

Luke Hale Interview Transcript

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Game industry, producer role, project management, technical challenges, communication skills, gaming consoles, haptic feedback, video game development, career advice, creative media, job opportunities, cutting-edge technology, pandemic impact, entertainment industry, game development.

SPEAKERS

Lynda, Luke

Lynda 00:00

Do you play games? Do you want to work in the game industry? But you don't know where to start. Luke Hale, a producer at Frontier Developments who really recently produced Planet Coaster console edition, is joining the archives of it today to share his experience. Welcome, Luke. Perhaps you'd like to start by telling us about what you do on a day to day basis.

Luke 00:20

Yeah, sure. So realistically speaking, there is no day to day. My my day changes every every single day there's there's something new to kind of handle. It can vary from spending my day in meetings with developers, planning out and scoping out a project, deciding what needs to be done next, who we should speak to and how we get around certain technical hurdles. It could also be spent budgeting a project, deciding how many people need to work on it, if we need to work with outsourcers, how much licencing is going to cost for certain things, you know, all this kind of stuff my day could also be spent kind of filling some of the holes in in development, where maybe we're we're missing a voice actor, or we need some more, some more lines done for something like that, and producers will step in and and do little bits like that. Maybe we'll look at the script and and make some changes or fix some grammatical issues. Or, you know, as a producer, you could be doing anything on on any day, really, just to to make sure that the project happens.

Lynda 01:32

That sounds like you're an amazing problem solver.

Luke 01:36

Yeah? Like to think so yeah.

Lynda 01:39

Sounds as though you enjoy it a lot as well. Okay, so why did you choose to go into the gaming industry?

Luke 01:47

The games industry was something that I've been wanting to do since I was a very young kind of child. Playing games is something that I've always enjoyed and and going into work, I always kind of had the mindset that I wanted to do something that I enjoyed. It's something that my kind of my grandparents taught me, that you know, if you enjoy what you do, you'll never really feel like you're working and so since I enjoyed playing video games my whole childhood is kind of what I wanted to do. Yeah, growing up, I kind of played around with creating board games on paper. When I got a first computer, when I was quite young, I started making games of my own, and then I've just kind of taken it from there, really.

Lynda 02:35

That sounds great advice from your grandparents, yeah. What qualities do you think you need to be to have to be good at working in the games industry,

Luke 02:48

to be a good communicator is is certainly very important to be able to speak to a number of different types of people in in different ways, depending on who they are and what their role is, and how they're feeling sometimes at a time. Yeah, so, so one of the more challenging things can actually be the jumps in technology that happen within games. So one that we've experienced recently is the release of the new games consoles, the PS five and the Xbox series X. And the challenge comes with that, that we have a whole new base level of technology to work towards something in games, as always, you want to push consoles and hardware as far as possible, but you do have that limit when it comes to consoles, of what the upper limit is and the options of what you can spend that that on, in terms of memory and graphics and all these kinds of things. So it's a good challenge to have, but it's always difficult to especially as those consoles first come out, make the right decision so that you're not left behind by other similar games, I guess.

Lynda 04:04

Okay, that's great. It's very interesting. Thank you. How do you think that your your work impacts on society as a whole, the games industry as a whole, you know?

Luke 04:18

I think it's very positive, especially in this period that we've just gone through, or are still going through, with the with the global pandemic, we've seen the figures of people that play games rise, the spending of people that were already playing games rise. I think entertainment is is very important. And working in games, it means, not only are you working towards entertaining people, as well as working with cutting edge tech, it also kind of means you you reach those people that kind of really need a smile sometimes, and really, really need something to kind of. Writing their day and spend something to allow them to spend time enjoying themselves with and it's just great to know that you can kind of provide that.

Lynda 05:13

That's a great answer. Thank you. What is the most exciting thing you've mentioned a few things. What do you think is most exciting thing for you about working in technology?

