



10-Page Design Document.

This document is a set of game development guidelines, an 'executive summary' of the general game. It's enough information for developers, marketers, PR and publishers to get an understanding of the basic tenets of the game. This is a foundation for the more in-depth Game Design Document (GDD)

PAGE ONE - COVER PAGE: Elements to Include.

Game Title and/or Logo

Contact Information (the document will be read internally and by marketing/publishers etc.)

Target Platform

Target Audience

Target Rating

Expected Shipping Date:

This document is adapted from a student design document created in my my class 'Videogame culture' (2013) by Ryan Gumper, Brendan Smith, Blayn Samuels, & Justin Ungar. All illustrations by Justin Ungar.

Story/Game Overview

Story is not applicable in pure puzzle games like Tetris or Angry Birds. If your game is more mechanics based, focus on what the player will be doing.

Game overview should reflect the game's setting and environment as well as the characters and areas of conflict. Also include unique or interesting gameplay elements as a justification for the game's existence (why is this game cool? What makes it good?).

WHiP is an Open-World, Sandbox style game with a large map and roaming area set in the contemporary political environment of Washington D.C. The game is intended to be an action, strategy experience with moral judgment and player choice playing a key role. The game incorporates the dark side of politics and is focused on deals and relationship-building. WHiP appeals to players who want to experience a 'behind the scenes' look into the US political system. The setting will be an accurate but fictional version of Washington D.C. with modified streets and story-based locations but with accurate depictions of major landmarks.

The protagonist is John Morrow is notorious, prestigious Independent Representative (party affiliations come later in the game as the player's choices decide alignment) from Virginia's 2nd district who has fallen prone to public scandals perpetrated by those who he placed trust in. John was promised that he would be appointed as Secretary of State after his efforts guaranteed the President's election. With it being publicly known that Morrow wants, and most likely would be made Secretary, the President and his group of trusted cabinet members devised a sex-scandal implicating John, ending his chances of an appointment. Morrow knows that he can beat the media attention and eventually regain his power.

The gameplay begins as John is informed by those he trusted, (President and Vice President) that he is to be kicked out of the inner circle. Now it is the player's purpose to regain stature and free the nation's capital from the grasp of the corrupt government. In order to do this John needs power, executive power.

The Experience

Whip is a political, revenge thriller (in line with TV programs such as *House of Cards*) exploring the dark underbelly of modern politics. The goal of the game is to guide the main character from his lowest point (a political scandal), to the top of the political ladder.

In line with the '*House of Cards*' format there will be cinematic experiences within this game, where the player becomes completely immersed in the narrative and political intrigue. Loaded with strategic, and karma based decision making systems, the player is immersed into WHiP's political structures and political agendas. As the player explores the environment of Washington D.C., newspapers and other forms of media are updated to reflect player decisions. Deals, assassinations, press leaks and political attack ads have real consequences and these are reflected in the media outlets in-game.

Gameplay:

Mechanics, Characters & Controls.

Who does the player control and how do they navigate the game? As this is an overview, focus on interesting and unique gameplay mechanics and options rather than in-depth FPS or third person movement controls.

If the player has access to multiple characters this also needs to be explained.

Gameplay:

The gameplay mechanic and player navigation will resemble that of most other open-world urban-based games. There will be Non-Player Character (NPC) interactions and other events which will trigger story progression and deliver alternative player missions.

Player movement will be consistent with open-world foot and vehicle-based games enabling exploration of the D.C. area as the main character John Morrow. Morrow's actions are focused on walking and talking (face-to-face, on the phone) as his 'special power' come in strategically making deals with and manipulating other politicians through dialog sequences and interactive sequences.

Player character: Mia Alvarro. Mia is a stealth character who can sneak into offices and buildings to plant bugs, steal or plant documents and set up opportunities to frame or acquit other politicians. Mia has martial arts skills and her movements reflect a more combat-ready stance, she also moves fast around the urban environment using parkour with verticality. Mia is the 'no kills' option for the player, using subdues and choke holds.

Player character: Thomas Laine. Thomas is the 'tank' full-frontal assault option. Laine is basically a hitman for Morrow. Laine's character attacks with firearms and knives and will kill targets in a more 'up-front' manner.

