineering

Systems Engineer in Aerospace & Defense over 7 years.

Retired from Aerospace to pursue a career in game dev in 2022.

The
Ikigai
Philosophy

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Ikigai

A JAPANESE CONCEPT MEANING "A REASON FOR BEING"



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This method provided a framework for the practical tips I am going to share with you: Ikigai = Finding your purpose that balances something your good at + what you love + what the world needs + what you can get paid to do.

Scoping the Job Hunt

- Create a monthly schedule for how you want to spend your time.
 - *How much time do you have left over for Job Hunting?*
- Create a budget that balances your monthly expenses
 - *How much money do you have left over for Job Hunting?*



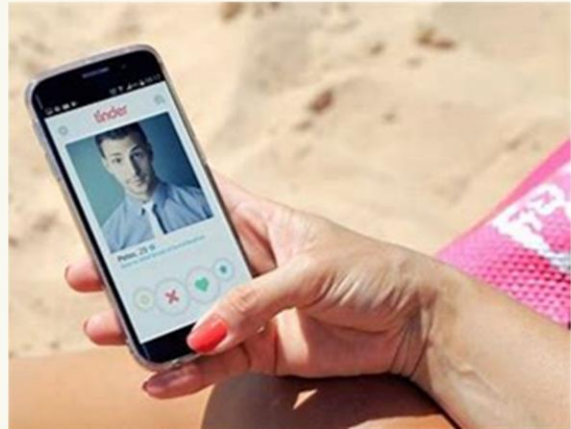
Every month, measure your progress and adjust.

How

1. Calculate the time you have - CA Adam Smith. Looked bank account and bills and calculated how much time you had to pursue a career change - budgeted a full calendar year, and it took that (be ready -it can take that or longer)
2. Whats your budget to spend on career change research? (don't compare your budge to someone else; honor if you're low budget)
3. Determine priorities (husband, kids, medical school)
4. *"What do you want and what are you willing to risk to get it? -Camille Meehan"*

What You Can Be Paid For

- Focus on 5-7 Companies at a time and Products you really want to work on.
- By mass applying, you are fishing for the most desperate employer



This method provided a framework for the practical tips I am going to share with you: Ikigai = Finding your purpose that balances something your good at + what you love + what the world needs + what you can get paid to do.

The Ikigai Worksheet

Company	Role	Product Area	Personal Interest	Am I Good At It?	Compensation	The World's Needs	Ikigai Total
Defense Company	Technical Program Manager	Aerospace					
Game Company 1	Product Manager	Content Moderation					
Game Company 2	Esports Producer	MOBA Esports					
Game Company 3	Product Manager	FPS					
Game Company 4	Game Producer	Fighting					
Game Company 5	Associate Producer	FPS MMO					
Game Company 6	Producer	MMORPG					
Game Company 7	Associate Producer	MMORPG					

- Company Info relating to these job titles will be omitted
- **Personal Interest** + **Knowledge** + **Compensation** + **World's Needs** = **Ikigai**
- If you're unhappy, underpaid, or unappreciated, this method will help you

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This method provided a framework for the practical tips I am going to share with you: Ikigai = Finding your purpose that balances something your good at + what you love + what the world needs + what you can get paid to do.

Worksheet template is here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1J5RyyfuEmHIJGuIaan03gYXc592rcHiufHWB-mAQBI0/edit?usp=sharing>

Your Passions Matter

Company	Role	Product Area	Personal Interest
Defense Company	Technical Program Manager	Aerospace	3
Game Company 1	Product Manager	Content Moderation	10
Game Company 2	Esports Producer	MOBA Esports	8
Game Company 3	Product Manager	FPS	8
Game Company 4	Game Producer	Fighting	7
Game Company 5	Associate Producer	FPS MMO	7
Game Company 6	Producer	MMORPG	7
Game Company 7	Associate Producer	MMORPG	7

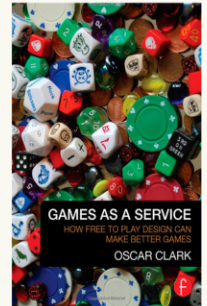
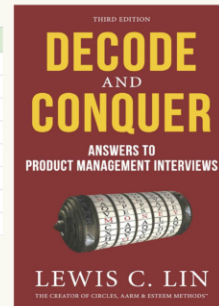


- Employers love people who care about the products they create
- Your personal interest in the job will help you stand out

This method provided a framework for the practical tips I am going to share with you: Ikigai = Finding your purpose that balances something your good at + what you love + what the world needs + what you can get paid to do.

