

GAME INDUSTRY VETERANS REVEAL

67 TIPS

FOR

INDIE GAME

DEVELOPMENT, LAUNCH, &

MARKETING



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INTRODUCTION

Do you ever feel like your games are just not good enough? Are you ever worried that even though you might make a good game, other people won't like it and they'll say mean things? Have you ever been flat out scared of selling your game? We've all been there.

I remember when I first started in game development, I felt this way. And not only were these all very real feelings for me, but I looked at some of the successful game developers out there as gods. For me, the fact that they could build something that so many people loved, and have the understanding and know-how to actually get it out on the market and make money from it was astonishing.

Well, one day when I felt particularly down, I decided that if these guys could do it, so could I. And I was going to learn from them directly.

So I compiled all of the quotes I could find from all the people that inspired me to make better games, finish more projects, and sell more copies. Some of them were from the game industry, some were not, but they were both extremely helpful on my journey to be successful in game development.

I've boiled my list down to just 67 tips for you to read, and hopefully they will stir up the same fire of determination in you as they did me.

If you like what you read here, check the [Game Dev Underground blog](#) every week for tips, tricks, tools, and techniques to build, launch, and grow your indie games.

Go forth, and make great games!

Tim Ruswick

Founder of Game Dev Underground
Recruit #1



DESIGN

#1

“The game designer shouldn’t be making a world in which the player is just a small part. The player’s the boss; it’s your duty to entertain him on her.”

-John Carmack

Creator of Doom

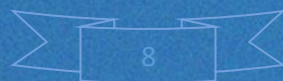


#2

“To evoke emotions through art, in games or anything else, you have to break down your medium. What’s the minimum amount of information we can use to tell you what you need to know about an object? Use that, and no more.”

-Luis Antonio

Artist on The Witness



#3

“The important thing is just to use whatever is at your disposal to create new ideas and come up with stuff that’s fresh and new. That’s just the important thing. Rather than trying to recreate something, or go over the same old ground, create new things.”

-Koji Kondo

Game composer for Mario and Zelda franchises

#4

“This is the entertainment industry, so game designers have to have a creative mind and also have to be able to stand up against the marketing people at their company – otherwise they cannot be creative. There are not that many people who fit that description.”

-Shigeru Miyamoto

Creator of Mario, Donkey Kong, & Zelda

#5

“A game is a series of interesting choices.”

- Sid Meier

Creator of Civilization

#6

“Infinite power just isn't very interesting, no matter what game you're playing. It's much more fun when you have a limited tool set to use against the odds.”

- Markus “NOTCH” Persson

Creator of Minecraft

#7

“I think it’s more accurate to think of aesthetics as a key ingredient in a recipe, as opposed to the icing on the cake.”

- Stephen P. Anderson

Author, *Seductive Interaction Design*

#8

“What game is worth doing that's not creatively risky?”

- Tim Schafer

Game Designer

#9

“I had no special training at all; I am completely self-taught. I don't fit the mold of a visual arts designer or a graphic designer. I just had a strong concept about what a game designer is. Someone who designs projects to make people happy. That's a game designer's purpose.”

- Toru Iwatani

Creator of Pac-Man

#10

“The successful people are the ones who can think up things for the rest of the world to keep busy at.”

- Don Marquis

Author

#11

“A great idea is meaningless. A great idea that leverages your existing technology, gets the team excited, is feasible to do on time and budget, is commercially competitive, and, last but not least, floats the boat of a major publisher...Now you have something.”

- Ken Levine

Creator of Bioshock

#12

“A common mistake that people make when trying to design something completely foolproof is to underestimate the ingenuity of complete fools.”

- Douglas Adams

Author, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

#13

“The goal is to win, but it is the goal that is important, not the winning.”

- Reiner Knizia

Board Game Designer

DEVELOPMENT

#14

“90% of what is considered ‘impossible’ is, in fact, possible. The other 10% will become possible with the passage of time & technology.”

-Hideo Kojima

Creator of the Metal Gear Franchise

#15

“A delayed game is eventually good, but a rushed game is forever bad.”

-Shigeru Miyamoto

Creator of Mario, Donkey Kong, & Zelda

#16

“Focus groups tell you what people like, but they don't tell you what people want.”

-Ron Gilbert

Game Designer

#17

“It is very important to lead the field and innovate in game design.”

-John Romero

Creator of Doom and Quake

#18

“At first it was easier, but when the testers said 'this is too difficult', I made it even more difficult.”

