# David Ventura
## Creative Director, Ichigoichie





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# Getting Hired with a Personal Touch

David Ventura
Creative Director / CEO, Ichigoichie

# Quick poll

- How many of you have applied for a job...
  - and gotten no response at all?
- How many have done a work test?
- How many have gotten to a second interview?
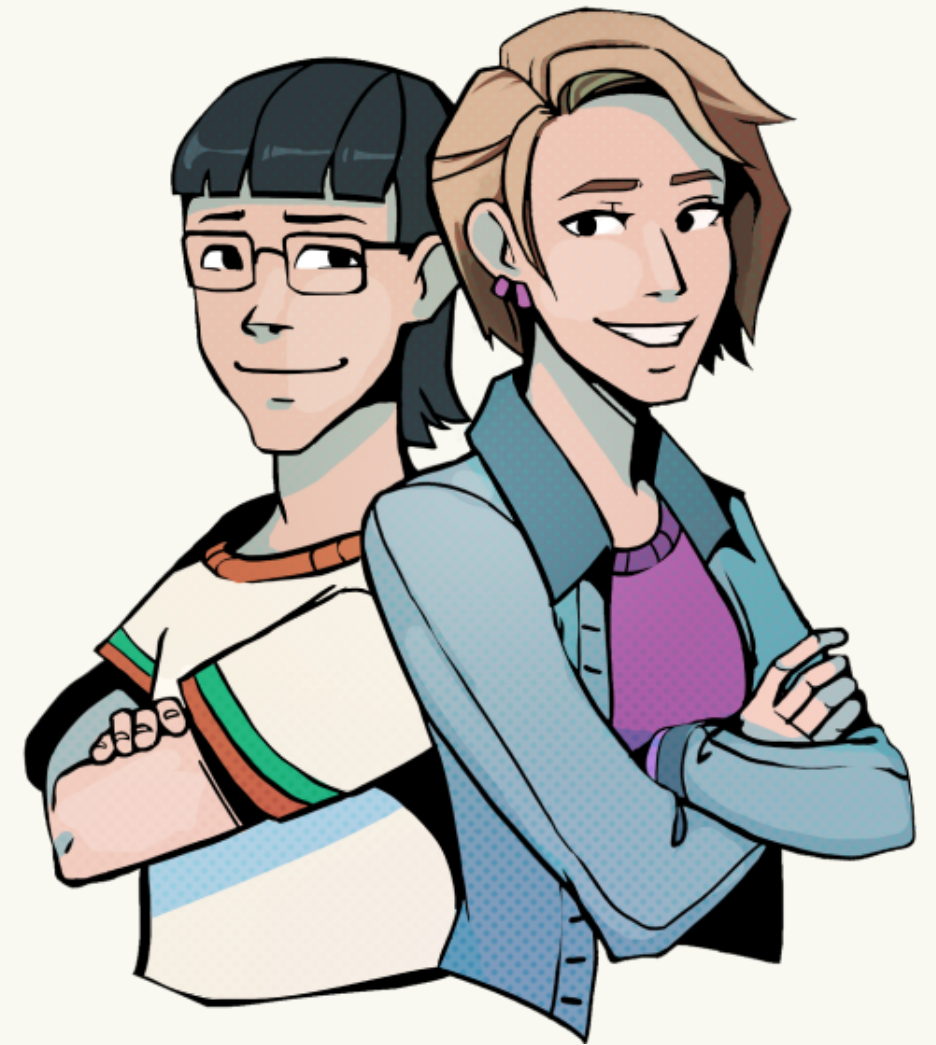
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# So You Want to Be a Developer...

