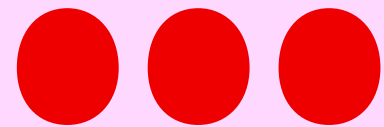
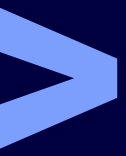
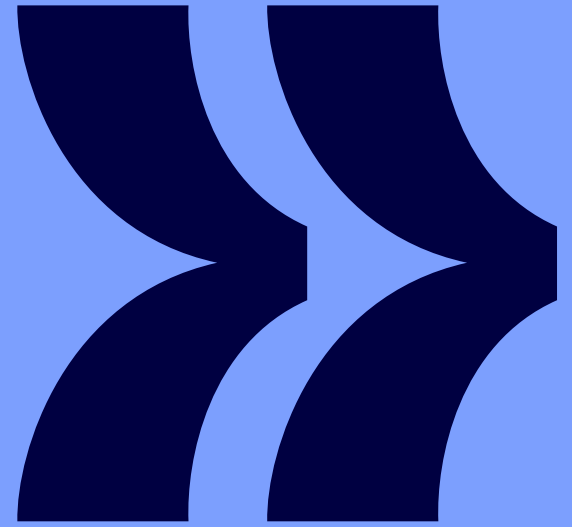
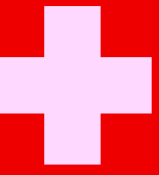


2026 TRENDS REPORT



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Welcome to the 2026 GDC Trends Report

Every year, GDC reminds me of why I love this industry. Walking the halls, sitting in sessions, and talking with game professionals from around the world, I'm consistently inspired by the passion, creativity, and problem-solving that defines our community.

The 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming was no exception. From the Opening Night celebration at Oracle Park to closing the doors of the Festival Hall, we witnessed a community coming together to share knowledge, celebrate achievements, and tackle the challenges ahead.

This Trends Report distills insights from thousands of speakers, exhibitors, and attendees who brought their insight and experience to the 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming. What emerges is a nuanced picture of an industry navigating significant change while staying true to its creative core.

Some of the findings may surprise you. Others will likely confirm what you're experiencing in your own work. The rise of AI-assisted development tools, the ongoing conversation about sustainable studio practices, the expanding diversity of games and game-makers—these aren't just trends, they're the lived reality of game professionals working to build better experiences and better careers.

The challenges are real. Economic pressures, technological disruption, and industry consolidation are reshaping the landscape. But so are the ingenuity, adaptability, and mutual support that have always been hallmarks of the game industry.

As you read through this report, I hope you'll find both resonance with your own experiences and fresh perspectives that spark new ideas. Most importantly, I hope you'll see yourself as part of a global community that continues to push the boundaries of what's possible in interactive entertainment.

Thank you for being part of GDC and thank you for everything you do to advance the art and craft of games.

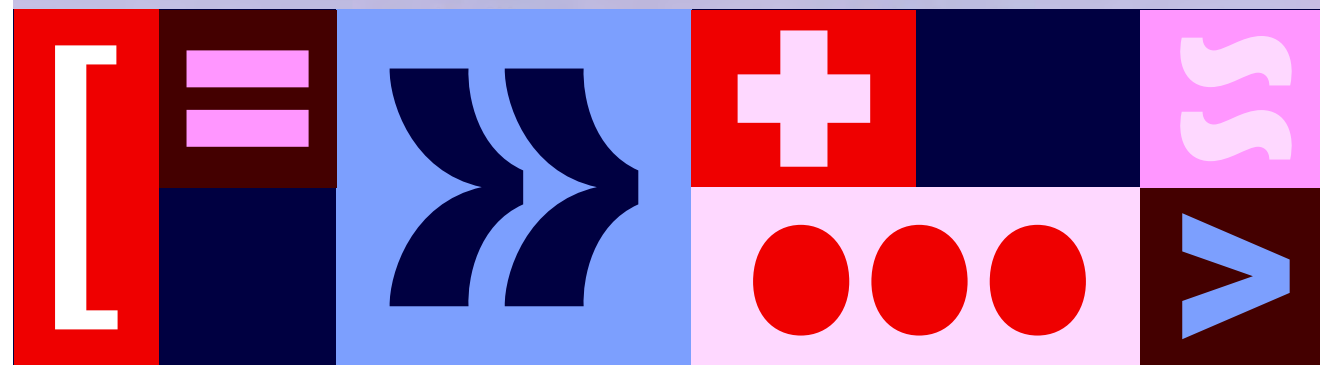
MARK DELOURA

VP of Content Strategy
GDC Festival of Gaming

Executive Summary

5 Key Trends Shaping the Game Industry

- 1** Generative AI tools have reached a place where many game industry professionals can use them without difficulty, so the focus is now on how (or if) they should be implemented in the development process.
- 2** Studios are embracing co-development to help make games that require more staff and resources, but newer studios ready to offer their services face a crowded, well-established market.
- 3** Dual monetization is becoming more commonplace in mobile, the Vietnamese hyper-casual market surges, and casual and hybrid-casual games turn their focus to retention over new user acquisition.
- 4** Anti-DEI policies continue to impact marginalized game industry professionals, especially those in the LGBTQ+ community, and older professionals address ageism in the workplace and job market.
- 5** Things continue to be challenging for studios that need funding, as many publishers and investors expect prototypes (or more) before signing on to a project, but indie game funds are trying to help fill the gaps.



GENERATIVE AI

* State of [AI] Play

When it comes to generative AI in game development, we've seen three factions emerge. Some like it for everything. Others prefer it for some things. And then there are those who do not want it at all.

This was apparent at the 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming, which focused a great deal on generative AI usage and application. Now that the tech has reached a place where most people can use it without difficulty, many of the sessions and onsite conversations were focused on how these tools should be implemented in the development process.

There was consistent support for using AI for outlining, brainstorming, and mundane tasks like email and task management, especially among older professionals and people who are neurodivergent. This tracks with 2026 State of the Game Industry data, which showed that most surveyed AI adopters use it for those roles. Claude Code was also a popular subject among speakers and attendees, with creators weighing the benefits and pitfalls of automated coding.

AI proponents showcased some of the latest asset tools. Head of Technology Nathan Chen shared Tencent Games' skeleton generation model for building primary skeletons and additional structures. Product Manager

Jérémie Noguier touted Adobe Substance 3D Painter's new Warp to Geometry feature, which "literally wraps itself into any geometry in real time."

Asset technology is improving rapidly, and it's impressive to see what is possible now versus even just a couple of years ago. But there appears to be a line in the sand (within the industry and among players themselves) between acceptable and unacceptable use of asset tools.

At the Festival of Gaming, many industry professionals emphasized the importance of these tools "augmenting" the game-making process, not replacing it. When asked whether AI could eventually become creative on its own, Alexander Mufrik, product lead at Google DeepMind, said: "Even if the models could do it, we would not want to use them in that way."

However, some expressed concern that, despite the promise of needing human creativity, companies are betting big on AI supplementing a large percentage of the workforce... and that widespread adoption of these tools could lead to more layoffs. *

“ AI is not the end of game development. It's the beginning of a more profitable, more sustainable, and more creative industry.”

