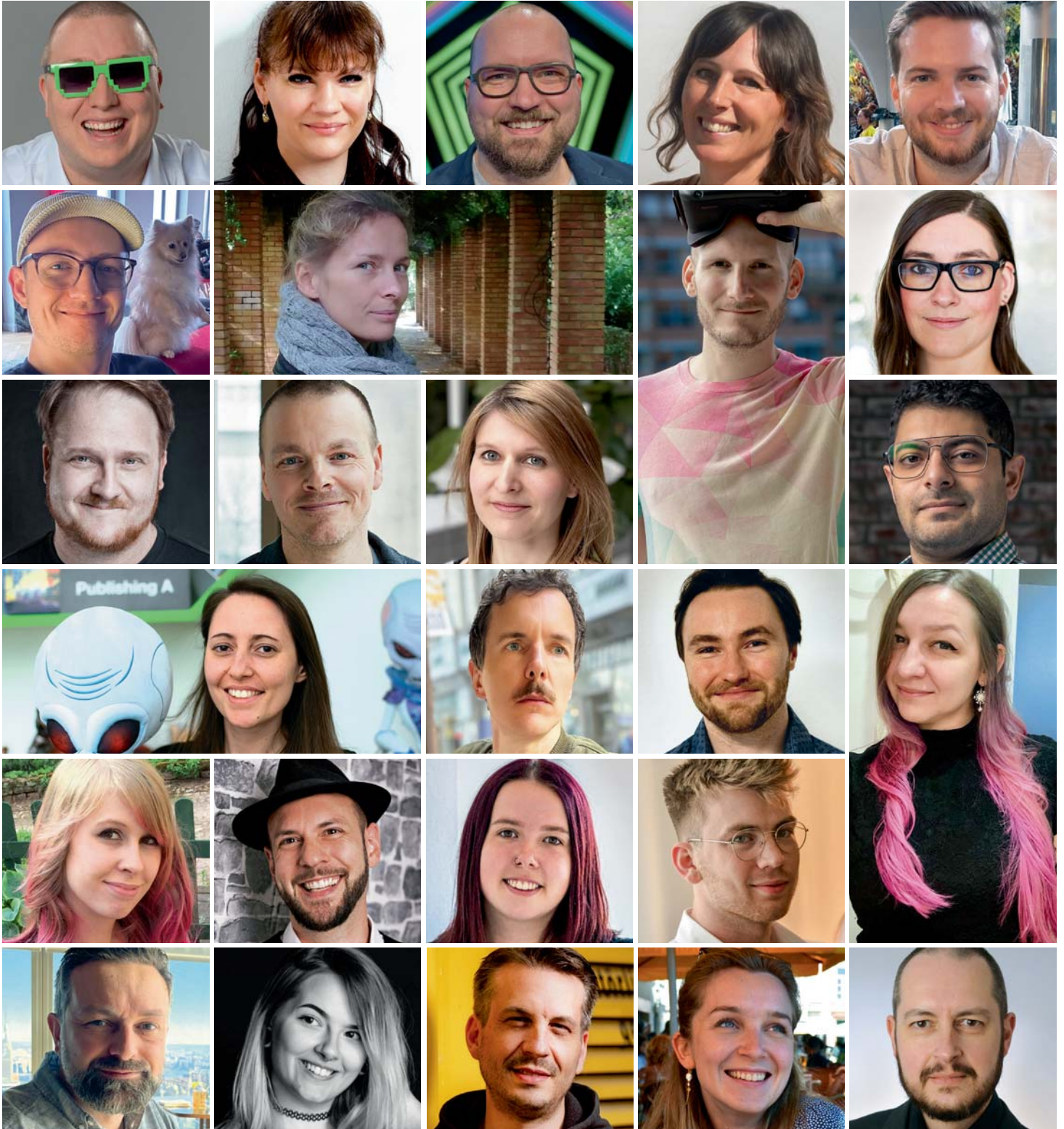


GAMESMARKT+

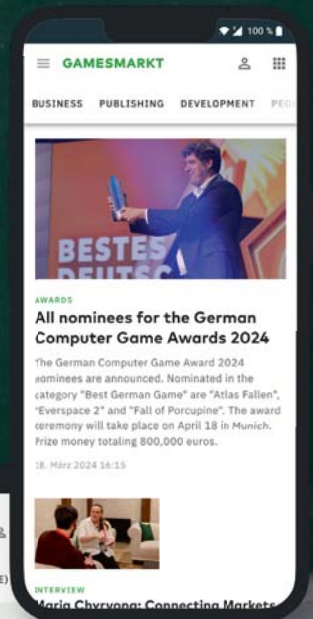
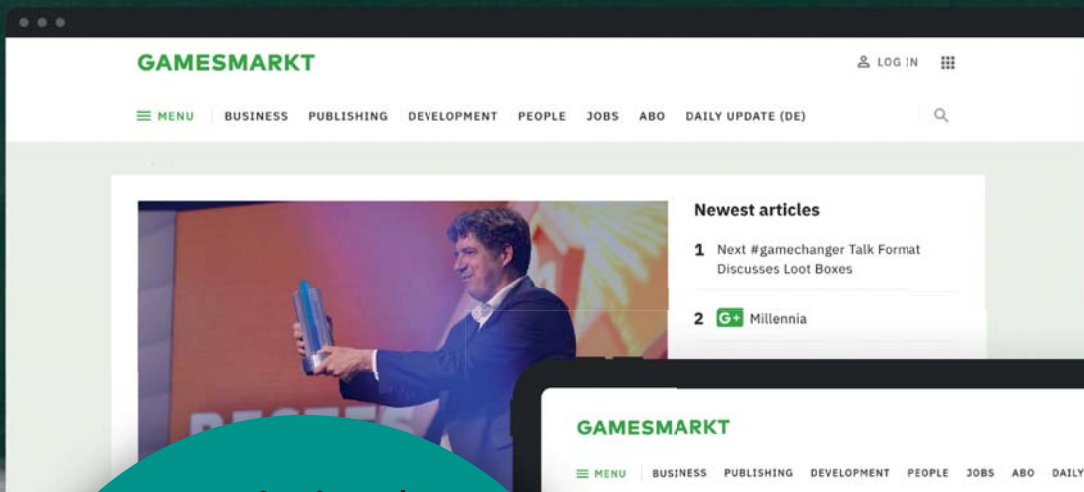
Working in Games



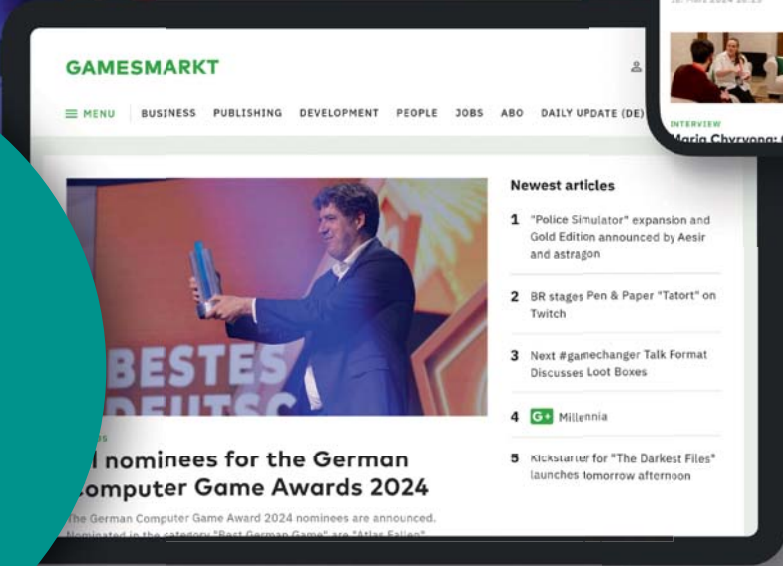
Discount for

Students

Digital subscription
of GamesMarkt
(+ free digital access to
Blickpunkt:Film and MusikWoche)



*Digital
subscription
for only € 2
per month**



* only as one-year subscription for € 24 plus VAT (instead of € 178,80). Enrolment certificate is mandatory.



Content

4 WAYS INTO THE INDUSTRY

26 personalities talk about their paths into the national games industry.

16 STUDYING GAMES

What courses are available to enter the games industry?

20 LEARNING THE CRAFT

There are more ways to enter the games industry than by university courses.

23 CIPSOFT

24 HR PLANING

Survey of HR managers in the industry.

28 EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

Why gaming is a recruiting ground for ESA.

31 TRAVIAN GAMES

32 NEW APPRENTICESHIP

All about the new Designer Interactive Media.

35 WOOGA

36 WAYS INTO THE INDUSTRY

16 personalities talk about their paths into the international games industry.

44 SALARY SURVEY

How much does the German games industry earn? We conducted a survey.

46 LIFELONG LEARNING

An overview of various programmes.

45 IMPRINT

We live in a time of contrasts: Some of the best games ever released come out every year, commercial successes are abound. And yet, layoffs are the defining topic.

T

hat we have to grapple with the highest highs and the lowest lows at the same time can make the decision to start into games complicated. Other media industries are faced with similar problems, to be sure, but gaming as a respectively young

industry is only just developing the security nets and thick skin needed for sustainable growth. Complications change depending on where you look, too: North American developers only start out developing a class consciousness and organisational structures of their own. In Germany on the other hand, the industry struggles with fundamental securities provided by state funding.

And yet, games are still a dream sphere of action for many, many people. And with a substantial amount of professional workers still missing in any industry, the games branch too, new game workers are highly sought after. So highly in fact that the Ministry of Economy spearheaded a new apprenticeship for Interactive Media Designers, a remarkable occasion. With this new way into games that we portray and talk with the responsible parties about, and several academic lanes to learn game development and design, I hope this issue helps you decide your way into gaming, if you are still soul-searching. You can find inspiration in two articles where 42 games industry people speak about their career paths, and compare salaries with the analysis of our second annual game wage survey. Tackling the layoffs, we probed HR departments on their best ideas to prevent redundancies through clever long time HR management. And if you are thinking about a career change, you'll want to read our piece on the European Space Agency. Whether you start out or are a veteran of the games industry: Have a good read!

Pascal Wagner

EXPERTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

26 Individual Ways to get Into the Games Industry – National Edition

What is the *career path* in the computer and video games industry?

The stories of its representatives are as varied as the industry itself. A collection of inspirational stories, thrilling careers and happy coincidences.

Founding and Managing

"Even though I always enjoyed video games, I didn't have the intention to join the industry early on. I've always been somewhat of a tech geek which is why I decided to first go through an apprenticeship as systems integration specialist and worked on configuring servers and routers," says **Lars Janssen**. Towards the end of that, he wanted to explore the business side, so he got his diploma in business administration from the University of Frankfurt and even worked there after graduation to get his doctorate. After a few months, he got in touch with some people in the games industry as part of a research project and quickly realised that he doesn't to be an academic for at least another five years. "At that point, I made the decision to try my luck getting into the games industry as I felt I was ready to bring my knowledge and passion. I thought the industry was waiting for me. Well... that didn't go quite as planned and after many rejections for various roles — mostly as Producer or Product Manager — I was about to give up when a mid-sized studio (Acony) in the Black Forest region gave me a shot to become their Product Manager for an online game they were developing." He stayed for about two years before moving to Berlin for a short stint in the payments industry, only to realise it was not for him. "I had met the previous CEO of Travian

Games at Acony and he gave me a call out of nowhere to ask if I was interested in joining them in Munich to take over their largest project. It was no easy decision as my now wife and I had just moved to Berlin but I simply had to take the opportunity." Janssen joined Travian Games in 2010, working his way up through various roles and eventually taking over as CEO in 2015. "After a total of nine years, I decided to leave Travian Games and explore new areas as I felt I wasn't really helping the company that much anymore and also wanted to get into PC/console games. Klemens Kunderatitz, CEO at Plaion, at the time still Koch Media — got in touch with me a few minutes after the news of my departure at Travian Games became public and asked if I wanted to join them to lead their internal studios. I was excited by the opportunity and joined in November 2019." During his time at Plaion, he has refined the company culture to be more inclusive and focused on the support of people in the studios. "At the end of last year, I came to the point where the wider restructuring efforts within the Embracer Group that Plaion belonged to were taking too heavy of a toll on me and knew it was time for me to move on again — ideally back to development where I have a greater impact on the team I work with." He was recommended by a number of people for a leadership role at Deck13 in Frankfurt, where he started in March

as the new CEO, helping the studio develop a vision for the future of the company. "While I gained a lot of experience throughout my first years working, I always feel I learned the most about leadership when I was the guild leader of a 120-person guild in *World of Warcraft*, organizing raids and PvP teams, conducting interviews with applicants, and being the go-to person for everything people had on their minds. I think nothing has pre-



LARS JANSSEN

CEO Deck13 Interactive, Chairman of the Executive Board game — The German Games Industry Association

"Ever since I joined our industry, I've always enjoyed working with creative people who bring their entire personality to work and don't have to pretend to be someone else in order to fit in. I would say that's not a given in many other industries."



The Wandering Village

pared me as much for leading people like those five or six years playing a massively multiplayer online game," says Janssen. Later, he had countless conversations with experienced people to learn how to tackle the toughest challenges. "Unfortunately, our industry is still not the most easy to get into if you bring zero experience in the field — being a gamer is usually not enough. Go to game jams, attend games industry events, work on modding games or be active in communities, reach out to people you know in the industry and ask for their advice — most of them are really helpful and kind. I was lucky enough at the beginning of my journey that someone gave me a shot and I always try to give that back to people who are now seriously trying to make their living with games. I feel I owe them and I see that more and more in our industry are feeling the same way."

Philomena Schwab took a more or less direct route into the games industry. "After high school, I went to a specialised gymnasium (a kind of high school). Then I did a one-year course in preliminary design and applied for a Bachelor of Arts in Game Design at the Zurich University of the Arts," she says. After completing her bachelor's degree, she went on to do an in-depth master's in game design, combining theory with practice. "After an internship in game marketing and a successful crowdfunding campaign for our



PHILOMENA SCHWAB

Co-Founder Stray Fawn Studio and
Co-Founder Swiss Game Hub

"Always ask if you want something. Holding back won't get you very far in this industry, and the worst thing that can happen is that the answer is no".

game (which was part of my bachelor thesis), I founded the indie studio Stray Fawn together with Micha Stettler." Outside of her studies, she has kept up to date with YouTube tutorials and books. Schwab is now a game designer, co-founder and sought-after speaker at conferences. In her opinion, it helps a lot in the games industry to be familiar with all areas of game development. It makes communication with team members much easier. She also gave the following tip, which is particularly aimed at new managers: "It can be difficult at first to keep the team motivated while you are still in the 'hobby project' phase without financial resources. It helps a lot to set common working hours (preferably live on site) and to set common goals with deadlines (e.g. exhibiting the game at the Indie Arena)". She and her team are currently working on *The Wandering Village*, a city-building simulator on the back of a giant wandering creature, which has already achieved six-figure sales in Early Access. But that's not all. Stray Fawn Studio is now also a publisher of indie games, and Schwab co-founded the Swiss Game Hub, the first co-working space and incubator for games in Switzerland.



