Download these slides

Overcoming Multi-Partner Tensions In Game Dev

Serious Play 2024

Adam Clare
Wero

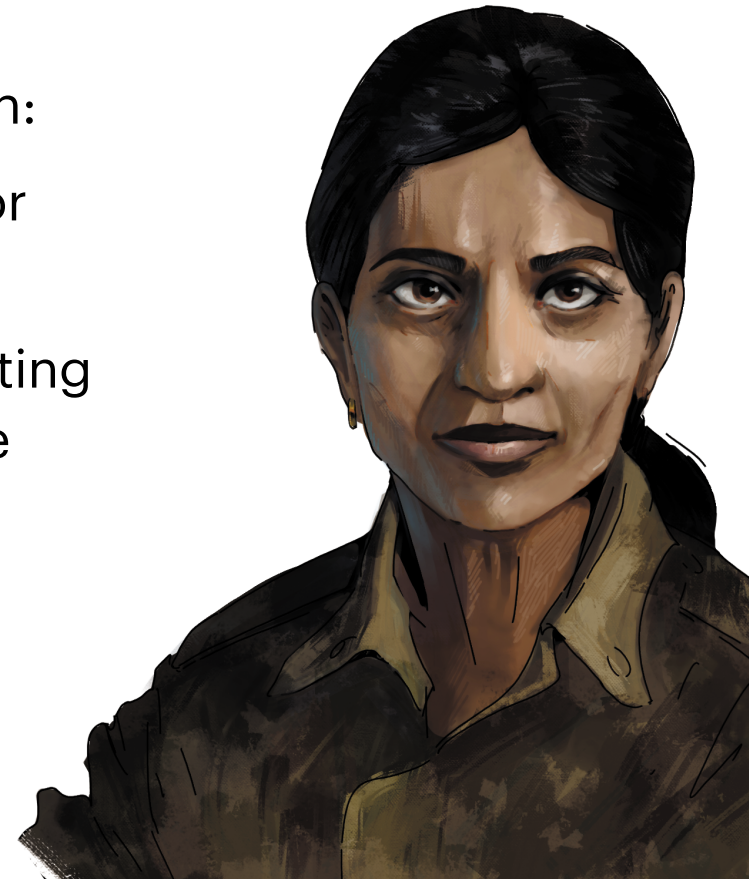**Kassie Miedema**
Archipelago of Design

Who This Session Is For:

- Who we hope to help:

  - Game Developers

  - Entrepreneurs

  - Anyone working with partnerships

- What we hope you learn:

  - Practical strategies for overcoming setbacks

  - Inspiration for navigating uncertainties in game development

  - You can do it!

Context

- Archipelago of Design (AOD) and Wero partnered to make games that improve people and organizations

  - Goal: Make a game about cultural transformation

- Reflection on the design process of a cultural transformation game with a third partner

  - We will call this partner "Anonymous"

- We learned some strategies we want to share

Case Study Overview

- Project Focus:
  - Develop a game on cultural transformation for security and defence orgs and corporate teams
  - Collaborate with multiple partners bringing specific skills and expertise
- Key Objectives:
  - Change beliefs and behaviours of individuals
  - Catalyze organizational culture change
  - Quantify the results (metrics)

Summary Report | January, 2024

ARCHIPELAGO

Cultural Transformation Game Workshop

Game Development Challenges
Nothing surprising here

- Creative tensions

- Connecting mechanics to meaning

- Working with Subject Matter Experts (SME)