NATHAN CHEN

HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY,
TENCENT GAMES

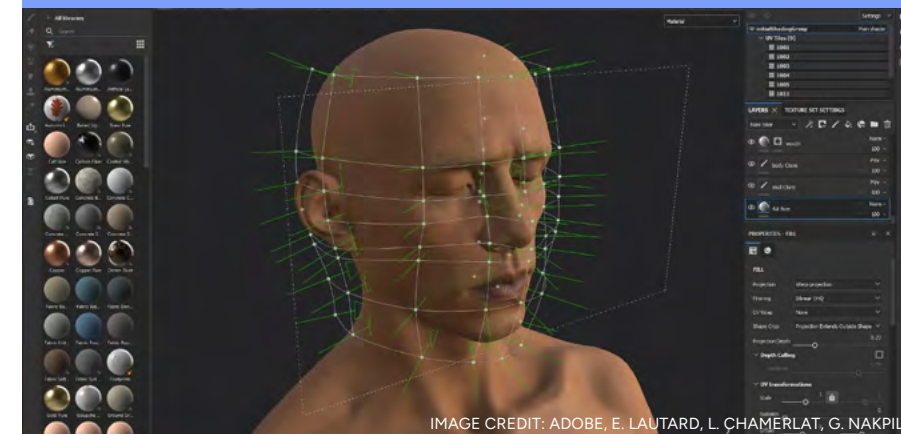
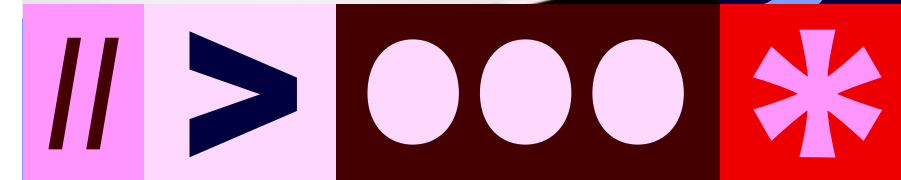


IMAGE CREDIT: ADOBE, E. LAUTARD, L. CHAMERLAT, G. NAKPIL



IMAGE CREDIT: JUN LI - STOCK.ADOBE.COM



> SPOTLIGHT: Agentic AI

It's one thing to ask an AI model to handle a player's complaint; it's another for the program to do it on its own. Agentic AI, which is a system that can act autonomously on behalf of its users, is one of the most hyped innovations coming out of the AI space.

Behind the scenes, there are companies paving the way to for Agentic AI in backend and frontend support—whether it's Globant helping address bugs and cheating, build code, and quality assurance; or Helpshift's (part of Keywords Studios) work in proactive player engagement and player support resolution. Some AI proponents are striving towards a bigger goal: companionship. From one-off NPCs that can respond to players in real time, to longstanding teammates with their own combat styles and personalities.

There are reasons a company might wish to bring AI agents into its workflow. They can free developers or teams to focus on more creative or strategic pursuits. Kevin Janzen, CEO of the Games and Ed Tech Studio at Globant, discussed this potential when talking about their subscription service, AI Pods.

"AAA development has become so expensive, and video games in general. That has led to a huge concentration in the market and even less high-profile games being

released," he said. "With AI Pods or generative AI as part of the solution, I believe costs are going to go down. And a studio that perhaps had a vision that was so ambitious for the budget that they had, suddenly they can start dreaming about seeing that game come to fruition."

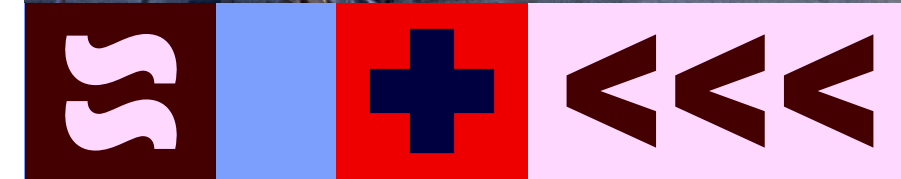
On the gaming side, solo players having the ability to play a multiplayer game with a digital program might seem more appealing—especially for those who've faced harassment in online gaming spaces.

But there are times when human intervention may still be necessary. Rob Schoeppe, head of global sales and business development at Helpshift (part of Keywords Studios), gave the example of a player getting banned for riffing with their friend: "The agent doesn't understand context. It doesn't know if you were talking crap to your friend," he said. "So, that part has to be escalated to a human who understands the context and connects the dots." *

“ AI gives humans superpowers, but it can never replace the emotional intelligence and context that humans bring to the table.

ROB SCHOEPPE

HEAD OF GLOBAL SALES & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, HELPSHIFT





“ Perspectives: [AI] Intellectual Property

Over the past few years, AI companies have sourced billions of files to build their training models, and the legal system is trying to catch up. Recent lawsuits, like *The New York Times v. OpenAI*, have raised questions about the legality of mass data sourcing. But it still winds up feeling like the wild west at times.

Benjamin Siders, attorney and counselor-at-law at Lewis Rice LLC, shared insights about AI use at his 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming talk, while highlighting that “the law is still in development” and “nobody really knows” what’s truly safe. According to Siders, creating content with AI remains a big risk. Some publishers and platforms do not allow AI content, and concealing it could have consequences. Plus, if it infringes on another company’s copyright and they sue, you’d be liable, not the platform.

He also advised caution about what content is being fed into an AI program, particularly open-source ones. It will probably be used to retrain their AI, which could theoretically go anywhere and be impossible to track. Having a paid subscription can help, but only if the company has explicit language forbidding use of your content for training purposes.

If your copyrighted content has been inputted, with or without your knowledge, you can request it to be removed. But that doesn’t mean it’ll be gone for good—for example, if it was already used to help build something else.

Then, there’s a creative risk. Siders, who’s written several screenplays and short stories in his free time, shared a story of how, as a test, he ran one of his screenplays through ChatGPT for feedback. He specifically wanted a neutral, unbiased opinion. However, the feedback he got still reflected a bias: His own.

When he told the program he didn’t think the script was good, the AI gave it a lower rating. But when he said he was proud of it, the AI praised the content and gave it a top score. Siders called it “illusory validation or discouragement,” and said it can impede progress on creative projects.

“Be very careful about how you use its output, especially if you’re using it to give you feedback on your creative endeavors,” he said. “It’s going to tell you what you want to hear,” he added. *

“ Do not take your proprietary secret formulas that make your whole game work and then send it to the AI and say, ‘Is this good?’ Don’t do that.”

BENJAMIN SIDERS

ATTORNEY AND COUNSELOR-AT-LAW,
LEWIS RICE LLC

» INTERVIEW: Consent, Control, and Compensation

Actors' Rights



JENNIFER HALE

BAFTA-NOMINATED VOICE ACTOR
METAL GEAR SOLID, MASS EFFECT,
OVERWATCH, AND MORE.

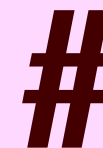
“Look, AI is not going anywhere. It’s part of our reality, and I believe that one must accept what it is. But we are also responsible for it. This is the thing I say over and over, I’ll say it again: AI is not yet an independent intelligence. It’s a tool. And the tool does what the human holding the tool tells it to.

And we are the canaries in the coal mine, as creators and performers. It is going to impact everyone’s employment—well, nearly everyone. Some jobs won’t be touched by it, but not many.

As actors, what we’re asking for is consent. Do I give you permission to use my voice in any way—whether it’s generative and it’s mixed with a bunch of others, and you “can’t really tell.”? You can tell. I can hear my rhythms in other humans copying my work, or who learned from my work, or who were honoring whatever came before them, including my work. Like, I can hear it.

Control. I don’t want it used in some situations. I don’t want an AI to do a performance I could have done, because I can inform it with my human soul that is however-many days or years more informed, intelligent, and experienced than it was the last time I worked on that project.

So, control, consent, and then compensation. You can’t take away someone’s ability to make



a living and not pay them for it. It is *wrong*. It is *wrong*. Ain’t nobody making you do it. You do it, or you don’t.” *

CO-DEVELOPMENT

* State of [Co-]Play

More publishers and studios are embracing co-development, a “divide-and-conquer” approach where full teams are brought on to work on larger parts of a project. Co-development as a practice has existed for decades, but advances in remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic made it easier to implement.

