



Building the Story-Driven  
Experience of

# DEUS EX

HUMAN REVOLUTION™

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# What Is Deus Ex: Human Revolution?

- **Open-Ended Play / Meaningful Choices**
  - Branching player-driven dialogs
  - Multiple opportunities by objectives
  - Multiple endings to choose from
- **Story-Driven**
- **Show, don't tell**
  - **Show** does one ensure that branching paths coalesce into a cohesive narrative?
  - **Triggered** scripted events and cut scenes
- **React to Player Action and Consequence**
  - **Case specific** NPC dialog
  - **Multiple** news items (read via newspapers)
  - **End game** revelations that reflect how you played

# An Early Design Decision

- **Create an Internal Narrative Design Position**

- Part of the game design group
- Hired during Conception
- Responsible for the game narrative from concept to implementation
- Collaborates with Game Director and game direction
- Designs and writes\* the game story
- Resolves conflicts between story and gameplay as they arise
- Interfaces with other departments to communicate the story vision



**Ensure that branching paths coalesce into a cohesive narrative.**

\*with a team of contract and in-house writers

# The Deus Ex: Human Revolution

For that, we needed to:

## Blueprint Process

- Develop a **process** that would force every member of the team to build the game together.
- Create a **method** for designing the game on paper.
- Implement a **tool** that would maintain the team's vision and goals.

# The Deus Ex: Human Revolution Blueprint Process

Step One:  
Define the Game Concept

# Define the Game Concept

- Involved 4 key people\*
  - Producer
  - Game Director
  - Lead Game Designer
  - Artistic Director
- The goal was to determine the **foundations** on which to build a compelling Deus Ex game experience.

\*Narrative Designer was added to this group in the last month

# Define the Game Concept

- Defining the following elements gave us an **anchor** on which every creative decision would later be made:
  - Game Essence
  - Player Fantasy
  - Setting and Game Structure
  - Top Features
  - Core Gameplay Mechanics
  - Level Design Philosophy
  - High Level Story Concept
- Once we had them, we could move on to the next step...

# The Deus Ex: Human Revolution Blueprint Process

Step Two:  
Create the Story Concept

# Create the Story Concept

- Involved 3 key people
  - Narrative Game Designer
  - Game Director
  - Lead Level Designer
- The goal was to turn the high-level story summary into a fully developed, conspiracy-laden **story outline**.

**"NATURE  
IS WHAT WE ARE  
PUT IN THIS WORLD  
TO RISE ABOVE"**

# Why Do We Do The Things We Do?

Upgrade Superhuman Abilities

Choice of Augmentations

Multiple Paths based on Augments

Play as Augmented Security Agent

Society Divided

Competitive Marketplace

Corporations Vying in Secret

(because we all need to feel in control of something)

$[h+]^3$



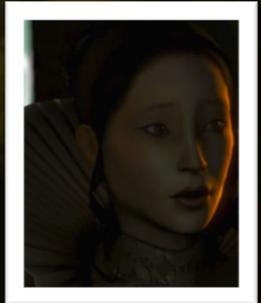
### Wants to control technology

- *Idealistic*
- *Hands-on*
- *Single-minded*
- *Capitalist*



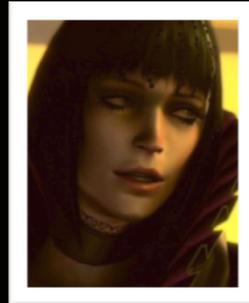
### Wants to control the body

- *Visionary*
- *Egocentric*
- *Daring*
- *Frustrated*



### Wants to control the market

- *Driven*
- *Fearless*
- *Manipulative*
- *Vain*



### Wants to control truth and lies

- *Inquisitive*
- *Amoral*
- *Immature/Naive*
- *Emulative*



### Wants to control society

- *Empathetic*
- *Superior*
- *Charming*
- *Indomitable*



### Wants to control his choices

- *Resourceful*
- *Curious*
- *Loyal*
- *Cynical*

# Create the Story Concept

- Developing the following elements gave us a rich, conspiracy-based tale around which a game could be built:
  - Unifying Theme
  - Hero, Villain, and Critical Path Story Characters
  - Conspiracy Groups
  - State of the World and Historical Timeline
  - Key Plot Points
- It did not, however, give us a **playable game story**.