Morrow does not fight or get involved in altercations. His 'weapon' is dialog, charisma and verbal intimidation. The player can choose to use Mia or Thomas, stealth and subduing over assaults and killing, each action effects the overall protagonist's "moral meter" which acts as a good or evil direction for the game play and ending.

Controls:

The controls for WHiP are displayed here. A notable control is in focusing on the use of the "select" button in gameplay as an interaction function for NPCs and Characters in-game.

The movement controls will be much like traditional third person games with the player using both joysticks to aim and move and select dialog options.

The game has an auto save feature, but also has hard-save points at John's office and home.



Gameplay (continued)

The more elaborate the game concept the more you are going to need to outline in this 10-page document. It is always a good idea to give readers a sense of the mission structure of a game as this is the template for player progression.

Missions and Objectives:

Missions will be made available to the player through interaction on the HUD/menu display. The open world, sand box aspect of the game environment allows the player to select which mission she/he would like to play. The missions will consist of fetch-quests, breaking and entering, combat, dialog-based relationship building, sneak/assault and media manipulation. Each mission will have a designated "good/bad/neutral" karma factor associated with it which will affect gameplay options and NPC interactions. These "good/bad" missions are represented by your cabinet member's codenames; Dart and Death.

Mission Example:

The first mission opens with a cinematic clip of the new President being sworn into office in Washington D.C. The ceremony ends, John and his wife Carolyn begin to get up to exit and this is where the player takes control of John. He is denied access to the President by security and aides and this is the first indication of his fall from grace.

The objective of the first mission is to get to your limo with Carolyn and get home as soon as possible in order to plan your next political moves. This mission introduces the player to the basic mechanics of gameplay, movement, interaction, dialog decisions and object use (with on-screen prompts). After reaching the limo, there is a cut scene of John and Carolyn discussing the beginning of the plan to remove the President from office. The cut-scene ends at the Morrow home, which the player can then explore to get a sense of who Morrow is by looking through emails, personal effects and so on. It also introduces the house as a safe-area and hard-save point).

Through a friendly tip-off the player will now choose Mia or Thomas to go on a fact-finding mission to find out how many were in on the plot to oust him. Once the mission is selected the player can choose to immediately take up the Mia/Thomas mission or go on a free roam to pick up media information that will give more depth to the current political situation.



image from wikicommons

Gameplay (continued)

As part of the gameplay overview it is useful to expand on any mechanics, unique properties or game hooks. If there is a different or unique application of a system players would see in other games, it's useful to explain this more here. Also introduce reward systems. How is the player going to be 'rewarded' intrinsically or extrinsically? How does that feature into the gameplay?

Rewards Mechanics and Modes:

'Status' rewards. As your power grows civilians and other politicians recognize you more, boosting your overall positive political 'meter'. NPC's will interact with you based upon your behavior and moral choices (Karma meter). Some will be openly antagonistic to you, others will be friendly etc.

Unlocking areas: the map has 'political off-limits' areas which will unlock as the player completes 'man of the people' missions. For example as the player builds relationships with politicians their offices, houses and district neighborhoods we become available to the player.

Favors: players can undertake 'favor' missions (intimidation, bribery, framing etc.) for other politicians (using Mia or Thomas) which unlocks running mates and decreases the power of political rivals.

Super-Pac: players can fund their operations using a super-pac operation. Missions such as favors and man-of-the-people have monetary rewards.

Super-pac mini-game: WHiP also contains a fundraising mini-game. The player can run an on-line campaign, sending out emails and telephone requests for money. In-game actions begin to dictate the good/bad alignment of the main character so the fund-raisers have to reflect that too (more right wing, libertarian, left wing audiences).

The ultimate reward is the Presidency, but what sort of President will you be?

WHiP's Karma System :

Each decision or in-game positive/negative action directly affects the story narrative and relates to your popularity with the NPC's and general public. When a player makes a "bad" moral decision this will have a negative effect on your karma.

This will lower the Karma bar, which is active on the HUD display. It will shift towards the Red portion on the Karma Bar. As "bad" decisions accumulate you are more likely to be following the 'morally suspect' story path. Choosing between Mia or Thomas for missions will influence the Karma bar as well. Your Karma score will initiate various triggers story-based progresses, throughout game, which will lead to three separate endings that are reflected in the type of President you become.