“In the post-pandemic [era], you’re seeing the need to save costs and still have teams when you need them,” Lindsay Gupton, CEO of Pipeworks – A Virtuos Studio, said during a GDC panel. “People are getting more comfortable with working with people that are further and further away.”

The 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming featured sessions covering co-development from both sides—with some studios seeking advice on finding the right partners, and others looking to join the co-dev market. According to the 2026 State of the Game Industry report, about 6% of studio workers are at dedicated co-development companies. However, there are other teams and studios that, in addition to their own content, perform co-dev work on the side.

However, as Steven Sargent, vice president of production at Blind Squirrel Studios, told GDC, co-development is a big commitment and can take time away from your own work. He also said the rise in popularity has made the field more crowded, making it harder to establish long-term relationships that are essential for co-dev success. Newer teams starting from scratch will have a harder time getting established.

“It’s not as easy as people think it is,” he said. “Clients, the reason they’re hiring you is because they want results quickly. So, you need good people on these teams who are flexible and smart and can get going very quickly. That’s a skill that not everybody has.” *



Good ideas can come from anyone ... no matter what company they’re part of.”

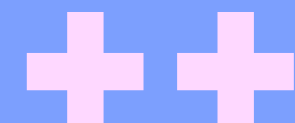


JOHN DOYLE

VICE PRESIDENT AND HEAD OF PRODUCTION,
PLAYSTATION STUDIOS

How to Succeed as a Co-Dev Studio

- > Start Small:** Take on low-risk projects to get comfortable and build trust.
- > Talk Early and Often:** Ask your clients/partners questions. Voice concerns. Ensure everyone on your team has a clear vision of the end goal before production.
- > Collaborate and Trust:** Take ownership of your part of the project. Do everything you can to reduce strain on the internal team.
- > Be Mindful of Scheduling:** Working across time zones is cited as one of the biggest challenges in co-dev. Make sure your team is equipped to handle this.
- > “Part of the Team”:** Do what you can to grow your partnership. Share your ideas. Bring the client into your workflow. Invite them to your studio. That’s key to building long-term relationships.



“ Should I Co-Dev or Outsource? ”

Co-development is a solid way to add teams from around the world to your projects. During a 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming panel, John Doyle, vice president and head of production at PlayStation Studios, noted how more studios and publishers are moving away from outsourcing and toward the co-dev model. But which one is right for your game?

Brad Hendricks, CEO and founder of Blind Squirrel Games, said that both forms of collaboration have their advantages, but the main thing that sets co-development apart from outsourcing is creative control. According to Hendricks, outsourcing is when a studio or publisher “wants something siloed in a box,” so they contract a vendor to provide that specific service. Examples include quality assurance, assets, localization, or cinematics.

When a co-development studio is brought onto a project, it’s for larger, more foundational parts of the game. Hendricks gave the example of an MMO publisher telling its co-dev team: “Go create this section with all the quests and all the things that are contained.” The team becomes an active part of the game’s creation, coming up with original designs, ideas, and narrative elements that fit the main vision.

“ You’re working more closely with the team that’s hired you; almost like you’re a member of the team.”

STEVEN SARGENT

VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCTION,
BLIND SQUIRREL GAMES

“It’s really, really important to keep that connection and not just hand off something into a black box and get something back,” said Kay Arutyunyan, general manager at CounterPunch – A Virtuos Studio.

Most of the experts we talked to prefer co-development over outsourcing—not just because it gives developers more of a say in the content they’re creating, but because finding the right collaborative partner can set up a studio or publisher for long-term success. But only if everyone involved is willing to share the creative spotlight.

“It’s the hardest thing to be willing to go and let something go to someone else. That’s extending trust, right?” Lindsay Gupton, CEO of Pipeworks – A Virtuos Studio, said. “But if you do that, you get greater rewards in return.” *

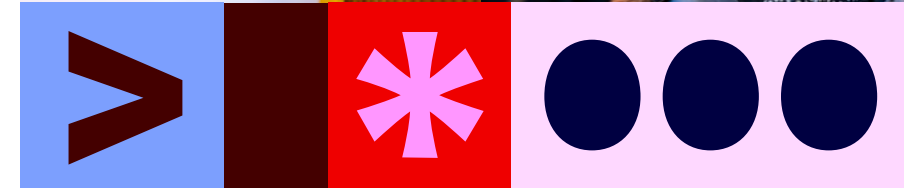
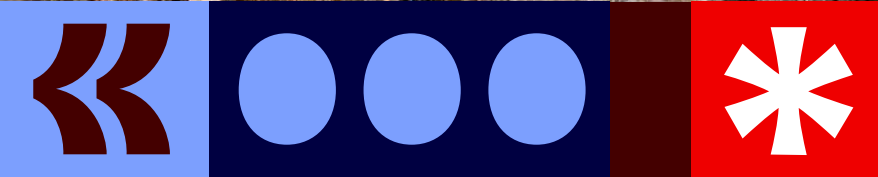




IMAGE CREDITS: MOBY GAMES



> SPOTLIGHT: The PEAK of Co-Development

Live service gaming has long been dominated by PvP experiences, like *Fortnite* and *Call of Duty: Warzone*. But a new, more collaborative trend has started to emerge—and, in one case, it’s also collaborative behind the scenes.

During his GDC session, Aggro Crab Studio’s Nick Kaman dove into the studio’s co-development journey with Landfall Games to create *PEAK*, the surprise indie hit. The team was burned out after working 33 months on *Another Crab’s Treasure* and had lost some funding, so they were looking for a new direction. Meanwhile, Landfall Games was riding the success of *Content Warning*, a game they’d made in two months. Kaman wanted in.

“How dare you come up with something this good in so little time when I’ve been over here busting my ass?” he said jokingly. “We didn’t know how games could be made like this. And we said, ‘What if we just join you in Korea next year?’”

It was Aggro Crab’s first time doing co-development, and Kaman described it as one of the best development experiences they’d ever had. The two studios worked

side-by-side, merging their ideas and resources into a single productive entity. Overall, *PEAK* took about four months to produce, and the results spoke for themselves: *PEAK* became Aggro Crab’s most successful game to date, with over 300,000 reviews on Steam.

It was also their first venture into “friendslop,” a term for online experiences that typically have smaller stakes, lower cost, and are meant to be played cooperatively with friends. Examples include *RV There Yet?* and *Phasmophobia*, along with popular Roblox games like *Grow a Garden* and *Dress to Impress*. The trend has grown in popularity over the past year—to the point where, according to Newzoo Director of Consulting Ben Porter, it’s inspired some PvP games to embrace co-op too.

“*Arc Raiders* has been bridging that gap of co-op to PvP,” he said. “They’re attempting to put aggressive players who shoot at other parties together, and people who are less aggressive are put together. They’re trying to algorithmically place like-minded players into similar servers, so that you can have your sort of ideal PvPE experience.” *

» INTERVIEW: Deploy Their Vision

AAA Co-Development



KEVIN JANZEN

CEO OF GAMING & EDTECH
AI STUDIO, GLOBANT

You've worked with companies like Unity, Riot, and FIFA. What is collaboration like in these relationships?

It really depends on each company that we work with. Usually, the first model of engagement is that you're in and out, or you are basically just augmenting their capacity—what we call a "staff augmentation" type of project.

But that is not the end goal, right? What we like to do is use those opportunities to prove our worth and that, by learning their preferred way of working and their own processes, we can become more of an extension of themselves. It is a compliment and the end goal that we have received on more than one occasion.