**STEFAN
DETTMERING**

Managing
Director BXDXO

Stefan Dettmering is an old hand in the German games industry. From an early age he wanted to be involved in some way. "But back in 1994, 1995, the barriers seemed insurmountably high. I was just a teenager then, too young, too inexperienced, freshly out of school and starting my apprenticeship as a retail merchant. Despite applying multiple times to Club Nintendo and the game hotline, I was never accepted." At the time, he was devouring tons of gaming magazines, the editors of which were practically his influencers. "So, I decided to launch "my own" gaming magazine, called "Play and Fun." It wasn't easy at all, especially considering there was no internet back then. It was a print magazine. A gaming retailer based in Munich printed the magazine and included it with all their orders. "Play and Fun" even made it to newsstands in Bavaria, with a circulation of over 30,000." In the spring of 1995, Sony was looking for people to staff a games hotline for the upcoming release of the first PlayStation. "I was thrilled and sent an application, only to be rejected because the hiring process had already concluded. Unwilling to accept defeat, I called Sony every day, pestering them to at least invite me for an interview. Eventually, they relented and invited me to their headquarters in Frankfurt. There, a Sony employee sat across from me, slightly annoyed, asking why they should consider me. I had a backpack full of Super Nintendo game manuals. I took them out, slammed them on the table, and simply said, 'completed them all.'" He then had to demonstrate in a mock interview how to progress to a certain point in *Zelda: A Link to the Past*. After that, he got the job. "I was on the hotline, answering calls with, "Hello, this is Stefan from the PlayStation Powerline, how can I assist you?" I helped desperate callers who were stuck in their games. As I mentioned, there was no internet, no social media, no YouTube. Meanwhile, I completed my apprenticeship as a retail merchant and then managed the official PlayStation games hotline →

→ for a few years." He later moved into the PR department at PlayStation and then into product management, marketing games such as *Gran Turismo*, *God of War* and *Uncharted*. "During this time, I pursued eleven semesters of parallel studies, realizing the importance of a solid business education. Armed with two degrees, one in Marketing Communication Economics and another as a Bachelor of Business Administration, and now with 16 years of service at PlayStation, I moved on to Electronic Arts, then Bethesda, before building up the PR agency ToLL Relations, and eventually launching my vision of a perfect games marketing service provider with BXDXO."

Dettmering believes that learning by doing is vital, and the learning process never ends. "Over the years, I've had the privilege of marketing hundreds of games, consoles, and services. My core competence lies in having a holistic view of marketing, not confined to silos like PR alone. That perspective is honed only through experience." He thinks it might be a bit harder to break into the industry at the moment, but that phase will pass. The industry is always in need of passionate people who are willing to go the extra mile, because that's the game-changer. "Developing games is tough. Marketing them is equally challenging. Even though it's a fantastic industry, and I personally wouldn't trade it for anything else, everyone should understand that making a game successful requires hard work. But when it finally pays off, it's an incredibly fulfilling feeling to know you've played a part in it."

Tobias Springer has been a passionate software developer since the age of eight and has been experimenting with 3D graphics from an early age. "During my computer science studies, I started to develop simple web games as hobby projects. When one of these showed promise, I dropped out of my master's program and became self-employed. I've been doing that for the past six years now." The skills he needs for his work in the



**TOBIAS
SPRINGER**

CEO and Founder
tobsspr Games



shapez 2

games industry have mainly been acquired through self-study. He used to learn a lot from books, but now relies heavily on online resources. "There are so many great resources out there, available for free." His first focus was on web games, starting with the tower defence game *YORG.io*. Since the success of *shapez*, an automation and factory simulation that has sold over 500,000 copies on PC, his focus is now 100 percent on Steam. "For our current project *shapez 2*, which is also partly funded by the German government, we are currently looking for new team members, so be sure to look out for open positions! We also always accept initiative applications." His advice for beginners or career changers looking to break into the games industry is simple: just get started. "Nowadays, it's so easy to develop a small game using tools like Unity or Godot, even without extensive programming skills. Just try it out as a hobby and see if you enjoy it. You can also gain a lot of experience outside of a professional environment, and a specialized degree in the games field isn't required to get started. What's important is that you bring passion and perseverance."

For **Manuel Leithner**, Lead Gameplay Programmer and Studio Manager Erlangen at Giants Software, the studio best known for *Farming Simulator*, chance set the course. "Looking back, I am now exactly where my childhood

experiences and education led me," he says, having been fascinated by technology and agriculture from an early age. "As a child, I spent almost every day on a friend's farm, and by the age of 14 I learnt programming on my own. While I was studying to become a business IT specialist, I programmed various tools for the medical division of Siemens as a working student".

MANUEL LEITHNER

Lead Gameplay Programmer and Managing Director Erlangen Giants Software



"Apply to companies whose games you like. If you are interested in a subject or passionate about a project from the start, you will automatically develop motivation and enjoy working on the product — which will have a positive effect on your performance. Passion for a product is the key!"

In those days, there was little time for games. The only game he played was *SimTractor*, which matched his affinity for agriculture and machinery, even if the gameplay was rudimentary. "In 2007, we discovered the newly created *Farming Simulator* forum, which was still in its infancy. The information and the first screenshots inspired me so much that I became very active in the forum. After the release of *Farming Simulator 2008*, I started modding alongside the game, creating vehicles and scripts with my friends." Through the mod, he came into closer contact with the founders of Giants Software,

which led to a freelance position in 2010. "After finishing my studies with a master's degree, I continued to work full-time as a freelancer in 2013, before officially joining Giants Software in 2015 and opening the German branch in Erlangen as managing director and studio manager. "Despite all the organisational tasks, I still put my heart and soul into programming and as Lead Gameplay Programmer I develop key elements of *Farming Simulator*," says Leithner. As well as a keen interest in gaming, his career is also driven by the technology behind it, much of which he learned himself. Modding "was the perfect playground for me to try out what I had learned, as well as a motivating force to continue learning programming. These practical applications and the creative, goal-oriented search for solutions still influence me today."

Although physics dominated **Ole Jürgensen's** life at university for ten years, his heart has always been in games. In his youth, he programmed his own video games as a hobby, which he didn't want to do professionally due to the industry's poor earning opportunities. Through software development, he ended up at the Hamburg start-up VR Nerds, where he came into contact with commercial game development and VR development at the same time. Despite his reservations, his interest in the field remained strong. But there were a few things about VR development that bothered him: "I think a lot of VR developers don't accept the limitations of the technology. As a result, a lot of games try things that don't really work. I really wanted to make something that was really made for the technology and not for the idea of VR that you find in sci-fi literature." From this insight grew *Crumbling*, a project that would harness and showcase the real possibilities and benefits of VR. He received enthusiastic support from his hometown and extensive backing from Gamecity Hamburg. "I was in the first Gameslift incubator with *Crumbling*,

which is essentially a series of training and mentoring sessions," says Jürgensen, who later not only received prototype funding from Gamecity, but also found his future investor through a Gameslift contact, who eventually put him in touch with Meta. Otherwise, *Crumbling* would probably never have made it into the strictly curated Quest Store. *Crumbling Games* is therefore a prime example of the successful combination of location and development support. "In principle, everything here has worked exactly as the funding programmes intended."



OLE JÜRGENSEN
Founder & CEO
Crumbling Games



Jonas Manke has changed his medium. Since 2008, he has worked as a freelance character animator for film and television. "In the years of freelancing, I was able to gain a lot of experience and occasionally animate characters for games in between larger film productions. The jobs from the games industry became more and more interesting and played an increasingly important role in my career as an animator," he says. For example, he worked on animating zombies in *State of Decay*, which was a welcome change from his work on children's films. "I downloaded the Unreal Engine out of interest and started playing and learning after work to understand how my client wanted my animations in the game," he continues. This laid the foundation for



JONAS MANKE
Founder Studio
InkyFox

Ommo, which began as a small, unambitious learning project. A friend then convinced him to post it on social media, and the response was overwhelming. "It took many more months before I dared to give the project a chance and commit to it full-time, at my own expense, and stop doing freelance work — it was a tough decision." What followed was a playable prototype, a Kickstarter campaign, funding from the Film und Medienstiftung NRW, and finally the founding of Studio Inkyfox. "This was also necessary to create a legal basis for all the dis-

cussions with publishers and investors that came our way after the success of the Kickstarter campaign". As a solo developer, however, there are always obstacles to overcome. In his experience, technical problems can be solved quickly thanks to the great developer community. The mental challenges are harder. "As a developer, you often doubt your work, question ideas and decisions, and regularly stumble at the prospect of overwhelming competition — as a solo developer, this is particularly dangerous as there is no one else in charge. If you have a bad day, the whole production stops. Maintaining the momentum to keep going has been the biggest hurdle for me. Still, he wouldn't give up his independence. He appreciates the solo work too →



Hieronymus

→ much, the flexibility thanks to “short” decision paths, the low costs and the time savings. “However, more manpower for development is definitely an option for the actual production. But as a DIY enthusiast, I will have to think long and hard about the scope and areas of work.”

“I loved escapism,” says illustrator and concept artist **Julia Goerke-Milde** of her early experiences with video games. But her favourite medium was always painting and drawing. That is why she completed her B.A. in Intermedia Design at the University of Applied Sciences in Trier, originally intending to make fashion or animated films. However, she found these industries too well-worn. As she was building her freelance career in the games industry, Goerke-Milde was drawn to the young, more flexible sector. “I’d previously worked in the animation industry and other graphic design jobs, and I realised that I didn’t want to work in a standard way. Of course, there are always certain design pillars to consider. However, I find that video games give you a lot of freedom and can be very dense in terms of narrative.” Thanks to these insights, input from professors and a joint game idea with friends, she decided to set up her own studio. “At the beginning of 2021, I came up with the idea for *Hieronymus* with my colleague Jörn Friedrichs, with whom I had already worked on a couple of small projects. Shortly afterwards, my

long-time friend Dr Patrick Zimmer joined us and together we formed our team Rhenus Vina Musica. We worked out our first short concept for *Hieronymus* and then applied for the NRW concept funding.” The game is an adventure in which you enter and explore the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. In addition to her studio, she works as a freelancer in various industries to broaden her financial base and maintain her own professional network. Although she is still relatively new to the games industry, she is passionate about it and is keen to pass on her own experience to young people and those just starting out in their careers. “I have been a member of the Indie Hub for several years and try to help other indies and newcomers where I can.” From her personal perspective, you have to be prepared for anything if you want to be happy in the games industry. “There is no one right way. There are many different ways to achieve your goal, especially in the games industry. It all depends on what you want. In small teams or as an independent indie, you need to be versatile and flexible. In larger studios it is a bit different and you are usually responsible for your own area of expertise. All in all, it can be a tough but rewarding road.” But without a passion for video games, it’s difficult, and without a network, nobody knows what you’re doing. “In our team, we always tell ourselves that the little crunch gnomes have to come to the surface”.



**JULES
STEINER**
Freelance
Translator

Design and Production

Jules Steiner works at the intersection of technology and literature. They have contributed to more than 230 English to German video game translations and headed up several major projects as a lead editor, including the colossal RPG *Disco Elysium*. Steiner started working as a localisation specialist in 2012. From a young age, they had been fascinated by the stories that could be told through games on the Amiga or the Amstrad CPC, displaying an early passion for everything to do with language and the imagination. Freshly equipped with an MA in English and German linguistics from Mainz and Birmingham, they joined localisation agency 4-Real Intermedia in Offenbach (near Frankfurt), where, among others, they worked on a number of Sony titles. Originally intended to fund their doctoral dissertation, the job has long since morphed into a career. They are definitely still benefiting from their academic disposition, though: “My background in historical-comparative morphology – the study of word forms – is not such a bad foundation for what I do. After all, game translators constantly deal with issues of word formation, inflections and how they change over time.” Since 2016, Steiner has been working independently, cooperating with a selection of agencies and end clients, as is common in the industry. While game translators are often mentioned in the same breath as QA, they are not exclusively or primarily technical service providers, Steiner maintains. “There is indeed a significant technical component – you have to be able to juggle variables, adhere to length restrictions and convey complex content in an easily understandable way”. Despite all this, translators still have to compose entertaining text that conveys the atmosphere, creates suspense and brings the characters to life. “In this respect, it is no different from translating a novel, for example. Nobody would omit the translator’s



**JULIA
GOERKE-
MILDE**
Illustrator/2D
artist (freelance) and
co-founder/2D
artist of Rhenus
Vina Musica



name from a novel, so why would they do so in a game?" asks Steiner. They would like to see more recognition and openness from the industry in this regard, since only if companies consistently list their localisers in the credits will customers be able to properly appreciate their work.

French AAA publisher Ubisoft has three offices in Germany. **Mohammed Al Kasm** has been with the company for over twelve years in Düsseldorf. "From an early age, I harboured a fascination with game development," says Al Kasm. It all started with 1989's *Prince of Persia*, a moment that ignited his passion and shaped his future — and today he works for the company that has owned the brand since 2001. "I set my sights on a career in game development and charted a deliberate course. My educational journey led me to pursue a bachelor's degree in applied computer sciences at the University of Göttingen." He applied for a Project Management Intern position at Ubisoft Blue Byte. "Luck was on my side, and I secured the role — a pivotal moment that opened the door to the industry. During my internship, I honed my skills and gained invaluable insights into game production. Undeterred,

I continued my education, earning a master's degree in media computer science from the Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences. Simultaneously, I remained committed to Ubisoft Blue Byte, balancing part-time work with my studies." He worked on *Champions of Anteria*, *For Honor* and *Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora*, among others. Today, he is Production Director: "It's a role that combines creativity, leadership, and strategic thinking. I collaborate with talented colleagues locally and across the globe, and I consider myself fortunate to be part of this dynamic industry." While formal education provides a valuable grounding, Al Kasm believes that most of the skills required to meet the challenges of game production are acquired through on-the-job experience. "Mentoring from seasoned colleagues and active knowledge sharing within teams and organizations are essential for personal growth and professional improvement." He believes that it is crucial to keep abreast of technical advances and trends in games and the industry in general. Game development offers a variety of career paths. "For Beginners and Career changers, my advice would be to take the time to introspect and



MOHAMMED AL KASM

Production Director
Ubisoft Düsseldorf

"If you genuinely love games and game development, let that enthusiasm shine through in your work.

Employers appreciate genuine dedication when you come across an open position that aligns with your skills and interests, apply. Confidence and persistence pay off."



