



Interviewing for Game Design

Richard Carrillo

Game Director @ Ubisoft Toronto

Standard GoTo's

Experience

- ▶ Resume Trap | Did they really do it?

Process & Documentation

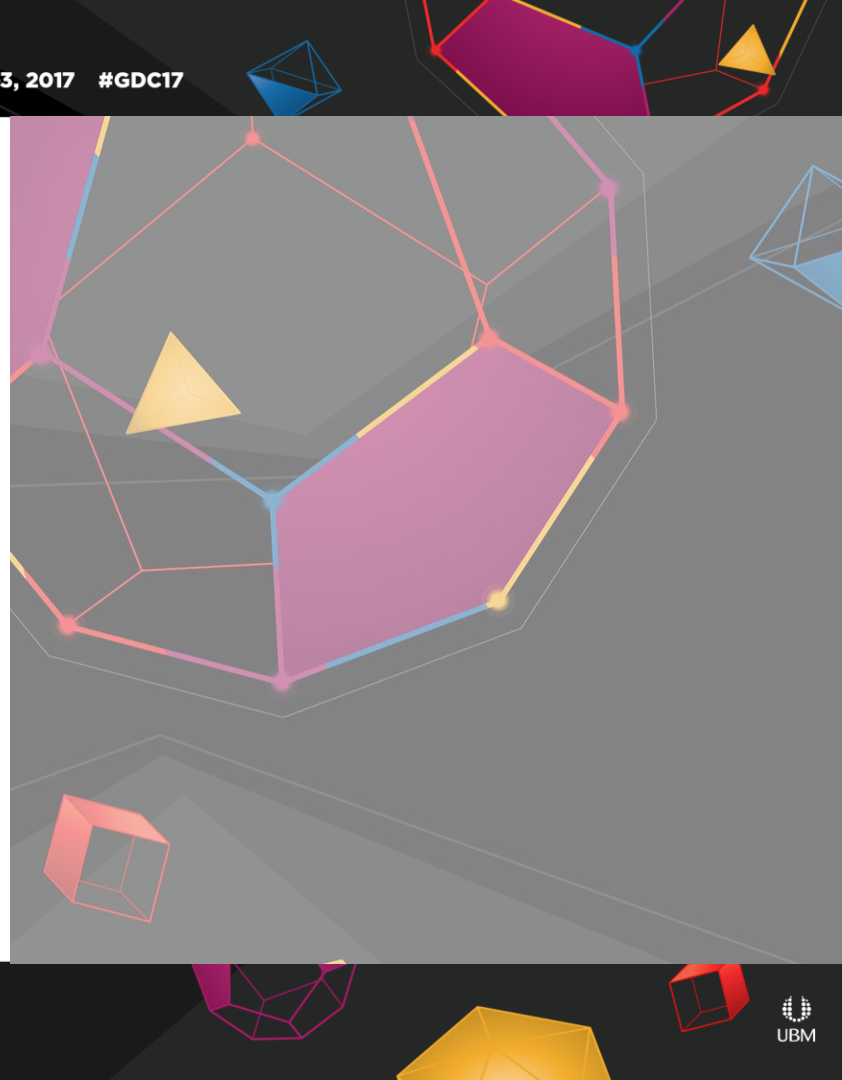
- ▶ In a perfect world...

Game Ideas

- ▶ Game Designer vs. Game Enthusiast

Testing Interview Skills

- ▶ Let's see where you take this...





ARE YOU A GAME DESIGNER?



Game Design



Systems



Problem
Solving



Player
Experience



Game Loops



Idea
Generation



Design
Critiquing



Level
Design



Basic Systems

Goal: To ensure the candidate understands the basics of system design



BASIC SYSTEMS



Bad Question



QUESTION

**What's your favorite game and what
would you change in that game?**

(I want you to talk until I hear something interesting...)



What's your favorite game and what would you change in that game?



Systems



Game Loops



Idea Generation



Design Critiquing

× Too Open

- ▶ What are good answers / bad answers?
- ▶ What if they talk about a game you don't know?

✓ Solutions

- ▶ Ask about a specific system | Add or remove a mechanic





BASIC SYSTEMS

 Good Question



QUESTION

You're working on the game **Rock Paper Scissors**. Your creative director wants you to **remove one** of the three options giving the player only two to choose from.

What goes through your mind?





Q

You're working on the game Rock Paper Scissors. Your creative director wants you to remove one of the three options giving the player only two to choose from. **What goes through your mind?**

Bad Answer

- "I would ask why he wants to change it..."
- "I don't like removing options..."
- "I would try to convince him not to do that..."
- × "I'd get the team together and we'd figure it out..."
- × "I would remove Paper..."