- A pandemic has weakened our social skills
- A significant part of your education has been remote
  - Camera off, mic off, no comment
- Interviewing is tough!
- Applying for a job is tough!
- Making a portfolio is tough!
- Tech is coming for our jobs!
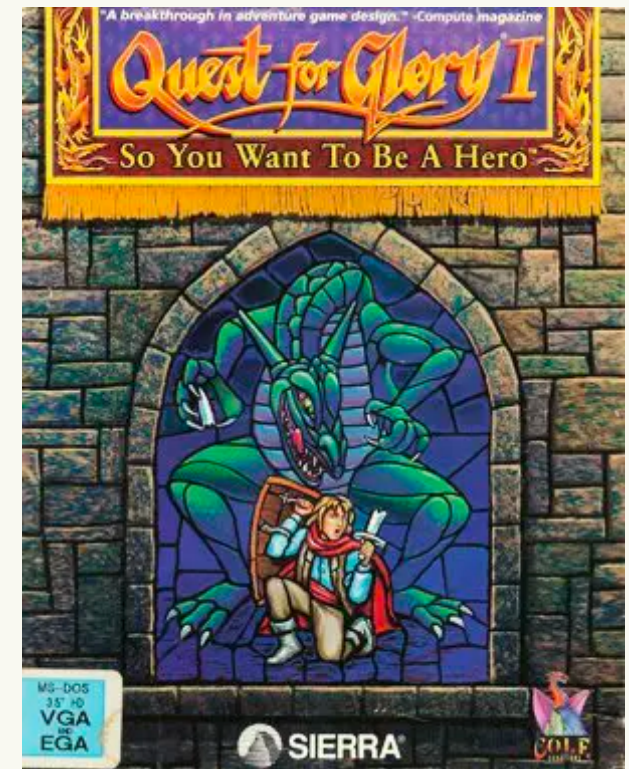
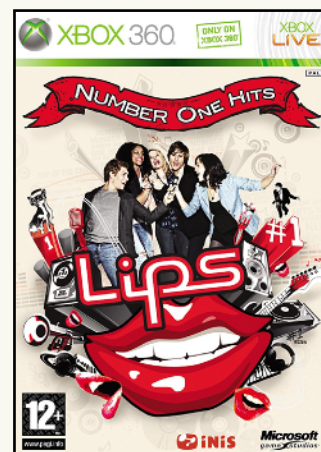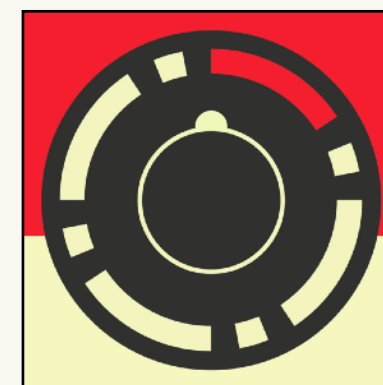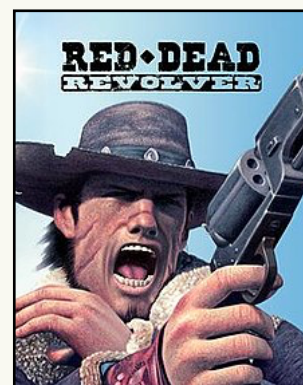# Never fear!

I am here to help you.

# Why is it me giving the talk?

- Hiring manager since 2008
  - Programmers, artists, QA, designers, audio
- Hired in Japan, hired in Sweden
- Worked with game dev trade schools
- Reviewed hundreds of job applications, interviews

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# Who am I?

# Today's process

- Five potential phases of interviewing for a job
- Do's and Don'ts for each
- Examples of helpful and detrimental behaviors

- Disclaimer: this is my hiring process, and different companies have different variations
- Principles work for companies 5-20000 in US, JP, EU, etc.

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# The application submission

Phase 1

# Why didn't I get a reply?!

- It's cheaper than ever to...
  - Find & apply to a job listing
  - Reject an application
- Maybe it's not the right time?
  - "Between March and May" is helpful
    - but not if it's past the end of January...
  - Be flexible if you can!

# Don't...

- Treat my company like a number
- Skip instructions
- Apply if you don't meet any core requirements
- Use AI-generated text
- Copy email body from your cover letter
- Make a bad first impression
  - Instagram follow + job application in sequence

# Hallmarks of a low effort cover letter

- Catchphrase from our site without any understanding
- Job name from LinkedIn/Indeed pasted into the mail
- Multiple fonts/slightly different colors
- Our games are not mentioned at all
- Content is 99% about the applicant's background/skills

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# Do…

- Take the time to research the company
  - Are there demos on Steam?
  - What tone in their messaging? (website, SNS)
- Describe your strengths **in the context of the job listing**
- Try to make a personal connection
- Be honest about your insecurities

# Cover letter that makes me pause

# Persistence may pay off

- Hiya! I saw a job listing you published that looks perfect for me! I would like to apply for...
  - Archive...
- Hey, I wanted to follow up in case my application got lost in the stack.  What caught me was how Backbeat's protagonist Watts...
  - Hmm...

