# Design Jam
*A game design exercise*

## Introduction

Design Jam is a 1-2 hour long exercise that gives the participants an opportunity to engage in an accelerated (and humorous) simulation of designing a game at a big company while dealing with conflicting constraints.

## Participants

Any number of people can join in. Divide the participants into small teams. It is recommended that there are 2-4 people per team. This will give everyone on the team a chance to have his or her ideas heard.

There are enough cards in the set to support 9 teams, but if your group is larger you can print out multiple sets.

## Set Up

Teams should be spread out across the room, preferably with one team per table. Give each team a stack of blank paper and pencils. Computers will not be needed.

Randomly deal one card of each color to every team. Explain that each card represents the needs of one of their "bosses":

- **Executive Producer** (green): This boss is responsible for the budget, salaries, and deadlines.
- **Lead Engineer** (blue): This boss determines the target platform for the game.
- **Head of Marketing** (purple): Using surveys and data from other games, this boss has targeted a specific audience for the game.
- **Creative Director** (red): This boss is responsible for the grand vision of the game.

If you have enough players then ask for volunteers to take on the role of the bosses. Those players will not be making designs, but will wander around the room critiquing the designs of others.

Each boss should strongly focus on his or her area of responsibility. For instance, the Executive Producer might make comments such as, "We'll never be able to get this work done on time". While the Head of Marketing might remark, "I don't think these features differentiate us from our competitors." (Encourage roleplaying!)

## 1 - Brainstorming

Each team should spend 5-10 minutes talking about the cards and brainstorming different ideas. Encourage the teams to agree on a direction as quickly as possible.

If a team gets stuck they are allowed to make a case to a particular boss about why their design task is too difficult. That boss may, at his or her discretion, switch out the problem card with a spare card of the same color.

## 2 - Paper Design

The majority of the exercise requires the teams to convert their ideas into tangible plans on paper. Plans should include information that is relevant to the bosses:

**Executive Producer**: A timeline showing the project milestones from beginning to end. Shorter projects should be measured in days or weeks; longer projects should be measured in months.

**Lead Engineer**: A schematic showing the main systems of the game and how they relate to each other. For instance, if there is a store then it should be clear how purchased content impacts the other systems.

**Head of Marketing**: A bullet point list describing the features that make this game unique and attractive to the target audience?

**Creative Director**: Diagrams showing the screen layout. What UI components will be necessary? If there are different modes (i.e., combat, skill trees, quest log) then each mode needs its own example screen.

## 3 - Presentation

Each team will create a 1-2 minute pitch that will be presented to the entire group. There will not be enough time for a team to cover all of their design work, so they will need to highlight the features that they believe to be the most important, creative, or novel. Each presenter should begin by reading the four boss cards out loud.

## 4 - Discussion

This exercise is not meant to be a competition, so there are no winners or losers. It is recommended that the activity wraps up with a brief discussion with the participants about what they discovered during the process. For instance, what were the good ideas that were cut due to constraints? How did the design team self-organize? Were some design tasks easier than others?

# Budget

**Time:** 6 months
**Money:** $2 million
**Team:** 20 veterans

# Budget

**Time:** 2 months
**Money:** $20,000
**Team:** 6 college grads

# Budget

**Time:** 2 years
**Money:** $10 million
**Team:** 100 varied

# Budget

**Time:** 1 month
**Money:** $100,000
**Team:** 10 veterans

# Budget

**Time:** 1 year
**Money:** $250,000
**Team:** 10 average

# Budget

**Time:** 5 years
**Money:** $100 million
**Team:** 200 experienced

# Budget

**Time:** 1 weekend
**Money:** None
**Team:** 4 high school

# Budget

**Time:** 2 years
**Money:** $1 million
**Team:** 5 super-stars

# Budget

**Time:** 3 years
**Money:** $25 million
**Team:** 50 pros

Design Jam

Stonetronix Designs, Inc.

# Audience

**Gender:** All
**Age Range:** Pre-School
**Interests:** Noise

# Audience

**Gender:** Female
**Age Range:** 5-10
**Interests:** Dance

# Audience

**Gender:** Male
**Age Range:** 10-15
**Interests:** Outdoors

# Audience

**Gender:** All
**Age Range:** Elementary
**Interests:** Animals

# Audience

**Gender:** Female
**Age Range:** 15-20
**Interests:** Science

# Audience

**Gender:** Male
**Age Range:** 20-30
**Interests:** ESPN

# Audience

**Gender:** All
**Age Range:** College
**Interests:** Travel

# Audience

**Gender:** Female
**Age Range:** 30-40
**Interests:** Cuisine

# Audience

**Gender:** Male
**Age Range:** 40 +
**Interests:** Gadgets

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## Platform

**Tablet**
Google Nexus

## Platform

**Smart Phone**
iPhone 6

## Platform

**PC**
Web Browser

## Platform

**PC**
High-end

## Platform

**PC**
Low-end

## Platform

**Console**
Xbox One, PS4

## Platform

**Console**
Wii U

## Platform

**Virtual Reality**
Oculus

## Platform

**Wearable**
Apple Watch

## Genre

First-person
Feudal Japan

## Genre

Adventure
Dinosaurs

## Genre

Role-Playing
Farm

## Genre

Simulation
Factories

## Genre

Strategy
Sports Coach

## Genre
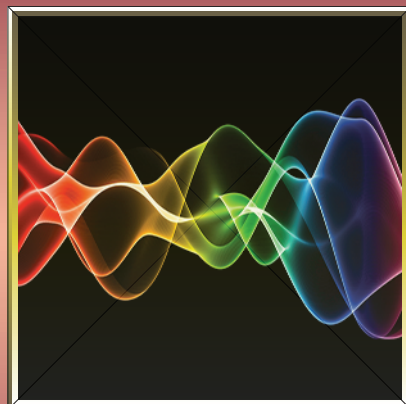
Music
Abstract

## Genre

Advergame
Chocolate Cereal

## Genre

Creativity
Sticks and mud

## Genre

Educational
Cooking