Learning through failure:
Why you're not making enough games

Alan Hazelden

alan@draknek.org
http://www.draknek.org/
Start with a counterargument

GDC 2010 rant: Please Finish Your Game

http://chrishecker.com/Please_Finish_Your_Game
Everything he says is true

BUT

- Not all games are worth finishing
- The best way to make a great game is to first make a lot of not-so-great games

Every time you make a game

- You learn something
- You have something you can revisit
The “magic spark”

- Some games deserve completion
- How do you identify which these are?
  - Only by making a lot of games
  - You can't polish every single one to completion
- What if you don't know?
  - Put it to one side
  - Come back later
Revisiting an old idea

- **WSAF game: May 2008**
  - [http://www.draknek.org/flash/wsafl](http://www.draknek.org/flash/wsafl)
  - Not fun
- **Dropple: June 2009**
  - Addictive
Learning from mistakes

- Platformers I have made:
  - Blobber: February 2007
  - Clockspider: November 2007
  - Crybaby: November 2008
  - Robo-Jimmy: April 2009
  - Doppelganger: January 2010
  - Flippy gets Lost: January 2010

- Each time the code gets less hacky
Saying “this is done”

- I am fairly terrible at this
- Have a deadline
  - Stick to it
- Don't finish for the sake of finishing
- Four choices:
  - Release when no longer interesting
  - Release when “good enough”
  - Release when polished and complete
  - Never release
Release everything

- You should have a portfolio of games
  - Even the failures you're ashamed of
- For yourself
  - Reminder of accomplishments
  - Inspire new games from old
- For others
  - So they can see what you've made
Fail early, fail often

• Your game does not need to be good
  – If it's not, move on
• You can even make it intentionally bad
  – Klik of the Month
• When you've made a game, ask:
  – Is it as good as you were expecting it to be?
  – Is it worth spending any more time on?
Prolific indie game developers

- Cactus
  - http://cactusquid.com/
- Increpare
  - http://www.increpare.com/

- Somehow manage to make experiments that don't feel incomplete
  - Not the same as “entirely fulfills potential”
A game every week

- Experimental Gameplay Project 1.0
  - http://experimentalgameplay.com/

- Jayenkai
  - http://www.agameaweek.com/

- NMcCoy
  - http://nmccoy.net/
From prototype to success

- **2D Boy**
  - Tower of Goo
    - 4 days development
  - World of Goo
    - Massively successful

- **Petri Purho**
  - Crayon Physics
    - 5 days development
  - Crayon Physics Deluxe
    - Grand prize winner at IGF 2008
Themes/Prompts

- Experimental Gameplay Project
  - http://experimentalgameplay.com/
- Wednesday Workshop
- Video Game Name Generator
  - http://norefuge.net/vgng/vgng.html
Online competitions

- Ludum Dare
- PyWeek
- Klik of the Month
- TIGSource
- Do you need an excuse?
Go make some games

Fail early, fail often