*Meanwhile...*

# Create the Story Concept

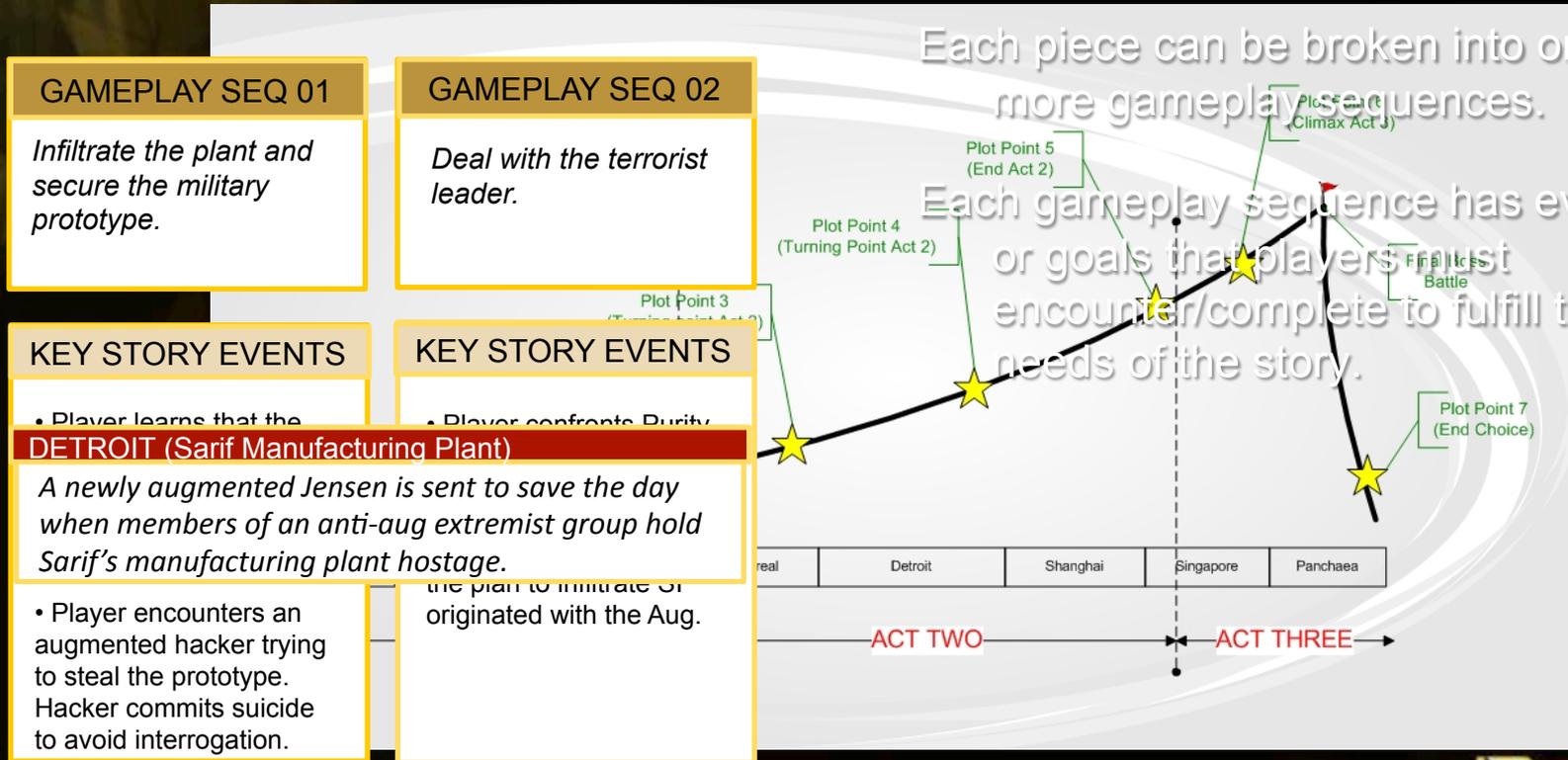
- During Preproduction, many diverse elements were being developed simultaneously:
  - Technology and Tools
  - Gameplay Mechanics
  - Critical Path Story
  - Art Direction
  - Sound Design, etc.
- They were also being developed *independently*.
- We needed a **process** that would force the team to build the game together.