ANDREA FRICKE

Lead Game Designer
Ubisoft Mainz

identify your specific interests within game development. Is it art, animation, design, programming, or perhaps something else? Understanding your passion will guide your career path. Once you've pinpointed your area of interest, focus on developing specialized skills in that domain." In addition, a well-managed portfolio is the golden ticket to success. "It showcases your abilities, creativity, and potential to prospective employers. Artists, curate your best work; animators, create an impressive showreel; designers, highlight personal projects or game mods you've contributed to."

When **Andrea Fricke** was growing up, she also had a passion for games. "As a child, I wanted to be a graphic designer, but that evolved into game design. How do you create fun in games," she wondered. After studying computer science with a minor in media studies and mathematics, her first job was as a Junior Game Designer at Cranberry Production in Hanover. "Towards the end of my computer science studies, I had actually written off my dream of working in the video game industry. But an advertisement in Making Games for a job/internship fair raised my hopes. I landed an internship as a producer at dtp entertainment. With this foot in the door at dtp, Cranberry's parent company, I then got a job as a junior game designer in Hanover," she says. When dtp went bankrupt, Deck13 took on a lot of staff and she was able to work on business simulations in Hamburg. "When a headhunter wrote to me on behalf of Ubisoft Mainz, I didn't take it too seriously at first. Mainz is too far from Hamburg. But my husband encouraged me: 'Then we'll just move', and off we went to the beautiful wine region — away from the seagulls and container ports. I grew up with *Anno 1602* and played it with my sister as a child. And then to work on an *Anno* myself — what an opportunity!" Now she is a Lead Game Designer and her last project was the console version of *Anno 1800*. →



Anno 1800

→ Anyone remember Turbo Pascal? In the summer of 1999, **Nicko Böhnke** came across a book about Turbo Pascal by chance. He used it to learn programming and immediately created his first game. "It was even played seriously by my classmates. At the time, it didn't even occur to me that I could make a career out of it," says Nicko Böhnke. After studying computer science and mathematics, he didn't know what he wanted to do for a long time. "Then a former fellow student got me an internship at a games company — since then I can't imagine doing anything else. In my first job I worked for four years on an AAA MMORPG for PC. It allowed me to experience the



NICKO BÖHNKE

Lead Game Developer
tobspr Games

"Your professional expertise only defines the kind of projects you can contribute to. Whether you can successfully make a game depends solely on how well and how much you enjoy working with your colleagues on that very game. Professional distance from the game or your colleagues is the death of any game project".

full range of challenges in game development." After that, he changed jobs every two years, choosing the project and position based on what he wanted to do and learn next. He has worked at Reakktor, Deep Silver Fish-labs, InnoGames and Stratosphere, among others. "I didn't care about a career, so I kept moving between positions as Lead Developer, Technical Product Lead or Technical Director to Game Developer." Complementary to his technical background, he is a freelance board game author. "This work helps me a lot in my professional dialogue with game designers at work. And it has always been a creative counterbalance for projects that are far from the actual definition of games — especially free-to-play mobile games". Motivated to raise aware-

ness of 'real' games, he has worked as a game design consultant and occasionally travels as a speaker or workshop leader in schools and large digital game studios. Expertise is very important to him, but not everything. "And as with everything in life, you learn the most by being exposed to as many different situations as possible. That's why you should change your working environment from time to time, especially at the beginning."

Many people currently working in the games industry used to do something completely different. One of them is **Fabian Boulegue**, who was Head of Production at Aerosoft for many years and recently joined publisher astragon Entertainment as Senior Producer. He started as an apprentice at Hella GmbH as a process mechanic for plastics and rubber technology. After completing his apprenticeship, he realised that industry was not for him. He then applied for and completed an apprenticeship as an IT specialist in application development at Aerosoft in 2010. After that, "I stayed with the company, working in support and community management, and then quickly moved into product management, because I don't like contracts either, and I've always been involved in 'development' myself through my IT skills, so I got more and more involved in production and built it up at Aerosoft (it didn't exist before)." After twelve years, Boulegue decided it was time for a change and joined publisher



FABIAN BOULEGUE

Senior Producer
astragon
Entertainment



SANDRA MEIER

Lead Graphic
Designer Giants
Software

astragon Entertainment overseeing various projects as Senior Producer. "After twelve years, it wasn't an easy step for me. But I don't regret it at all, the new tasks and colleagues are really a breath of fresh air!" He remains loyal to the simulation genre, which is particularly popular in the German game development scene. "The simulation genre in particular offers many exciting studios and projects that are often overlooked by many!"

Sandra Meier really enjoys being part of the entertainment industry, an industry that brings happiness to other people. "I was lucky that my parents not only shared my love of video games, but also encouraged it. The year I got a GameCube for Christmas was definitely the best Christmas in my memory," she recalls. While at university, she studied video game concepts as part of her design degree, took a workshop on programming an 8-bit game and created a prototype for a mobile game as part of a group. She got her first taste of the industry at Nintendo of Europe and realised quickly, that she didn't want to work in any other industry. It wasn't just video games that launched her career, as she enjoyed drawing and crafting as a child. "When I was at school, I realised that "design" can and must do more than just look pretty. Graphics is a constantly evolving field — there are always new trends and techniques. It never gets boring!" She is delighted

AEROSOFT
is one of the
most traditional
game companies
in Germany.
They specialise
in simulations



to be working in such a fast-growing and successful company, "where flat hierarchies are not just a promise, but a reality," praising her wide range of responsibilities. "My team is involved in all internal and external areas: Print and digital, in-game assets or PR and marketing." Alongside her, three other graphic designers are part of "Team Pixels", which she has been leading since the beginning of 2021. She has risen through the ranks at a rapid pace. The move to the leadership position was driven by the need to grow the team and create a leadership position as Giants expanded from developer to publisher. "Having been with the company for some time and feeling that I could fill the role, I jumped at the chance. I'm grateful that even then they had the confidence in me to allow me to do it," Meier says. She points out that there are so many opportunities in the industry and has a message for other women: "Use your female uniqueness as an argument! After all, women often bring a breath of fresh air to a company, convincing people with different ways of thinking, approaches and ideas. Conversely, don't be intimidated by the male domain! There are efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, and it is definitely a good and exciting thing to be part of."

A common thread runs through **Mona Brandt's** life: the line between fun and seriousness, between gaming and sophisticated content. Today she is Lead Game Designer at Paintbucket Games, the Berlin-based studio behind *Through the Darkest of Times*, *Beholder 3* and the upcoming *The Darkest Files*. Paintbucket stands for serious themes in games, for impact games, but not serious games. Brandt's CV reflects this. She studied film at the Babelsberg Film School, but came across game studies courses at university. Her bachelor's thesis focused on what motivates players to grind in video games. As Brandt was not yet sure what she wanted to do for her Master's degree, she looked for internships. A call to the



Through the Darkest of Times

USK, which had no vacancies at the time, led her to the Digital Games Culture Foundation (Stiftung Digitale Spielkultur), where Brandt was accepted. During her internship, she came into contact with the game development course at the TH Köln – so the Master's programme was set. She continued to work part-time for the foundation, occasionally heading up the Memory Culture project. This is how she came into contact with Paintbucket. "At the same time as I was submitting my master's thesis, Paintbucket was looking for someone to work on the game design for *The Darkest Files*. I started in September 2021 and have been the lead designer of *The Darkest Files* since spring 2022," Brandt explains. Working on the game, which revolves around the legal reappraisal of the Nazi era, perfectly combines her skills with her interests, as the topic was already important to her at the Foundation. "It has always interested me and I believe that it is essential to maintain a vibrant culture of remembrance, especially here in Germany." Brandt has plenty of tips for people interested in impact games and wanting to develop their own: "Listen to the people who are actually affected, or in this specific example, their descendants. Even if the intention of an implementation is well-intentioned, ignorance can lead to the exact opposite and sometimes cause considerable damage," she stresses. "As game developers, we have the expertise to create interesting, exciting or entertaining game experiences. We use game mechanics and/or narrative to design game spaces that allow players to engage with serious issues in an implicit or explicit way."



MONA BRANDT

Lead Game Designer Paintbucket Games

Marketing and Communication

"I didn't take a very direct route into the video game industry, more like a detour," says **Kerstin Weber**, Senior Marketing Manager at Square Enix. "I was a bit of an Otaku in my youth, inhaling and loving all things Japanese." She started learning Japanese in her spare time, then confronted her parents with the idea of studying Japanese at university, to which they predictably replied: "no way, you will not find a job and earn any money with that. Study something useful." But she was a bit of a free spirit and didn't (quite) do it. "I ended up studying media studies with a focus on marketing, Japanese studies and psychology, one major and two minors." After two years, she secured a coveted place at an exchange university in Tokyo and did an exchange year, where she made some connections that later proved very valuable. "One was the CEO of a little marketing agency who I stayed in contact with and who later asked if I wanted to work at his agency after I finished my studies." She didn't know much about his company, so she asked him for a six-month internship instead, but when she arrived in Tokyo, he suddenly asked her to lend herself to Porsche Japan for a few weeks because one of their marketing staff had been off sick for a while and they needed a replacement. "And it just so happened that my future employer had contact with Porsche Japan and mentioned to them that I was about to start at their company and that I had experience working at Audi in Germany (I did an internship there)." In the end, she never started her →



KERSTIN WEBER

Senior Marketing Manager Square Enix

"So you should first realize where your interests and strengths lie and how that could be used in the gaming industry. And sometimes it helps if you have that special little extra talent (like let's say speaking Japanese) that makes you a little more interesting than your competitors."

→ internship and never worked a single day at her employer's agency, but went straight to Porsche Japan and stayed there for about three and a half years in their (entirely Japanese) marketing events team, planning and executing sports car driving and exhibition events all over Japan. She gradually moved into different roles, from secretarial work to delegating agencies to securing budgets and planning and running events. Yes, that is a long way from the video game industry. When she decided to move back to Germany, she saw a job opening as a product manager at Square Enix in Hamburg. It certainly helped that she had a background in marketing, although mainly event marketing and not so much online marketing, but she suspects that one of the deciding factors in getting the job was her knowledge of Japanese. "To this day it's still kind of satisfying for me that I got both my jobs because of my Japanese studies, although my parents were so adamant that it wouldn't get me anywhere. At that time I didn't have a profound background in online marketing or knew how to create a marketing plan. I read a lot of marketing books in my free time and looked over the shoulder of my colleagues to learn the trade."

In her eight years at Square Enix, she has overseen releases large and small in the Kingdom Hearts, Dragon Quest, Life is Strange and Final Fantasy franchises. "We product managers (now named Marketing Managers) at Square Enix are also responsible for media buys, so the whole media portion of the marketing plan which usually amounts to about 60 per cent of the overall budget. I like how every product and every release is different and needs a different marketing approach. So it never gets boring and we can get very creative with lots of out-of-the-box ideas." Weber believes that jobs in the games industry are incredibly varied, and the paths that lead to them are just as numerous. "Working in the game industry doesn't mean you need to be a developer and game designer. Square Enix Germany

for example is only a publisher. We don't do any development, that happens overseas in our western and Japanese studios. Everyone of us has a background in marketing, PR, social media/community management, sales, or accounting. Some of my colleagues came from gaming media outlets or game magazines, some from PR or media agencies that worked with Square Enix or other game publishers before, some came from totally different industry sectors like myself."

Freyja Melhorn was probably an early esports athlete, but before she discovered her passion for gaming, she was interested in fantasy worlds and used to spend all her pocket money on Magic: The Gathering booster packs. However, she got into the industry more by chance. While studying law, she played a lot of *Counter-Strike* and *World of Warcraft*, until she spotted job adverts in games PR. "Development was never my thing, but PR combined my strengths with my hobby: communication, writing, networking, a bit of creativity and working with people. Without further ado I started an internship and after two weeks I knew: this is my dream job!" During her internship, she completed a part-time weekend course to qualify as a PR specialist. "At the time, career changers were unusual; many HR departments required a university degree and I didn't want to jeopardise my chances," she says. With this degree, she was given the opportunity to be the first employee at Swordfish PR to help set up the games department. "It was a lot of groundwork at the beginning, but we managed to get to grips with it and then quickly established ourselves. Five years later, I took over as Head of Games and was able to live out my passion for video games PR." In 2023, it was time for a change and she joined marketing agency BXDXO. Melhorn was attracted by the full focus on games, the opportunities for further development in marketing and product management, especially as she is now also part of



FARMCON The Giants Software team having fun at their in-house expo



FREYJA MELHORN

Director
Marketing
Communications
BXDXO

the management team. "I also help my youngest sister Deborah Melhorn, a European kickboxing champion, with social media, PR and marketing on a part-time basis." Basically, she believes that anyone can have a career in the games industry, as long as they have a passion for video games. In this way, the fun of the job comes almost naturally. "Being persistent and following your own path, not being afraid to ask for advice and putting out feelers at events is the quickest way into the industry. Talent and passion are so much more important to our industry than gender identity, religion or personal preferences," and that almost sounds like the text of a job advert for a games agency. "Unfortunately, established industries and politicians outside our video game bubble have yet to fully grasp the potential of this industry. We've all seen the studies showing that our industry's turnover far exceeds that of music, cinema and the Bundesliga. In reality, however, the video games industry is still seen as the young and wild industry that people are afraid of. We ourselves experience this time and again when we try to work with companies outside the games industry and they sometimes shy away from games."

Something completely different is what **Boris Stefan** did before he entered the games industry and, after a long stint at Konami, he is now Head of Publishing at Giants Software. A self-proclaimed gamer since the age of five, Stefan first trained as a retail salesman at Flachsmann, later Media-Markt, where he built up the then fast-growing video games department. "After a few years, I was offered



Farming Simulator 22

the opportunity to join Konami's field sales team, so I started looking after retail customers in Baden-Württemberg," he says. "Within the department, I first developed into a Key Account Manager, then as Sales Manager Germany I took over the entire team in Germany, and finally as Sales Manager Central Europe I was responsible for a large number of European countries, before taking my last career step at Konami as Head of Digital Business Central Europe." He had been with the company for 19 years when he took the next step and initiated the move to self-publishing at Giants Software, now world-famous for its Farming Simulator. From now on, the company intends to launch and distribute the product worldwide on all platforms. Looking back, he stresses that self-education has been very important in his career, but that he also had a "great boss", Martin Schneider, from whom he learned a lot. His advice to newcomers and those interested in the game is that patience and the will to see your ideas through to fruition are key. "But the essence is probably patience, perseverance and enthusiasm," says Stefan.