What is the balance between your creative freedom and following the vision of the company?

It's less freedom, usually, when we're talking about co-development. When you're talking about a second-party studio or handing over a full game, that's a different story.



“By learning their preferred way of working ... we can become more of an extension of themselves.”

When it's co-development, usually the creative vision is kept within the main studio that's producing the game. In many cases, we get the privilege of having more of a creative input if we have earned that trust; if they have carved out specific aspects of the game that they want to send our way completely. Of course, that is very rewarding for the teams.

But being part of a co-dev studio is also knowing that you're working on somebody else's game and you are helping them deploy their vision. *

MOBILE GAMING

* State of [Mobile] Play

Mobile continues to draw in millions, but pay-to-play alone may no longer be enough. We've seen more streaming services adopt in-app advertising for paying users, and mobile gaming is doing the same. Dual monetization is becoming more commonplace in mobile, with publishers featuring in-game ads alongside in-app purchases (IAP).

Hyper-casual games are still a key part of the mobile gaming ecosystem, and there's an emerging focus on mechanics over metagaming and volume over viability. In his 2026 talk, Dave Rohrl, CEO of Mobile Game Doctor, profiled Vietnam's growing industry, where swaths of hyper-casual games are churned out in short development cycles (usually 4 to 6 weeks). This cycle enables developers to respond to trends, but it's harder to establish a strong metanarrative.

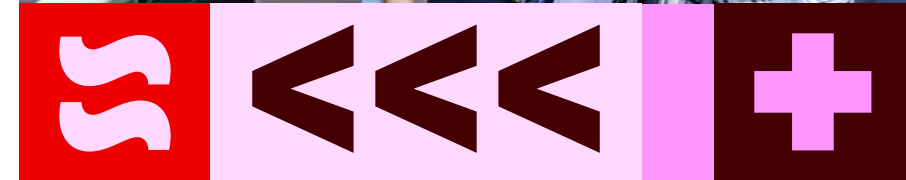
"Not a ton of sophistication there yet, but at least enough to allow them to start buying higher value IAP traffic and pursue a dual economy or dual monetization," he added.

When it comes to casual and hybrid-casual games, Rohrl pointed to puzzle games like *Merge Mansion* as one of the current leading trends. There's also a heightened focus on retention over acquisition—with social engagement as one of the key resources. In his Luminaries talk, Justin Sousa,

head of developer community at Roblox, highlighted the importance of social loops for Roblox games, where about 80% of users are mobile. "Gaming is a social interaction at its core, and you've got to honor that," he said.

But there are other trends in player retention—like human psychology. In her GDC session, Xianzi Feng, art director at Infold Games (Papergames), talked about how the *Love and Deepspace* team "broke down the feeling of love at first sight" using cognitive science, and that each character update is meticulously crafted to grow that connection. Often in very subtle, hard-to-notice ways, like the length of eye contact or the number of pearls on a necklace.

"From a cognitive science perspective, love at first sight is our brain formulating patterns. We are drawn to something that is familiar yet new," she said. "Love at first sight feels like destiny, but it's actually a selection of our subconscious." *





“ For a lot of games now, direct-to-consumer is the largest sales channel. It’s bigger than Apple. It’s bigger than Google.”

MICHAEL LEWIS
CEO, OFC ADS

> SPOTLIGHT: The Future of [D2C]

The direct-to-consumer (D2C) monetization model has long been a staple for core games. But ever since the courts ruled that Apple cannot ban apps that link to external payment sites, D2C has started catching on among mobile publishers.

“I think every major publisher is going to be doing this to some degree or another, but it’s not totally clear yet what the ceiling is,” Omdia principal analyst Liam Deane told GDC.

During his 2026 session, OFC Ads CEO Michael Lewis shared how some mobile publishers are getting 25 to 50% of profits from D2C, but on average, anywhere between 2-15% of hyper-casual and casual games include direct-to-consumer payment options. Setting up direct purchase options can be challenging, but it boasts great benefits: Lewis said D2C increases profits by \$250K for every \$1-million processed.

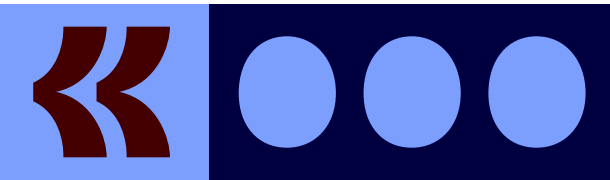
There are also advantages for players. Deane noted how the added margins mean publishers can offer discounts or additional benefits for those who purchase directly through them (Lewis recommended benefits over discounts, as players tend to prefer getting more over

paying less). But it only works if the process flows well. The more friction, the fewer users.

Lewis recommended mobile publishers start by providing deep links to their direct-to-consumer checkout pages, usually with a value add-on (like 10% more coins). He said the page should be co-branded and have a similar look and feel to the game itself. In addition, the checkout should open directly on the web, no sign-in required, and should redirect back with some visual signifier of achievement. “Make it feel rewarding,” he added.

Web stores are trickier, but Lewis did recommend bringing them into the business model. When suggesting ways to increase usage, he highlighted the importance of having a daily streak tracker, with extra rewards, to incentivize users to show up consistently.

“The number one reason why web stores don’t succeed is because they don’t have enough traffic, and they’re not sticky enough,” he said. “If it’s a better experience, it’s going to yield better results.” *



“ CASE STUDY: New York Times Games

When Game Doctor CEO Dave Rohrl was readying his “Year in Live Service Games” presentation on the popularity of daily puzzle games, there was a clear frontrunner driving the trend: “When we originally talked about doing this section, we referred to it as The New York Times Games section.”

The Times has seen massive success in the daily puzzles space, ending 2025 with nearly 13-million subscribers and over 11-billion puzzles solved across games like *Wordle* and *Connections*. According to Rohrl, “The Times is, no doubt, the largest purveyor of daily games for the English-speaking market.”

Now, they’re looking to expand. At the 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming, The New York Times Games team showcased their first standalone game, *Crossplay*. In an interview with GDC, Amra Khullar, senior product manager at The New York Times, said the PvP nature of the game necessitated its own app. It’s also part of an effort to diversify their audience base.

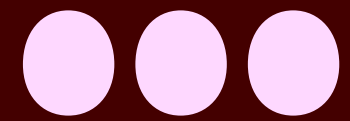
“Having a standalone app gives *Crossplay* its own positioning in the App Store and [Google] Play store. It allows us to test, measure, and give it its own storefront,” she said. “Really reach out to a specific audience—a new audience of its own, essentially.”

“ Traffic in this category cannot be bought; there’s just not enough value in the average user to justify that expense. That means the traffic has to be earned.”

DAVE ROHRL
CEO, GAME DOCTOR

Rohrl shared advice on how to find success in this “interesting and under-observed category” of mobile games. He said daily puzzle games need an established base of operations with high traffic, like a news site or social media page. Each app should have one puzzle per day, be easy to learn, and, perhaps most importantly, feature content that is clearly created by humans. Players are more likely to engage with puzzles that are witty, intelligent, and genuine, rather than engineered by an algorithm.

“Traffic in this category cannot be bought; there’s just not enough value in the average user to justify that expense. That means the traffic has to be earned,” he said. *



» INTERVIEW: The Daily Habit

Crossplay and mobile gaming



AMRA KHULLAR

SENIOR PRODUCT MANAGER,
NEW YORK TIMES



SHAFIK QUORAISHEE

SENIOR GAME DEVELOPER,
NEW YORK TIMES

What are some of the lessons you've taken from The Times' previous games, like *Wordle* and *Crossword*, and brought into *Crossplay*?

