

INCLUSIVE GAME DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

2022



Summary

This white paper provides an overview of the various steps and considerations to be taken while designing and developing an inclusive game, including team building, research, game world, mechanics, accessibility, community, and marketing considerations. Developed by the IGDA in partnership with Facebook Gaming.

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Introduction

Games are a rich, expansive medium that allow players to explore the possibilities of other realms and realities. Diversity in these stories, mechanics, and environments allows games to appeal to a wide set of this potential player-base while allowing players to become enriched, inspired, and empowered by these games and the stories within them.

Inclusive game design and development not only empowers players who are often underrepresented, but also creates an impassioned fanbase, distinguishes the game and its design from competitors, and improves both user experience and public perception.

This document provides an overview of the various steps and considerations to be taken while designing and developing an inclusive game.

What is Diversity?

Diversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. There are many types of diversity possible, including:

- Culture
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Physical appearance
- Age
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Ability/disability
- Neurodiversity
- Socioeconomic
- Behavior/ethnodiversity
- Ideologies and viewpoints
- Education
- Career and roles
- Marital/parental status
- Location and geography
- History
- Technology and technology access

Variety in these backgrounds and characteristics enriches a game with diversity of history, characters, and context.

Diversity of genres, mechanics, and other qualities of games is also possible. Variation of these elements allows for games to appeal to different audiences.

Team Building

A diverse team will innately build a more diverse and inclusive game, as the team members will incorporate their own backgrounds, experiences, ability, heritage, and culture into their development process and creations.

In-House Diversity

A team that is diverse and inclusive will tackle problems more effectively and create content that will be enjoyed by a wider audience. Diversity of thought, creativity, and experience makes **teams more effective** and creative. It requires active effort to support diversity amongst a team.

While pursuing diversity within their studio, hiring managers and recruiters should refer to local laws and legislation regarding what information may be taken into consideration during the hiring process.

Recruitment

Proactive measures need to be taken to recruit a diverse team.

Job advertisements should be thoroughly considered to ensure that they do not have gender-coded words or do not reflect the company's culture. Additionally, the only requirements listed for a position should be the core requirements of the role.

Candidates will review a company's website, social media, and public image to determine if the culture would be fitting for them. A company should ensure they are promoting their values and a diverse range of their employees publicly to both support diversity and to demonstrate their inclusivity. However, companies should not promote images of employees with diverse characteristics with the intent to make the company appear more diverse than its true demographics.

Interview panels themselves should be as diverse as possible. A homogenous panel is more likely to express unconscious bias. Diverse candidates should also be considered for every role and an active effort should be made to find diverse candidates to review.

Finally, investing in development of local talents can help improve your recruiting pool. Consider supporting schools with diverse populations, accepting interns, and providing support to nonprofits that support marginalized communities.

Retention

Retention of talent, especially diverse talent, is just as important as recruitment of that talent. A game studio requires a clear set of behavior expectations, active cultural development, mentorship and training, and explicit support.

The IGDA has published a detailed [HR Policy Guidebook Template](#) that outlines how to develop a guidebook for employees that sets standards and processes to ensure employees understand expectations, report handling, and the goals of your organization.

It is important that inclusivity of both a team and the content they create is part of an organization's core values. These values should be not only listed, but actively considered in the choices made by the company. Explicit and outward support of these values will also help maintain a positive and inclusive company culture. Policies and values must be upheld. For example, while 69% of respondents of the [IGDA's 2021 Developers Satisfaction Survey](#) worked at companies with a general nondiscrimination policy, only 41% of respondents felt that these policies were adequately enforced. Anti-harassment, nondiscrimination, and anti-retaliation policies with detailed processes and enactment upon complaints are necessary to demonstrate a company's commitment to a safe working environment.

Developing support channels is a great way to help retain talent. Most employees are looking to grow their skills and knowledge, so a mentoring program that pairs all employees with mentors and regularly scheduled mentorship sessions will both improve an employee's growth and their desire to stay with the company. Additionally, affinity groups for mid-sized and larger organizations, such as employee resource groups (ERGs), provide safe spaces for an employee to connect with others and find additional support for their growth and wellness.