**BORIS STEFAN**

Head of
Publishing
Giants Software

**MARC BOSCH**

Business
Development &
Publishing
Director Aesir
Interactive



Police Officers

Even without studying at a university, **Marc Bosch** found his way into the industry. "As a teenager I had already been quite musical, an entertainer and "class clown", and in 2000 I tried to find a career path with internships for media design at the local theatre and regional television broadcaster. It only took a few weeks to make my first appearance as a presenter on a local video games show". At an apprentice fair, he came across an offer from Siemens to become a "computer science assistant" in addition to the possible media design job at notorious broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk. He jumped at the chance and finished his apprenticeship three years later top 3. "It was so cool to be able to work in the field of computer science, even without the need of a general entrance qualification for university," says Bosch. During his apprenticeship, he founded his first company, Xbox3000, which aimed to promote the German Xbox community. The two largest Xbox LAN parties in Europe were organised by his company. He then worked as a programmer at Crytek, trained as an IT specialist at Microsoft and later became a producer at Koch Media, now Plaion, for their external studios. "My skills for the games industry are a mixture of my very open personality, my thirst for knowledge and engineering. In the words of (German) Sesame Street song, "Who? How? What?" I've always questioned everything and then tried to find a source and recreate it." This started with background knowledge from German computer magazines and progressed to online tutorials and articles. Content on video platforms came only later. He has three tips for getting started: start very small, create and exchange. "Whether with a pen or a keyboard, try to build a prototype of a game idea to understand what is needed. Tools, graphics, programming environment, engine, audio. I myself started with BlitzBasic. You'll quickly find out what part you like best. Then you exchange ideas with others at fairs and events

like the Indie Outpost in Nuremberg and try to ask as many questions as you can". True to the motto of (German) Sesame Street: "Who doesn't ask, stays dumb."

For **Lara Mischnick**, who currently manages the community for Capcom titles in Central Europe, working in the games industry was always her goal. As a result, she focused her degree in Communication and Media Studies on games studies with a focus on gaming communities. "At the same time, I started streaming on Twitch, attending events and getting to know the industry. This allowed me to gain

**LARA MISCHNICK**

Community Manager
Central Europa

"Ultimately, personal experience, authenticity and a passion for your own particular industry are the core elements that will pave the way into the sector."

a lot of important experience and meet inspiring people. All of these foundations, and networking in particular, eventually paved my way into the industry," says Mischnick. So it's a combination of study, initiative, her own streaming experience and part-time work, especially as she has several years' experience of working with creators during her time on Bethesda's official *The Elder Scrolls Online* stream team. "Reaching out to publishers – whether as a creator or on a part-time basis – or taking the initiative to learn new skills offers a lot of potential for further development and experience," she adds.

Even before he left school, **Josh Hamann** knew he would end up in the games industry. "My gaming journey started at the age of 5 and while in school, I realized that at some point I would end up in the games industry. I could not stand the idea of working in an area to which I am not fully attached to," says Hamann. His first →

→ real experience in the industry was an internship in consumer marketing at Electronic Arts in Geneva. He then began his studies in international marketing, which required two internships, which he completed at Activision Blizzard and InnoGames. "From there on my professional journey in the games industry continued with various marketing and sales-related roles in companies like Activision Blizzard or Razer until I had the great opportunity to continue my journey at Plaion in 2023." His studies and his own interest in games and all things related to them are a great start, but actually working in the industry gives you the chance to work on a wide range of skills. "The games industry lives from the excitement of gamers all around the globe, so being open-minded, adaptable to change, and eager to learn and work with diverse kinds of people is a daily practice. The games industry is not just about development — it has a broad spectrum of opportunities ranging from IT, marketing, sales, development, game design, art, finance, customer service to many more." He believes that the passion for gaming behind the actual job is essential.

It was his passion for games that brought **Oliver Nickel** into the games industry. "With a degree in Sinology and American Studies, I probably didn't follow the typical path to a job

OLIVER NICKEL

Head of Communications GSA Plaion

"Just look around, because there are countless opportunities to work in the games industry here in Germany, and of course you can also go international.

And don't be afraid to show that you're a nerd, because almost all of us are."

in PR, and to be honest, for a long time I wasn't really aware of the many opportunities the industry had to offer. The stereotypical view is of positions in development or quality assurance," he says, although he had



JOSH HAMANN

Head of Marketing Plaion



LILLY BOULEGUE

Assistant Manager Nplay

always had an eye for public relations in general. The cornerstone of his career was also his master's thesis, which he wrote on the specific characteristics of the video game medium in China. His career began with a job at Marchsreiter Communications. This was followed by seven years at SZ Scala and PR for Nintendo of Europe until he joined Plaion in 2020. "You could say that the work, the many great people and Munich itself appealed to me so much right from the start that I'm still wholeheartedly involved in games PR after more than 13 years." It also helped that he had been playing games since his earliest childhood and had become more familiar with the medium, particularly through the gaming press and literature. "Enthusiasm and an understanding of a product are extremely helpful, but this applies to all areas of professional life."

From publisher to content creator: **Lilly Boulegue** made this leap this year. After completing her apprenticeship at simulation publisher Aerosoft in early 2021, where she was responsible for trade fair planning and PR in the marketing department, she moved to Nplay, Germany's largest content creator in the simulation sector, in February 2024. "I quickly realised that I wanted to develop further after my apprenticeship and get to know other professional areas in the games industry, so it was a perfect fit." After taking parental leave in September 2023, she used the change as a springboard for a fresh start. "I take care of all the management and organisational tasks at Nplay and try to ease Ansgar Blauth's workload as a creator. We're not just about videos, there's a lot more to it than meets the eye. Tractor tours, real-life videos, our own shop — it never gets boring. But it's fun and I'm incredibly happy to have taken this step." She concludes: "A lot of people smile at the job of content creator, but when you see what's really behind it, you're really impressed!"



MARKUS WILDING

Senior Director, Marketing & Commercial Private Division

"And yet I still think the human element is one of the most important: attend trade shows, conferences, and industry gatherings, listen to presentations and attend workshops. And if that proves difficult, then go online and watch and listen to the tons of interesting presentations that are available to everyone for free. This is an industry that loves to communicate, and knowledge is freely shared. Make the most of it!"

Markus Wilding, Senior Director, Marketing & Commercial at Private Division, a subsidiary of Take-Two, seized the opportunity. He started his career in sales as a wholesale and export sales manager with a traditional toy company, best known at the time for its chess computers. "I worked as sales manager for southern Germany and Austria when the company was taken over by a competitor called Saitek. In addition to chess computers, they also had joysticks and gamepads in their portfolio, and since I was the only one who knew anything about this business, I was immediately made Product and PR Manager." As his move from sales to marketing/PR was very abrupt, he learned by doing, because he was the only person in the company who had anything to do with video games. At that time, there were hardly any training courses or seminars available, as the games industry in Germany was anything but established and recognised in the 1990s. So Wilding made it part of his job to visit all the major publishers in Germany several times a year to negotiate co-operations for the hardware line-up. "As a result, I got to know all the marketing managers in the German industry and built relationships that have lasted for years, in some cases decades. Through these contacts and the many discussions with much more experienced members of the industry,



No Rest for the Wicked



Construction Simulator

I was able to learn more than in any training course. And indeed, the trade magazines that were only available in print at the time also helped me – both GamesMarkt and MCV (now defunct) were extremely helpful in my professional development,” says Wilding. “Even after almost 30 years in the games industry, I would never want to leave. I can’t imagine anything more exciting than a career in this, the most exciting, creative, and successful entertainment industry.” He believes that the opportunities for training and further education in games today are virtually limitless, whether digital or live, regional or international, publishing or development.

Video games have fascinated **Martin Wortmann** since childhood. However, he decided that he was not a programmer or designer, but that video games had to be marketed. That’s why he chose traditional business studies. “I was lucky enough to write my thesis at Nintendo of Europe, which included a six-month internship. I applied directly to Nintendo through their online job portal. The enthusiasm for video games among my colleagues is an invisible common denominator, which is definitely a plus in the games industry when it comes to joining a company,” says Wortmann, whose previous positions prior to his current position as Head of Digital & International Sales at astragon include Business Analyst and Financial Manager Digital Content outside the



**MARTIN
WORTMANN**

Head of Digital
& International
Sales astragon
Entertainment



**YVONNE
LUKANOWSKI**

Senior PR
Manager astragon
Entertainment

games industry as well as CEO of the digital sales platform Gamesrocket. He acquired his knowledge of marketing, products and trends more or less through editorial articles or later as part of his day-to-day work. “This is a core skill, especially in sales and marketing. Audiences and how to approach them change over time. You never stop learning and the business or industry is fast moving.” He recommends a general international business degree with a period abroad as a good foundation for those considering a career in sales/marketing. “The industry is very international; in addition to English, foreign languages such as French or Asian languages are an advantage, depending on the potential employer. Career changers from eCommerce or a marketing agency environment fit the gaming industry’s requirements profile particularly well when it comes to general marketing or digital sales topics.”

After leaving school, **Yvonne Lukanowski** did a voluntary social year at a youth centre. She was determined to stay in the social sector until she and her best friend discovered an opportunity to study game art. “We both love art, we both love video games. So from that day on we were hooked: We both wanted nothing more than to become game artists. During our studies, however, we both realised at almost the same time that we still really wanted to start a career in the games industry, but not as

artists: instead, I discovered my passion for communication and writing, and she discovered her talent for project management and analysis. Today, I am a Senior PR Manager at astragon and she is a User Research Analyst at Ubisoft,” says Lukanowski. She first came into contact with the industry through her studies in game art, but gained most of her professional expertise through learning by doing and sharing ideas with others, catalysed by her passion for games. “I’m also very interested in what’s happening in the industry outside of my job, the latest game hits and why they became hits, technical advances and what creative promotions other companies are coming up with for their games, how communication around video games is organised, and many other aspects that overlap with my work,” she adds, and encourages newcomers. “The games industry isn’t just about artists and programmers. Whatever talent you have – be it a knack for numbers, accounting, communication, project management, analytical skills or even manual skills – you will find a place in the industry that suits your talents and allows you to turn your passion for video games into a career. Get in touch with people in the industry, whether at events or through social platforms. Our industry is particularly open to young people who have questions, and people are more than happy to share their knowledge, tips and experiences.”

MARCEL KLEFFMANN

WHAT DO I WANT TO BE?

The Most Important Games Degree Programmes

You need *specialised knowledge to work in the games industry.*

One possible way to get there: Becoming a student! The following overview of seven key specialisations in games development can help you find your way.

Game Development

From the outside, game development is often seen as the bread and butter, the most basic craft of games making. This is not entirely wrong, as the programming of the game and the systems it contains is the basis for creating a game. Of all the areas of games training, game developers are closest to classic IT professions like programmers. However, it is not without cause that we generally no longer call it game programming in most contexts, but instead refer to it as game development or game engineering. On the one hand, programming is not always the focus, because thanks to modern,

increasingly easy-to-use game engines such as Unreal, Unity, GameMaker or Ren'Py, ever more complex game concepts can be developed with relatively little or even no programming effort at all. However, programming is of course still part of the developer's tools of the trade and will also be part of most degree programmes in one form or another – you simply can't do without it!

On the other hand, game developers don't work alone in their office and tinker away. Instead, they are also the interlink between many other of the other game making disciplines. After all, they are the ones who integrate the systems, quests, storylines, art and sounds into the



game on the technical basis, be it by programming or engine utilisation. Game developers must therefore be trained in almost all areas of game development and understand the basics of what other artists do in the game – so where it says programming on the outside, there can be a lot of interdisciplinary work inside. It is therefore similar to game design and accordingly often taught together in a combined study course at universities, sometimes with the option to specialise in a later term.

How to study?

Game engineering is offered at many state and private universities all over Germany and Europe, often at those with a technical focus. The chances of finding a degree programme locally are good in many large cities. Some universities stand out with special programmes, such as courses with included interdisciplinary parts from game design and art like at MacroMedia, or a unique hybrid of games programming and computer games research at the University of Bayreuth, currently the only such M.A. degree in Germany.

The expert says



"Game development is a diverse, interdisciplinary activity in which different disciplines come together and complement each other. Game and level design, storytelling and writing, game art and technology, engines and programming are perhaps the most important elements. Specialisation in one of these areas is of great importance, as is an overview of the entire game design and development process. This ensures successful collaboration and a better understanding of experts from other disciplines."

GERALD FARCA, Professor Game Design, MacroMedia

The expert says



“Above all, game design means creating a world that is as immersive as possible, in which players feel free to perform meaningful actions that help them progress in the game and the story and offer them the possibility of conflict resolution as a challenging means.

As a job description, it refers to someone who (in the narrower sense) develops the design of the rules system and game mechanics, often with an additional focus on other trades, such as level design, balancing, storytelling, worldbuilding or even producing – even if these each represent their own job descriptions. In a broader sense, game design means making decisions that are relevant to the game experience – in other words, artists, programmers, producers, level designers, etc. also make game design decisions.”

LINDA BREITLAUCH, Professor of Design – INTERMEDIA DESIGN, Trier University of Applied Sciences

Game Design

Just as ubiquitous as programming is the term game design, albeit often with a somewhat less concrete idea of what it entails. The terms game development and game design are occasionally used interchangeably, but the field of application of the game designer is fundamentally different. Game design refers to the processes that are necessary to transport ideas for a game into an artistic vision in terms of content, structure and emotion, to develop the game concept based on this and finally to translate this into finished game software. Game designers are the interface for all these processes and often also work as a sounding board for the other development disciplines: they build quest lines together with the narrative design team and determine the best ways to incorporate them, they conceptualise important game mechanics and coordinate



their development with the programmers or implement them themselves, they discuss the audio atmosphere with the sound designers and composers and much more. Everything that goes into the world building of a game, the level design or the balancing of a title passes through the hands of the game designers. A game designer often also takes on the role of producer, keeping track of the development status of the game and coordinating the collaboration of the other team members.

How to study?

Game design is also often taught at technical universities, usually in conjunction with games programming. In addition, almost all private universities that specialise in games offer game design courses. Distance learning programmes, such as at the IU, are also possible.

Game Art

Game art is probably the most self-explanatory field of study in the gaming industry. A game artist does exactly what you would imagine: They create concept art, design characters and set pieces, paint 2D assets, model 3D assets and animate them. Of course, not all of this is always done at the same time or by the same person, as specialisations are possible. Although digital art naturally dominates in game art, this does not mean that classic art such as drawing on paper or photography has no value here; after all, many a game has been created from scanned paintings or with the help of film recordings, and each art style brings unique opportunities to a game. And last but not least, the sense of aesthetics and design that many artists from other disciplines

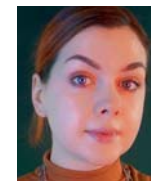


bring to the table before entering game art naturally also helps when creating appealing game worlds. Different degree programmes require different prior knowledge of the arts in general and digital art such as 3D modelling in particular, from no prior knowledge to advanced.

How to study?