Amra Khullar: The daily habit is super important. People always talk about *Wordle* in the context of "oh, I've played my daily *Wordle* today." That's really important to why, in a large part, our games are successful because we have that habituation factor where people feel it's part of their routine.

When it comes to *Crossplay*, we wanted to build a feature set so that it could fit into your routine in a positive way. That lesson is very important and translatable to anything we do in the future.

How does the matchmaking system work?

Shafik Quoraishee: Matchmaking is really important to balance games that involve multiplayer. A lot of thought went into making it fair for people [who are] playing their friends or strangers. For example, the better you are at playing matches, your score will go up, and you'll be put into a different bracket with more advanced players within a certain range of your play ability. We use a dynamic similar to Elo scores.

We also compute other factors to ensure fair gameplay. One thing we care about is that the people you're playing against are active participants in the game. We want people who



are looking for matches to find others who see games through from start to finish.

Does The New York Times Games have a mobile-first strategy, and what are the challenges of that?

Amra: We are fairly mobile-first right now. The challenge is launching a new game or app in this ecosystem. How do you get the right audience? How do you scale the game? How do you build a retentive game? For *Crossplay*, it's been great because we've gotten really great player reception. But there's always a challenge around reaching the right audience. Whether a new game will be a new app or part of the current New York Times Games app depends on the type of audience we're trying to reach. *

ADVOCACY

* State of [Equal] Play

Culture and sustainability are at the heart of the game industry, and professionals from all walks of life gathered at the 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming to share their triumphs, challenges, and perspectives. Topics included accessibility for neurodivergent workers, casting authentic voices for diverse games, and “designing disagreement” in an increasingly polarized society.

A major point of discussion was the recent rise in anti-DEI policies; companies moving to generic concepts like “belonging” while promoting merit-based systems of advancement. However, as was pointed out in several sessions, this assumes everyone starts from the same place and that’s not often the case.

During “Mid-Stage Career Development Talk for Marginalized Game Devs,” industry leaders looked at how a “post-DEI climate” has impacted those looking to advance their careers—including Nair Fajardo, CEO of Dreams of Heaven Games. In her microtalk, she criticized the lack of access for marginalized developers, calling it an “infrastructure problem,” and noted the largely invisible labor needed to make up for a dearth of opportunities.

“There’s something this industry doesn’t talk about enough: Not talent, access. Access to funding,

access to networks, access to visibility, and access to decision-making rooms. Because talent is everywhere, access is not,” she said.

LGBTQ+ issues were also at the forefront, with discussions on recent discriminatory policies and actions (especially against trans people). In an interview with GDC, Gay Gaming Professionals CEO Gordon Bellamy noted how, while he’s seen amazing progress over the past two decades, the subsequent backlash is taking a toll on LGBTQ+ creators. He highlighted the importance of education, empathy, and allyship within the overall game community.

“Use your power. There is a power you have when you are not experiencing the dynamic—to intervene, to be seen, to be heard—that is not available to a person who is experiencing the dynamic,” he said. *



> Age Is [Not] Just a Number

Video games have been around for over half a century, and many professionals who've been around since the early days are approaching their later years. Ageism, or workplace discrimination based on one's age, is not an unfamiliar concept for some in the game industry. But it's starting to become a larger part of the conversation.

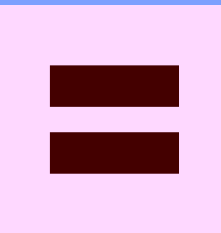
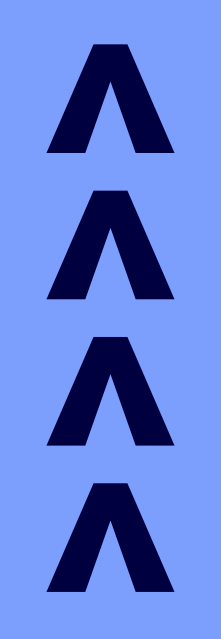
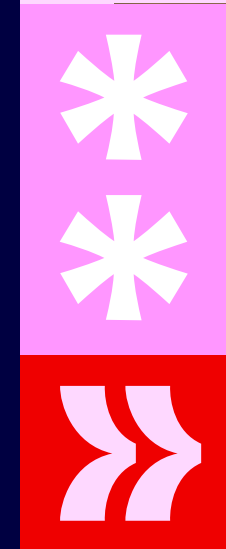


Older game developers gathered in a roundtable to discuss the unique challenges they face in today's industry. Topics included dealing with imposter syndrome, the growing obsolescence of some of their skills, and

the challenges of securing a new job after being laid off. To protect the privacy of participants, no quotes or identifying information will be shared here.

Generative AI was a top point of conversation. Several touted the benefits of using AI tools for brainstorming or outlining but were worried about bringing them into more creative roles. Some feared they'd be laid off for not understanding the technology as much as younger professionals. Others said the tools risk taking away the joy in coding, programming, design, and other feats they've spent their careers mastering.

Job roles were another tricky subject. Some talked about the pressure they feel to take on leadership or managerial positions, due to their age, when some of them just want to code or write (those who've experienced layoffs felt this the most). They said it's common to assume that an older developer must manage, not create, leaving them feeling unsatisfied in their work. But when they apply for contributor roles, they're seen as overqualified or too expensive. Some even noted how they hide parts of their résumé so they don't read as "too old" for the job. *



{ON THE FLOOR} International Pavilions

This year's Festival Hall featured international pavilions representing over 30 countries—including Kyrgyzstan, which appeared on the floor for the first time. The incredible games and creators represented at these pavilions showcase GDC's commitment to bringing the international game ecosystem together.



“This is our third straight year showcasing our games at GDC. It feels very special to be here... This is the right place for any developer.”

DEEPAK GURIJALA

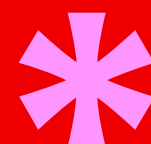
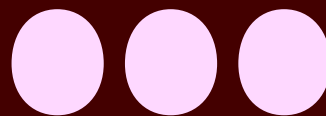
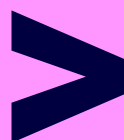
CO-FOUNDER, 1312 INTERACTIVE
(INDIA PAVILION)



“The chance of sharing that experience — of having your own creation be experienced by other people — that is something that moves me a lot. And probably it's that sensation that join us together as people, in an event such as this one.”

FRANCISCO BRAVO

CEO, BREWMASTERS GAMES
(CHILE PAVILION)



» INTERVIEW: Advocating for Mental Health



ELIZABETH KILMER, PHD
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST,
RESPEC PSYCHOLOGICAL
SERVICES

Take This, Inc. debuted the 2025 Mental Health in the Game Industry study at the 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming, exploring the rise in on-the-job stress and how studios can support their employees. Clinical psychologist Elizabeth Kilmer, PhD, sat down with GDC to discuss their latest findings.

GDC: Can you tell me a bit about the research that you presented at GDC?

Elizabeth Kilmer, PhD: At Take This, we care deeply about the intersection between mental health and games. Our goal was to understand how developers are doing in terms of mental well-being and burnout, what resources studios are providing, what developers are using themselves, and what changes they want to see in the industry moving forward.

What were some of the statistics that stood out to you the most?

Kilmer: One key statistic was that only about 20% of the sample reported their mental health as good or very good, with just 2% in the excellent range, which is concerning. Additionally, 94% of the sample reported experiencing at least one burnout symptom, with an average of seven out of 12 possible symptoms. These findings highlight significant challenges in the industry.

Are there any unique aspects of game development that you notice take a toll on someone's mental health?

Kilmer: Game development is a passion-driven industry; similar to teaching or nonprofit work, where people invest a lot of themselves. For many developers, games are not just work but also hobbies and social connections. This overlap can lead to over-engagement, even without managerial pressure.

