



Efficiency for game designers:

Lessons learned making Gunpoint quickly without going mad

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GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE®

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Restrictions on Gunpoint's development:

- **Forgotten how to program**
- **No idea what I was doing**
- **No budget**
- **Worked weekends only**



Results:

- Sold well (quit my job)
- Reviewed well (five 9/10s)
- I'm happy with it
- Didn't destroy my life



$$\text{Efficiency} = \frac{\text{Value for players}}{\text{Work for developer}}$$



First thing I learned:

Forget good ideas

Look for efficient ones



A good idea for Heat Signature:



Planets you can land on!
(5 weeks)



Efficient ideas for Heat Signature:

- **Space stations you can dock with - 1 week**
- **Randomly generated weapons - 2 days**
- **Upgrades for your ship - 3 days**
- **Interior doors you can mess with - 4 days**
- **Galaxy map - 1 week**
- **Factions system - 1 week**



Considerations for estimating value:

- **How many times will one player get value out of it?**
- **How many players will experience it?**
- **Is this the type of value you care about creating?**



**The second thing I learned:
Factor in uncertainty**



If you are:
Certain it'll be good
Not sure it'll be quick

Give it a day!



If you are:
Certain it'll be quick
Not sure it'll be good

Make it anyway!



Judging an idea without knowing how it'll work out:

Certain it'll
be quick

Try it!

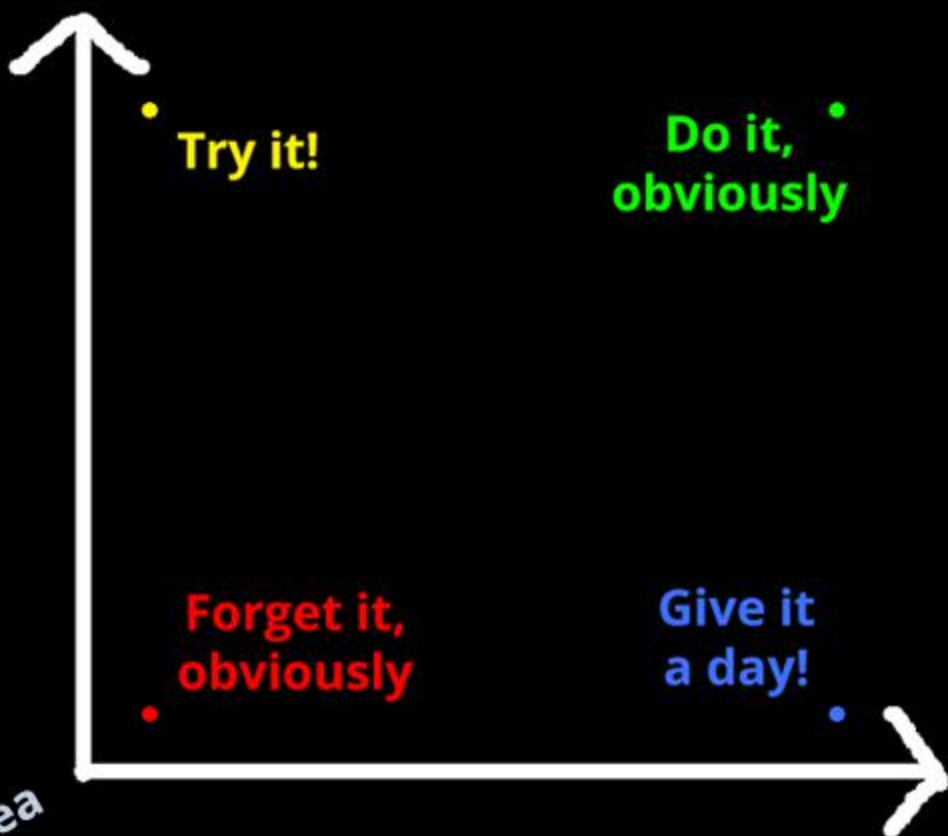
Do it,
obviously

Forget it,
obviously

Give it
a day!

No idea

Certain it'll
be good





**The third thing I learned:
The art of Not Doing things**









**Something I should have
considered for Gunpoint:**

Not Doing The Gun



**The fourth thing I learned:
The best place to save time is in
the concept**



The fifth thing I learned:
How to stop being a perfectionist



Or:
Fuck it, that'll do



**Each time you come back to work, ask:
"Is this the most important thing left to do?"**



**"It's the little things that make
the biggest difference."**

- Someone Who Is Wrong



It's easy to stop polishing the silverware once you realise how much of the house is on fire.



**The sixth thing I learned:
How to feel good about yourself
at the end of the day**



**If you are your own boss:
Be a good one**



Only ask yourself 2 questions:

- Did I work 8 hours?**
- Did I work efficiently?**



In summary:

- 1. Choose ideas based on value divided by work.**
- 2. Quick ideas are worth making. Good ideas are worth trying.**
- 3. Not Doing Things is instant and free.**
- 4. Overcome perfectionism by knowing how much is broken.**
- 5. If you put in the hours, never feel bad about yourself.**



Efficiency is important because:

- Your life is precious**
- It's OK to waste it making videogames**
- But it's a shame to spend a lot of it on things that go unappreciated**



Thanks!

I'm @Pentadact on Twitter

**My new game is Heat Signature:
www.heatsig.com**