Luke 05:28

I think the most exciting thing for me probably is the constantly changing hardware available to people that play games where I work, not only do we make games for consoles, but we make games for PC as well. And PC is a area of the market that's that's constantly evolving. It's always around the cutting edge of technology, and it always means that there are the goal posts are always moving, but it's, it's always improving in such ways that you can really kind of push everything that you're doing, which is really exciting, because it always means that decisions that you've made in the past, of, should we spend our time on A or B or C? Now you can do all three and start looking at other options too. So,

Lynda 06:24

yeah, it does sound very exciting, yeah, very exciting. So you're really seeing the cutting edge almost before it comes out, and you're having to think well ahead as well, presumably,

Luke 06:33

yeah, yeah, a lot of the time, especially with the consoles, a new one comes out, we'll know about it years in advance and be kind of working on on games, to push that hardware as far as we can, at that early stage, also that early on, we'll hear about all these new technologies, like with the PlayStation five, it's got this haptic feedback, which is kind of this, this a bit of a push in tech, especially on the console market. It's the first time it's been done, but it's something that's been known about for a while, so knowing about it so early on, we can kind of start to think, how can we use this in games, and in what areas would this enhance the experience of playing the game rather than just being kind of attacked on extra bit. So, yeah, no, it's, it's really interesting.

Lynda 07:31

And for those of us that don't know the word haptic, what does that mean?

Luke 07:35

Exactly? Oh, I can, I can tell you what that that technology is, the haptic feedback. But I'll refrain from trying to describe the word itself. It basically haptic feedback on buttons. Is buttons that push back, essentially. So depending on the situation, you can say, instead of it just being a you press it down and it's there. It will push back with X amount of force to simulate a lot of games are using at the moment for kind of gun triggers, so the trigger might get stuck or whatever. If it's you're using that trigger as a pedal, like an accelerator or a brake on a car, you can simulate the fact that it's got stuck, or it's more difficult to do in a certain situation, or a brake might be harder to press depending on the temperature of the area that you're driving around in. So it's really interesting. It brings a whole new kind of level to things. But, yeah, it's one of those things that we've had to think about for a long time before we could start considering implementing it anywhere.

Lynda 08:46

Sounds really exciting, really interesting. So you've been in your role now for quite a number of years. And what did you study at school and at university that really helped start your career in this, down this, you know, the way that you've gone.

Luke 09:05

Yeah, so when I was leaving school and going to college, knowing that I wanted to work in games, but at the time, my focus being as a as a coder, as a developer, so I was focused very much on maths, physics, kind of quite a lot on English as well. I took that into college. I studied creative media, because at the time, that was the closest that you could could study to what I wanted to do. I know that's changed now, and though at college there are of specific and individual courses for for games and for web and for all the kind of stuff that creative media covered, yeah, that was that was really interesting and kind of gave me more of an opportunity to create my own game. Games. I went to university to study video game development as a whole. So that kind of gave me a nice kind of let you, lets you dip your toes in all of the different areas of people that that put games together. So it's working on the the assets and the audio, the animation, the code and stuff like producing, which is what, what I do now.

Lynda 10:31

And did you choose to go into producing straight out of university, or did you go into actual, as you said, the sort of the actual making in terms of the coding, such like..?

Luke 10:42

Yeah, so I decided to go into production in my final year of university. I did a sandwich course, so I had a year of experience working, and I spent that year as a developer in web, and I just kind of decided that I much preferred the planning and the management side of development than I did to to actually, actually coding myself. So yeah, my third year of university, I focused on production, and then I was in a job just before I finished university as a producer.

Lynda 11:22

Well done. That sounds very good. So having gone through all of that, what advice would you give someone who's considering gaming a career in gaming or in tech more generally?

Luke 11:35

Yeah. So the advice that I would give people is that it's worth knowing that it is a viable job option is something that you can do. It's extremely varied working in in video games, because we have everything from very creative roles to very technical roles, depending on where people's strengths are. There are also it's not just a few big companies that put all the games together like it is in some industries, the companies in games range from 1000s of people down to five or six in some so that there are a huge number of companies and they scale drastically. So the opportunities are absolutely out there, and for anyone that's interested in games and in technology, it's definitely worth looking into.

Lynda 12:26

Well, thank you for sharing your work and your career with us. Is there anything else that you want to add that might inspire some person who's watching this and thinking, well, maybe I really enjoy playing games, and I maybe that's for me.

Luke 12:39

Yeah. So anyone who enjoys games, I think should, should consider a job in the games industry. The the span of jobs is so huge. If you have whatever your skill is, whatever you personally really enjoy doing, or really think you're good at, it's almost definitely something that we could use in the games

industry. It is a myth that there is no job that is literally sitting there and playing games all day. But there are some that come very, very close

Lynda 13:12

that's very, very interesting. It's been a fascinating insight, and I'm sure it'll help many people who want to follow their dreams and ambitions and work in the games industry. Thank you.