Evaluate Your Skills

Company	Role	Product Area	Personal Interest	Am I Good At It?
Defense Company	Technical Program Manager	Aerospace	3	8
Game Company 1	Product Manager	Content Moderation	10	6
Game Company 2	Esports Producer	MOBA Esports	8	6
Game Company 3	Product Manager	FPS	8	6
Game Company 4	Game Producer	Fighting	7	7
Game Company 5	Associate Producer	FPS MMO	7	8
Game Company 6	Producer	MMORPG	7	7
Game Company 7	Associate Producer	MMORPG	7	8



Increase your score by diving deep into your chosen subject matter

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- Compare your current skills and job description to the jobs you want
- What are the gaps you need to fill?

Bet On Your Future

Company	Role	Product Area	Personal Interest	Am I Good At It?	Compensation
Defense Company	Technical Program Manager	Aerospace	3	8	10
Game Company 1	Product Manager	Content Moderation	10	6	11
Game Company 2	Esports Producer	MOBA Esports	8	6	8.5
Game Company 3	Product Manager	FPS	8	6	11
Game Company 4	Game Producer	Fighting	7	7	9
Game Company 5	Associate Producer	FPS MMO	7	8	8
Game Company 6	Producer	MMORPG	7	7	8.5
Game Company 7	Associate Producer	MMORPG	7	8	6.8



- Salary Info sourced from websites like Glassdoor, Blind, PayScale
- Networking will give you insight into Salary + Benefits
- Divide "Compensation" Column by 10K = Total Compensation Score

This method provided a framework for the practical tips I am going to share with you: Ikigai = Finding your purpose that balances something your good at + what you love + what the world needs + what you can get paid to do.

Learn About Your Audience

Company	Role	Product Area	Personal Interest	Am I Good At It?	Compensation	The World's Needs
Defense Company	Technical Program Manager	Aerospace	3	8	10	2
Game Company 1	Product Manager	Content Moderation	10	6	11	8
Game Company 2	Esports Producer	MOBA Esports	8	6	8.5	6
Game Company 3	Product Manager	FPS	8	6	11	4
Game Company 4	Game Producer	Fighting	7	7	9	4
Game Company 5	Associate Producer	FPS MMO	7	8	8	4
Game Company 6	Producer	MMORPG	7	7	8.5	4
Game Company 7	Associate Producer	MMORPG	7	8	6.8	4



Your research on current events will inform you on the "World's Needs"

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Books like Jason Schrier's "Press Reset" and "Blood Sweat and Pixels" helped inform me that the game development process badly needs good Product and Program managers to get the best games to the players as possible while avoiding crunch and burnout.

Websites like Gamedeveloper.com and Reddit kept me informed on current events and gaming trends.

Finding Your Reason For Being

Company	Role	Product Area	Personal Interest	Am I Good At It?	Compensation	The World's Needs	Ikigai Total
Defense Company	Technical Program Manager	Aerospace	3	8	10	2	23
Game Company 1	Product Manager	Content Moderation	10	6	11	8	35
Game Company 2	Esports Producer	MOBA Esports	8	6	8.5	6	28.5
Game Company 3	Product Manager	FPS	8	6	11	4	29
Game Company 4	Game Producer	Fighting	7	7	9	4	27
Game Company 5	Associate Producer	FPS MMO	7	8	8	4	27
Game Company 6	Producer	MMORPG	7	7	8.5	4	26.5
Game Company 7	Associate Producer	MMORPG	7	8	6.8	4	25.8

The sum of your highest score is your **Ikigai!**

This method provided a framework for the practical tips I am going to share with you: Ikigai = Finding your purpose that balances something your good at + what you love + what the world needs + what you can get paid to do.

So you've found your Ikigai. Now what?