Bad Karma does not mean that the player will not be able to be President, it effects the structure and political landscape, cabinet and policies in place once the player 'wins'.

Game Experience

Carrying on from the themes of gameplay, in this section you can outline what the player will actually see and interact with. Environments, moodboards, character sketches, NPCs and so on. Questions to answer here are; what emotions are you attempting to convey? How will the narrative be revealed to the player? What is the overall 'feel' of the environment and game?

Game Experience:

Characters

John Morrow: Main Protagonist, United States Representative from the 2nd district of Virginia. He is a graduate of prestigious military college The Citadel, and decorated Vietnam War veteran. Formerly the Majority Whip, in charge of discipline amongst Congress.

John Morrow's interests focus on destroying the lives and careers of those who have wronged and betrayed him in an effort to climb the political ladder, and eventually reach the height of American politics. John continually befriends numerous politicians in an effort to use and dispose of as he needs. When John is not at work he spends time with his wife Carolyn who is completely involved and dedicated to all of John's actions.

Personality traits: highly intelligent, highly motivated, highly confident, manipulative, greedy, self-centered, adept speaker, highly adaptable, and ambitious.



Mia Alvarro: Codename, Dart. Mia is part of John's cabinet as an advisor but her real role is that of 'spy'. Mia is most-often used for missions where the player chooses "good" karma options. Her skills include martial arts and parkour which plays a vital role in how gameplay functions with Mia and enables different building access opportunities. Her allegiance to John is based off of her strong belief that John will be the person to finally dismantle the corrupt government that has hurt her family in the past.

Personality traits: Self-righteous, trusting, quick-witted, street savvy. Mia has a strong dislike of guns and views them as an instrument of warfare and death.

Enemies, Bosses, Combat etc.

Not all games have clearly defined 'boss battles' but most narrative based or action/adventure games will have enemies (guards, agents etc) and some form of hard-to-beat final boss or lackey. Although you may have already talked about the 'enemy' of the player it can be well worth giving a deeper overview that outlines when they might appear, how they are defeated and what the player 'earns' or is rewarded on vanquishing the enemy.

Enemies

The main 'nemesis' for Morrow are the President and Vice President. Both of these characters need to fall from grace and be replaced for game completion.

This is achieved in two ways; discrediting the President through the media and by revealing your own framing as evidence of corruption. Or by assassination. These endings are reflected in the support characters of Mia and Thomas.

To get to the main enemies the player must use political or physical muscle. Either way security agents and political insiders will need to be overcome to get evidence or close enough to the President to enact a final 'coup'.

Low Level Security Agent.

Weaponry: Melee Attack, Baton. Not very aware of surroundings. Can surrender to player.

Mid-Level Security Agent.

Weaponry: Handgun, Taser, Baton, Hand-to-Hand combat. Tougher to beat, more aware of surroundings, can go into 'alert' mode and call in more agents. May surrender.

High Level Security Agent.

Weaponry: Handgun, High Powered assault rifle, Hand-to-hand combat. Very tough to beat, very aware of surroundings, has armor, 'alert' mode can call in more agents.

Presidential Guard.

Weaponry: Handgun, High Powered assault rifle, Hand-to-hand combat. Very tough to beat, very aware of surroundings, has armor, 'alert' mode can call in more agents. Will not surrender, stealth take-downs difficult.



DLC (Downloadable Content), Bonus Content, Replayability.

How will the game live-on beyond it's initial release? Once the 'cool-down' period is over and players have completed the main missions, are there additional missions for them to download or purchase? Are there characters from the main story that could have their own content or mini-game? Are there better weapons, objects, achievements that can be opened up? Is there any reason to replay the game?

DLC; "Uprisings". Retail (suggested \$20)

There are plans to create an exention to the game worls based on the characters of Mia and Thomas. This will enable the player to go through the back story of these characters and their lives before meeting with and working for Morrow.



Achievement/Trophy Lists:

Political Turmoil: Make accusations towards politicians stick. 100 Points
Sticking it to them: Get revenge on Staffers. 100 Points
Adapt and Survive: Change Political affiliation to Win Primary. 100 Points
Hostile Takeover: Align 80% of districts with your party. 100 Points
House of Cards; Become President. 100 Points

Optional achievements.

