

Video Game Design Foundations ©2014

Chapter 9: Large-Scale Design Process—Glossary

3ds Max. Software used to develop 3D assets.

Brochure. Leave-behind document that artistically displays a game concept.

Budget. Plan that details how much a project should cost.

Character design document. Sketches that detail the appearance, poses, and abilities of a character.

Character development. Characteristics and abilities that define the protagonist.

Compiler program. Software that translates simplified script or object-oriented programming into machine-readable code.

Concept art. Sketch of the basic shape and style of a character or other object.

Concept stage. First stage of the three-stage cycle; focuses on formalizing the big idea for the game.

Construction stage. Second stage of the three-stage cycle; focuses on building levels and game assets needed for the game.

Consumer off-the-shelf (COTS) software. Retail software that can be purchased by anyone.

Crunch time. Occurs at the end of a production cycle when time runs short.

Custom software. Computer applications created to perform a specific design purpose.

Cut scene. Movie-like segment of a game that does not require the player to interact with any game element.

Decision tree. Graphic organizer that maps out the decisions available to the player.

Delay in production. Occurs when the time schedule is not followed and the project is behind schedule.

Demographics. Measurable characteristics of the potential customers.

DirectX. All-inclusive game development tool from Microsoft.

Eight areas of design. Critical areas of design that are refined through the iterative process.

First playable level. First milestone of the game build whereby an entire level has been programmed in playable fashion.

Five essential questions. Must be answered by a designer to help plan how the concept will be implemented.

Functionality. Testing that focuses on whether the game plays and delivers as intended.

Game script document. Details core interactions with the game as defined by the general rules and core mechanics instructions.

Game treatment document. Pitch documents that summarize major game features such as the concept, story outline, character, and art.

Game-development tools. Hardware and software used to streamline and simplify the game-design process.

Governing game design document (GGDD). Master collection of design documents used to record information needed for each decision made for the project.

Graphical user interface (GUI). Point-and-click user interface displaying applications and functions as icons.

Green light. Approval to move forward with a project.

High concept document. Used to introduce the idea or concept of a game and answer the five essential questions; a résumé for the game.

Iteration. Different version of the same game build with increasingly more refinement.

Iterative process. Process by which a basic prototype game is built and improved through many improved versions until the final version is perfected.

Leave-behind document. Pitch documents left with the publisher for them to look over after you leave.

Level design. Programming all interactions needed to take a protagonist through each level of the story.

Market analysis document. Details the target market and sales projections for a proposed game.

Mock-up. Simple objects, like paper or note cards, used to act out a scene for testing the rules and designing the core mechanics.

Mode elaboration. Addition of secondary gameplay modes for better immersion and storytelling.

Model sheet. Refined detailed sketches that show the character in multiple poses, dress, and emotional expressions.

Pitch documents. Documents that present or sell a game idea to the decision makers.

Playability testing. Type of testing that determines whether the story is completely told, the game holds true to the concept, and the objectives are attainable.

Presentation folder. Quality example of the designer's work used to present a new game concept.

Primary gameplay mode. What the player must achieve as the main goal of the game or level.

Professional game testers. Play and test a game and note all glitches and imperfections before it is released to the public.

Protagonist. Main character of the game around whom the plot is designed.

Prototype. Basic, first version of a game build used to test the concept.

Secondary gameplay mode. Other objectives or activities the player completes for additional rewards.

Speed of development. How quickly a game can be built.

Story elaboration. Developing the concept to put together all pieces of the story.

System-shall command. A statement that tells what the system is allowed to do.

Technical design document. Details the computer codes, event codes, and technical interactions between the user interface and core mechanics.

Technological superiority. A clear benefit from using higher technology.

Testing and debugging. Stage of construction focusing on finding the problems within a game.

Three-stage production process. Production cycle with stages of concept, construction, and tuning.

Time-sensitive issues. Important reasons why the final game must not be delivered late.

Tuning stage. Final stage in game design where the game is tested for functionality and playability.

World design document. Displays and lists the items needed to create the game world.

XNA. Game developer tool available through Microsoft Visual Studio for game developers making Xbox 360 or PC games.