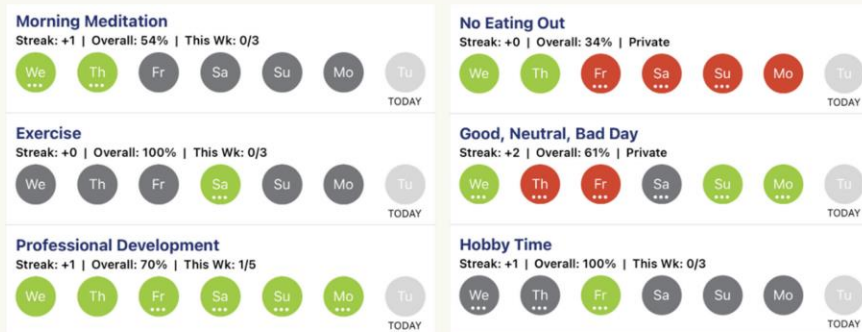
Risk Tolerance in Job Hunting



What are you willing to sacrifice to achieve your dream job?

A fellow CA Adam Smith asked me, "I am a husband, a father, and I'm still in school. What advice do you have for me?"

Determine Your Priorities



Track Habits to maintain your Physical Health, Mental Health, and Relationships

How

1. Calculate the time you have - CA Adam Smith. Looked bank account and bills and calculated how much time you had to pursue a career change - budgeted a full calendar year, and it took that (be ready -it can take that or longer)
1. What's your budget to spend on career change research? (don't compare your budget to someone else; honor if you're low budget)

Conclusion



From: June 15th, 2021: Rage quit my previous career after burnout

To: June 22nd, 2022: Accepted my first AAA role @ EA

1. Found a therapist and began tracking my mood since Feb 2021.
1. Tracking my mood helped me understand what was causing me stress and what was bringing me joy
1. I had 10 rejections before I found success in my current role. Everytime I would get rejected I would take it personally, but this method I have created helped me build the resilience I needed to continue my training and persevere until I achieved my dream job. Working to the bone in my previous career pushed me to go this hard to find a job I loved. Now here's Nathalie Galla to talk about how to avoid burning out

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Fire & Flame for Your Future Job - Don't Burn Out!

Nathalie Galla
Project & Studio Management
remote control productions

#GDC23

NATHALIE:

Hi! I am Nat, and I deal with Anxiety & Depression. Nonetheless, I am still standing here, on this stage - so today, I want to give you a toolkit of how to navigate the job search, and more importantly how to find the right company for you as a person - to make sure you don't end up burning yourself out at the beginning of your journey already, like <insert name> mentioned earlier.

Mental Health in Numbers



www.takethis.org

Source: Crevoshay, Eve & Sawyer, Sarah & Kowert, Rachel & Boccamazzo, Raffael & Dunlap, Kelli & Cocks, Jane & Skimmons, Ryan & Kocurek, Carly & VanDenBogaard, Jay & Rogers, Lisa. (2019). State of the Industry 2019: Mental Health in the Game Industry.

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The games industry is infamous for burning out its workforce. In a paper written by TakeThis, a nonprofit decreasing stigma and increasing support for mental health in games, we can see this fact in numbers:

Mental Health in Numbers

→ Only a 1/3 of developers remain in the industry for 10 years



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As lateral change friendly as the industry is, we also lose a lot of people to other fields: only a third of developers remain industry for 10 years and more.

Mental Health in Numbers

→ Average number of employers in a 5-year-period: 2.2



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The average number of employers in a 5-year-period is 2.2
This kind of job instability is related to increased stress, work anxiety, and depression.

Mental Health in Numbers

→ >50% say *crunch* is an expected part of their job



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More than half of us admit that crunch is an expected part of our jobs. For those that have not heard the term before: crunch is compulsory overtime during the development of a game, often uncompensated.

The symptoms of crunching are related to burnout, and are identified by emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, and feelings of hopelessness.

Impacts on Your Job Search

**mental health
is a valuable,
scarce resource!**



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Now you might be thinking “That’s all fine information Nat, but what do I do with it? Kind of the opposite of encouraging to tell us this.”

Well, I am spelling it out because I personally chose to ignore those facts and took the first job I could, not even in games but general marketing, and I am still recuperating from the toll of being unhappy and losing my income after the trial period; neither me nor my employer saw it going anywhere, so we split ways.

If you take one thing away from this talk, let it be this notion: mental health is a valuable, scarce resource! Treat it like one.

Impacts on Your Job Search

→ don't let the "job shortage" scare you



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I understand being scared, and feeling like you cannot afford to be picky - in a literal, financial sense as much as in terms of being inexperienced.

HOWEVER, there is more game jobs out there than you would believe, and not only in programming or art either. As someone who got to be part of our internal hiring process recently, and exhibited at a career convention full of companies battling for the attention of job seekers: you have options, take the time to evaluate them.