-Tomonobu Itgaki

Creator of Ninja Gaiden

#19

“We find you need to make a game wrong at least two or three times before you find the right path. We took a lot of opportunity to design and explore, knowing that a lot of it would be thrown away.”

-Ken Wong

Lead designer on Monument Valley

#20

“We've been learning that players in general want a game that rewards them for thinking, and doesn't penalize them with meaningless randomness... We've been learning that players embrace a challenge and don't mind failing as long as the failure seems fair.”

-Raphael van Lierop

Founder of The Long Dark studio Hinterland

#21

“Playing asynchronous games allows me to play when it’s convenient. [...] whenever I want, including when I’m sitting on the porcelain throne.”

-Ron Carmel

Co-creator of World of Goo

#22

“Golden rule of level design—Finish your First level last.”

-John Romero

Creator of Doom and Quake

#23

“Nobody in this industry knows what they’re doing – we just have a gut assumption based on the games that we can play.”

- Cliff Bleszinski

Creator of Gears of War

#24

“A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.”

- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Writer

#25

“Complicated programs are far easier to write than straightforward programs.”

- John Page

Programmer

#26

“The worst thing a kid can say about homework is that it is too hard. The worst thing a kid can say about a game is it's too easy.”

- Henry Jenkins

Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts

#27

“One of the key rules of game design is the first 15 minutes. These introductory minutes have to be fun, satisfying, and exciting. You are letting players know they’re on the right track, you should reward them, and let them know cool stuff will happen later. This doesn’t negate increasing difficulty levels later on, by the way.”

- Sid Meier

Creator of Civilization

#28

“Players are genius at missing stuff.”

-Gordon Walton

Bioware

STORY

#29

“The greatest games are the ones we never truly understand because humans can never truly be understood. Every game is a fuck you to stage fright. Every game designer is an astronomer because every new game is a new universe.”

-Zach Gage

Game Designer

#30

“Theme is the oxygen of narrative. You don’t need to see it to notice when it’s missing.”

-Hall Hood

Writer, Star Wars: The Old Republic

#31

“Here's the thing: crafting female characters in lazy, sexist, one-dimensional ways isn't just doing them a disservice and insulting the female gamers out there (one of whom is my 22-year-old niece). It's also, put very simply, bad writing.”

-Dan Jolley

Writer

#32

“The player should feel like the NPC serves to further her story. The player should feel like she has the best lines and coolest moments (players aren’t fond of being upstaged). Picturing a version of the scene without the player character should be virtually impossible.”

-Alexander Freed

Lead writer, Star Wars: The old republic

#33

“They want to tell stories that will touch people’s hearts. It should be the experience that is touching. What I strive for is to make the person playing the game the director.”

-Shigeru Miyamoto

Creator of Mario, Donkey Kong, and Zelda

#34

“People have forgotten how to tell a story. Stories don’t have a middle or an end anymore. They usually have a beginning that never stops beginning.”

-Steven Spielberg

Writer and Director

#35

“The obvious objective of video games is to entertain people by surprising them with new experiences.”

-Shigeru Miyamoto

Creator of Mario, Donkey Kong, and Zelda

#36

“I think good game writing is a process of getting out of the player's way. You give him or her just enough to work with narratively, but ultimately you let the player tell his or her own story.”

-Tom Bissell

Author of *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter*

#37

“In a way, trying to impress people with design or personality or whatever works to promote movies doesn't work with games because it takes the focus off the player who is supposed to be the star. The more the player is the star, the better a game you have.”

- Sid Meier

Creator of Civilization

MAKING MONEY

#38

“You don’t make money by working on things; you make money by shipping things.”

-Dave Lang

Iron Galaxy Studio

#39

“There were some comments by Nintendo, that \$0.99 apps are destroying the industry, and making games disposable. We don’t regard Angry Birds as disposable content. That’s why every few weeks we update the game. More levels, more content.”

- Peter Vesterbacka

Executive at Rovio, maker of Angry Birds

#40

*“If you want to get into the business of developing great apps,
don’t forget the business side.”*

- Mark Roxas

Game Developer

#41

“What people will still pay for is how content makes them feel. They pay for progress. They pay to stand out. To fit in. To give. To win.”

- Nicholas Lovell

Founder of GAMESbrief

#42

“A great way to not make money is to make something you don’t believe in. Make your game. Be confident.”

- Rami Ismail

Founder of Vlambeer

#43

“Any business arrangement that is not profitable to the other person will in the end prove unprofitable for you. The bargain that yields mutual satisfaction is the only one that is apt to be repeated.”

