What Makes Good Video Games - Insights for Leadership

Good video games have a remarkable ability to engage players and drive them to want to achieve success. Studying the aspects that make these games so successful offers insight at what team leaders might do to make their teams successful.

Customizing Learning with Games

from Jose Bowen, *Teaching Naked*, 2012, pp 59-61

Production

- Provides opportunities to create
  - Players can build their own games
- Use mastery to develop new environments
  - Skilled players thinking out of the box devise new games to play and new ways to play the game.

Cross-Functional Teams

- Multi player games encourage diversity
  - Encouraging diversity builds strength
- Teams affiliated by common goal
- Use shared resources to achieve common outcome
  - More resources are available

Distributed Knowledge

- Interaction between player and characters equates to distributed knowledge
  - Players learn from each other.
- Multi player options increase distribution
  - When playing as a team, more skills are available to solve problems
- Creates synergetic teams.
  - Teams members help each other reach a common goal

Lateral Thinking

- Creativity and Mastery require rethinking of goals periodically
  - Goals change as the game progresses
- Exploration is integral part of enjoyment
  - It's ok to try new stuff

Sequential Problem Solving

- Escalating sequence of problems
  - As players solve one problem they are led to another sequential problem to solve.
- Encourages multiple creative solutions
  - More than one solution works
- Tend to be fun - good training for future
  - Players enjoy their endeavours - are having fun.

Systems Thinking

- Players learn their action have consequences in relation to future events and other players
- Players need to use what they have learned to achieve success
- Isolated facts are of limited use to players in any game.

Just in Time or On Demand

- Traditional training provides too much knowledge before it is needed - what was learned is often forgotten when it is needed.
- Players get the tools, concepts and information they need, when they need it for immediate application
- Players are focused on learning skills that are relevant to success.

Customization

- Allows player to use a variety of styles or approaches. Not everyone plays the same way.
- Different levels of difficulty - Players can take on challenges at their own pace.
- Different ways to solve problems - There is more than one "right" way to do things.

Risk-Taking

- Lowers consequence of failure
- Encourages risk taking - it's ok to fail - it's not ok to not try!
- Failures can be used in next challenge - encourages learning from mistakes.

Performance before Competence

- Players can make progress without being experts - yet.
- Plays have the ability to create, control, perform in order to develop competence
- Intuitive - no instruction manual - the game doesn't need an instruction manual it's obvious what the player needs to do to succeed.

Pleasant Frustration

- Surmountable Challenge
- Lessons are neither to easy or to hard
- Develops engaged learning

Interaction

- Traditional learning is passive and provides little feedback
  - Books
  - Video
  - Lectures
- Games provide constant feedback and reaction
  - Players know how they are doing
  - Players know when they do something wrong and can start again.
  - When players succeed they get encouragement

Agency and Identity

- Offer learners value and control
  - There is a reward (non-monetary) for success.
- Provide identity and recognition
  - Continual success is recognized - excellent players gain notoriety
- Have stake in the outcome
  - In order to achieve the desired result what each player does individually counts.

Challenge and Consolidation

- Unlimited time to solve finite problems
  - There is enough time to solve problems
- Encourages mastery of skills
  - Solving problems one way once isn't mastery - learning how to solve the problem consistently helps develop skills
- Develops expertise
  - As multiple skills are mastered players become experts at the game being played.

Situated Meanings

- Offers contextual learning
  - Players can apply their past experience to solve problems.
- Develops relationships between words, images, and actions
  - Can see what they do affects their result.