Exit Interviews

When an employee leaves a company, they should be asked to participate in an exit interview. The interview should be for the sole purpose of determining possible improvements for the company. The employee should be informed that their answers will have no bearing on their career or future recommendations. This interview should be focused on the internal processes of the company and any issues within the organization, allowing the employee to express their grievances and other concerns.

Contracted Experts

It is not always possible to have members of an organization with backgrounds in all of the cultures that their content will encounter, from both a development and consumer perspective. Thus, it is important that contracted experts are brought in to consult on cultural and social sensitivity and content culturalization. These experts will not only ensure that a game treats sensitive topics respectfully, but they will also help avoid public issues and criticism.

If you need assistance in finding such experts, please [contact the IGDA](#) or any of the [IGDA's Special Interest Groups](#) related to the topics or cultural content that requires additional oversight.

Research

Before starting full production of a game, it is important for a development team to perform a wide range of research to expand the inspirations that they draw from. This research should expand across culture, history, current game approaches, and any other relevant topics to the title. Research alone can plant seeds of inspiration that will blossom as the concept develops.

Diverse Inspirations

Research for a game should be spread out across a large number of sources to overcome any biases or inaccuracies that may be present in a single source. A diverse set of initial inspirations will also help encourage creativity and diversity in the design of the game and gameworld as well.

Cultural

The diverse range of cultures from around the world are rich sources of inspiration for worlds and the characters within them. Cultures provide references for clothing, relationships, societal structures, buildings, tools, values, beliefs, and many other qualities that can enrich a game.

Cultural influences should be handled with reverence and an expert should be consulted to ensure that cultural symbols are not being misused.

Historical

Historic records and events are also valuable resources of inspiration. When referring to or creating a game about a specific historical event or time period, note that historical records are often biased or limited. Thus, multiple sources should be referenced, including anthropological records. Any topic should be approached with consideration that often only the victors and powerful were the recorders of history, leaving out many diverse characters and perspectives.

Accessibility Research

The game industry and the tools which support it are evolving rapidly in their support of accessibility innovations and considerations to improve access to games. It is important to research the tools, best practices, and current innovations in accessible game design early in the game development process.

The most important research activity that can be conducted for accessibility is engaging directly with the audience. This can even start before the first code is written, through activities like formative user research on previous or competitor games. Conducting user research with disabled participants early and often is the best way to ensure your vision reaches as much of your target audience as reasonably possible.

Accessibility is much easier and more effective when it is considered from pre-production, and the tools and methods necessary to support it are included as part of the development pipeline.

This [GAconf talk by Ashley Papineau](#) introduces how to conduct user research with disabled participants.

World Building

Building the world of a game is creating its context for the gameplay and narration. A designer must create the structure, context, and rules of a world. It may include development and determination of geography, cultures, magic, or even physics laws. Diversity and inclusion should also be considered in the creation of a game's world, as the characteristics of the world can greatly support inclusivity and the characters within it.

Environments and Objects

The environment of a game influences both the player and any characters within the world and informs the way they interact with and shape that world.

Geography

The geography of a world greatly affects how the people and creatures interact and live. Geography informs the lives of the people within it and both supplements and limits their lifestyles. For example, it would be unlikely to find a fishing village on top of a mountain.

If a game is inspired by a real world culture or group of people, the basic geographic qualities of the place that group lives needs to match in order to properly convey their lifestyle and struggles.

Buildings

Buildings have deep cultural and practical significance. The culture, wealth, environment, and lifestyle of the people who built and live within them should be considered when designing the buildings of a world. Buildings are most often built with local materials and craftspeople.

If real world or historical buildings are used or used as inspiration in the design of the buildings of a game world, not only should the design of those buildings be studied, but also the standard usage of them. How different types of buildings are designed, how the rooms and features of those buildings are used, and who uses these spaces are all important considerations.

