Getting it wrong at any budget

A case study in German development

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Who are we?

- ## Ralf Adam
  - In the industry for over 16+ years
  - Broad background in producing, project management, localization and game design

- ## Jan Wagner
  - In the industry for 16+ years
  - Broad background in producing, brand management, community management, localization and game design

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Today's session

- We are going to look at sample projects and discuss their positive and negative aspects

- We are going to focus on the specific (or not so specific) merits and problems of German development

- What lessons can be learned from this for any developer?

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Spellforce - The good...

- More than 100 hours of gameplay
- State-of-the-Art Technology (German Engineering)
- High Production Values
- Innovative Controls
- Fully playable both in isometric and 3rd person view
- Largest maps of any RTS so far
- Even with delays still relatively "small" budget
- New Genre-Mixture: RPS

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Spellforce - The bad...

- Too many features
- Not enough polishing
- Extremely hard to access (3 hrs Tutorial)
- Complex RPG system (100 different spells)
- Complex empire building system (7 resources)
- Weak AI and pathfinding
- Weak and unpolished multiplayer mode
- New Genre-Mixture: RPS

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Spellforce - The ugly...

- Original planning:
  - 24 months development cycle
  - About $1,5 Mio developement budget

- In the end:
  - 48 months development cycle
  - About $3 Mio development budget

- Main reasons:
  - Lack of clear vision among all project stakeholders and team members

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Ikariam

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Ikariam – A different approach…

- Pre-Production-Phase
- Results of Pre-Production:
  - Clear Mission Statement
  - Design Doc
  - Feature-List with priorities
  - PPT-Prototype
  - Project Plan
  - Role definition of team members
  - Official Project-Kick Off

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Casual MMO - 7Million (WIP)

- Casual MMO codenamed „Ocean's 11 Online"
- Very modest Budget for 3D MMO
- Original Estimates:
  - 12 developers at 14 Months
- Current Estimates
  - 20 developers at 22 months

7Million – What's good?

- Team had a clear mission statement

- Agile development with external project management

- Experienced senior developers

- Regular focus group tests

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7Million – What's bad?

- Faith in features– In order to get financing, we had to put in more stuff

- Classical Milestone Contract led to „quantity before quality" focus

- If it doesn't work:
  -> Throw more features at it

- Not enough beta scheduled:
  –> too much confidence in paper design

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I did it my way...typical German development?

- There are a couple of mistakes many German teams seem prone to:

    – No explicit and written Mission Statement
    -> conflicting/unclear visions
    -> increased re-design
    -> damages project management possibilities

    – Fixing by feature
    -> makes games and porjects more complex
    -> increases time and budget
    -> makes polishing more difficult

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I did it my way...typical German development?

- Publishers believe in „I paid for ten features"
  approach
  -> teams focus on contracts instead of what is right
  -> makes polishing even harder
  -> Leads to polishing issue

- Polishing is a luxury
  -> Unbalanced relation between production and beta
  -> Underestimates results of polishing
  -> Decreases international appeal
  -> Results in bugs and reduced accessibility

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Thank you for your time

We will now take questions from anyone and abuse
from German developers or publishers present

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