# The Deus Ex: Human Revolution Blueprint Process

Step Three:  
Complete the Blueprint

# Blueprinting Your Game: The Underlying Philosophy

In games, every map has its own piece of storyline.



# Blueprinting Your Game: The Underlying Philosophy

## DETROIT (Sarif Manufacturing Plant)

*A newly augmented Jensen is sent to save the day when members of an anti-aug extremist group hold Sarif's manufacturing plant hostage.*

### GAMEPLAY SEQ 01

*Infiltrate the plant and secure the military prototype.*

### GAMEPLAY SEQ 02

*Deal with the terrorist leader.*

### KEY STORY EVENTS

- Player learns that the military prototype is in danger: Sarif's plant has been taken over by extremists.
- Player encounters an augmented hacker trying to steal the prototype. Hacker commits suicide to avoid interrogation.

### KEY STORY EVENTS

- Player confronts Purity First leader, who reveals that his people didn't know they'd been infiltrated by an Aug. But the plan to infiltrate SI originated with the Aug.

Every gameplay sequence can be further broken into one or more blocks of gameplay.

Each block describes a gameplay challenge that's needed to fulfill the sequence goal.

• Sarif exposes the importance of the prototype and the situation with Purity First to you.

the Plant.

er into the Plant.

tells you terrorists have gained control of systems. You need the prototype.

st in the prototype room trying to access it. The hacker him.

# Blueprinting Your Game: The Underlying Philosophy

## DETROIT (Sarif Manufacturing Plant)

*A newly augmented Jensen is sent to save the day when members of an anti-aug extremist group hold Sarif's manufacturing plant hostage.*

### GAMEPLAY SEQ 01

*Infiltrate the plant and secure the military prototype.*

Every gameplay sequence can be further broken into one or more blocks of gameplay.

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B1

•Sarif exposes the importance of the prototype and the situation with Purity First to you.

B2

•You arrive on site and must infiltrate the Plant.

B3

•Now inside, you must progress further into the Plant.

B4

•As you near the prototype, Pritchard tells you terrorists have gained control of systems. You need to hack to regain control and access the prototype.

B5

•You encounter an augmented terrorist in the prototype room trying to access it. The hacker commits suicide before you can stop him.

By knowing what each gameplay block is, you can identify all elements needed to make it work, including:

- Scripted Events
- NPC Behaviors
- Dialogs
- Choices and Consequences

# Complete the Blueprint

- Involved key people from several departments:
  - Game and Level Designers
  - Narrative Game Designer/Writers
  - Level Artists
- The goal was to **design the game on paper**, merging story and gameplay along the way.
- It was hard!
  - Daily meetings, from 10 to 5 each day.
  - Sometimes story changed to accommodate gameplay ideas.
  - Sometimes gameplay ideas changed to accommodate story.
- It was a true group effort.
  - No one person led the charge.

# Complete the Blueprint

- In the end, it gave us:
  - A true sense of ownership for everyone on the team.
  - A clear vision of what we were trying to build.
  - The ability to cut without damaging the integrity of the game or story.
  - The ability to focus our efforts.
  - A story that could be told through gameplay, and gameplay that supported the story.
- But it didn't give us the final product!