Tools

Weapons, pottery, farm tools, and even hygiene tools speak greatly to how a society lives. Anthropologists study such artifacts to learn about societies and the lives of the people within them. Similar care and consideration should be given to the tools within a game world, as they can portray important information to the player, and a player could be driven away by anachronistic or misunderstood tools.

Culture and History

In any game with characters that have personality and interaction there should be careful consideration of their culture and history.

Cultures of Influence

Relatable cultures, historical events, and lore can help a player more easily immerse themselves and understand a world. These histories and inspirations can also help other players gain familiarity with lore and historical events from cultures which they may not be familiar with, helping them gain a more worldly perspective. An expert can provide deeper insight into cultures and help ensure that all cultural elements within a game are being handled respectfully.

Divergence from Historical Records

Very few games, even historical games, require strict adherence to historical records. Historical records themselves are often flawed and biased. A developer should carefully consider which aspects of recorded history are important to the story and which ones may be inaccurate or bent to increase the diversity of representations within the game.

Clothing and Costumes

Clothing and costumes can provide much context about a world, the day to day life of its people, and the beliefs that are held. The design of clothing can signal the wealth, culture, and activities of the people, and the materials the clothing are made from can suggest the resources available to them. These designs, materials, and colors can also indicate specific social or status roles.

Integrating clothing and styles from various cultures can provide additional depth and meaning to the characters in a world. Clothing and artifacts inspired by real modern and historical cultures should be carefully reviewed in their meaning and implementation to ensure they are being referenced correctly and with proper consideration for any cultural or historical significance.

Common Tropes

Tropes are common conventions that are interpreted to have greater meaning within a culture. A trope is a commonplace, recognizable plot element, theme, or visual cue that conveys a meaning or idea. For example, a common trope is that enemies wear black.

Common tropes are advantageous for rapid communication about a scene or situation, as they can use simple elements to convey a great meaning or situation. However, it is possible to accidentally use stereotypes when working with tropes. Stereotypes and some types of common tropes can be harmful or exclusionary to various audiences. It is important to review any intentional or unintentional tropes that will be used within a game world to ensure that they support the intended message.

Trope Subversion

Subverting tropes is a great way to break conventions and expectations. Subverted tropes can empower those who have felt excluded by such tropes and provide an interesting basis for parts of the game world.

Characters

While not all games have characters, characters that exist within a game are almost always a focal point of the player's attention. Humans are naturally empathic creatures and seek to relate to and understand others, whether intentionally or not. Creating characters that spark the emotions and relations desired from the player can greatly benefit the story and motivations within a game.

Thus, characters and their diversity should be at the forefront of consideration when developing an inclusive title. Diversity of characters helps a wider audience relate to people within the game.

Culture

Defined cultures provide structures for characters to act within. Defying clearly defined cultural expectations, whether through dress, action, or other means can be cause of conflict. The customs, arts, social institutions, daily life, and achievements of a society all define its culture and should be considered thoroughly. A diverse range of players can better relate to a game that uses inspiration from various cultures to create its societies and characters.

Any cultural references, inclusions, or inspirations should be reviewed by an expert of that culture to ensure they are being handled with proper reverence.

Religion, Faith, Spirituality

Use of religion, faith, spirituality or other beliefs should also be considered and closely reviewed. Any invented beliefs may have unintentional parallels to established religions or faiths that may cause players to feel misunderstood or worse. When establishing beliefs for a set of characters, such as antagonists, any biases must be carefully watched to prevent unintended negative portrayals of a set of real world groups.

Traits and Depth

While there are many surface level characteristics a character can display, the most interesting and relatable characters have depth. Depth causes a character to be interesting and relatable and helps create player investment or even disdain towards a character. While the backstory of a character is important in providing one layer of depth, their other more complex traits, such as personality and flaws, can provide even more intrigue.

Personality and Mental Traits

One core of a person's characteristics is how they interpret and interact with others and the world around them. In addition to their culture, this is influenced greatly by their personality and mental traits. While there is framing for personalities, such as the Big Five personality traits, there is not a single method to best describe or capture personality. A team should use the definitions and style that works best for their own communications about character personality.