Q

You're working on the game Rock Paper Scissors. Your creative director wants you to remove one of the three options giving the player only two to choose from. **What goes through your mind?**

Good Answers

- ✓ “IMPOSSIBLE!!!”
- ✓ “That would destroy the balance of the game.”
- ✓ “If you remove Paper, then Rock would always win...”
- ✓ “You can’t do RPS with two options...one always wins or it’s always stalemate.

So What’s Your Response to the Creative Director?

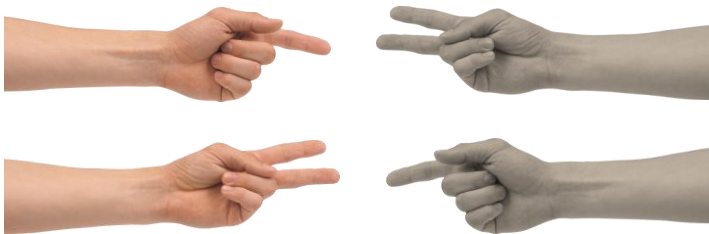




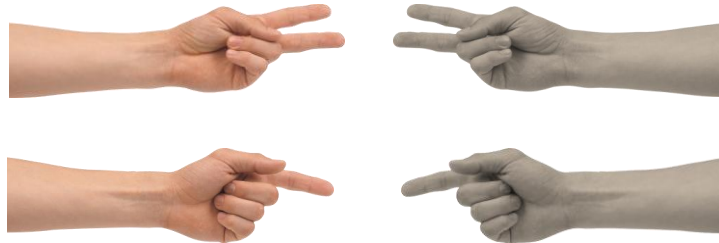
Great Answer



Odds



Evens



Extra Step – Select Teams



Q

You're working on the game Rock Paper Scissors. Your creative director wants you to remove one of the three options giving the player only two to choose from. **What goes through your mind?**



Systems



Game Loops



Problem Solving



Player Exp

Takeaways

- ▶ Don't ask open questions
- ▶ Know the Good & Bad answers
- ▶ To test Systems, add or remove a mechanic from a known system



The background is a dark gray gradient with several abstract geometric shapes. In the upper right, there is a large, complex wireframe structure with magenta, red, and yellow edges. To its left is a smaller blue wireframe shape. In the lower right, there is a red wireframe cube. The overall aesthetic is modern and tech-oriented.

Real World Problems

Goal: To ensure the candidate can solve
Real World scenarios on Player Experience



REAL WORLD PROBLEMS



Bad Question



QUESTION

You need to design a new NPC for a game. Where do you start?

(Design...GO!)



REAL WORLD PROBLEMS



Good Question



QUESTION

You're working on **Far Cry** and the creative director asks you to design a **Tank Vehicle** as an enemy encounter. Two points to keep in mind while designing this:

1. Far Cry is an open world game and the creative director wants this to be a roaming NPC that can be encountered anywhere.
2. Far Cry supports a wide variety of playstyles from the stealth archer to the demolition man. All playstyles should be able to overcome this Tank encounter.

What's the first thing that **crosses your mind** when given this task?



Q

You're working on *Far Cry* and the creative director asks you to design a **Tank Vehicle** as an enemy encounter. Two points to keep in mind while designing this:

1) Open World NPC

2) Supports All Playstyles

Bad Answers

- × Skipping the Encounter (Designers know where the meat is)
- × Tangents that dodge the question (Player driving the tank)
- × Too much reference (They never bring it back to *Far Cry*)
- × They don't understand the problems (Open World / Playstyles)





Q

You're working on *Far Cry* and the creative director asks you to design a **Tank Vehicle** as an enemy encounter. Two points to keep in mind while designing this:

