



GAME NARRATIVE
SUMMIT

Game Together or Die Alone: Writing Co-operative Campaigns

Panel Discussion

Game Developers Conference® Online 2011
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About this panel...

- PANELISTS

- Anne Toole: Freelance Writer and Narrative Designer
- Evan Skolnick: Lead Narrative Designer – Lucas Arts
- Cory Herndon: Senior Writer – Carbine Studios
- Jay Posey: Writer – Red Storm Entertainment

- MODERATOR

- Haris Orkin: Freelance Writer and Narrative Designer



A dramatic, low-key illustration of Geralt of Rivia standing in a dark, gothic interior. He is wearing his signature blue and white armor with brown leather straps. He holds a silver sword in his right hand. The background features large stone arches and a bright light source. In the foreground, a large, grotesque monster head with sharp teeth and red blood is visible on the right, and a pile of dark, twisted roots or branches is on the left.

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DEAD ISLAND



Game Together or Die Alone

Panel Questions

- What sort of problems crop up when you combine an overarching story with drop in/drop out co-op. How can you balance the requirements of creating a co-op campaign with those of the game's single player campaign?

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Panel Questions

- A game writer has many storytelling tools at his or her disposal; including cut scenes, scripted dialogue, systemic dialogue, environmental clues, audio logs, and text logs. Which of these tools are more useful in a co-op campaign, which are less so, and are there narrative devices that are exclusive to a co-op campaigns?

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Panel Questions

- In fantasy games that follow the D&D paradigm there are distinct classes with specific abilities. Asymmetric and complimentary abilities seem to be a cornerstone of co-op design. But not all co-op games have distinct classes and abilities. How do those mechanics affect the narrative?

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Panel Questions

- When playing co-op we need to depend on the other players/characters to make our way forward. We can care share loot. We can trade ammo. We can watch each other's backs. This can help foster a strong emotional connection between characters and players. How have you used these kinds of mechanics to help define the relationships between characters in the narrative?

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Panel Questions

- If conflict is the heart of drama and co-op playable characters are never in direct opposition does that defuse the drama? Can you have co-op players in opposition without breaking the game?

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Panel Questions

- In games that feature player choice that can affect the narrative, which of the players should be given the ability to make this choice? Or should there be some way for the players to "vote" or otherwise all participate in story-related decisions?

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Panel Questions

- How does level design influence writing for a co-op campaign. Do you work hand in hand with your level designers? Do you do the level design yourself?

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Panel Questions

- Do you think certain genre's work better for co-op? *Resident Evil 5*, *Left for Dead*, and *Dead Island* are all survival horror. Doesn't the co-op mechanic make those games a little less scary? How do you overcome that?

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Panel Questions

- While playing co-op players can communicate with their own voices while still hearing conversations between the character's voices. Does that back and forth between reality and fiction break immersion? And if so, is there a way to solve that problem?

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Panel Questions

- Is there a distinct difference between two-player co-op and three- or more player co-op, from a narrative perspective? Does the number of potential simultaneous players influence the approach for creating and/or delivering story?

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•Open Q&A