At the very least to make a conscious decision about the trade-offs you are willing to take, and to mentally prepare yourself.

Impacts on Your Job Search

→ take time to hone your craft & value hobby projects



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I started as a programmer, but do you want to know what I got hired for? My time spent streaming on Twitch. Not as a content creator per se, but due to the skills I collected through being one: social media marketing, community management, video editing, minor graphic design. Not only would I never have thought some of them would prove useful, they also allow me to do things that I enjoy at work, which - you guessed it - benefits my mental health.

Where do YOU fit in?

Self-evaluation questions:

- What environment do you work well in?
- What kind of team do you need?
- Where do you want to go, career trajectory-wise?



These are the typical questions self-evaluation questions one should ask themselves.

Where do YOU fit in?

Annoying truth:

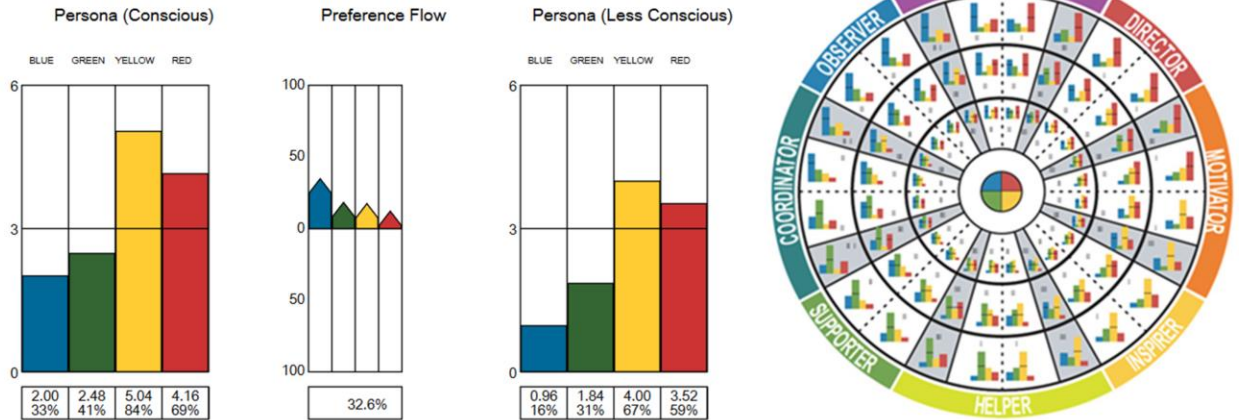
Figuring those out can take
10 years to learn.



Yet, when I wrote the previous slide, I was told I that those things can take 10 years to learn, and you probably don't have that much time. So let me give you a shortcut for the meantime, until you intrinsically know the answers to those questions: the awesome, pseudo-scientific results of personality tests.

Life Hack: Personality Tests

The Insights Discovery® Colour Dynamics



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Seriously, they are beginner-friendly are tools that can help clarify how you work and identify your strengths & weaknesses. And allow you to start your self-evaluation from a solid baseline, instead of from scratch. Not the buzzfeed kind though - thought I would make that clear.

Some more sweet insider knowledge: we at rcp make potential recruits take this test, called Insights. It's paid, but comparable sites like 16 personalities can get you there as well. A typical start-up makes the mistake of hiring only people that are like them, while a good team is actually ideally balanced out over the wheel you see here.

What **COMPANY** do you fit in?

"Do you have any questions for us?"

→ No...



Don't waste this situation.

What COMPANY do you fit in?

“Do you have any questions for us?”

- What does a successful person at your company look like?
- More examples at <https://github.com/viraptor/reverse-interview>

I am going to end on this slide to give you the time to note down the URL. Thank you so much for listening, and please don't be shy to approach any of us after the panel.

Ok, on that note – it's time for Q&A. Do YOU have any questions for any of us?

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Questions??

Portfolio Template



#GDC23

LinkedIn Contact Info



Portfolio Template:

<https://github.com/gamingportfolio/template>

LinkedIn Contact Info:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/9316649/>

Ikigai Worksheet Template:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1J5RyyfuEmHIJGuIaan03gYXc592rcHiufHWB-mAQBI0/edit?usp=sharing>

Reverse interview questions:

<https://github.com/viraptor/reverse-interview>