- Funding

- Time
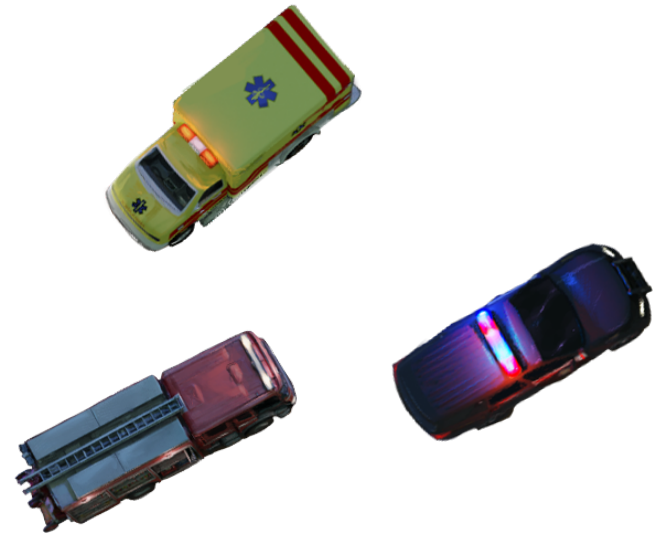
Specific Challenges

- Find a subject matter expert who is willing to tackle **cultural transformation** in resistant organizations
  - Wero are experts at other things (game design)
  - AOD team has some expertise in cultural transformation
    - Both organizations are signatories of the Derby House Principles
- **Quantify** player performance for organizational evidence
  - Specifically GBA+
- Find **$100k** in funding for a prototype
- This is how we ended up meeting Anonymous and thinking all would be fine *because they had a demo of a cultural transformation game*
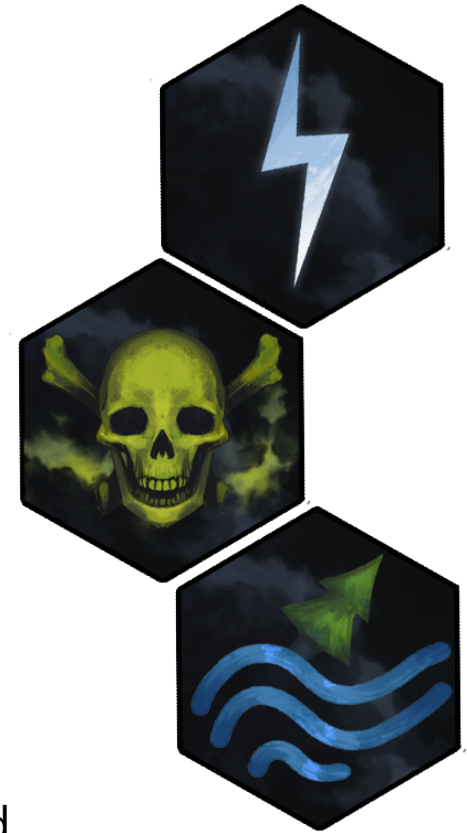
Navigating Creative Tensions

- Anonymous wanted to keep their core mechanic and storyline
  - Previously worked with another game studio
  - Unspecific target audience
- AOD wanted to align game design choices to be conducive to the target audience
  - AOD has previous experience working with defence and security orgs

- Their demo was unplayable and obscure
- GDD was a pitch document
- Lacked a robust understanding of how to connect pedagogy to game mechanics

And it all fell apart

Transitioning Themes and Mechanics
Make it relatable to the audience

- Change of game narrative setting required

  - Emergency flood response team

- Pivoting/narrowing down our goals

  - Focus more on inclusivity and team cohesion

- Change of game mechanics from complex, fast interaction to thoughtful and tactical

Financing Finagles Negotiations
It's the economy

- Why it fell apart:
  - Anonymous wanted to delegate the work to us and also wanted a salary
  - Anonymous initially claimed to bring "over 100k" in funding, would not reveal financial sources
  - Wanted the exclusive rights to reuse game mechanics present in the game
  - Wanted AOD and Wero to never engage with target market outside of the project
- Without a partner bringing financing we were back to square one

Achieving Market Readiness

- We did anyway
  - AOD put forward financing to hire a junior designer & illustrator
  - We designed the game with limited time

- Original goal for 2024:
  - Digital prototype playable by AOD network partners
  - Wero can take prototype to market partners for additional financing

- Current status:
  - Tabletop prototype playable by AOD network partners
  - Presently looking for clients to beta test the game in a real world setting
  - Applying for multiple research grants to fund a digital prototype
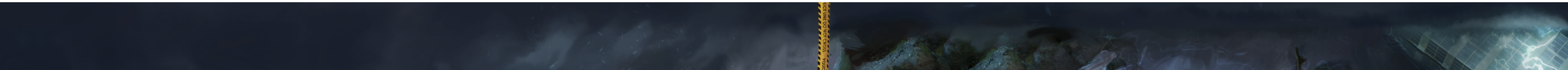
Lessons Learned
Learn from our mistakes
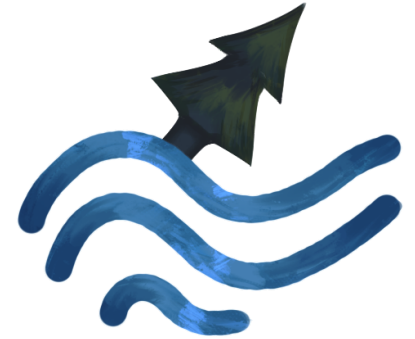
- Be kind, be empathetic, challenge your own biases, but know your limits

- Open and honest communication, and one of *mutual respect*

- Scope is essential, all partners need to know their limits and strengths

- Creative freedom and achieving the goals of the project is more important than financing

- Paper prototypes can become a sellable piece

  - We plan on using funds generated to pay for digital version

Thanks

Download these slides

wero

Adam Clare
adam@werocreative.com
https://werocreative.com/

ARCHIPELAGO

Kassie Miedema
kassie@aodnetwork.ca
https://aodnetwork.ca/

Want to join our focus group?