What is the end goal of this research and subsequent work?

Kilmer: Our goal is to provide actionable takeaways. We identified accommodations developers use, such as flexible schedules, remote work, and muted notifications. Requested resources include wellness stipends, education on ADHD, autism, burnout prevention, resilience, and navigating layoffs. ✨



PUBLISHING & FINANCING

* State of [Money] Play

Any startup founder or indie studio head is going to tell you the market is tough right now. There are more games than investors, more studios than publishers, and getting a project funded can seem like an insurmountable task. But the Festival of Gaming is where success stories are born: Jenny Xu, founder of Talofa Games, shared how she started her fundraising journey by networking with attendees and experts at a previous GDC.

Experts at a variety of GDC talks shared the challenges developers and studios have been facing over the past year, and ways to navigate them. More publishers are comfortable waiting until games are more established, looking for those with successful online communities, wishlists, and social media buzz. At the very least, they're expecting a playable demo or prototype. This means teams need money before they go out to get money—which feels like it kind of defeats the purpose.



There were suggestions on how to accomplish this, including individual angel investors, regional government support, contests, or pre-seed venture capital firms. During a Luminaries talk, Emily Greer, venture partner at 1Up Ventures, shared the story of a studio that funded its prototype by selling a highly sought-after domain name it had previously registered.

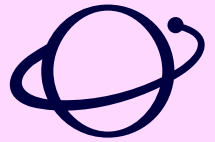
But that's just one step of many. Once the company and prototype are ready to head out there, there's also the issue of finding the right people to work with. Lauren Frazier-Silva, co-founder and former CTO at Ramen VR, had a simple philosophy: "Choose partners, not checks." During her 2026 panel, she noted how finding people who believe in the game, team, and company should be the priority, rather than focusing on dollar amounts or which investors have the most name recognition. *

“ That first bit of money is often the hardest.”

EMILY GREER

VENTURE PARTNER, 1UP VENTURES

New Models for Sources of Capital



– Nicole Lazzaro, CEO and Founder, XEODesign from “How I Raised X Million”

- **User Acquisition Funds**
(e.g., General Catalyst)
- **Loans and LOC's Pay Back**
(e.g., Tilting Point)
- **Tech Innovation Funds**
(e.g., Supercell AI Lab)
- **Accelerators/Incubator**
(e.g., YC Tech Stars)
- **Tech Platforms**
(e.g., Meta AI Glasses)
- **Streaming Services**
(e.g., Apple, Netflix)
- **Successful Studios > Publishers**
(e.g., Black Tabby Games)
- **Successful Game Developers > Funders**
(e.g. Outersloth)

SPOTLIGHT: GDC Pitch

GDC Pitch is the Festival of Gaming’s annual live pitch showcase, hosted and co-organized by Jason Della Rocca, a global expert in funding, pitching, and studio acceleration (co-founder, Execution Labs; former Executive Director of the IGDA). It’s an unforgettable experience that celebrates game changers and helps them find success.



INTERVIEW: Jason Della Rocca



How important is “the pitch,” and why should game industry professionals take time to perfect theirs?

Jason Della Rocca: Your pitch is the summary of your game and its business case. If you are

investing the time and cost of being at GDC to hustle for funding, you need to take your pitch seriously. Publishers and investors want to understand who you are and why you or your team can deliver on your vision; they want to be inspired by the cool and compelling project you are building; and they need to understand how you’ll make craptons of money, thus justifying their investment.

What are the biggest differences between pitching to publishers and pitching to investors? How can game industry professionals best prepare for both?

Jason: Good news, you don’t have to prepare for both! If you are doing premium-priced PC/console games, you really only should pitch to publishers and other forms of project funding. If you are doing free-to-play GaaS-style games, then you should be

pitching to equity-style investors (e.g., venture funds, angels). Your business or pricing model determines who you should be chasing for funding.

In terms of the pitch, the main difference is that you are pitching your game to a publisher (as they care about that single game as the opportunity) versus pitching your company to investors (as they care about the long-term growth and excitability of your whole company). So, the pitch deck emphasis needs to be adjusted accordingly.

What brings you back to GDC Pitch every year?

Jason: Oh, I just love it! It’s so much fun to coordinate the jury members and to coach the teams. They are all doing cool stuff, but the extra prep really helps them fine-tune their pitch. They do a wonderful job onstage and, more critically, it helps with their pitch meetings during the whole week. It feels great to have that kind of impact with developers. I actually helped the GDC team launch GDC Pitch and GDC Play over a decade ago. I’ve run Pitch since then and hope to do so for years to come! *

* Ace in the Hole

How Playstack Discovered *Balatro*

“One thing that we do at Playstack is we scout. We look at games across all sorts of platforms. Part of my job is looking at every game that goes up on Steam every day, if that’s possible, you know. I start in the morning, and I’ll look through all of the games that have just gone up. That’s how we first came across games like *Balatro*.

I saw the game the day it went up on Steam. Quite interestingly, at that point in time, we were quite focused on wishlists as a metric, Steam wishlists. I don’t think we believe they’re quite as important as they used to be.

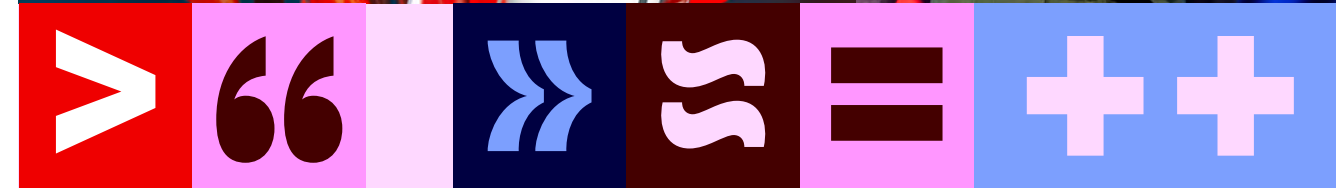
So, *Balatro* came through on Steam, and it didn’t have many followers to begin with. It didn’t have many wishlists on the platform. But it looked interesting. We thought, ‘That’s a cool-looking game. We should reach out and just try it.’ And I went to Twitter at the time and contacted LocalThunk. I think he had maybe two or three followers at the time on the platform. So, we were in there really early. And I think that made the key difference.

Obviously, I’d like to think we were a great partner for the game, but just the speed at which we could move out was very important for that time.”

PATRICK JOHNSON

HEAD OF DISCOVERY, PLAYSTACK

Quote from GDC 2026 session “From Discovery to Launch: An Inside Look at the Publisher-Developer Relationship”



> To Thine Own Self [Publish] Be True

Many studios dream of landing that big publishing deal, the one that will take their game from the pitch deck to the Steam Deck. But that's not the right path for everyone. Some may have a game that publishers don't think is marketable. Others may want to keep creative control.

There are resources available for those who wish to pursue self-publishing. For example, there's Outersloth, a game fund established by *Among Us* developer Innersloth. CEO and Co-founder Forest Willard and Communications Director Victoria Tran broke down game funds during their 2026 GDC Festival of Gaming talk.

There are benefits to self-publishing with game funds instead of going the more traditional route. Publishers typically expect higher sales percentages for the support they provide. Game funds remove this from

the equation, which can make the contract more profit-friendly for studios. This route also lets studios make and promote their games on their own terms.

That said, pursuing self-publishing opens the door to potential issues (and a great deal more work). Game funds do not function as publishers, so they don't typically offer services like marketing, testing, or quality assurance. This leaves creators with a lion's share of responsibilities, some of which they may not have the experience or training to handle. Also, it's a competitive field. Willard said they've signed about 1.4% of games submitted so far, and he believes that's slightly higher than the average.

