

Bring Out Your Dead: An examination of employing social and mobile gaming delivery and design techniques to resurrect commercially dead game genres, specifically western tactical role-playing games

By: Michael Mc Donnell

Supervisor: Dr. Mads Haar

Advances in game design and development are generally more iterative than evolutionary. The increasing demand for games to be commercially viable has led to creative stagnation in terms of game design. From around 2000 onwards the number of viable genres has been pared down to a mere handful and the majority of innovation lies in fine-tuning these genres rather than exploring others. The purpose of this paper is to explore the nature of game design practice for mobile and social gaming in order to try and define a broad high level list of design concerns which could form a framework for adapting commercially dead genres to these new sectors. In order to focus the material somewhat we shall be looking at one specific commercially dead genre, western tactical role-playing games.

I feel that this research, should it lead to a successful design paradigm, would greatly contribute to the field by lessening the impact of commercial viability on game design and genre choice. This in turn greatly opens up the design space. Hopefully leading to an increased level of innovation and increasing the chances of evolutionary advancement. The paper begins with a qualitative analysis of the genre as well as social and mobile gaming. It then takes the design elements and practices covered and examines how they are applied in real world situations. We also take a comparative look at key games in the western tactical role-playing game genre in order to try and identify key elements of said genre.

The paper then moves on to an analysis of the design practices and elements covered in earlier parts and attempts to extract platform agnostic elements which can be used to construct a broad design framework. This section concludes with an illustrated example of how this design framework could be used in conjunction with the essential genre elements covered earlier to create a game design model for adapting western tactical role-playing games to new media platforms.

The paper closes by taking a brief look at the limitations of the papers research and scope as well as suggesting avenues for future work. The conclusion addresses the answer to the question asked in the introduction and concludes that the framework from chapters three and four meets the goal of successfully adapting the dead genre in question, western tactical role-playing games, to social and mobile gaming.