



Nine things to look for in the next generation of MMOG

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Introduction

- What this is about
 - The elements you should see in the next generation massively multiplayer games and how they can advance the medium
- And who I am...
 - Gordon Walton
 - 27 years in game development
 - Currently with Sony Online Entertainment in Austin working on an unannounced MMOG
 - Previously worked on a half dozen online games including The Sims Online, Ultima Online, Air Warrior

Quality

- Objective Quality
 - Consumers expect quality (the more mass market, the more “working” is an expectation)
 - An essentially bug-free product is the goal, issues are fixed as they are uncovered
 - Use objective quality metrics
 - Expect to see significantly higher objective quality in next generation games!
- Subjective Quality
 - Perception is reality
 - Designs can be perceived as quality issues
 - Use subjective quality metrics (community and polling)
 - Make sure you know and maintain your core game tension though!

Accessibility

- Topic selection
- Hardware/software specifications
- Compatibility
- Ease of use / Interfaces

Larger Audiences == Short Play Cycles

- We are competing against TV as an entertainment medium
- Many of our potential players have only 15-30 minute time slices
- Less setup time/more payoff!
- LESS "PAIN" - MORE FUN!

Viral Sampling

- Word of mouth has always been our best acquisition vehicle
- Specific ways to enhance this include:
 - Postcards
 - Film clips
 - In-game remote viewers (voyeurism)
 - Sampling clients
 - "Buddy" CDs or registration codes
 - Please tell me more ways to do this!

Audience Mode

- Much of the mass audience wants no to low interactive entertainment
- What portions of your experience would be compelling to watch?
- Any portions they could wager or vote on?
- The game that cracks this problem may well be a breakthrough for the entire medium

Utility Level of Service

- This is a consumer expectation, even on the internet
- Is your goal 100% uptime?
- What will you do when the inevitable service outage happens?
- Are you there when your customers need you?
- How easy is it to get help, and does it address their real issues?
- Setting and meeting consumer expectations

Player Generated Content

- We have always had player generated content, this is only about increasing the scope
- There are challenges (editorial, trademark infringement)
- Opportunities (common carrier, tapping into consumer creativity, player ownership in and of the environment)
- Possible approaches
- The game that cracks this problem may well be a breakthrough for the entire medium

Multiplatform and Mobile

- PC is king, but console, handheld and mobile phones are coming
- It is important to fit the content to the delivery medium
- The goal is to better integrate your experience and brand into your customers lifestyle

Intense Socialization / Rites of Passage

- What do I mean by socialization and rites of passage? (using real life meaning)
- How can you do this in MMOGS?
 - Tutoring
 - Initiation
 - Gaining competence/acceptance
 - Milestone accomplishments
 - TV moments
 - Retiring
- This is an huge opportunity to tap the emotions of your community in real and meaningful ways

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Summary

- Meeting these objectives would advance our massively multiplayer medium
- The two largest breakthrough opportunities are Audience Mode and Player Generated Content
- Watch the upcoming games to see how many of these next generation ideas they incorporate!

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- Time for your questions!