-B. C. Forbes

Founder of Forbes Magazine

#44

“A community is not a customer.”

-Nicole Thompson

Executive Producer of Club Penguin

#45

“My job is to get everyone on the internet to want to have a beer with me.”

-Kellie Parker

Sega Community Manager

#46

“A few Kotaku articles and IGN front pages do not make a hit game.”

- Ethan Levy

BioWare San Francisco

IMPACT

#47

“My whole career has been me, trying to find new ways to communicate with people, because I desperately want to communicate with people, but I don't want the messy interaction of having to make friends and talk to people, because I probably don't like them.”

- Edmund McMillen

Co-Creator of Super Meat Boy

#48

“What I'm interested in... one of the things I think is interesting is finding other things besides difficulty-based challenges to be the meat of the game, to be interesting.”

- Jonathan Blow

Creator of Braid

#49

“Every game designer should make one explicitly world-changing game. Lawyers do pro bono work, why can’t we?”

- Jane McGonigal

Game Designer and Author of Reality is Broken

#50

“A well-designed game is a guided missile to the motivational heart of the human psyche.”

- Kevin Werbach

Author of For The Win

#51

“Fun is not the same thing as fulfillment.”

- Tom Bissell

Author of *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter*

#52

“Everyone who’s had a shower has had a good idea.”

- Nolan Bushnell

Co-Founder of Atari

#53

“It’s madness to say something like 'games can never be art.' To me, the salient point...is games are a MEDIUM. Of them some may be considered art, and some may not.”

- Hrag Vartanian

Writer

#54

“Reality is broken. Game designers can fix it.”

-Jane McGonigal

Game Designer and Author of Reality is Broken

MOTIVATION

#55

“Failure is not the end game.”

- Paul Gadi

IGDA Manila

#56

“There is no such thing as too late.”

- Bari Silvestre

Founder of Keybol Games

#57

"It's not about ideas. It's about making ideas happen."

- Scott Belsky

Startup founder

#58

“The last 10% of game design is really what separates the good games from the great games. It’s what I call the clean-up phase of game design. Here’s where you make sure all the elements look great. The game should look good, feel good, sound good, and play good.”

- Garry Kitchen

Programmer

#59

“Where do good ideas come from? A lot of bad ideas.”

- Seth Godin

Author and Thought Leader

#60

“It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can do only a little. Do what you can.”

- Sydney Smith

Writer

#61

“A lot of people have ideas. But there are few who decide to do something about them now. Not tomorrow. Not next week. But today. The true entrepreneur is a doer, not a dreamer.”

- Nolan Bushnell

Co-Founder of Atari

#62

“Hell no we didn’t achieve what we were striving for on Deus Ex. What you do is aim for the moon, so that you end up hitting Hawaii or something. If you aim for Hawaii, you end up Keokuk, Iowa or something, you know?”

- Warren Spector

Creator of Deus Ex

#63

“A lot of indie developers who became ‘overnight successes’ were working at it for ten years.”

-Dan Adelman

Former Head of Digital Content and Development, Nintendo

#64

“You can't wait for inspiration, you have to go after it with a club.”

-Jack London

Writer and Novelist

#65

“Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.”

- Japanese Proverb

But it's still really relevant.

#66

“If you want to write better songs, write more songs. If you write 20 songs, ten of them will be better than the other ten.”

- Martin Atkins

Musician

#67

“The way to succeed is to double your failure rate.”

- Thomas Watson

Businessman

CLOSING

Thanks for Reading!

This report brought to you by:



If you're into awesome content like this, here are a few things you might want to check out:

1. [Game Dev Underground](#) - A technology platform that helps you finish, launch, and market your indie game.
2. [The Game Dev Underground Blog](#) - Lots of cool stuff to read.
 - a. [60 Tips to Stay Motivated and Finish Your Indie Game](#) – a huge and awesome article with a ton of ways to carry through and finish what you start.
 - b. [The MASSIVE Indie Game Marketing Post \(And How To Get Started!\)](#) – A great guide for those new to marketing on what to do when.
 - c. [59 Ways to Monetize Your Indie Game](#) – A complete list of every possible monetization method, from mobile to desktop.
3. [The GDU Link Library](#) - Links for every tool and resource.
4. [The Marketing/Motivation/Monetization Video Collection](#) - Lots to learn!
5. [The GDU Discord Channel](#) – Hundreds of developers from all over the world chat live about game development.

We will hopefully see you again soon!