When deciding which route to take, Willard and Tran said it's about knowing your team's strengths and weaknesses and making sure you pursue a path that uplifts your work in the right places. *



No one knows your game better than you.



VICTORIA TRAN

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR,
INNERSLOTH



» INTERVIEW: An [IP] With Legs

What to know before pitching to investors



LUCIEN PARSONS
FRACTIONAL COO,
OPSCAT

“I went and asked a bunch of investors the same question: What is it that studios miss? What is it that startups miss?”

The first one—in certain people’s description, by a country mile—was their finances. Just understanding the finances of running a business and understanding what they should be asking for when in that process. And that goes from having the actual financial documents in order and actually knowing what they’re doing, understanding their cap table, and knowing who owns what. Being really careful about what it is that you’re presenting and what you have to present—but also what you’re asking for.

It’s a big thing to go and say, ‘Hey, I need a million dollars to go make this, or \$5-million or \$10-million or even half a million dollars.’ It’s a lot better if you can say, ‘I’m going to use it for this, this, and this. And I know something’s going to go wrong, so this



“ Show you’re building capacity, that you and the team are going to get better and better together, and be able to create something on the next pass that’s even bigger and better than this is.”

percentage is going to be set aside for the things that go wrong—so that I don’t have to come back to you in a year and say I need more money because I didn’t think these things through.’

It all comes down to having a very coherent story and a very coherent plan that are working together—as you work with building the pitch deck, talking to the investors. The ideas you want to get across are, ‘Look, this is going to be an IP with legs. It’s going to have different variants that I can later work on. Not that I’m going to build a trilogy right off the bat, but if this is successful, it leads to more opportunities.’

Also, show you’re building capacity, that you and the team are going to get better and better together, and be able to create something on the next pass that’s even bigger and better than this is. If you can show investors that you have the vision for that kind of longevity, that ticks a lot of boxes.” *

FESTIVAL LIFE

Around {MOSCO}NE}



GDC {NIGHTS}

* Opening Night @ Oracle Park



* 3rd Annual Game Developers Concert

INTERVIEW: A Game Developer's CONCERT



AUSTIN WINTORY
COMPOSER, 2026 GRAMMY
AWARD WINNER

What is it like creating the GDC Developer's Concert?

I keep waiting for the other shoe to drop, because it's crazy lucky that I'm given a budget to hire an orchestra and free rein to invite any guests that I want. No, there's no filtration of like, "Well, I don't know. Is this a good person for our stage?" In fairness, I don't even give anyone an opportunity to rebut my selections. I just show up. But the fact that they let me do that is crazy.

This year's theme was about new beginnings. What inspired that choice?

It was because of the rebrand to the GDC Festival of Gaming. I just found myself thinking [how] I admire when someone doesn't sort of rest on their laurels, and they don't think, "I can kind of do tomorrow what I did today." That's not how I operate.

When I see other people take big swings, I find that inspiring. For an event like this, that's as old as it is ... to see them go, "You know what? Why should we not redo the formula? And if there's things about it that don't work, we'll modify them, we'll improve them." They listen to people's feedback. Because of these concerts, I've really gotten to know a lot of the staff, and they really do care.

Are you already thinking about 2027?

Not only yeah, but I have a spreadsheet that has 30 years worth of ideas that I just kind of try and move around and experiment with. Of course, I also have to

“ It can't be just this parade of greatest hits. I want it to feel very real to where the industry is.”

leave most of it open with the idea that I won't really know what I want to do until probably December, because there's a whole year's worth of games to come out.

What I love about this event is that it's usually about the previous year, top to bottom. It's reflecting on all the highs and the lows—whether that's people here looking for work or their studio closed, all the way to celebrating at the awards show with this huge success they had, and everything in between. It's like a churning shoreline that is just recleaning itself nonstop.

And so, I said the concert should have that same spirit. It can't be just this parade of greatest hits and things. I want it to feel very real to where the industry is. *



AWARDS WINNERS

2026 Independent Games Festival Awards

BEST STUDENT GAME

Poco
(Whalefall, Micah Boursier)

EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN

Titanium Court
(AP Thomson, Fellow Traveller)

EXCELLENCE IN VISUAL ART

Eclipsium
(Housefire, CRITICAL REFLEX)

EXCELLENCE IN AUDIO

Baby Steps
(Gabe Cuzzillo, Maxi Boch, Bennett Foddy, Devolver Digital)

AUDIENCE AWARD

Wednesdays
(Pierre Corbinais, The Pixel Hunt, exaheva, Christophe Galati, ARTE France)

WINGS AWARD

13Z: The Zodiac Trials
(Mixed Realms Pte Ltd)

ALT.CONTROL.GDC AWARD

ProyectoEXO
(Todo Normal)

EXCELLENCE IN NARRATIVE

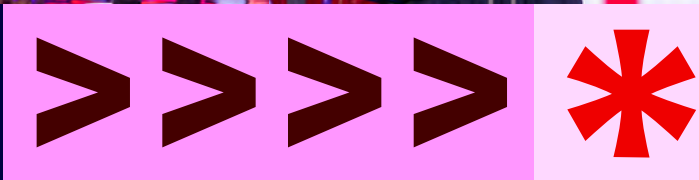
Perfect Tides: Station to Station
(Three Bees)

NUOVO AWARD

HORSES
(Andrea Lucco Borlera, Santa Ragione)

SEUMAS MCNALLY GRAND PRIZE

Titanium Court
(AP Thomson, Fellow Traveller)



INTERVIEW: Winning IGF



AP THOMSON

CREATOR, TITANIUM COURT

IGF 2026: Seumas McNally Grand Prize, Excellence in Design (co-creator; Consume Me)



JENNY JIAO HSIA

CREATOR, CONSUME ME

IGF 2025: Seumas McNally Grand Prize, Nuovo Award
GDCA 2026: Social Impact Award

I'm going to start with a bit of trivia for you, AP. Not only are you the second person to win twice, alongside Lucas Pope, you are actually the first person to win two years in a row. How does that feel?

AP Thomson: It feels like I'm going to lose to the Eagles at the Super Bowl next year. I made that joke five times last night, but now everyone else gets to hear it.

Jenny, what was it like passing the torch to AP Thompson? I saw your face when you opened that envelope and you saw that he had won. Take us through that moment.

Jenny Jiao Hsia: Well, I was going to say *Titanium Court* either way [laughs]... so it's fortunate for me that that was actually what was written. I'm so happy that he won. I think it worked out perfectly.

When I played *Consume Me*, I was taken aback by how much it resonated with me. I grew up in the 90s and 2000s, and it was all diet culture. Did you intend it to be a universal experience, or was it purely a personal story?

Jenny: I think it was pretty personal. But I also believe that people, you know, we're not so different, and my story can probably resonate with you in one way or another... And I believe that we can connect over that—just like, you know, oversharing—I feel like that's how I enjoy relating to people and that's what I'm used to.

I'm really scared to work on my next game, because I don't know if I want it to be autobiographical anymore. Because then it would just be *Consume Me 2*, you know? Because, like, I haven't really changed that much as a person.

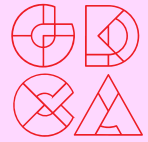
In *Titanium Court*, you're an understudy coming into this play. Why did you frame it this way, where it's almost like a play within a game?

AP: I would say that games actually resemble plays a lot more than maybe people acknowledge. I think we're used to games mimicking movies, but I think games are capable of mimicking a lot of other things. Although one thing I will mention is that I didn't really think of *Titanium Court* as a play when I was developing it. I thought of it as a puppet show.



Can you elaborate a bit on that?

