ZEUS MENDOZA

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SENIOR GAME DESIGNER
Systems Design | Progression & Economy | Combat Balance | LiveOps

Senior Game Designer with approximately 15 years across game design, systems balancing, and testing, primarily in mobile free-to-play. Designs progression, economy, combat, and LiveOps systems, combining spreadsheet modeling and design documentation with hands-on content implementation through testing and live release.

Areas of Expertise

Systems & Progression Design | Economy & Reward Tuning | PvE/PvP Character & Faction Balance | LiveOps & Events | F2P Monetization | Spreadsheet Modeling | Design Documentation | Content Implementation | Player Research & Iteration

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Niantic - Pokemon GO, San Francisco, CA | November 2020 - May 2025
Game Designer III (Senior Design Ownership: Systems & LiveOps)

- Designed Golden PokeStops for Gimmighoul's introduction, adapting an existing system under an aggressive timeline and limited resources; the feature returned in later LiveOps events.
- Modeled global Pokemon encounter distributions and loot tables in spreadsheets for events and seasonal baselines across PokeStops, raids, and research quests; implemented tuning in GMT through validation, testing, and live release.
- Owned systems and LiveOps events spanning boss raids, seasonal features, and core loop enhancements; tuned event pacing and rewards around player engagement goals.
- Wrote event backstories and Gimmighoul’s introductory story, including Professor Willow and Jacq’s dialogue at the first golden PokéStop. Helped write the Fashion Challengers’ dialogue for Fashion Week 2021.
- Wrote system specifications for Engineering, Art, UX, QA, and Product; used prototypes and spreadsheet models to evaluate pacing, combat, and progression.
- Collaborated with The Pokemon Company on IP authenticity, event fidelity, and brand alignment.
- Partnered with UXR on player studies and used qualitative and quantitative findings to refine feature mechanics.
- Led competitor teardown presentations to mentor junior designers and inform LiveOps design decisions.

EA Capital Games - Star Wars: Galaxy of Heroes, Sacramento, CA | March 2016 - November 2020
Game Designer

- Led game design for Jedi Master Luke Skywalker, tuning tank mechanics and Jedi/Light Side synergies for PvE with emphasis on PvP balance; the character remains in competitive Grand Arena use more than five years after release.
- Designed and shipped legendary units, combat encounters, guild bosses, and rotating events.
- Modeled gear and power progression in spreadsheets; balanced hundreds of characters, gear items, and event segments, including character and faction synergies.
- Implemented tuning values, ability mechanics, and images in XML and proprietary tools; validated and tested changes through Unity before live release.
- Set up characters in Unity, connected ability icons and animation prefabs, placed enemy and boss lineups across combat stages, and organized store offerings across title updates.
- Wrote feature specifications and internal tool documentation for recurring LiveOps content development.
- Mentored junior designers on tuning, encounter design, and balance analysis.
- Collaborated with Lucasfilm on narrative fidelity and lore consistency for new features and units.

EA Capital Games - Star Wars: Galaxy of Heroes, Sacramento, CA | March 2015 - March 2016
Game Balance Specialist

- Contributed to Galaxy of Heroes from preproduction through launch, tuning balance and pacing across all launch characters and stages and implementing content through XML and Unity.
- Simulated player progression and combat scenarios using server tools and dashboards to evaluate difficulty and progression pacing.
- Validated post-launch tuning and analyzed player behavior to refine power curves, economy flow, and challenge levels.
- Created a reusable script template supplying static code for character stats and gear while teammates entered dynamic values and IDs. Adopted by the Game Balance Specialist team with manager approval.

5th Planet Games, Rocklin, CA | March 2012 - January 2015
Lead Game Designer

- Owned systems, progression, and economy design for Legacy of a Thousand Suns and Curio Quest across live browser and mobile titles.
- Designed and shipped units, bosses, items, and LiveOps events, balancing itemization, combat rewards, and progression pacing.
- Wrote character and event lore. On both Legacy of a Thousand Suns and Dawn of the Dragons, wrote much of the equipment lore and some of the side-story zones.
- Built sales and monetization calendars tied to content cadence and live event schedules.

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Various, Remote / Contract | January 2011 - March 2012
Contract Play Tester

- Tested early-stage systems and experiences and provided structured feedback to support iteration.

EDUCATION

Cal State University Northridge
Bachelor of Arts: English in Creative Writing

SOFTWARE

Google Sheets, Microsoft Excel (advanced economy modeling & tuning)

XML & proprietary tools (tuning, ability mechanics, images)

Unity (content setup, validation & testing) | GMT (live-game tuning)

Google Docs, Slides, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint | Jira, Confluence | Figma