# The first round interview

Phase 2

# What could you be asked?

- Give me an introduction on yourself
- Pick one game you've played in the last year
  - What does it do well? How could it be improved?
- Describe your best group project
  - Same questions as #2
- What are your questions for me?

# Don't...

- Show up more than five minutes early
- Ramble on
- Give non-answers to the question
- Blame other team members/bosses for failures and shortcomings

# Do...

- Be respectful of my time by asking how much I have
- Tell me about your values
- Be introspective about your contributions
- Be able to be critical of other games
  - If you can't answer this, think about it more

# The work test

Phase 3

# Don't...

- Start without reading the entire brief several times
- Go off on a tangent and do what you want to do
  - Enemy AI, yeay!
  - Character modelling, yes!
- Skip instructions
- Leave out information

# Do...

- Ask for clarification on vague things
- Be thorough and document your time/process
- A compassion exercise to imagine how to make this easier for me and position yourself in the best way
  - How busy is the recipient?
  - What environment will they be using?
  - What could go wrong?
    - Time, location, access

# Imagining the application reviewer

- Is it the person you've been emailing with?
- Do they use Windows? Mac?
- Do they have the same tools on that machine you're using?
- What if…
  - They are traveling when they review it?
  - They have bad internet?
  - One of my files is corrupted
  - OneDrive/Dropbox link is broken/private
  - They don't have an application to decompress the files?
- Some of these things you could reply and ask about before you begin!
- Some you could guard against by delivering redundant files/types
- Some of these things you can test yourself with a private browser window, a different startup folder on your computer, etc.

# Stop to think about the task

- Why am I asked to animate a walk/make a state machine?
- What kind of characters do they have in their released games?
  - Size? Style? Camera? Materials?
  - Is this request similar to those things?
- What images were provided? Why?
- ... half of these things are assumptions, so **document them**

# My ideal work test package

- Instructions followed and where it deviates, explanations
- Open on Mac or Win without anything else (ZIP)
- Source (.mb, .PSD, .cpp), intermediate (FBX, PNG, EXE), screenshots
- Minimal fuss to review… e.g. animation(s)
  - ❌ 1 second video
  - ✅ Video with several loops
  - ✅ Video with side by side views
- Concise, yet thorough, docs explaining what and why

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# The follow-up interview

Phase 4

# Don't...

- Make excuses for problems with Unity/Maya/Windows
- Come in unprepared to talk about the work test thoroughly

# What could you be asked?

- Your strengths and weaknesses **as a team member?**
  - That empathy/awareness thing again
- Toughest role you've had?
- Your personality in 3 words? (3 means 3)
- What do you value in others?
- Your long term career goal?
- If you can't answer on the fly... follow up ASAP afterwards

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# Do...

- Build on what we talked about last time
- Bring some things you thought about in the interim
- Ask direct questions what I thought about the work
- Tell me your thoughts about my evaluation
- Repeat back to me what I just said

# The times in-between

Phase 5

# Don't...

- Play games pretending to be sick
- Take it personally if you don't get an initial reply
- Shoot off quick one-line replies immediately
  - (the reading the instructions thing again)

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# Do…

- Be creative!
- Be transparent
- Be persistent, but respectful
- Be personal and empathetic
- Ask for feedback on everything (and mean it)

# In short…

- From the first moment you contact us, you're simulating yourself as an employee
- Easy to work with, communication, character > mad skills
- Empathy, consideration, and respect FTW

# Some helpful books

- Getting More, Stuart Diamond
- The Effective Executive, Peter Drucker
- The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, Patrick Lencioni
- Leading Teams, J. Richard Hackman
- Sell With a Story, Paul Smith

# Thanks for a team effort!



Thank you to all our developers, student interns, schools, and our accelerator Baltic Explorers as well!

# Follow via ichigoichie.org!



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