

Turning David into Almost Goliath: Paradox Interactive's Journey

Shams Jorjani – Corporate Paladin
GDC Europe – Cologne August 15 2016

"And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine."

Old Testament, 1 Samuel, Chapter 17, Verse 38-40

Overview

- Me
- Background - Framing
- Mistakes & Growing pains
- Summary & takeaways
- Q&A

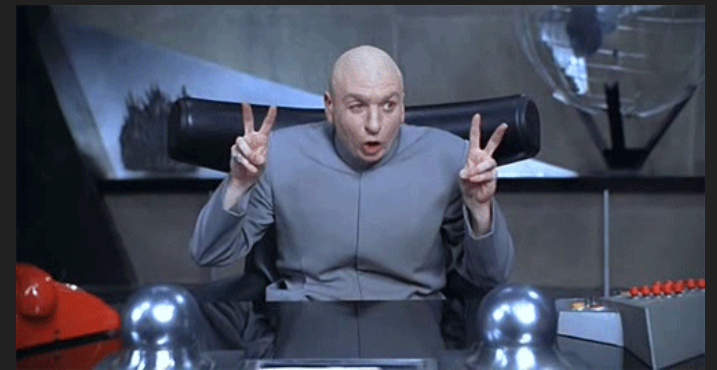


DISCLAIMER!

Paradox is a weird one. No absolute truths.

Relevancy? C'mon dude.

Great teams – lot's of learning. Enough blame to go around.



Shams Jorjani VP Business Development

Age: 33 years

Lives: Stockholm, Sweden

Studied: Film, Literature, Engineering

Previous: Avalanche Studios

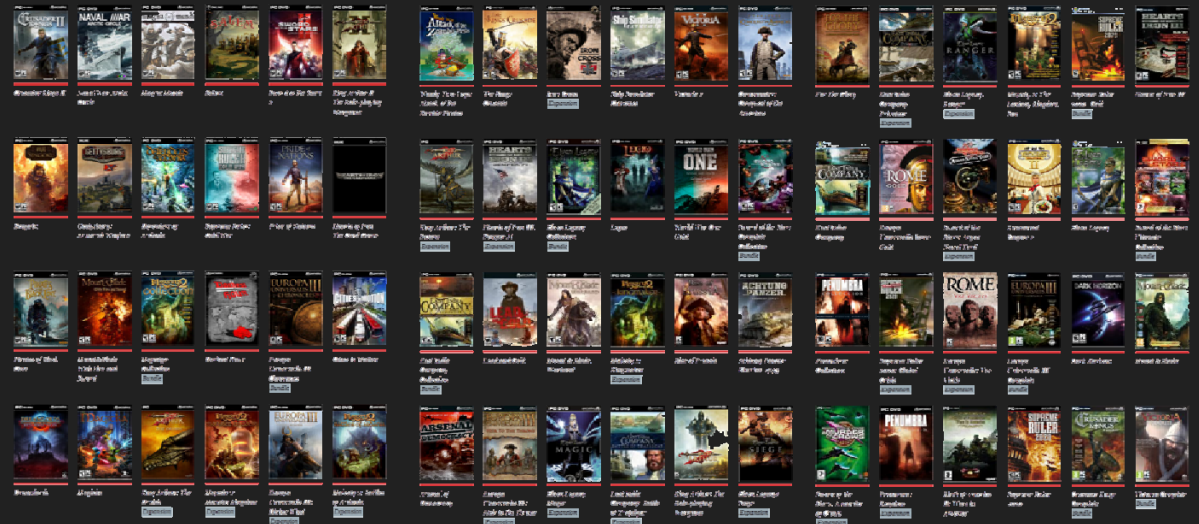
Joined PDX 2009: Marketing,
Production, business development,
management

Job: Games portfolio & new business



Once Upon a Time

- 2004 Paradox Entertainment spinoff
 - “video games are dead”
- Our weird niche games -> Your weird niche games
- PDX today



Everyone starts somewhere...



What we do nowadays



Keeping your eye on the prize

And other reasons for why the heck we are here.

Motivation & goals

Three questions

- Why are you here?
- What is your end goal?
- What are you good at?

Colossal Order

- "A good game sells itself"
Paradox Development team



90 Metacritic
+99% User score on Steam

Hurry slowly

Retirement

It's a marathon – not a sprint

You at 14 or you "future-you"?

Excellence takes time

Rovio, Notch, Colossal Order

- "we knew A and B – so we just assumed we knew the entire alphabet"

Johan Andersson – Game Director Paradox Development Studio



Near miss & Huge Success

Or was it a near success and huge miss?