1) Open World NPC

2) Supports All Playstyles

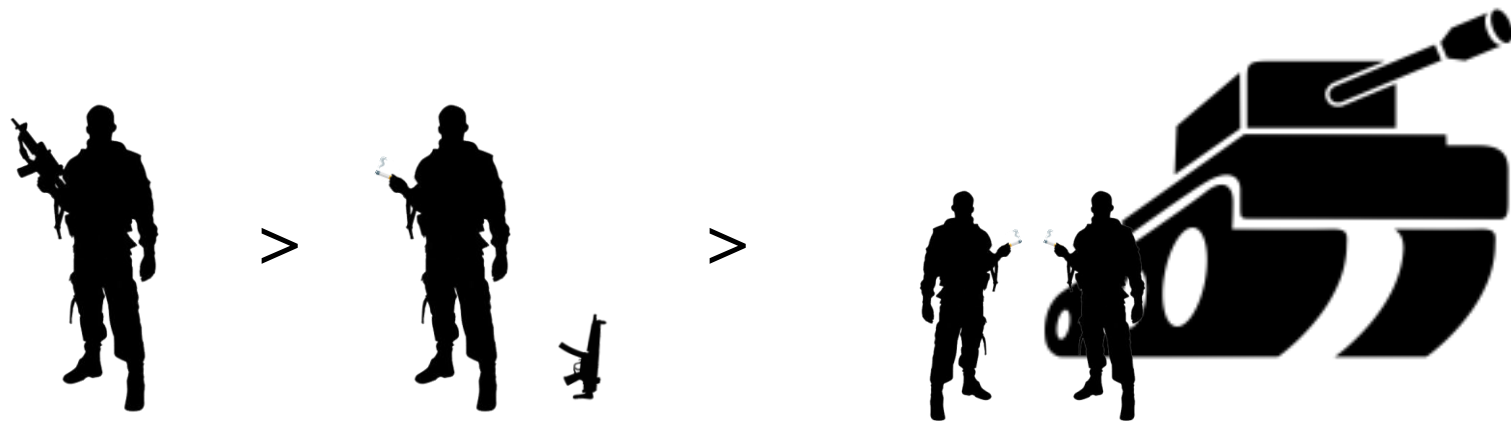
Good Answers

- ✓ Open World: Not an arena | Player brings the solution
- ✓ Playstyles: What are all the types | Challenge & Opportunity
 - ▶ What other problems might that create?
 - ▶ What about this idea? (Have bad ideas ready)
- ✓ Combined, 1 & 2 create a major problem for stealthier playstyles





Great Answer



It's not a tank...it's 2 guys in a tank





Q

You're working on *Far Cry* and the creative director asks you to design a **Tank Vehicle** as an enemy encounter. Two points to keep in mind while designing this:

1) *Open World NPC*

2) *Supports All Playstyles*



Systems



Game Loops



Problem Solving



Player Exp

Takeaways

- ▶ Don't ask how they design. Offer scenarios with problems.
- ▶ Turn the interview into a Design Session
- ▶ Keep the conversation on track
 - ▶ What problem are you trying to solve?
 - ▶ Does that create new problems?





Game Design



Systems



Problem
Solving



Idea
Generation



Design
Critiquing



Player
Experience



Game Loops



Level
Design

Game Directors



High Level
Direction



Building
Brands



QUESTION

Where would you take the next Far Cry?

(Got any cool ideas?)



QUESTION

Critics are saying that many Ubisoft franchises – like AC and FC – are becoming too similar of experiences.

What's the root of this criticism, how are these brands different, and how would you help to differentiate these brands in future installments?



VS

Where would you take the next
Far Cry?

Critics are saying that many Ubisoft franchises – like AC and FC – are becoming too similar of experiences.

What's the root of this criticism, how are these brands different, and how would you help to differentiate these brands in future installments?

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Where do we go from here?

Interviewers

Define Game Design

- ▶ What does it mean for your studio?