Walkabout (walk 100 miles in the DC Metro Area) 50 Points
Shakin' (shake 100 Characters hands) 50 Points
Post No Bills (post up 1,000 flyers in each political district) 50 points
Shakedown (have rivals arrested by police after incriminating them) 50 points
Whip It Good (have affair with rival's partner) 50 points
Political Intrigue (read all emails from rivals computers) 50 points

Internal & External Monetization.

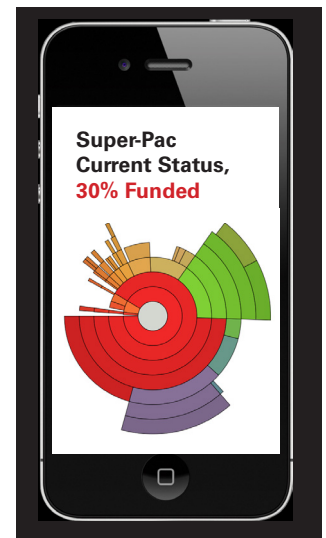
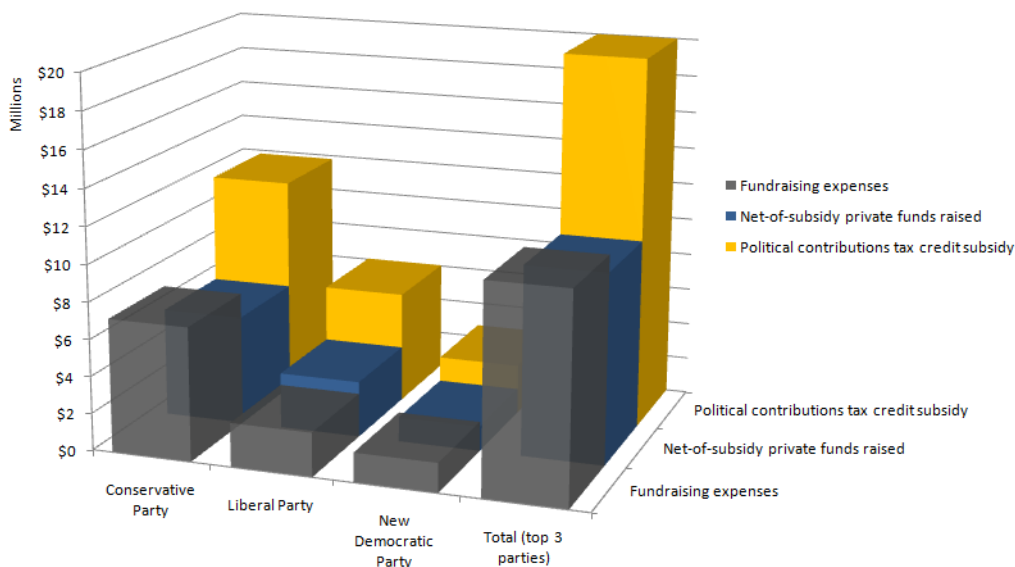
Does the game have a built-in economy? If so, how does it work and how do players amass money? Does the game offer in-game purchase opportunities? How does the in-game economy effect gameplay options? How do you balance in-game purchases?

The Economy

WHiP has a mini-game 'super-pac' funding mechanism. To get votes, to raise awareness and gain support the player needs money. This is managed through the 'Super-Pac' game that is accessed via the in-game menu system (appearing as an app on John's phone or on his computer/website).

Players have to romance donors and members of the public to get more money to be able to mount adverts in the media. Dependent on the players approach to their gameplay the ads can be supportive or 'attack' ads that devalue their rivals or more balanced and fact-based.

Super-pac also contains requests for public and business donations. Players can choose which messages to send, their tone and the sort of affiliations of key donors (for example industrialists with questionable health and safety track records or conservationists who want a more green planet).



In-Game purchases:

WHiP players can also access cosmetic purchases in the game. Such as:
Costumes for Mia; 'stealth girl', 'maintenance', 'super hero' \$0.99c
Costumes for Thomas; 'B-Boy', 'Office Drone', 'super hero' \$0.99c
Costumes for Morrow; 'The Reagan', 'The Nixon', 'The Clinton' \$0.99c