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Why We Play Games Together: The People Factor

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Seven Ways to Create More Emotion For People Playing Together

1. Support Player to Player Interaction

Offer opportunities for cooperation and competition. Allow players to affect each other as well as beat the clock or an NPC. Support interdependencies and skill specializations. Weapons, Heals, buffs, de-buffs are just the beginning. Make success and failure interesting and emotional.

2. Put on a Spectacle

Make sure the game is fun to watch so those not playing have something to do. The game will be more likely to be shared if experienced players see new things in the game when a buddy takes over the controls. Support casual play experiences for the beginning game. Make it easy to start and spectacular enough to inspire commentary.

3. Tools to Communicate Emotion

Allow player to see others emotions and communicate their own. Does not only have to be web cams and voice chat. Can be with color or symbols or changes in animation. Selection of an object can “say something different.” Provide emotive actions that are not too specific so that players can create their own meaning from them. Design chat and emote systems so that players can create their own meanings.

4. Emotional Non-Player Characters

Even if they are not human they can inspire human emotions. Allow players to manage emotional states of others. Even if an NPC barely has a body it can express emotion and have goals and needs that react to player decisions.

5. Emotionally Expressive Tools and Objects

This will support more emotional exchanges in the players. Offer a range of items and features that have a different emotion attached to them. Not just a bigger gun, but also one that lets players say something about themselves and about their target.

6. Emotion Cycles, Feedback, Chains

Target emotions that can chain and create feedback loops. Look for aspects that will create different reactions in different players. Then when the situation is reversed the players will feel the opposite emotion. Support large groups getting together for the emotional intensity inspired by crowds.

7. Save money

Get to know your users. Test early, test often. The more you know about how your players play together the better. Work with players to shape the game to find new emotion-generating experiences and make your game a better entertainment appliance.

References

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Nicole Lazzaro, Founder and President of XEODesign, Inc., is an authority on emotion and the player experience and a frequent speaker at industry events. She writes extensively on games and why people play them.

Nicole Lazzaro has over fifteen years of expertise in Player Experience Research and Design for mass-market games and consumer creativity products, with clients including Sony, Ubisoft, Sega, Roxio, LeapFrog, Mattel, The Learning Company, PlayFirst, Xfire, Broderbund, and Maxis.

To learn more about XEODesign's ground breaking research on emotion in games including free white papers please visit: <http://www.xeodesign.com>, email: info @ xeodesign.com, or call 510-658-8077.

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