Mental traits and diversity of such traits should also be considered. Few people approach problems in the exact same way. Their route for approaching situations is influenced by their mental traits, from their preference towards logic to their place on the Autism Spectrum.

Creating characters with mental health struggles can connect with players who have faced similar situations either themselves or with others in their life, but should also be approached with care. It is recommended to consult with experts and those with personal experiences when working with any mental health related topics.

Flaws

Each person has their own set of qualities that will influence their decisions. A major tension creating quality is a character's flaws. These flaws may cause a character to make a harmful, disadvantageous, or unexpected decision. These flaws can also speak to a player's own experiences and struggles and should be treated with respect.

Gendering

The way a character genders themselves should also be taken into consideration. A character's gender can greatly influence their expected roles within their society and any defiance of that role can provide a source of conflict.

Development

Character development is also important to consider. How a character evolves and interacts with others through a game and its story can contribute to how people relate to that character and to the game itself. Stories and depictions of development help players connect with characters and their struggles. Static characters without any development feel flat and unrealistic, especially when placed in extraordinary circumstances.

Interpersonal Relationships

There are a wide number of interpersonal relationships that characters can establish, maintain, build, transition, or destroy as part of their development and the development of the story. These relationships can also be with the player character.

These relationships archetypes can include:

- Family

- Friends
- Romance
- Sexual attraction
- Mentors
- Antagonists/opposition

It is important to research and understand the different ways that each of these types of relationships are handled in cultures that the game characters are part of or can relate to. Language, social structures, expressions and gestures, traditions, and other culturally related interactions should be considered. A variety of how these relationships are approached can create a richer world and a deeper story with more opportunities for players to relate to the characters and the characters themselves to have meaningful interactions and even misunderstandings.

Appearance

The appearance of a character can suggest a lot about their personality, culture, background, and life. Their appearance will speak towards their job and responsibilities, their wealth, and even their personal priorities in life. If a game has a wide variety of characters, they should also have a wide variety of appearances. This variety of appearance helps distinguish them from one another and provides the player with additional details about the character.

People relate better to characters that they can project themselves onto. [Newzoo's 2020 Gamer Sentiment Study on Diversity and Inclusion](#) showed that half of players want more diverse characters in games, 45% of players avoided playing games that they felt were not made for them, and that a third of respondents prefer to play characters who resemble themselves.

Furthermore, variety in character build, clothing, and other appearance traits helps make them more recognizable and memorable. The [2021 The Double-Edged Sword of Online Gaming](#) overviews which characteristics are less commonly represented.

The following lists are not exhaustive, but provide a solid basis for parts of character appearance to consider.

Clothing

- Casual dress
- Formal dress
- Uniforms / work clothing
- Special event and fashion clothing
- Cultural clothing
- Home clothing

Physical Characteristics

- Age
- Skin
 - Tone
 - Complexion
- Hair
 - Color

- Sportswear / activewear
- Cold weather clothing
- Warm weather clothing
- Swimwear
- Outerwear
- Undergarments
- Accessories (hats, scarves, etc)

Style

- Hair style
- Grooming
- Cosmetics, paints, and markings
- Tattoos and piercings
- Accessories (purses, etc)

- Texture
- Shape
- Voice
- Height
- Build
 - Muscularity
 - Proportions
 - Maturity
- Facial features
 - Eyes, eyebrows, ears, nose, chin, cheekbones, forehead, mouth
- Unique physical characteristics
 - Moles, freckles, vitiligo, etc.
- Disabilities

Another important appearance characteristic to consider is gender expression. Gender expression is a character's behavior, mannerisms, interests, and appearance that are associated with gender in a particular cultural context, specifically with the categories of femininity or masculinity. A character may fall on any range within this spectrum.

Developers should be careful with how they use these appearance traits for antagonist characters. Disabilities, unconventional appearances, and ethnicities are often used to mark a character as an antagonist. This leads to shallower character development, promotes negative stereotypes, and can be exclusionary to that group of people.

Design and Mechanics

The mechanics and gameplay of a title also has a large influence on the range of audiences it appeals to and how it supports their needs and playstyles.