Build Direct Questions

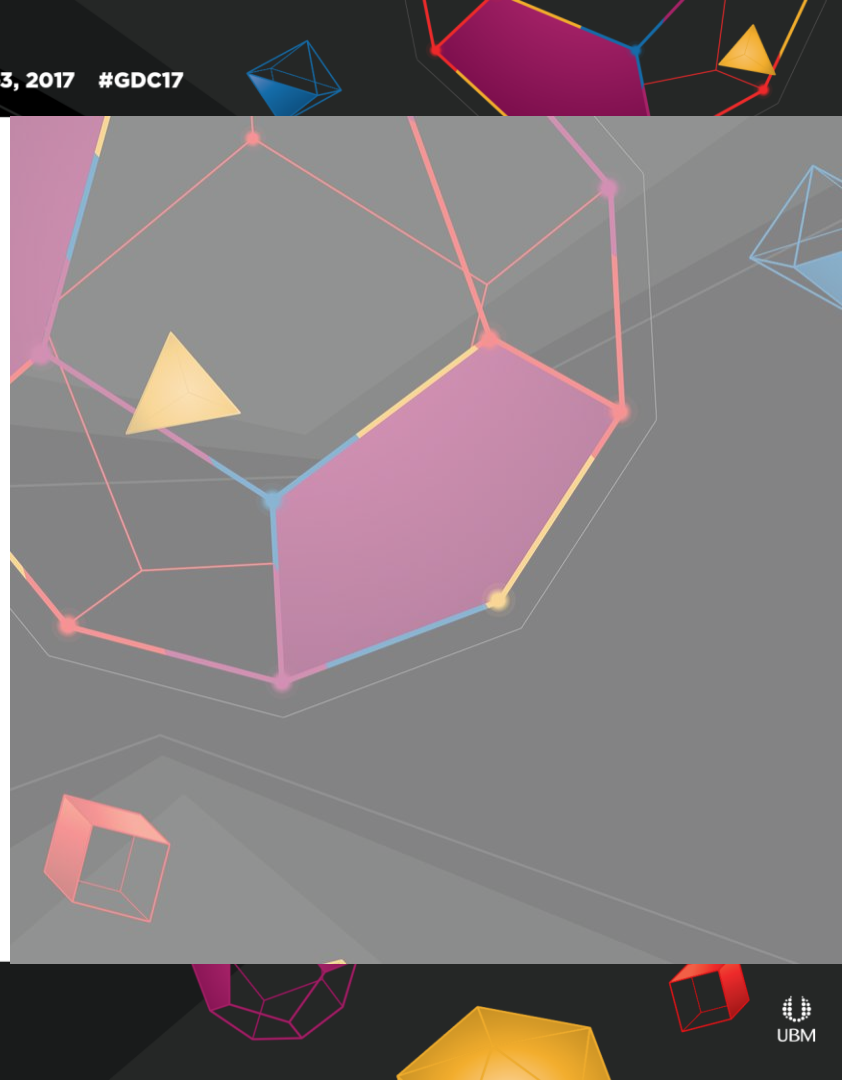
- ▶ Know the Good & Bad answers

Turn Interviews into Design Sessions

- ▶ Test Job Skills | Not Interviewing SKills

Keep Reviewing Your Hiring Process

- ▶ Raising the bar raises the industry



Candidates

Game Design is a Profession

- ▶ Play Everything! Reference Anything!

Game Design is Tedious

- ▶ See “The Door Problem”

Think Out Loud

- ▶ Your mental process is what we’re after

Game Design Isn’t About Your Ideas

- ▶ It’s about everyone else’s



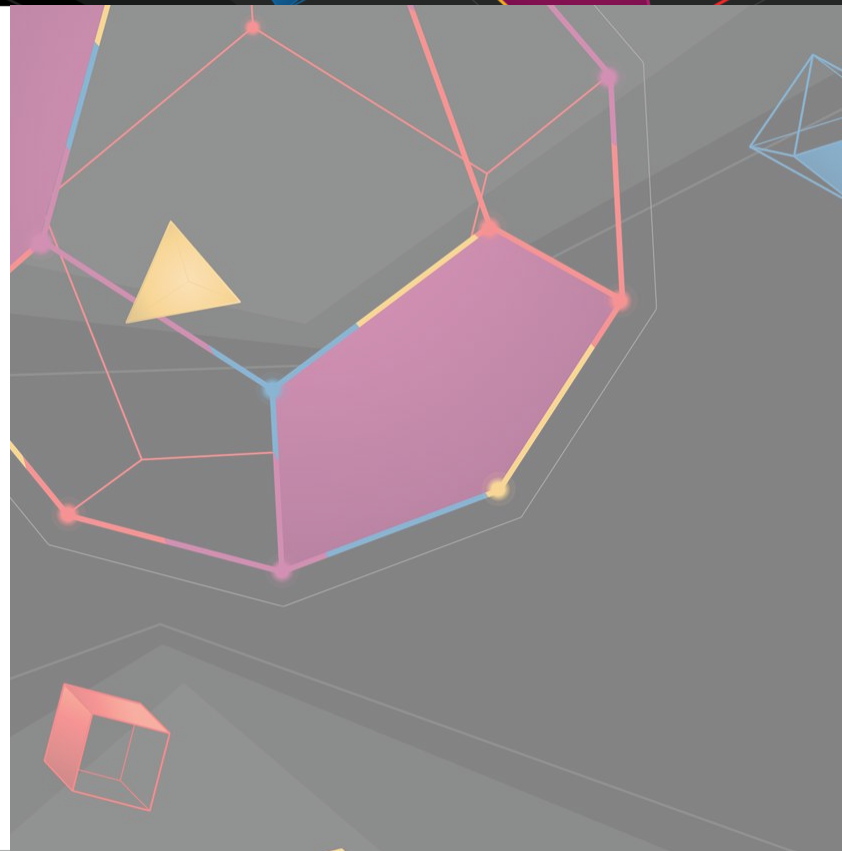
Contact Info

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VISIONARY



SALESMAN



EMPATH



ANALYST



Designing Your Design Team