

Tapescript

Paul: Hi. My name's Paul Osborne. I work as a designer in the computer-game industry. Like a lot of my colleagues, I grew up playing video games; wasting money on arcades, playing the early game consoles. Computer games have always been a big part of my life.

Basically, lots of people are involved in the production of a game. As a designer, I'm largely concerned with the visual material that you see, so my background's artistic. People sometimes wrongly assume that I'm a developer [7] – that's the guy with a maths background who actually figures out how the game works. We work closely together, of course, also with the game's market researcher, who tells us what players are asking for.

So, how did I get into game designing? My degree was in art and design, and I did courses in painting and drawing as you'd expect, as well as one in computer graphics, which really captured my imagination, and one in animation. That was the one which enabled me to build up the key conceptual and visual design skills that I use now. [8] But I wasn't afraid of technology, so my career could've gone in a number of directions.

My first job was as a graphic designer, doing book covers largely [9], though occasionally video game boxes or CD sleeves did come my way too. After a while, an opening came up in the company's games division for someone who had art and design sensibilities, along with some technical acumen, to work on things called user interfaces [10]. I saw that as the opportunity to move into designing software. It was interesting to put together visual design, ergonomics, psychology and technology. I had some great mentorship from the head of my section and really developed a passion for the work.

Basically, what you're responsible for as a designer is whether a game's fun or not. I've worked on a number of great games: Purple Moon was my first big challenge, and I had a key role on Defending Planet X. But the one I got most out of was Star City because I was working on defining the multi-player experience [11]. That's when two or more people play against each other. We wanted multi-players to play the game as if they were creating their own narrative [12], as compared to a single player when they're experiencing a story you've made up for them.

I love being able to come up with a cool idea and actually see it happen. The most challenging aspect of the game, however, is hitting the right level of difficulty [13]. You want the game to be hard enough to reward people who

gain expertise, but not so hard that people become frustrated and stop playing.

So, what does it take to be a game designer? You need the creativity to have a vision – see what will make a game fun and create a great experience. You need the communication to articulate that vision to other people and get them to do what you think needs to be done. But above all, you need dedication to see your vision through – to work your way through the disappointments and failures [14]. When you're three months from shipping, working until two in the morning, that's what sees you through.