Accessibility

A core aspect of universal design is accessibility. Accessibility avoids creating unnecessary barriers that can come between disabled players and the kind of experience intended for players to have. Accessibility is achieved through design considerations and game settings that allow a player to engage with the game and its content in a way that works best for their own unique needs and capabilities.

Disabling situations occur when someone's impairment comes up against some kind of barrier, resulting in difficulty performing a task. A mismatched interaction between capability and barrier. Accessibility means working to avoid unnecessary mismatch, optimising a game so that more of the target audience is able to have the intended experience.

Games present many barriers to players. No game can be accessible for everyone, but many of the barriers that game designers create for players are unintentional or unnecessary for the game's core experience. Some unnecessary barriers can be avoided by design, for example by not relying on color difference alone to communicate or differentiate information.

Accessible design should be a priority consideration, but sometimes a one size fits all approach is not possible as different people have different needs and capabilities. Accessibility options provide players the ability to rebalance to their own needs and capabilities. For example, a choice of button mappings, a choice of text size, a choice of game speed.

The following is a list of ten core questions to ask. It includes the five most commonly complained about accessibility issues in games:

1. Can your game be understood without hearing? On mute? In a noisy room?
2. Do your systems account for cognitive load?
3. Could your controls be simpler, more flexible, less demanding?
4. Does your visual information work across all screen sizes and levels of visual acuity?
5. How intense is too intense?
6. Does your gameplay or UI depend on seeing colours?
7. What difficulty level do you want your players to experience? Easy? Hard? Impossible?
8. Is your text both legible and readable?
9. Are you sure you know what your players need?
10. Do your players know that your game is accessible?

For more detail on these see the [IGDA Game Accessibility SIG's Top Ten resource](#). The accessibility SIG also hosts a broad collection of other [resources for developers and researchers](#), covering guidelines, articles, videos, articles, and tools.

Audience Considerations

When designing a game and the mechanics within it, both the intended and potential audiences need to be considered. This consideration informs aspects of the game design and world such as the level of violence, the language used by characters, and the depth of mechanics. It should also review the potential issues that must be addressed to make the game itself more accessible, such as

Diverse Motivators

When considering the player or audience personas for a game title, it is important to consider the diverse motivations that they may have to engage with the game. Understanding that some groups prefer different pursuing different goals, challenges, achievements, and mechanics will allow a designer to better appeal to those audiences.

The motivators that appeal to a particular player may also change on a day to day or even hour by hour basis. Having a crafting and collection focused section of a game that can be used for a player to wind down and relax in between aggressive combat sessions will help improve player retention and allow for a wider diversity of audience and engagement.

Play Session Variations

Similar to how a player's motivations to play the game may range, so will their available time to engage with the game. A competitive game that can only be played in lengthy, hour-plus long matches, will exclude players whose abilities or availability may now allow them to engage for that length of time. The required or comfortable play session length will influence the audience of a title. Adding additional context with a variety of engagement length requirements, such as quick match modes or bite-sized single player challenges, will broaden the audience.

Player Character

A player character needs to be handled with particular care, as poor handling of such a character will make it extremely difficult for some players to relate to the character and the game itself. If the game's story allows the player to insert themselves and their desired character onto the character, it can allow for an even more inclusive and immersive experience.

Customizability

Any offered character customization should expand across the full range of traits possible for that type of character. Refer to the Character: Accessibility section of this paper for more details on the potential ranges for these options.

Gendering

A player character in a game where the player character does not have a defined personality, backstory, or other set characteristics should not be gendered to allow a player to most easily project themselves into the role of their character. If gendering is necessary due to language and

dialogue requirements, the assignment should be left solely to the player and not based on other customizations, such as body type, hair length, or facial features.

In English, if you must have assigned pronouns for the player, consider offering the options of:

- he/him
- she/her
- they/them
- ze/zir
- custom pronouns

Similarly, clothing options should not be limited by gender or body type.