# The Deus Ex: Human Revolution Blueprint Process

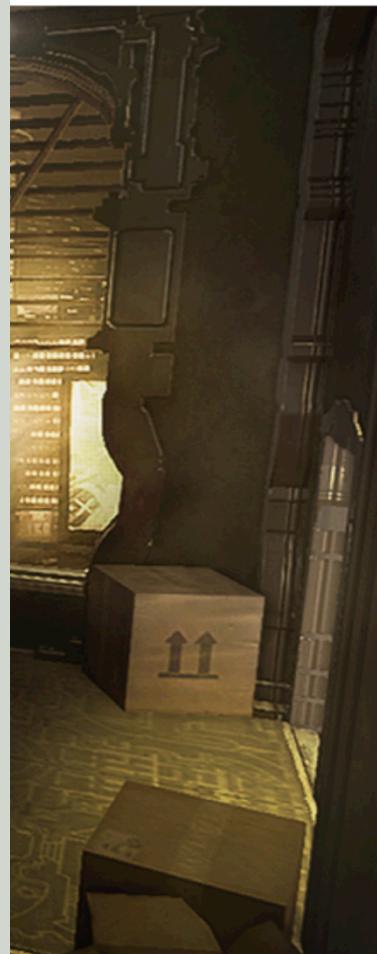
Step Four:  
Conduct Gate Meetings

# Conduct Gate Meetings

- Gate meetings divide the production effort into distinct stages based on goals and deliverables.
  - First navigable
  - First playable
  - Etc.
- The **goal** of each gate is to ensure that creative directions/intentions are understood and being met.
- They are also a form of **constructive** peer review:
  - People involved depend on which stage of production you are in.
  - Questions and feedback from each person in the room is strongly encouraged.

# Conduct Gate Meetings

- Our gate meetings accomplished the following:
  - Fostered communication between departments.
  - Ensured that all aspects of the game (*story, gameplay, sound, art, animations, etc.*) worked together to communicate the vision.
  - Enabled all team members to bring their creativity and expertise to the table.
- They proved to be so successful, we decided to implement them across all levels of production...



# The Deus Ex: Human Revolution Blueprint Process

## Conclusion

# In Conclusion

Deus Ex: Human Revolution aimed at being an immersive, story-driven game that reacted to player choices in significant ways.

In the end, our ability to blend story and gameplay coherently was due to the following factors:

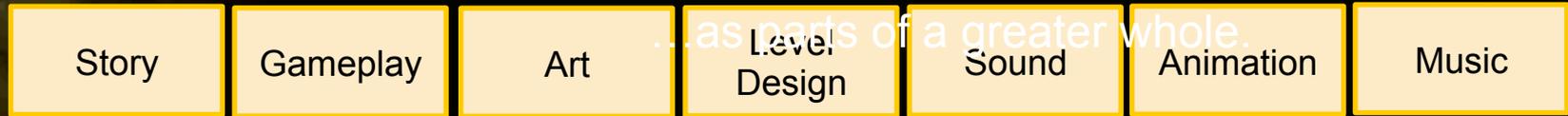
*However...*

1. Our ability to recognize story as being a central part of the game experience we wanted to create.
2. The methodology we used. *(Hire an Internal Narrative Director!)*

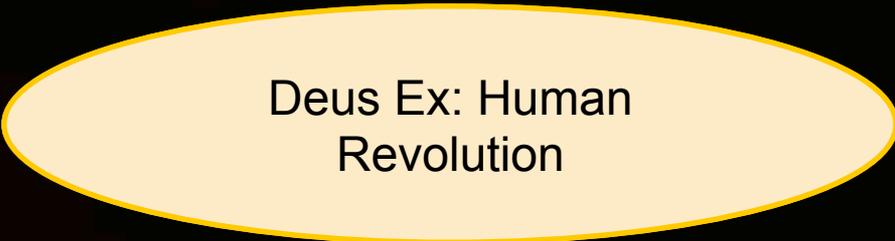


# In Conclusion

The **success** of our methodology was linked to our ability to see every aspect of the game...



And it was **this** philosophy, I believe, that enabled us to create...



Questions?



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