Game artists have often not necessarily studied game art. Artistic design degree programmes, which are available at almost all state universities and many private schools, are a good basis for aspiring artists. If you want to study game art specifically with a focus on 3D animation, for example, you will find plenty of choice at private universities for applied sciences such as the SAE Institute and the School of Games.

The expert says



“To become a versatile, employable and fully-trained Game Artist, being able to draw really well is only a very small skill you will

need. A Game Artist has a deep understanding for the needs of the player of their game, as well as visual design and an aesthetic intuition. Game Art students first and foremost learn how to explore the possibilities of design for a game: Is the style more realistic or iconic? Does the art consequently convey the feel of the game as a whole? Does the player understand what they are seeing on the screen? Only after this explorative work, they immerse themselves into technical problem-solving: Animation, 3D art of implementation of graphics into the engine are all part of a game artist's job.”
MARION PLANK, Professor Game Art, IU International University

Narrative Design



Who actually writes all the stories that are told in games? This is a question that can quickly get out of hand, as many more stories are told and things are written in games than is obvious at first glance. The works of a writer are not only the main story and the side quests, not only the dialogues of the characters in the game. No, every item description, every quest log in the diary, every tooltip in the menu has to be written. This is the speciality of narrative designers, sometimes called game writers. And even stories that players don't experience in written or spoken form often go through the hands of a narrative designer. This includes so-called environmental storytelling, for example, stories that the game only tells through the arrangement of objects and characters in the space being played. If a skeleton in the post-apocalypse is clutching a teddy bear, then a game writer has come up with it. So if you want to practise games writing, you have to learn one thing above all: how to tell stories. If you want to write stories for games, you should logically be able to write

creatively. Many game writers come from related creative industries, they are or were previously novelists or screenwriters, comic writers, journalists or literary translators. If you want to enter the industry as a games writer, you can lay the foundations with courses such as Creative Writing, Theatre Studies or (Media) Journalism and gain initial practical experience by writing your own novel or designing interactive stories with software such as Twine.

How to study?

Creative writing, theatre and film studies or screenwriting can often be found in the curricula of universities with creative courses, and philological courses such as Romance, British or Slavic studies often include creative writing, usually focusing on the respective language's styles of literature. Narrative design for games in particular is still quite rare as a separate degree programme, but is taught at select private schools such as MacroMedia as part of game design or can be taken as an additional certificate. Established game writers like

The expert says



"Games writer and narrative designer are two different words with basically the same meaning. They describe experts in the art of telling stories with video games.

This requires knowledge of writing dialogues, scenes and in-game texts, as well as the ability to structure a plot and design interesting characters and immersive worlds. All of this not only needs to be created, but also documented in a structured manner (storybible) so that all team members can work with it easily. But knowledge of game design is also important in order to create stories that only the interactive medium of video games can tell. In short, a games writer/narrative designer needs creative energy, knowledge of the craft of writing and a whole lot of practice."

MARCUS KLÖPPEL, Deputy Professor for Game Design & Development, MacroMedia

Hannah Nicklin, Edwin McRae and many others are also increasingly recognised as teachers in their field and publish books focused on writing for different styles of games that can serve as a nice introduction before starting into a learning programme.

Game Communication

Game communication as a collective term for degree programmes and training courses that focus on marketing, sales, event management and PR for video games does not strictly fit into this list of the major games-specific fields of study. Nevertheless, the area of marketing, sales, events and PR in the games industry as a whole is such an important and large one that it is worth pointing out the training profile. Currently, very few universities and colleges focus on marketing, sales and PR for games in dedicated degree programmes. However, there are universities that offer additional qualifications in their game design, game development or game art programmes that teach the basics of marketing. On the other hand, there are also universities with additional programmes in traditional marketing or PR studies that address the special circumstances of the games industry or other media and creative industries. Unlike many other fields, which can primarily impart specific game creation knowledge,

game communication first teaches classic, robust marketing tools, on which specialised knowledge is then built. In other words: If you want to get into games PR or do marketing, you are also in good hands in classic marketing and PR degree programmes and in corresponding traineeships



directly at agencies. In order to offer particular added value for the games industry, some universities include a special focus on esports, where event management for sporting events and competitions and several topics tailored to the wider gaming industry are also taught. Depending on your own interests, a gaming-specific degree or additional diploma can therefore pay off. Internships are also common in PR, so if you really want to get a taste of the field, you can find opportunities at local agencies.

The expert says



"First of all, I think it's important to dispel the idea in students' minds that marketing activities in the games industry are completely different

strategies and measures compared to other industries. Not everything is 'disruptive' and 'edgy' – rather, we are largely dealing with classic marketing craftsmanship that is tailored to its target group and products in a clean, considered and sustainable way."

RUDOLF INDERST, Professor of Digital Game Studies, IU International University

How to study?

PR and journalism degree programmes are a good foundation for working in games PR, especially if they include project management. Many of these programmes are also available as distance courses. A few universities also offer programmes focused on the games industry under titles such as Games Management or Game Business, including the S4G School for Games and Mittweida University of Applied Sciences.



Sound Design

Anyone studying sound design, also known as audio engineering, is probably not doing so specifically for games, but as part of the wider creative industry. The film, music and audio industries in particular have been training sound design students for a long time, both at universities and in apprenticeships. There are numerous degree programmes in sound engineering or music production, each with a slightly different focus, but which can still open the door to the games industry. However, anyone who feels musically inclined and plays instruments or is studying can also find fulfilment here, both as a composer and in sound engineering. Sound designers not only or not necessarily compose the soundtrack of a game, but are also responsible for everything that players hear through their ears: From background atmospheres and subtle nature sounds to orchestral boss battle themes and electronic sound via the in-game jukebox to the sound a menu makes when clicking and scrolling. Whereas in the past, sound was often only added towards the end of the development phase in game development, sound design is becoming an increasingly important component from the beginning of the game dev process to the finished title. Audio engineers will therefore be increasingly in demand in the future.

How to study?

Sound design is often offered as a non-media-specific degree programme, i.e. not specifically for games. If there is an art form in focus, it is most often film. Accordingly, suitable degree programmes can be found at television academies and at almost all media-related private schools such as SAE. Music degree programmes, often with a media focus such as film music, are also taught at most state music academies.

The expert says



"Game audio is the acoustic design of a game and an essential component of a successful title. Perfect sound is crucial to make a game an immersive and emotional experience. Good sound design includes the right music, dialogue and sound effects in the game. This includes,

for example, ensuring that action-related noises like movements, steps, jumps and weapons are accompanied by appropriate sounds so that the action is authentic. Ambient noises such as wind, rain or birdsong also complete the overall acoustic impression of a game. A sound designer for games works closely with the development team to ensure that the sound of the game enhances the gameplay. This is why we attach great importance to this networking in our degree programmes. Our students from the Audio Engineering, Game Art & 3D Animation and Games Programming departments already work together in project teams during their studies."

CHRISTIAN MÜLLER, General Manager SAE Institute GSA

The expert says



"If a degree programme combines Game Development and VR Development, the development of virtual worlds and virtual content is also taught for other industries (e.g. automotive industry, mechanical engineering, medicine, aviation, etc.) using the tools commonly used there (e.g. CAD tools), which is why graduates can later work in many different industries. Game development is taught at the same time, with virtual reality and augmented reality games on the curriculum in addition to digital, video, computer, and console games. Such a degree programme will tend to be somewhat more technical and computer science-oriented than, for example, a game design or a pure game development programme, but increases the prospects of a well-paid and secure job in or outside the games industry."

DANIEL GÖRLICH, Professor of Virtual Worlds & Game Technologies, Offenburg University of Applied Sciences

VR Development



Often grouped under Virtual Reality (VR), study courses for what should better be called Extended Reality (XR) also mostly include Augmented (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR). And while most game development study courses include XR development in one way or another, more and more schools have developed specific courses just for XR because of the wide interest from all kinds of industries for the field. Broadly speaking, VR development students learn how to develop, design, code and animate for 3D spaces that players inhabit via VR goggles or that are projected into the real world with different kinds of AR applications. XR development is thus much more focused on peripherals and haptics like VR goggles, specific controllers that translate player movement into avatar movement and various kinds of AR gadgets, from smartphones to beamers and smart glasses. And while VR game development can be a lucrative field, XR developers are highly sought after in industry fields that design and produce, like the automotive industry, as well as in fields that simulate expensive or dangerous training environments, like surgical medicine, aviation or even spaceflight. Thus, XR development is a much more interdisciplinary study course than classic game development, and will have a much more technical focus to accommodate all the possible applications for XR technology in various industry branches.

How to study?

Special courses in VR development and design are a very new field, but several public universities have recognised the value in these programmes: The University for Applied Sciences Offenburg, the h_da Darmstadt and the HAW Hamburg are holding degree programmes that relate to XR specifically. So do the private schools SRH University for Applied Sciences Heidelberg and IU International University.

NOT 'JUST' STUDYING

Many Ways to Start Into the Games Industry

There are more ways to enter the games industry than by university courses.

Dual-study programs, scholarships from game studios or traditional apprenticeships directly at a company are just some ways to learn the craft!



One way to break into the games industry as a newcomer is through university

study courses like we present them in another article of this magazine. But that's by far not the only way to enter the German or European games industry. From apprenticeships in game studios or other industries to dual studies and stipend programmes with direct industry connections, many ways can lead into gaming – or to the application of initially game-centric skills in entirely different branches. We had a look at some prestigious outliers when it comes to special study programmes, and asked around gaming studios how to start as an apprentice in any craft of game design there.

Study Courses with Industry Cooperations

Close to traditional university studies, but more in connection with the game industry itself are several study courses, mostly at private schools and universities of applied sciences. Their unique factors are generally that they

host game workers as lecturers on a regular basis, that they include industry internships in their programs and that their schedules are adapted to the specific needs of the industry. Due to their closeness to studios and publishers, often local ones, schools like these often have a more flexible schedule depending on what the industry can offer in terms of internships or events to volunteer on. An example of such companies is the S4G School for Games, based in Berlin. "We maintain active partnerships with various companies in the games industry. These collaborations give students direct access to industry experts and resources. Students benefit from specialist lectures, guest lectures and workshops led by industry representatives. This not only promotes learning, but also the development of professional networks," explains Felix Wittkopf, Educational Manager and Managing Partner. Students are also actively encouraged to attend trade fairs and networking events. With project-based learning modules, students are designing and programming their first games and thus build a portfolio during the study course, and as such start out with prototyped ideas and examples of their work when they apply to companies. Also, "at the end of the training, an internship serves as a springboard into the industry. Through a 'Recruitment Day' organized by S4G, we bring our students together with other companies. In this way, we try to ensure a smooth transition into a job." The membrane between learning and industry can be thinner in a programme like this in contrast to more traditional university structures, and existing contacts

between lecturers that work in the games industry themselves and local and regional companies might positively influence the pipeline from student to junior worker.

On-Campus Studios and Industry Stipends

One of the most dedicated examples of such integration of industry and academia is the campus of Futuregames in Warsaw. Originally from Sweden, Futuregames built their first Polish school not just in the vicinity of, but directly on the campus of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* developer CD Projekt Red. Piotr Matecki, Head of the Warsaw campus, brought the school brand owned by Swedish educational giant AcadeMedia to Poland by cooperating directly with the prestige publisher. CD Projekt not only takes over part of the tuition fees for all students at the campus through sponsorships, "six of our students will also get one year tuition covered by CDPR in the form of a scholarship", Matecki says. CD Projekt Red themselves also profit from the cooperation, observing the promising talents right from the get go and being able to recruit them before anyone else after they graduate. "The idea behind our cooperation was a result of a shared desire to promote, improve, and widen access to education across the game dev industry. We truly believe that, thanks to both Futuregames' and CD Projekt Red involvement, we can make it easier for more students to take the first steps in their careers", explains Kacper Ullman, Partnerships Manager.



FELIX WITTKOPF

Educational Manager and Managing Partner S4G



PIOTR MATECKI

Head of Futuregames Warsaw



KACPER ULLMAN

Partnerships Manager, CD Projekt Red



TOM BURCK

Chief Officer Customs & HR for Gameforge

Being directly integrated into the industry in this way also shows in Futuregames' curriculum. From the start, all different study programmes are teamed together in groups emulating a development studio, with programmers, designers, artists and QA working together on their study projects right from the beginning and through the entire game creation process. While the Warsaw campus is a speciality in itself, Futuregames is also quite proud of their history in Sweden. Quoting industry statistics, Matecki explains that "we have educated over 14 per cent of the Swedish gamedev industry", and that 96 per cent of all graduates directly transitioned into industry jobs according to Futuregames' internal statistics. Sweden, itself a market not dissimilar to Germany where professional labour for the games industry is highly sought after and at the moment not enough experts are trained to fill all future demand has proved to be fertile ground for industry-entwined training, and Poland as one of the strongest AAA developer countries in Europe seems to be similarly receptive. Programs like those might not be available in every city of every country, but they show what is possible when industry and learning institutions intertwine to get students close to their chosen industry as early as possible.

Apprenticeships in Game Companies

Taking a step away from university courses, the industry itself is training their own young talents, of course. Like in any other craft, classic apprenticeships are still an integral part of the talent pipeline in games development. And, honestly, not just in the game-specific vocations: A lot of games companies are training people in HR, office management, system administration and a lot of other jobs that are integral to the workings of any company. Working in games does not only mean developing games, →

Studying does not mean *only theory.*
Lecturers from the Games Industry
or cooperated efforts with companies
can make *possibilities happen.*

→ after all. “Since 2023 we are training IT Specialist Application Development and IT Specialist System Administration. The apprenticeship lasts three years, every year we train one of each, so we will then always have 6 apprentices,” says Tom Burck, Chief Officer Customs & HR for Gameforge from Karlsruhe, for example. Other companies, like InnoGames from Hamburg, rely even more heavily on apprenticeships in a lot of vocations for their young talents. “Annually, we welcome between 4-8 apprentices across various disciplines including Software Development, IT, Graphics Design, Marketing, and Office Management,” explains Silja Bernecker, Senior P&C Business Partner & Team Lead Marketing at InnoGames.