Great (but wrong) conclusions

The "Near-miss"

Challenger accident

Continual improvement process

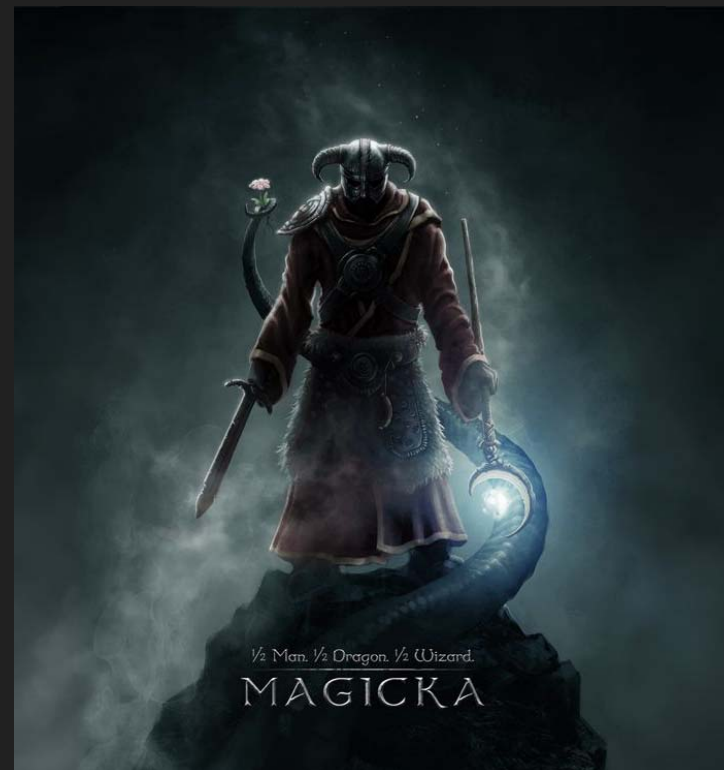
Kaizen, post mortems, external reviews

"we knew A and B"

Magicka 2, The Showdown Effect, Dungeonland, Impire, Leviathan: Warships, HOITCG, Salem

- "Just imagine how well we'd do if the game wasn't buggy" – Regarding Magicka 1

Shams Jorjani Paradox Interactive



Red Seas

And other tales of piracy

How the near miss of Magicka led us astray

- The Curse of the Success of Magicka

- Red seas / Blue oceans

- “Trying to be in every genre.”

- Martin Wahlund – CEO Fatshark



- “Dig closer to where you stand, that's where you're most likely to find gold.”

Daniela Sjunnesson – CMO Paradox Interactive

So where's that blue ocean?

- Blue ocean / Red Ocean
 - Platforms change. All. The. Time.
 - Steam
 - Xbox/Ps4
 - Nintendo
 -VR?AR?
- Survival of the fittest strategies
 - Extreme adaptability - Climax
 - Egg-a-palooza – Image & Form
 - Hurry slowly – PDX –



More survival tips

"If you prick us, do we not bleed?"

Sticking to your guns

War of failures

Stamina to endure

"Never change horses in mid-stream"

Wag the dog (1997)

Find a gun, and stick to it.

Finding your "gun". PDX pillars – our "secret" sauce

Games – >Business model

Speaking of Magicka...

Paradox Game Pillars

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR IN A GREAT GAME?



Replayable

You're basically never "done" with the game. System driven games with challenging sandbox environments make for unique game sessions each time you play.



Intellectual, yet hard core

The games challenge your mind, not your reflexes. Incredible depth is also matched with a balanced learning curve.



Function over form

What makes a Paradox game beautiful isn't necessarily the graphics - it's the gameplay. Given the choice, we will always focus on gameplay and systems first. We strive for the right production values, not high production values.



Accessible

The games take time to master - but the journey is always rewarding. You don't stop playing our games because you don't understand how things work or what to do next.



Creativity

We want our players to create and share their own stories from our games - not just the stories we imagined. The game should encourage creativity, experimentation and the creation of memorable stories.



Highly engaging subject matter

Regardless of what the game is about, there's always more to discover behind the scenes. The player can always dig deeper into the subject matter of the game even when they're not playing.

Scores made by Frigate from www.fragate.com is licensed by CC 3.0 BY



"I also like to live dangerously"

Making sure you don't have to call GG.

"No more parachutes!"

- Risk management changes. Duh!
- Reducing risk – in the non-stupid way
- Too many "firsts"
- Too much – we'll figure that out later
- Trying to make games too fast which can result in bad quality.
Martin Wahlund – CEO Fatshark



Building a following

"If you build it, they will come" – or the number 1 mistake we keep making

Echo chambers & checking your gut

Assumptions

Grand strategy \neq grand strategy

Listening enough in the right places

Your gut will take you far – but not all the way

Summary

“And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; **for I have not proved them**. And David put them off him.

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Questions?

Please get in touch – www.twitter.com/shamsjorjani