AP: Because a lot of the way that I was developing, it was basically saying, "Okay, I'm going to make a little puppet over here and they're going to say this, and then they're going to walk over to this part of the stage, and then they're going to say that." And, you know, as the person directing all of this, it really does feel like I'm kind of just moving a bunch of little puppets around. *



2026 Game Developers Choice Awards

BEST DEBUT

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33
(Sandfall Interactive / Kepler Interactive)

BEST DESIGN

Blue Prince
(Dogubomb / Raw Fury)

BEST TECHNOLOGY

Death Stranding 2: On the Beach
(Kojima Productions / Sony Interactive Entertainment)

BEST VISUAL ART

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33
(Sandfall Interactive / Kepler Interactive)

INNOVATION AWARD

Blue Prince
(Dogubomb / Raw Fury)

BEST NARRATIVE

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33
(Sandfall Interactive / Kepler Interactive)

AUDIENCE AWARD

and Roger
(TearyHand Studio / Kodansha)

BEST AUDIO

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33
(Sandfall Interactive / Kepler Interactive)

SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD

Consume Me
(Jenny Jiao Hsia)

GAME OF THE YEAR

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33
(Sandfall Interactive / Kepler Interactive)

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Don Daglow

AMBASSADOR AWARD

Rebecca Ann Heineman



INTERVIEW: The Creation of Clair Obscur: Expedition 33



JENNIFER SVEDBERG-YEN

LEAD WRITER, VOICE AND
LOCALIZATION PRODUCER,
CLAIR OBSCUR: EXPEDITION 33

GDCA 2026: Game of the Year,
Best Narrative, Best Audio, Best
Debut, Best Visual Art



(excerpt from the GDC Side Quest Podcast)

“When I joined, there was no studio, actually. Guillaume [Broche] and Tom [Guillerman], who are two of the [Sandfall Interactive] co-founders; they were actually still at Ubisoft at the time.

I just sort of joined by accident? They were doing a little technical test, and Gil needed some voices to say a couple lines and put together a scene. He was looking for folks on Reddit, in the subreddit Record This for Free. I happened to be bored during Covid. I’m not a voice actor, but I thought it might be fun. So, I did it. That’s how I started. From there, it really was sort of like an actual RPG, where you’re just assembling your party.

We started thinking about, ‘Okay, what kind of story do we want to tell?’ Guillaume had been working on another story previous to that, but after some advice from various advisors and investors, we thought, ‘Oh,

actually, what about something that is closer to the identity of the studio, something that is more distinctly French?’ That’s why we landed on the Belle Epoque.

Guillaume and I came up with the idea for *Expedition 33* together. He was inspired by a painting that sort of sparked an idea in his head about a countdown with a monolith and a Paintress. And I, separately at the time, was actually writing a short story based on a dream that I had that was about, **spoiler alert**, a woman who enters into paintings and wants to bring her mother back out of a painting. So, we decided we’re gonna just smush those ideas together.

And the final element actually came from Guillaume’s mom. He asked her, ‘What’s the worst thing that can happen to you?’ And she said, well, losing one of her children. So, we’re like, okay, that’s how we’re going to bring these two pieces together. Apologies for the trauma to everybody, but you have Guillaume’s mom to thank for that.” *



GDC HIGHLIGHTS

G NEWS: Coverage From Game Developer

Game Developer, the media arm of GDC, is your year-round resource for staying ahead in the ever-evolving game industry. With authoritative news, technical insights, and diverse perspectives, it's designed to help you lead your market. Explore stories to learn, share, and stay connected until the next GDC.



ALISSA MCALOON
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR



DANIELLE RIENDEAU
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



BRYANT FRANCIS
SENIOR EDITOR



CHRIS KERR
SENIOR EDITOR



Lightspeed Studios unveils proprietary development framework to build titles 'rooted in reality'



Sumo Digital partners with Arm to test AI-powered neural graphics tech



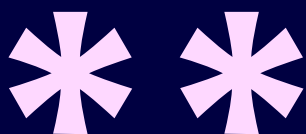
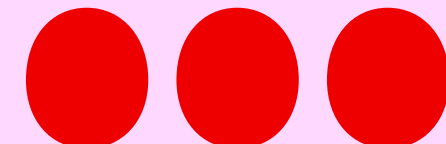
Microsoft lifts the lid on Project Helix at GDC Festival of Gaming



Microsoft says Xbox Play Anywhere titles can double spending and engagement



Google Cloud's vision for AI in the game industry



KEYNOTE: An Odyssey in Building Games That Last



ROB PARDO
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO,
BONFIRE STUDIOS



“Something that I’ve had to come to terms with over my long career is that you only get to make so many games—and the journey that *Arkheron* has been on has been an extremely long one. I’ve learned much about game development, and more importantly, I’ve grown so much as a leader for my own team.

What I hope for everyone here at GDC is that you get to make something that fills you with the same sense of pride when it gets out into the world. Something that you love dearly, something you’re willing to expose to reality, and something you’re humble enough to let evolve.

As game makers, we don’t get to decide if a game lasts: At best, we get to earn the right to find out. And I know the industry has changed. It’s a lot harder to break in, and development costs are going up, and we’ve all seen how many layoffs have happened in the AAA space.

“As game makers, we don’t get to decide if a game lasts: At best, we get to earn the right to find out.”

So, to those of you who are maybe executives or business leaders, I’ll leave you with one final thought: If you actually create a game that truly endures, it’s really incredibly difficult. And if you’re fortunate enough to launch one of those games, the rewards can be extraordinary. But in my experience, if you built a game like that, it also means that you’ve built an incredible development team. And personally, I think the game team is more valuable than the game itself.

Treasure that team, nurture that team. Give them the autonomy to keep taking care of the players. Because the thing that made the game special in the first place was the people who built it.” *



Selected Sources

2026 GDC Festival of Gaming Sessions

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Nathan Chen, head of technology at Tencent Games
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*** AI Trends of Today and Opportunities for Tomorrow: Ask Me Anything**

Bryan Catanzaro, VIP Applied Deep Learning Research at NVIDIA
Julien Merceron, founder and CEO at Orion Productions
Alexander Moufarek, product lead of Inception at Google DeepMind

Zhen Zhai, associate director of applied science at Blizzard Entertainment
Ross O'Dwyer, director of engineering at Oculus VR, Meta
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Benjamin Siders, attorney and counselor at law, Lewis Rice LLC
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Nick Kaman, studio head at Aggro Crab

[Watch on GDC Vault](#)

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Scott Hartsman, advisor and director

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Justin Sousa, head of developer community at Roblox

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Michael Lewis, CEO at OFC Ads

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4. Publishing & Financing

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Nicole Lazzaro, CEO and founder at XEODesign

Jenny Xu, CEO at Talofa Games

Lauren Frazier-Silve, Co-founder and former CTO

at Ramen VR

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Behind the Scenes of Game Funding

Emily Greer, venture partner at 1Up Ventures

Ed Fries, general partner at 1Up Ventures

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Forest Willard, CEO and co-founder at Innersloth

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Ben Starr, actor, Independent

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Nina Kim, senior game designer at Rare Ltd.
Leyla Lacombe, producer at Santa Monica Studios
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Michael Jones, senior sound designer, Independent
Lyn Dang, owner and principal consultant at Studio Citrus
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Lindsay Grace, Knight Chair at University of Miami
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Paul Fischer, responsible AI advisor and manager at Accenture

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Elizabeth Kilmer, clinical psychologist at Respec Psychological Services

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Jennifer Svedberg-Yen, lead writer and voice and localization producer at Sandfall Interactive

AP Thomson, developer, independent

Austin Wintory, composer, independent

Author



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