Apprentices trained in a company often have good chances of being retained there with a full-time offer. InnoGames offers about 90 per cent



SILJA BERNECKER
Senior P&C
Business Partner
& Marketing
Lead, InnoGames



MAIKE STEINWELLER
Director of
Communications,
Wooga

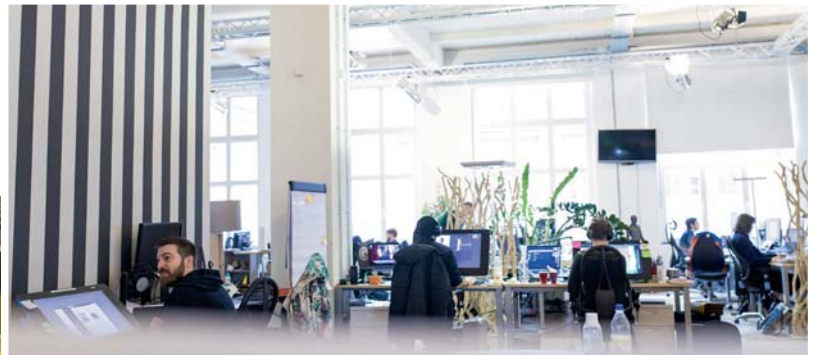
Not all jobs in games are *game-making* jobs. There is a whole administrative body *behind every game*, from HR and Office Management to Publishing.

of their apprentices full-time jobs, Bernecker claims, and Burck also ensures that Gameforge trains young talents in hopes of retaining them in the company. But successfully completed apprenticeships are also great ways to build expertise for the market, since learning a job directly at a company proves practice and talent of the apprentice. And, not least, while most university courses cost tuition fees, working as an apprentice actually starts out making some money and gradually increases salary.

Even if companies don't train apprentices, a successful game dev career can start at a game studio by means of internships or part-time

jobs. “We do not offer apprenticeships, but internships and working student jobs,” explains Maike Steinweller, Director of Communications at Berlin mobile game company Wooga. Often, studios do just that, but don't particularly market it through job portals if they aren't specifically in need of the workforce from young people trying out different professions. In these cases, the tried and true method of phoning to local game studios and asking about internships et cetera will never go out of style. Ask around, there may be more opportunities in your next bigger city than you realise now!

PASCAL WAGNER



CipSoft

Why should only job candidates answer questions? *Larissa Willner,*
Senior HR Marketing Manager *CipSoft,* introduces their company to you here.

What do you expect from future colleagues?

We are looking for individuals who are interested in a long-term career at CipSoft. It is important for us to avoid a high fluctuation, so we want to hire people who align well with our company culture. New colleagues should also be eager to further their personal development and to enjoy working with colleagues in our office – most of the time. This enables us to collaborate closely as a team, achieve our objectives and maintain our success over the past 25+ years.

You are a great place to work, because ...

... we have been decorated as one of Bavaria's best employers and we have even been certified by "Great Place to Work" as one of the top companies to work for in the ICT sector. Taking awards and certificates aside, we aim to make CipSoft a great place to connect, work and achieve goals together because we believe that only those who feel good can perform well. This is why we are putting a strong focus on the needs of our colleagues. Stimulating tasks and agreeable work conditions are just as important to us as a carefully calibrated work-life experience.

How does the company provide a stable workplace in these turbulent times for the industry?

CipSoft is here to stay. We prefer long-time success and sustainable growth to short-term profit and rapid expansion. Our company is and always will be independent – not only in the way we work and think, but also as an organization. We and only we want to decide which aims to achieve and how we will get there. This is why CipSoft is still directed by its founders.



LARISSA WILLNER

Larissa has been the woman responsible for sponsorships, events and all kinds of marketing activities at CipSoft for almost 5+ years.

ADDRESS

CipSoft GmbH
 Prüfeninger
 Straße 20
 93049 Regensburg

FACTS

Founded: 2001
 Employees: 101
 Location:
 Regensburg

PROJECTS/ GAMES

TIBIA
 TIBIA ME
 LITEBRINGER
 (further projects in development)



Contact:

Mario Kugler

Please send applications to:

jobs@cipsoft.com

More information
 on our website



We are looking for:

Marketing Manager/-in

Software Testingenieur/-in

Produktmanager/-in Payment

Webentwickler/-in Payment

We also welcome proactive, unsolicited applications!

HUMAN RESSOURCES

Thoughtful Hiring Principles and Responsible Growth

While layoffs were and are defining the headlines of the last twelve months, their connection to HR planning remains largely unilluminated. We spoke to four HR professionals about their companies' HR work in crises and how responsible HR work can help reduce layoffs.



Nora Neumann, Head of People & Culture, Yager

"As a smaller gaming company, we actively monitor and experience the unique challenges

posed by the current dynamics of the industry. In the short term, we find it important to be agile and responsive to the pressures and instability of the current market. Talent acquisition and retention are paramount concerns for us. To address these challenges, we implement a number of strategies. Working on both internal and co-development projects requires incredibly good planning, but allows us a bit of a safety by not investing all our efforts on one large project. We actively assess our employees skills and offer targeted talent development initiatives to bridge gaps.

Looking ahead, we recognize the importance of building a resilient and adaptable organization capable of continuing to weather industry challenges. We really invest in knowing our employees and at our size and the tenure of our leadership team, the personal connections we have gives us a great advantage. Not only do we have leaders that have seen the best and worst of the industry and exude a calm confidence, the high level of expertise of our employees, as well as the familiarity that is an important part of Yager culture enables us to swiftly adapt to changing needs and circumstances, facilitating quick and uncomplicated re-staffing and onboarding when necessary. Communication is key."

THE GERMAN GAMES INDUSTRY CURRENTLY FACES A SHORTAGE OF SKILLED LABOUR, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME MANY EMPLOYEES ARE AVAILABLE ON THE GLOBAL MARKET RIGHT NOW DUE TO RECURRING LAYOFFS. WHAT INFLUENCE DOES THE CURRENT SITUATION HAVE ON YOUR PERSONNEL PLANNING - IN THE SHORT AND LONG TERM?



Sina Biglah, HR Manager, Mifcom

"In principle, we keep an eye on general developments. However, we are focussing on the issues that we can positively influence ourselves. These are primarily our core values, our employer image and the working environment that we can offer our colleagues here."

Working on both internal and co-development projects requires good planning, but allows us a bit of a safety by not investing all our efforts on one large project.

NORA NEUMANN



Martin Eglseder, Senior Manager - Strategic HR Development, CipSoft

"Currently, we are witnessing an increase in applications from individuals with long-standing industry experience, which is uncommon for us due to our location in Regensburg, away from traditional gaming hubs. However, we do not expect this trend to continue in the medium to long term. Therefore, we are increasingly focusing on further training and comprehensive onboarding of individuals with basic experience within our company. This approach applies to both professional and personal development of our employees. In addition to welcoming applications from individuals with industry experience or basic education, we also recognize the value that career changers with practical experience in other fields can bring to our team. We are committed to offering opportunities to talented individuals from diverse backgrounds, integrating them into our corporate culture and workflows through targeted onboarding processes."



Tom Burck, Chief Officer Customers & HR, Gameforge

"Actually, the impact is not as high as one might think.

The shortage of skilled labor is as old as the industry itself, and at Gameforge we've had more than 20 years to adapt to it. From developing our own talent, recruiting worldwide, and even to switching our company language to English in order to be able to accommodate foreign talent possessing special skills and experience that remain somewhat limited or less abundant domestically. However, the most important measure to counter the shortage of skilled labor is employee retention. Therefore, we at Gameforge put a lot of time and effort into ensuring that we remain a good employer and keep our employees happy as they continue to grow.

Additionally, external audits like Great Place to Work help us better understand where some of our current strengths and challenges are."

WHAT IS YOUR CONCEPT FOR SUSTAINABLE HR MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE HR DEVELOPMENT?



Nora Neumann, Head of People & Culture, Yager

"At Yager our concept for sustainable HR management and development revolves around fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture. We encourage open communication, and embrace constructive feedback. This fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment among our employees, reducing turnover and enhancing productivity.

Work-life balance is integral to maintaining employee well-being, and we offer flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse needs. Our commitment to employee well-being is evident through our range of well-being programs, including mental health support and wellness initiatives.

Strong leadership is essential for our success, and we invest in leadership development to cultivate a pipeline of talent. We aim to prioritize employee engagement and recognition, organizing events and creating a positive office experience. We aim to create performance management processes that are transparent and we promote a feedback culture to drive continuous improvement.

Higher turnover in times of instability can come from redundancies, but also from a lack of trust in the current projects or anxiety related to the market and industry as a whole. By investing in leadership and people management training, as well as company-wide trainings in areas such as mental health awareness, change management and non-violent communication, we are trying to empower our workforce to build their own resilience, to support them to thrive in dynamic environments."



Sina Biglah, HR Manager, Mifcom

"Our approach starts with recruiting the right colleagues. We take great care to ensure that new potential colleagues are a 100 per cent match for us and our core values. We have even anchored the topic of sustainable personnel development in a core value: 'Continuous Improvement'. We are already successfully supporting many employees on their individual career paths and have already been able to (co-)celebrate great successes here. We are also currently revising the entire internal personnel development concept in order to be able to offer all colleagues even more targeted measures. The aim is to provide our employees with ongoing training – on the one hand, to support their need for further development and, on the other, to keep them qualified in the long term."



Martin Eglseider, Senior Manager - Strategic HR Development, CipSoft

"Initially, our employment contracts are limited

to two years because, while we aim for long-term collaboration, we also want to ensure that new employees fit well with us and meet the professional requirements. The standard probation period is often too short for this, which is why we spend 21 months working closely with new colleagues to determine whether or not they fit into our company. We always aim for permanent cooperation and thus the permanent employment contract. Should we discontinue a development project, we strive to place affected employees in other teams, a commitment we have successfully upheld in past projects. It is comparatively easy for us to plan reliably due to the fact that we act both as developers and operators of our games. For example, the company's management decided that the company should not significantly exceed its current size until another major successful project has been established, so further expansion is ruled out until an additional, sustainable income source has been secured. This strategy also includes our HR development policy: New employees receive intensive training in accordance with CipSoft's philosophy in their first three years, complemented by optional training on topics such as responsibility, communication, and time management, as well as challenging areas like values and non-violent communication. Our goal is for every new colleague to have the opportunity to reach senior level within the first three years, which already signifies a high degree of independence and professional and personal maturity at our company. This program was initiated directly by the executive board, and I am personally responsible for the training and support in all interdisciplinary areas, imparting knowledge and experience from my 15 years at CipSoft."

WHAT IS YOUR CONCEPT FOR SUSTAINABLE HR MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE HR DEVELOPMENT?



Tom Burck, Chief Officer Customers & HR, Gameforge

"It all begins and ends with the people you work with. Our concept for sustainable HR management and development revolves around prioritizing the well-being and growth of our team members. We emphasize careful selection of employees based not only on skills but also on their ability to integrate into our team culture, consistently earning us high marks for company culture and teamwork across all levels of our organization.

To adapt to the changing work landscape, we've implemented a hybrid model post-pandemic, offering flexibility in remote and office work. Despite the shift, we've fostered camaraderie through increased company events, expanded facilities like an in-house gym and massage services, and renovated communal spaces to encourage group activities. Also, we always had a soccer team, bouldering and board game groups, and now we have several new ones, including a ballroom dancing group, Squash, film viewing groups, and more.

In addition to promoting cohesion, we focus on skill development. Many employees seek growth opportunities, leading to diverse career trajectories within Gameforge. We support this evolution through initiatives like our leadership academy and communication training, along with 'HR Nuggets' sessions (which are simply short optional training opportunities) to broaden employees' understanding of different departments.

Through these measures, we prioritize both the personal and professional growth of our team, ensuring a sustainable and thriving workforce at Gameforge."

"Our goal is for every new colleague to have the opportunity to reach senior level within the first three years, which already signifies a high degree of independence and professional and personal maturity at our company."



Nora Neumann, Head of People & Culture, Yager

"Very close collaboration between HR, company management, and project management is key to ensure informed decision-making and proactive adjustments to teams and operations before a worst case situation arises.

HR planning on its own is not a silver bullet, and there are many other factors involved in a project's success. However, good HR planning and a common sense approach to building an organizational culture where employees are supported to feel safe, resilient and flexible can go along why in bolstering a company's ability to endure phases of hardship, navigating economic uncertainty and industry fluctuations.

At Yager we prioritize building a resilient culture allowing us to navigate challenges with agility and compassion."



Sina Biglah, HR Manager, Mifcom

"On the one hand, companies can already align their new positions with the dynamic

requirements of the market and fill these vacancies with the right applicants. There should be clear expectations and prospects for each new position before it is filled.

Secondly, growth should be based on a specifically developed strategy. Only then can it be ensured that growth is healthy and targeted and that there is no threat of major layoffs as a result."

HOW CAN COMPANIES USE THEIR HR PLANNING TO HELP AVOID LARGE WAVES OF LAYOFFS LIKE THE CURRENT ONE?



Tom Burck, Chief Officer Customers & HR, Gameforge

"Was it really the HR planning that caused the layoffs? I do not believe that this was the root cause for every

studio. While Gameforge has been fortunate to not be affected by the current waves of layoffs, I believe that many of the struggles elsewhere resulted because many companies were planning with low interest rates around the time of the pandemic, and then suddenly found themselves having to cut costs in the years that followed.

Additionally, very few companies in any sector are immune to failed projects. Here at Gameforge (as an independent organization), we finance our new projects directly from our earnings, thus we do not have to rely on external capital, which puts us in a quite comfortable situation. Yet, we do plan new projects carefully and bear in mind what happens if a project fails. Nonetheless, despite our solid performance, we continue to closely monitor our growth in a manner that is sustainable and efficient, especially when it comes to our most valuable resource: our workforce."



Martin Eglseder, Senior Manager - Strategic HR Development, CipSoft

"We can only speak for online games, which is our area of expertise. In our opinion, these are very long-lived projects – for

instance, our biggest game, *Tibia*, will be 28 years old next January. Our corporate culture, which was shaped by the founding members, provides the most significant foundation for our approach. One of our guiding principles is: 'CipSoft should still exist tomorrow.' This stability, which might seem conservative in the gaming industry, allows us to avoid significant risks and the associated massive hiring and subsequent waves of layoffs. Every position in our company is designed for the long term. Although this might pose a challenge in other industries, this approach has led to significant growth in revenue and profit over the last seven years without a substantial increase in the number of employees."

"Growth should be based on a specifically developed strategy. Only then can it be ensured that growth is healthy and targeted and that there is no threat of major layoffs as a result."

SINA BIGLAH



RECRUITMENT At gamescom, ESA is presenting its VR labs and actively looking for engineers



W

ith a degree or plenty of experience in game working,

you are not just ideally suited for making games alone. Many other industries are seeking talents from the games industry for their unique skills and their inherent interdisciplinary expertise. Highly specialised industries especially are looking left and right to different industry branches for new talents, and with its inherent digitalisation, gaming is a natural pool of resources for those. And let's be honest, it does not get more highly specialised than spaceflight! No wonder, that the European Space Agency (ESA) has been exhibiting their company on two consecutive gamescoms and plans to come back in 2024 as well.