Romantic Options

If a player character does not have a story-defined set of preferences, their romantic options should not be limited based on their defined gendered or other characteristics, unless the romanceable characters have their own such preferences limited by story-defined reasons.

Community

Toxicity and abuse in a virtual community can be a core behavior of the community's culture that cannot be easily changed even with the best technical approaches and moderation tools. Fostering the desired culture of a community is key to creating an experience that all users can enjoy without unwanted harassment. The community of a multiplayer game also greatly affects the first impression of both users and the media.

Tone

Tone-setting is critical within a community, as it establishes the manner in which players will engage with each other. A community with a negative or toxic tone will be less inclusive and cause departure of other parts of the playerbase.

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct is a low cost method of informing a community of the allowed behavior. A Code of Conduct is generally a list of behaviors that are considered acceptable or unacceptable. Not only does it inform users of what actions are appropriate within the experience's community, but it also empowers community members to stand up against inappropriate

behavior by giving them explicit guidelines to point to when someone acts outside of them. It can also be held as reason to remove a player from the community in the End-User License Agreement (EULA), though often the ability to remove any player without reason is included in EULAs to avoid legal disputes over the matter.

A Code of Conduct should be short, easily accessible, and written in clear language to be most easily consumed, understood, and upheld by users.

Tone-setting Content

The content of a video game can have a great effect on the culture of its community. If imagery of the user avatars accentuates their sexual aspects, it is likely that there will be more sexual comments and interactions, and likely more sexual harassment.

Imagery, language, symbols, jokes, and events in a virtual experience affect how users perceive the experience and define its culture, including what is considered appropriate. Identifying and removing imagery and language that make suggestions against the desired culture of the experience can help set the culture on the desired track from the start.

Harassment and Abuse

Harassment and abuse between users within a game's community can drive-off players, particularly from different backgrounds. Harassment must be proactively addressed to support an inclusive community. Cases of harassment and abuse not only negatively impact the user, but can tarnish a project or developer's reputation as well.

Moderation

Moderation is a method for managing communities to ensure that the behavior of community members stays within defined bounds. Moderation can be handled in various layers. These layers can be combined to form more complete moderation coverage of content, while discouraging abuse opportunities or flaws that may be present in a single layer of moderation. Each layer and system needs to be evaluated in the context of the content it will be applied to, as the moderation needs and potential moderation abuses of a competitive game are very different from that of a casual, virtual social space.

Moderation layers can include:

- Personal moderation tools (e.g. mute, kick, block)
- Community self-moderation tools (e.g. vote-kicking, reporting)
- Chat filters (e.g. banned words)
- AI-power moderation

- Company-hired moderators

For more details and considerations about moderation layers and their benefits and drawbacks, please refer to the IGDA's whitepaper on [Social Virtual Reality Best Practices](#).

Promotion and Celebration

Another way to assist with cultural development of a virtual community is to publicly promote and celebrate positive behavior. This can be done in a wide range of approaches, from congratulating community members on social media to granting profile badges commending upstanding behavior. Even a simple notification once a week informing users who have not been reported that week that they are appreciated as upstanding members of the community can act as positive reinforcement to continue their positive behavior.

Player Feedback

Audiences of a game can provide even more diverse and detailed feedback than playtesters and other team members. Player feedback can be tracked and analyzed through multiple channels, including, but not limited to: gameplay and engagement data, marketing effectiveness information, surveys, forum and social media commentary, in-game chat sentiments, and direct player feedback. While not all player feedback is useful, it is important to use these channels of feedback to evaluate any potential issues within a game or game community. Avid and outspoken players often act as the canary in the coalmine for helping developers recognize issues that may become more critical.

Marketing

Inclusiveness in marketing is just as important, if not even more so, than inclusiveness in the game's design. If a game is inclusive but the marketing for the game skews heavily in favor of one type of audience, then the game may only be adopted by that narrow audience and the sales will be limited by failing to reach the full potential audience. Marketing materials promote to the audience that the game is "for them", but bias or skewed power dynamics in these materials may make a potential customer feel that the game is "not for them".

