



April 1, 2013

### Agenda:

- Article of the Week – *Designing Without a Pitch – An FTL Postmortem*
- GDC Recap
- Presentations
- Reminders
  - Marshall Seese, Jr. of Mowgli – Saturday at 3pm
  - T-Shirts are now \$20

### Article of the Week

#### Designing Without a Pitch – An FTL Postmortem *by Simon Parkin*

[http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/189353/Designing\\_without\\_a\\_pitch\\_An\\_FTL\\_postmortem.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/189353/Designing_without_a_pitch_An_FTL_postmortem.php)

Developers who set out to create a game without a design document or template still must have a clear focus to test their ideas against. This was the advice of Matthew Davis and Justin Ma, co-founders of Subset Games and creators of *FTL: Faster Than Light*, the Kickstarter-funded space strategy game released to widespread critical and commercial success in 2012.

The pair began work on the game with only a target atmosphere – no genre, pacing or scope planned, thinking the development would be a three-month side-project for them.

“We started with a very vague idea for a concept and used that as a guiding light for the entire project,” said Davis. “By having one singular focus we were able to abandon everything else that didn’t fit in line with that vision.”

The pair admitted that many features were dropped from the game that they had initially hoped to include. “We wanted multiplayer features that didn’t fit the template,” said Ma. “We kept ditching things to keep moving towards the goal.”

Davis said that this focus can be various things to various different developers. “Technically that focus can be anything: a certain type of visual aesthetic a piece of audio; a story,” he said. “By having one focus and letting that direct your entire experience you can approach your builds from a distance and find out what to keep in order to make that game into the experience you want it to be.”

“Very often you get bogged down in a certain system and it just doesn’t work out,” said Ma. “We just had this one idea and it steered out path, allowing us to follow the fun and find what was interesting.”

Finding this focus was especially useful for the team when their Kickstarter exceeded its goal twenty



April 1, 2013

times over, generating \$200,000 instead of the requested \$10,000 from 10,000 backers. "You can't just throw money at a game and it gets better," said Davis. "It's a difficult balancing act – how to take advantage of clump of new resources, but also stick to release date and keep everyone happy. The focus helped us know where to expend energy and expand the game."