ESA Loves gamescom

In 2022 and 2023, the ESA has been part of the gamescom's Exhibition Floors in the IT Jobs area of Hall 10.2, looking for talents that are well established or want to start out in the games industry. "At ESA, we want

to make it clear that we are not just recruiting astronauts, meaning we look for people with all kinds of backgrounds. Gaming is a great way to reach a new pool of talented individuals as there are a lot of people in the industry who may not realize that ESA could be the place for them, too. ESA recruits people at many points on their career path; from young researchers at Masters and

PhD level to professionals with up to 20 years of experience. But most of all, we are looking for future colleagues with team spirit, curiosity and problem-solving skills, all of which are also essential competencies to be a successful gamer," explains Lucy van der Tas, Head of Talent Acquisition at ESA. "The majority of ESA's vacancies are in engineering and science."

EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

If You Can Make Games, Spaceflight Needs You!

The European Space Agency isn't just looking for astronauts. In fact, the gaming industry is one of the most important recruiting grounds for the prestigious spaceflight entity. Looking to take your dev skills to space? You might want to visit ESA at gamescom.



Virtual Reality Connects Gaming and Spaceflight

Probably the biggest interconnection between gaming and spaceflight industries at the moment is Virtual Reality. "There are close links between virtual worlds in gaming and ESA's real-world space missions. Certain technology and techniques from the gaming industry are helping ESA to prepare astronauts for missions and to explore our Universe. At ESA, Virtual Reality (VR) headsets are used for simulations that immerse astronauts in settings such as the ISS or the moon to help them get familiar with their surroundings. Another crossover from the gaming world is the use of haptic feedback from games controllers, a technology through which feedback is provided through touch, that is being used by ESA to control robot rovers and robotic arms," says van der Tas, explaining some of ESA's most impressive VR implementations. "Within the XR lab, a range of VR applications have been developed. These applications are designed to train astronauts in operating the International Space Station's robotic arm, familiarizing themselves with the layout of the station, and conducting spacewalks in space



LUCY VAN DER TAS

Head of Talent Acquisition, ESA

Most open jobs at ESA are in Engineering and Science, including VR developers, programmers and animators. Different soft skills from the gaming sphere are also sought after.

or on other planets. Additionally, the XR lab supports a medical training programme as an integral part of the basic medical training provided to ESA astronauts." VR testing environments will comprise an absolutely integral part of future missions, going so far as to premodel actual physical testing environments on Earth, she continues. "Looking ahead to upcoming missions, such as those involving the Lunar Gateway, the XR lab employs VR technology to aid in the design and evaluation of the lunar space station. The lab also recreates lunar landscapes for robotic missions and outreach endeavours and brings to life architectural renderings of future construction projects. One such example is the LUNA facility, a cooperative project between ESA and the German Aerospace Centre DLR. The main element of the LUNA facility will be a 700 m² hall, filled with lunar dust simulants 'EAC-1' and rocks or boulders imitating the lunar surface."

An Employer not Just for Astronauts

Games development then, from 3D modelling, UX design, VR haptics, animation and many more areas of programming and designing expertise, are highly sought-after skills for space agencies, and the ESA as residential European agency with strong ties to Germany, especially to North Rhine-Westphalia as the hosting state of the German Aerospace Center DLR's headquarters in Cologne, has seen the potential of Germany as a gaming location.

DLR, on a side note, in turn has especially strong ties to gaming here in Germany, as the agency is responsible for the games funding process on a Federal level.

gamescom especially helps to dismantle prejudices against the Agency, van der Tas clarifies. "We know that many people discount ESA as a potential employer because they think that ESA only recruits astronauts and astrophysicists. As these roles represent a very small percentage of the roles we have to offer, we would like to increase the number of people who will also look at ESA when considering their next career move.

This brings us to events such as gamescom where we can meet people who might not even have heard of the European Space Agency before. gamescom also helps us meet the "hidden gamers", i.e. people who come from all sorts of professional domains and game in their spare time, and who might not necessarily have thought about ESA as a potential employer."

More Games With ESA's Cooperation

The fair also benefits from ESA's participation. In 2023, ESA astronaut Samanta Cristoforetti has been part of gamescom's opening show, presenting a gamescom flag she had with her on the International Space Station the year before. And the Agency sees so much potential in the fair, 2024's engagement at the Exhibition Floors will even expand to look for coopera- →



OPENING NIGHT
Cristoforetti presents the spacefaring flag to Federal Economy Minister Habeck

→ tions with game publishers and other companies. “ESA will be back for gamescom 2024! As in 2022 and 2023, visitors to the ESA booth will be able to directly experience the links between space technology and video games and our gamescom participation will also be a starting point for new collaborations between ESA and gaming companies across all genres.” Collaborations between the Space Agency and games companies are not without precedent. In the past, ESA had cooperated with UK developer Auroch Digital in the production of the spaceflight basebuilder and management game *Mars Horizon*, delivering real rocketry, actual missions and a lot of lovely fanservice for spaceflight enthusiasts, including a podcast with behind the scenes information. Lucy van der Tas sees even more co-operations on the horizon. “ESA wants to take partnerships within the video games industry to the next level, including new cooperations with the world’s leading game developers and publishers. ESA has an established track record of partnerships with games developers and continues to offer expertise and assets that benefit their businesses and raises ESA’s profile. gamescom has been a great platform to raise awareness with developers about the ESA resources



MARS HORIZON has been made in cooperation with ESA and the UK Space Agency, a sequel is in the works

available to them, including imagery, models, data, experts and filming locations.”

Gaming as a truly interplanetary experience, from XR Labs on the ground to digital training spaces all the way to the ISS – spaceflight might not have been the most straightfor-

ward career path for people learning game development. But for a lot of people, combining a hobby like gaming and a fascination like space will feel like a childhood dream come true, and if that isn’t great publicity for the European Space Agency, surely nothing is. **PASCAL WAGNER**

Travian Games

Why should only job candidates answer questions? *Carola Knerr,*
HR Business Partner *Travian Games,* introduces their company to you here.

Please describe yourself in two or three sentences, dear company.

Travian Games is the largest Bavarian games company in founding hands, which saw the light of day twenty years ago with the success of "Travian". 150 employees at three locations operate and develop strategic browser and mobile games that impress with their substance and depth of gameplay. Whether it's big clan battles, railway empires or football clubs – Travian games are as unique as their community. We are particularly proud of them, regardless of which of the more than 100 countries in which we are active.

Why should applicants choose you, dear company?

We attach great importance to a modern and employee-friendly working environment: extensive home office regulations, a new career and salary model, comprehensive DE&I policies and more benefits than you could probably list here; from a Germany ticket to Wellpass membership, a job bike or a flexible holiday account. The great team spirit among employees is also repeatedly emphasised on review portals. In addition, there is a brand new office at the Olympiapark – sports facilities en masse right on the doorstep.

Where do you see yourself in five years, dear company?

With flourishing live games that inspire their players with events and new features, as well as numerous new developments in various stadiums, we are just as at home in the browser as we are on mobile. Solidity before growth and satisfied players through fair offers are still the focus of our activities. Just as "Travian Legends" is an integral part of the global gaming canon, Travian Games is also an integral part of the gaming landscape.



CAROLA KNERR

HR Business Partner and has been involved in recruiting at Travian for seven years is looking forward to receiving applications.

ADDRESS

Travian Games
 Moosacher Str. 70
 80809 München

FACTS

Founding year:
 2005

Employees:150

Locations:
 Munich, Cologne,
 Hamburg

GAMES

TRAVIAN LEGENDS
 RAIL NATION
 KINGDOMS
 GOALUNITED
 ARKHEIM



More information on
 our website



We are looking for:

Community Management Team Lead (f/m/d)

HR Business Partner (w/m/d)

Junior QA Tester (f/m/d)

Online Marketing Manager (f/m/d)

PHP Backend Developer (f/m/d)

Producer (f/m/d) for New Games

Talent Acquisition Manager/Recruiter (f/m/d)

Unity Developer (f/m/d)

Speculative applications welcome

DESIGNER INTERACTIVE MEDIA

A New Apprenticeship for the Extended Reality Age

Since 2023, a new apprenticeship can be learned in Germany: The *Designer Interactive Media* learns their *craft* directly at media companies or the producing industry.

Authorities on apprenticeships expect big developments for an *XR* future in the long run.

Since April 2023, a new officially approved apprenticeship exists in Germany. Successful conclusion grants a certificate issued by the corresponding regional Industry and Commerce Chamber (IHK), the commercial entity lobbying for the interests of production and commerce companies and self-governing the quality of apprenticeships in an area.

Such new apprenticeships are rare; most new vocation trainings these days are conceived as study courses or dual studies. But when the Federal Ministry of Economy and Climate Action called for more professional game workers in Germany, several professional associations came together to develop a concept for an apprenticeship program that includes many of the needs a skilled game worker would need. The result: the new job description "Gestalter/-in für immersive Medien", Designer for Interactive Media (DIM). In a three-year course learning in a trade school and directly at a company, apprentices learn everything from 3D modelling and animation, lighting and visual effects, even sound design and more. The DIM is embedded in the German system of authorised apprenticeships that include pre-approved training in two pillars of learning: the company itself and a vocation training centre.

A State and Industry Joint Venture

Responsible for the structure of the DIM are three associations from different branches of industry and administration: The German Association for Virtual Reality e.V. (EDFVR), who is representing the interest of the industry. The collective organization of the Industry and Commerce Chambers DIHK is responsible for the certificates and the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) is the authority on all authorized apprenticeships since 1970. The BIBB had established the need for a new apprenticeship for the digital age in a study. "In recent years, applications of immersive media have expanded significantly. For some years now, a wide range of offerings have developed, particularly in the areas of production, retail, medicine, education and cul-

ture. Over the next years, it is expected that the further expansion of the digital infrastructure will create an important prerequisite for immersive media to be used not only in a stationary environment, but also in mobile usage contexts. With the further development of the market and technology, the need for qualified personnel is also growing. However, there is a major shortage of skilled labour in the field of designing and creating immersive media; the demand has not yet been met in terms of either quality or quantity," explains Heike Krämer, Project Lead at the BIBB. "Together with experts from employers and employees, a vocational training regulation was developed with the involvement of the responsible federal ministries. At the same time in a coordinated process learning content was developed for the vocational school. This is because the training occupation of designer for immersive media is trained in the dual system, which means, that the vocational training takes place at two learning venues: in companies and at vocational schools."

"There is a major shortage of skilled labour in the field of designing and creating immersive media."

Mixing Workers Into an Academic Milieu

These schools are in the authority of the German Federal states, explains Michael Assenmacher, Head of Division Development of Vocational Training at DIHK. "The content is

HEIKE KRÄMER



**HEIKE
KRÄMER**

Project Lead,
BIBB



**MICHAEL
ASSEN-
MACHER**

Head of Division
Development
of Vocational
Training, DIHK



**STEPHAN
SORKIN**

Chairman, EDFVR



**JULIAN
HERMLE**

Managing
Director
Technology, CMC
Engineers

drawn up by company experts appointed by the social partners, employer and employees."

The decision to establish a three-year apprenticeship instead of, say, another study course, was evaluated by the BIBB to be "the best way to ensure qualified personnel in the long term," Krämer says. Speaking with the EDFVR, the organisations came to the conclusion that an academic pipeline of employees is established, while a worker training program from schools onward is missing. Stephan Sorkin, Chairman of the EDFVR, summarises the idea like this: "Most employees have an academic background and often joined the company via internships during their studies. A second strong recruitment strand is made up of career changers who have gained further qualifications on the

job from project to project. An industry cannot only employ academics, nor can their qualifications be based on individual skills alone."

Younger Workers and Safer Cost Structures

Another strong point of interest for industry branches is the potential for a more homogenous workforce, not just in skills and training approaches, but in age as well. "The training is primarily aimed at young people. However, it is also possible for university dropouts to start training," Assenmacher says. Indeed, this is supposed to change the employment structure of companies in the long run by quite a deal. Sorkin explains the future vision from the perspec-

tive of employers: "The fact that we have been able to train school-leavers as designers for immersive media since August 2023 will have a massive impact on the employee structure of companies. For one thing, the new employees are younger. Their income after training will generally be lower than that of an employee with a university degree. In future, this will result in a more homogenous workforce and a better cost structure."

A Hit Outside the Games Industry

First training rounds began in August 2023 in selected companies, meaning that so far, no Designers for Interactive Media are yet on the market. →



JOB PROFILE

"Immersive media designers are involved in the entire production process when creating and designing applications with immersive technologies such as virtual or augmented reality. At the beginning of the production process, they are involved in advising and supporting customers. They create concepts for the design of immersive media products, taking into account virtual lighting, visual effects and the acoustic experience for users. Depending on customer requirements, they produce image and sound recordings, model 3D data and create animations for subsequent integration into the application. They select the appropriate development environment and create a prototype for the application, which they test and further develop in iterative processes. During production, they bring together all 3D representations, image, sound and interaction levels to create an immersive experience for the user. Before handing over the final application to the customer, they check whether all requirements have been implemented and make adjustments if necessary. Finally, they make the application available to the customer in accordance with the order specifications."

Berufenet, Federal Employment Agency

More Information: gestaltung-immersiv.de

→ However, the respective associations and the companies that implemented the apprenticeship are already excited in their interim conclusions. And said companies are not limited to the games industry. "The training companies are very different. Of course, this includes companies involved in the production of augmented, virtual and mixed reality. The games industry is also an important sector in this regard. But other sectors are also showing interest in training, such as machine manufacturers or furniture makers who want to make greater use of immersive media in product development, theatres that want to make their stage construction easier with virtual worlds, marketing departments that use these media for advertising, or museums that want to publicise their exhibitions in this way or accompany them with media," Krämer says.

In fact, the new vocation seems to truly hit a nerve in the producing industries and its service partners especially. Several companies from outside the games industry have implemented the apprenticeship into their training programs. One of them is CMC Engineers, a technical visualization company in the mechanical and plant engineering industry. "CMC is training 3D artists for industrial use-cases for almost a decade now. In the past we had to rely on the individual interest of new employees. To be now able to offer them a cer-

tificated training program helps us to recruit more talented people in order to meet our needs," explains Julian Hermle, Managing Director Technology of CMC Engineers. "As a partner of medium-sized industry, CMC strives for practicable solutions for digitalization in CAD & product development. A particular focus is on the integration of industrial metaverse technologies and artificial intelligence in 3D visualization." For this, the new Interactive Media Designer vocation offers the perfect base. "3D is our daily business and for us this new job profile is just a logical consequence," says Hermle.

Currently, companies like CMC Engineers that train DIM apprentices are still rare compared to more traditional apprenticeships. But the interest is growing rapidly, and not by chance. "Initial feedback has been very positive, even though the number of training companies was still low in this first year. However, the introduction of the profession is being accompanied by many measures and support programmes," ensures Krämer. Programmes like, for example, a state of the art information website just for the Designer Interactive Media, administrated by the EDFVR, and several podcasts.