Placement

The places that a game is marketed greatly affect its audience reach. A studio or publisher should ensure that the advertisements for a title consider the reach and audience for any particular placement or medium.

Influencers

Influencers are great for bridging marketing gaps and reaching audiences that may be uncertain about a company or a new game. Minority influencers have a perfect position to contribute towards diversity and equality in online marketing by acting as an example of their community being welcomed into the game.

Imagery

Most people will be able to tell from the key art of a horror game that the game is within the horror genre and can determine whether or not it is a fit for them based upon that. The imagery used within a marketing campaign can provide many signals about various aspects of the title, including the intended audience.

A marketing team should be particularly careful in reviewing the imagery and dynamics of the images, videos, and other materials part of a marketing campaign, as it will greatly influence who decides to further engage with the title. Prominently displaying a white male protagonist is likely to signal to the audience that the game will appeal more to white men. Similarly, only showing girls playing the game in a commercial will signal the intended audience is young women.

Imagery also has a great impact on the tone of the marketing campaign. A tone that fails to mesh with the full target audience will turn away potential customers.

The details of the characters within the materials also provide subtle context to the campaign. It is important when displaying two or more characters that the dynamics of their positioning, poses, and expressions are taken into consideration. Placing one character behind another or in a passive or submissive position may communicate to the audience that one character and the audience that character may represent is somehow lesser to the other character and its possible audience. This is particularly important to keep in mind when representing player characters of different genders.

Variations of imagery, including poses, positing, and other character qualities can support different dynamics across multiple sets of promotional images, but the power dynamics should be considered and carefully balanced for key art and box art.

Language

Language greatly influences the tone of a marketing campaign and can be inclusionary or exclusionary. Marketing language includes not only the spoken and written words, but also

symbols and the meaning of phrases and metaphors. When targeting a wide audience, a team should avoid gendered or otherwise biased language, such as ableist language, that refers to the player or their opponents and any language or phrases that reinforce stereotypes.

It is also important to look into the origins of any phrases, symbols, idioms, or terms that are included in marketing material to ensure there are no potential issues in their interpretations. For example, some use the term “jipped” to mean “to cheated or swindled” without realizing the origin of the word is “gyp” and its use is quite insulting to the Romani people.

Accessibility Information

Information about accessibility considerations should be easy to find and shared in marketing materials for a title. The earlier confirmed accessibility information is included in the marketing process for the game, the earlier those who require those considerations to play the game will be able to join in the hype, get pre-orders, and feel equally valued as players and as people. Also review and consider the opportunities to share information about accessibility on storefronts and directly in game, such as within tutorials and loading screen tips.

Inclusive Review Process

Inclusive practices are beneficial across all aspects of a business, and an inclusive review process for marketing materials will not only ensure that a company reaches the largest audience possible, but that they will save themselves from potential public relations embarrassments. A diverse review panel is the best approach, but experts can also be brought in for a final review if the team is not confident in their coverage.

Author: Gittins, R. K.

Reviewers: Samuels, J., Michaels, S., Amaya, C. S., Wallace, N., Vela, J., LeRay, L., Krohn, M., Cullings, T., Hamilton, I., Rawlings, M.

International Game Developers Association

The International Game Developers Association (IGDA) is the largest non-profit membership organization in the world serving all individuals who create games. The mission of the IGDA is to support and empower game developers around the world in achieving fulfilling and sustainable careers.

As an international organization, the IGDA is a U.S.-based 501(c)6 non-profit professional association and a global network of collaborative projects and communities of individuals from all fields of game development - including programmers and producers, designers and artists, as well as writers, business people, QA team members, localization experts, and everyone else who participates in any way in the game development process. The IGDA brings together developers at key industry conferences, and in over 150 Chapters and Special Interest Groups (SIGs), to improve their lives and their craft.

Facebook Gaming

Facebook Gaming is building the world's gaming community by helping game makers, developers and publishers to build, grow and monetize their games. We're committed to building a workforce that's as diverse as the communities we serve, and in assisting our partners and clients in their efforts to make the games industry more diverse, inclusive, accessible and equitable for all.