

Developer Diary 2

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Chapter 1: The Legend of the Beta Testers

As game development challenges go, a technically solid foundation is always the primary task. Graphical implementation exemplifying our grand vision comes next. With these now both completed, the final task remains ensuring every game feature and operation actually works.

As with virtually any innovation process we arrived at a point, being too close to our own creation to effectively approach this task. This issue is perhaps best expressed by the phrase: "Not being able to see the wood for the trees." Unfortunately this proved true for us when "we could not see the bugs for the anti-bug spray" or something to that effect. After working so long on game logic we found we began to lose objectivity, with regards to player comprehension of the game. It became essential to have outsiders test the game.

To this end, we recruited a number from among the ultra-cool members of the original Lost Empire forum to become beta-testers for this new title. Our own Beta Task Force, if you will. Man, have they been effective! If BAFTA awards were given to the most devoted beta testers, ours would win hands down. By creating a special beta forum for our testers, we gave them the opportunity to question, to criticize, to offer suggestions and not least of all, the mechanism to report any bugs they encountered during testing. We also welcomed discussions about their own personal preferences. Though things have gotten a little heated at times, their dedication has never been in question. With their help, the game has been taken to the next level, in our view, to near perfection.

Chapter 2: Immortal Combat

Meanwhile, across the other side of the globe Jonas, our lead programmer completed his assignment to promote the game in San Francisco. Thankful to depart the cold, gray dreariness of the Danish winter, he spent four days showcasing the game to a number of influential game sites. For us, it's a very cool feeling having our latest game previewed and recognized on these major gaming sites. Though we suspect that for large companies this may have become a routine process, to a relatively upcoming company like ours, it has created a wave of genuine excitement. We are still getting used to this kind of attention.

It is not easy being a small company in this business. Computer games are expensive to make and demand both a high degree of skill and dedication from the game-makers. As the computer games industry is still relatively new, there is a lot of competition to secure the financial support needed to in order to commence such a costly production process. We are wary that smaller companies eventually fold, not because of their creative vision, but due to the lack of sufficient funding. That is why we are so excited to release our second game. Not too many young companies actually make it this far. So we're pretty psyched.

One of the things that have been important to us is ensuring it remains accessible to every type of player, from novice to expert. Turn-based strategy games have a reputation for being difficult to approach. Sometimes players can take hours to gain a basic level of understanding. With this in mind we have worked hard to make our game accessible. Yet, we have aimed to keep a certain level of complexity to ensure longevity. To walk the fine line between accessibility and complexity has been a real challenge. We have coined the term "Easy to access, difficult to master" - that's almost the definition of being a small game company.

Now with the international release dates unceasing creeping up on us, the feeling of joy and horror meld together in anticipation. Damn we're excited! Our game, our only focus for so long, is about to be released. How cool is that!