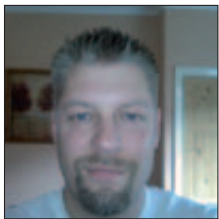


Get Jamming!

Aspiring developers create a video game in a weekend

Last weekend, Train2Game, in association with the University of Bedfordshire, is holding its first ever Game Jam with all the proceeds going to the Prince's Trust. Train2Game Game Design student Robin Channon was one of over 100 participants in the event and the Train2Game blog caught up with him on the Saturday afternoon – halfway through the event – to see how he was getting on. You can read the transcript below, or listen to it at www.audioboo.fm/train2game.

All proceeds from the Train2Game Game Jam will go to The Prince's Trust.



T2G: Well Robin, we're about half way through the Train2Game Game Jam, how are you finding it all so far?

CHANNON: Tiring, interesting, exciting, a huge learning curve – it's good fun I'm really enjoying it.

T2G: You mentioned the learning curve, what has surprised you the most so far?

CHANNON: The amount of work you can fit into such a short space of time; the amount of work that people are prepared to do without sleep as well, you don't get people doing this sort of stuff at 'normal' work. So to come and spend hours on end looking at a computer screen designing something is really quite cool.

T2G: At this stage, how long have you been awake and what have you been doing with your time?

CHANNON: I've been up since 6 o'clock on Friday morning – I've not had any sleep at all – and I've spent my time micromanaging my team, dealing with artist issues that we had on the team, and generally trying to keep a general direction going. I've even jumped in on some of the programming and some of the artwork myself to keep the team cohesive.

T2G: What have you learned from managing the team?

CHANNON: That people are far more capable than they let you know, that people can take themselves that extra mile without really realising it, and that people generally – in this situation – just get on with it and work hard.

T2G: Let's talk a bit about the theme of the Game Jam – *Sherlock Holmes* – were you surprised by the theme, and what have you done with it?

CHANNON: It scared me initially, I had total mind blank when Dave [Sharp, the Train2Game Jam Organiser] said Sherlock Holmes, I sat there and thought 'Oh my God, what am I going to do?' A few moments later ideas started kicking. We've gone with a search and find objects game and then you utilise those objects to generate other objects and then follow through mini-games and puzzles on a search for the missing Sherlock Holmes.



T2G: How have you found developing a game in such a short amount of time?

CHANNON: Its hard work, it's certainly not easy it's not something that I'd want to do every weekend, definitely not! [Laughs] But it's something I'd like to do every so often, I think every Designer, Developer, Artist should do this at least once in their career just to get the whole feel of how it works and what people are like and what you can really do within that time limit.

T2G: You're on a work placement at DR Studios at the moment, how has this been in comparison to that in terms of the intensity compared with what you're doing in the studio?

CHANNON: In the studio it's a lot more laid back than it is here. There are pressures and the pressures are different, they're 'real world' pressures at DR Studios – you have deadlines to meet, you have things to hand in at certain times – pretty much like you do here, but in the studio it's real world. In here you kind of panic more, you get that 'I'm running out of time' feeling a lot more than you do in the studio. So, they are different but in some respects they're quite similar.

T2G: As mentioned earlier, we're just over the half way point now, how do you expect the rest of the Game Jam to go?

CHANNON: Tired...I think people will start flagging a little bit. But then I also think that there might be some sort of boost towards the end as people fight for that final bit of polish. It'll be interesting to see what everybody looks like at the end of it, definitely.

T2G: It's probably taught you a bit about 'crunch time' in the games industry, so two final questions. Do you still want to work in the games industry after this, and would you do it again?

CHANNON: To the first question; absolutely, I think it would take a lot to put me off working in the games industry, I'm enjoying my time at DR Studios – I'm going to be really disappointed when I leave placement – and I'm hoping from that I can gain in that experience and move onto another studio in a junior position. As for the Game Jam, yeah definitely I'd do it again, and as I said I'd recommend everybody has a go. It's really good fun, you get to meet some great people, I've worked with a great team and despite having some minor hiccups and some issues, they've worked really well. I'm really, really enjoying it.

T2G: Thanks Robin

Dave Sharp, Head of Placements and Incubators at Train2Game, added "Train2Game's Game Jam is for all those with a passion for gaming, a test of skill, creativity and imagination. A small group acting as a team exemplifies where games development is heading and the Game Jam model brings that together beautifully. I'm expecting to see some new and crazy ideas flow out of this event and prove that the participants are up to the challenge!"

About Train2Game

Created in 2008, Train2Game is the only online blended learning college that offers people the chance to qualify as a Games Designer, Games Developer, Games Artist & Animator or Games QA Tester with a TIGA Diploma and was created to meet the specific industry skills shortages as recognised by TIGA.