Just the Beginning

With a young vocation training for a young target group, this year's sec-

ond class of apprentices will pave the way for even greater numbers of companies participating in the coming years. For the apprentices themselves, the first few years of classes will have the advantage of being part of a selected few then they graduate, being the first certified experts in an ever-growing market. And for the companies, training the apprentices from the ground up gives the opportunity to shape those apprentice for their specific in-company needs, giving much more specific expertise than general study programs could. Sorkin is truly excited for the prospects the programme brings to the XR industry in the long term. "We can now build on this structure, supplement and deepen it and hopefully also implement it in the university sector. We are in talks with other partners who all have an interest in harmonising, if not standardising, qualifications in the XR sector."

PASCAL WAGNER

Wooga

Why should only job candidates answer questions?

Silvia de Grandis & Klaudia Stosio, Talent Acquisition Managers at Wooga, herewith introduce their company to you.



SILVIA DE GRANDIS & KLAUDIA STOSIO

Talent Acquisition Managers

ADDRESS

Wooga GmbH
Saarbrücker
Str. 38
10405 Berlin

FACTS

Founded in 2009

Employees:
Over 300 from
50+ nations

Location: Berlin

GAMES/ PROJECTS

JUNE'S JOURNEY
(No 1 Hidden
Object Game
worldwide)

GHOST DETECTIVE
(launched on
Netflix Games in
2023)

For more games
check wooga.com/games

Please describe yourself in two to three sentences.

Founded in 2009 and based in Berlin, we're a team of over 300 Woogas who develop high quality story-driven casual games. Our game June's Journey is the leading hidden object game in the market* and has entered the 1BN lifetime revenue club in 2023**. We take narrative seriously: our stories go beyond dialogue; we blend art, design, writing, and engineering to create meaningful, unforgettable experiences.

Why should applicants decide for you?

At Wooga we are dedicated to delivering exceptional content to our players for years to come. The content in June's Journey is continuously evolving and being extended. At the same time we constantly work on innovative concepts for future narrative-driven titles. For all aspects we are balancing creativity, passion

and business results to deliver the most value to our players.

We offer an inclusive, English-speaking work environment, and we make mindset diversity our strength to build games for a diverse and wide audience.

We support our employees with a healthy work life balance, a hybrid work environment, flexible working hours and the possibility to work from abroad 10 days a year.

We believe in nurturing talent and we offer growing possibilities for all our employees to develop their skills. With a generous learning budget and two educational days per year, you will have the possibility to develop your skills and attend worldwide industry conferences.

We offer an environment that will give you the possibility to work with industry experts and produce world class games such as June's Journey.

We are looking for people who are able to draw the right conclusions

when analyzing data and player feedback, so that our games inspire joy in a wide audience and are commercially successful.

And lastly but definitely not the least, we want our employees to take ownership and be accountable so that all together we continue to be successful as a business.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Our vision is to be "The Player's Choice for Story-Driven Casual Games". We envision our games to have equal entertainment and relaxation value as novels, TV series or movies. We work hard to get us closer to it every day by enhancing the experience for our June's Journey fans but also by working on our next hit games to bring joy to even more players.

Shared company goals give us guidance and hold us accountable for our very own success story. The love we get back from our players is our most important "in-game currency" and we make sure to keep close ties with them.

Join us, and level up with us.



Contacts

Silvia de Grandis & Klaudia Stosio

Applications can be sent to
talent@wooga.net

More information and jobs on



What roles we are looking for:

Artists

Game Designers (Content, Feature, and Economy)

Unity Engineers

Marketing Managers

*JUNE'S JOURNEY HAS BEEN THE GLOBAL #1 MEASURED BY CONSUMER SPEND WITHIN THE HIDDEN OBJECT (PUZZLE) SUBGENRE ACROSS APPLE APP STORE & GOOGLE PLAY SINCE APRIL 2019, ACCORDING TO DATA.AI.
**1BN USD LIFETIME REVENUE. LIFE TIME REVENUES CONSIST OF GROSS REVENUES OF IN-APP PURCHASES AND AD REVENUES.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

16 Ways to get Into the Games Industry – International Edition

How does someone *get started* in the games industry? The stories of its *representatives* are as *varied* as the *industry* itself. In this article, we present *16 stories* of Germans who are working for companies that *do not have* their headquarters or a major office in Germany.

There are very few opportunities, if you want to work on AAA games in GSA. Instead, the route often

leads to other countries, such as Poland to CD Projekt Red (*The Witcher* and *Cyberpunk 2077*). Some people from GSA work there, in some highly specialised fields.

Lead International Community **Carolin Wendt** is one of them. It doesn't always have to be a degree in media or communications. Wendt has a master in Political Science. "During my studies I had to do an internship and I wanted to try my luck to see if I could combine my passion with my education," she explains, the passion being gaming, of course. "I actually got an internship as a project assistant at an industry-related foundation, where I worked for the awards office of the



CAROLIN WENDT

Lead International
Community CD
Projekt Red, Poland

"Stay persistent and don't get discouraged from wanting to work in the industry, even if it feels like you only get rejections at first. Build a network of peers and support each other. Look for mentors who can help you achieve your goal."

German Computer Game Award, among other things. After graduating, I was taken on and worked there for four years on various projects. That was really my entry into the industry. Through her work at the awards office, she was able to build a network that ultimately helped her make the leap to CD Projekt Red. She started as a community manager in 2019, put out a few fires in the forums and social media, and is now the Lead International Community. As such, she is involved in the development of long- and short-term community strategies for all of the company's games. Most of the skills she needs to do this have been acquired on the job; theory is helpful, but it cannot replace practical application: "I'm still learning new things every day that I didn't even know existed before. However, the university course has taught me a lot of useful skills regarding multitasking, deadlines, rhetoric, conflict communication, etc., so I definitely don't regret it. I also learnt a lot online, on game development forums, the GDC Vault, YouTube and by talking to other people in the industry."

The first step for **Ryan Schou** was to study media culture and media informatics in Cologne. During his studies, he got a job in the former Media and Internet Business Unit, which allowed him to get to know the media landscape in Cologne, including gamescom. "Apart from being a direct

bridge to my next job at the Film Festival Cologne, the visits to gamescom were probably the biggest advantage. It put me in direct contact with CD Projekt Red staff and the community, and shortly after I started streaming one of the games myself," says Schou. "My streams and YouTube content weren't particularly successful, but they helped me network with the community and gain experience. After a short time, I joined a group of professional gamers and content creators and travelled to Warsaw at my own expense to attend various esports events and create content for the community." When CD Projekt Red advertised for a Community Manager position for the game he had been playing for two years, his studies, dedication, passion and good relationships came together, as did his self-developed skills in social media, video production and communication. "I love video games because they introduce me to unknown worlds and allow me to have new experiences. For the same reason, working in an international company is exciting for me. Whether I'm talking to the Community Manager from Japan or the Concept Artist from Uruguay, I get to see other perspectives and learn something new for myself. I firmly believe that we can learn a lot from each other as people, and that the different experiences and impressions from all over the world offer great potential for this."



RYAN SCHOU

Community-
Manager
CD Projekt Red,
Poland



MILES TOST

Level Design
Lead CD Projekt
Red, Poland



AAA game development in Poland at CD Projekt Red in Warsaw

Miles Tost started studying at a games university in Berlin in 2010. "I also worked briefly as a game tester for a third-party quality assurance company. But the desire to make a living from game development has been there since I was a kid," he said. "After graduating, I managed to get an internship at CD Projekt Red in Warsaw, a relatively small and unknown studio at the time. More than eleven years later, I'm still working there, but no longer as an intern... I think." As Level Design Lead, he has actually learned most of the skills himself, as game and level design were not widely taught at university at the time. So he had to pick up the skills by playing and analysing games, and deepen them in practice through modding and student projects. "But the truth is, you learn most of it on the job anyway. CDPR is a studio full of incredibly ambitious and skilled people. You learn the most from them. The fact that we always want to push ourselves to new limits with our games means that we often throw ourselves into the unknown, and these two factors make for a great learning environment." Tost believes that it is difficult to break into the industry because it has become very competitive. "The quality of junior developers these days is almost frighteningly higher than it was back then," he says. "Download an engine, watch the tutorials, practice! You don't have to be a professional game designer to learn

the skills you need. Also, take the opportunity to get in touch with the developers. Ask for feedback. Twitter and LinkedIn are good platforms for that." Since 2021, he has been working full-time from Berlin. "But I also lived in Warsaw for eight years before that, and that was a really nice time for me, even if it wasn't always easy. Poland is an impressive centre of development and the trend that has led to this development seems to be far from over. A lot of new studios or locations are being set up there with exciting projects, which have also enjoyed international success, at least so far". In direct comparison, the German games development industry is in a sad state, he believes. "That hurts and is very sad for me. I like being here, I have a lot of great and smart friends in the German industry, and I'm very happy to share my knowledge – but as someone who is personally interested in working on international AAA productions where the whole team is creatively challenged and the medium is pushed forward, Germany is sadly largely uninteresting."

Narrative director **Philipp Weber** joined CD Projekt as a junior quest designer on *The Witcher 3* in 2013, after winning a modding competition for *The Witcher 2*. "There was no job to be won in the competition, just one of Geralt's silver swords, but the Lead Quest Designer at the time, Mateusz Tomaszewicz, thought the mod was



PHILIPP WEBER

Narrative Director CD Projekt Red, Poland

good enough to invite me for an interview. When I was hired, I was studying Classical Archaeology and History, and was even on a field trip to Cyprus when I received the email from CD Projekt." So he had to make the decision to go straight from his planned studies to a new job and a new country. Although Weber had worked on mods as a child and had always been passionate about video games, studying game design was not an option for him at the time. "Because it always seemed like a dream or like winning the lottery to work at a studio like CD Projekt, which made my favourite games. Nowadays, the study of various disciplines related to game design is more widespread, so I would probably make a different choice today and go straight into a relevant degree programme alongside modding. However, since our Witcher games contain some historical elements, I can still use my studies on a regular basis." He describes the job of a quest designer as a jack of all trades: writing dialogue, level design, environmental art, general and visual scripting, creating shaders, creating cinematics, and understanding a bit of programming were all components come together. "As a professional quest designer, you have the advantage that there are much better experts in all these areas to work with. However, it is always an advantage to have a 'general education', because you would be at a loss as a so-called "expert idiot" if you ended up being responsible for a quest and the work of all these experts and didn't understand anything about what they were doing. So being able to speak the same technical language is a big advantage". As a narrative director, he doesn't do much quest design himself these days, but it's still important to be able to talk to his colleagues about the different aspects at an appropriate level. Unsurprisingly, Weber sees modding as a good entry alternative to studying: "The 'free general education' that you can get from modding or simple engineering projects in Unreal Engine, Unity, Godot or even →



CD PROJEKT RED developed *Cyberpunk 2077* and *The Witcher* trilogy

→ RPG Maker is very valuable. Sometimes it's just useful to have the experience of working on a project yourself, just because you want to and because it's fun, rather than because you want to use it as a portfolio later on (although that can be a useful outcome too). Game development can sometimes be a very frustrating and unrewarding endeavour, so being able to draw motivation from the enjoyment of the art itself is an advantage." At the same time, however, it is important to have interests outside of video games or pop culture, and to use them as inspiration. "If you want to write for a *Witcher* game, for example, you shouldn't just know fantasy books or the like, because that's only good enough to copy. You should learn what the original authors were inspired by, such as history, folklore and classic literature. In my experience, colleagues regularly draw on a wide range of interests, such as the humanities — be it philosophy, sociology or psychology — as well as hobbies that have nothing to do with video games". Their story director Marcin Blacha used to say that you can only write about life if you've lived it, and Weber clearly agrees. Weber worked in Warsaw for the first ten years, but CD Projekt allowed him a temporary home office a few years ago. Like other companies, they made the switch with Covid, so he can work from Germany permanently. "I still visit my colleagues in Warsaw regularly to keep in touch and work in the

Warsaw office for a few days — it's not a must, but I think it contributes to the team spirit. I started 10 years ago as a fan of CD Projekt's games, and to this day I can't think of a game I'd rather be working on."

Modding was more or less the gateway to **Sarah Grümmer's** work as Acting Lead Quest Designer. During her apprenticeship, she had worked on persistent RPG servers for *Neverwinter Nights 1* and *2*. "Mapping, scripting, custom settings, and whatever else you can think of. It was just by chance that during my training, I spoke to one of my former classmates — I'm a qualified geriatric nurse — and told him about the RP servers and modding. After his comment "You know you can study that, right?" my eyes widened and I set the wheels in motion to change careers." She studied game design for a year at the Games Academy in Berlin and then immediately found a job at Spellbound and Black Forest Games, before she joined CD Projekt Red. Modding can teach you a lot, but for her the most important thing is the ability to solve problems. "How can I create something playable and entertaining with the limited tools I (usually) have as a modder? That still helps me today." But her training as a geriatric nurse would help too, as it taught her a lot about team building, teamwork and team organisation. She felt that her training at the Games Academy was also helpful because she was also

taught the basics of the other job specialisations. "Of course, pure work experience is unbeatable. I'm still learning every day, and with every new challenge you gain new knowledge and skills". She has this advice for newcomers: "It sounds like a cliché, but a presentable portfolio is very important. Modding can help a lot, but playable and presentable student projects can also help a lot. And don't give up, it's not always easy to get started — don't get discouraged. Be open to feedback, and if the application doesn't work the first time, work on yourself and strive for constant improvement."



SARAH GRÜMMER
Acting Lead
Quest Designer
CD Projekt Red,
Poland

Modding was not **Fabian Mario Doebla's** first step into the industry, no, it was actually journalism. "Right after leaving school, I had the opportunity to work as an editor at CyPress (a subsidiary of Vogel-Verlag). As I had already written for games magazines as a freelance writer while still at school, it seemed like a perfect fit. And the plan — the desire to work in this fantastic industry — has worked out to this day". It's been 25 years since his first permanent job. "The big step for me was moving into PR, at the time from Future Publishing to Codemasters in Munich. My parents were always a bit worried that I didn't have a university degree, but now it's (almost) accepted". At the time, he was lucky to have been looked after by his colleagues, both Stephan Hilgenberg from Codemasters and Ulrike Buttler from Herald Communications, Codemasters' agency at the time. "It was a classic 'sit down and explain the job' scenario. In PR, it's all about networking and understanding what both sides want from a project. I



FABIAN MARIO DOEBLA
GSA Head of Communication
CD Projekt Red, Poland

"Be present, ask questions, be persistent. Even if it's a bumpy ride now, there will always be a need for people with a gaming background and expertise. But the door probably won't open itself. If you're reading this, you've already taken the first step. Just keep going!"

still see myself very much as a service provider, trying to help media and contacts with their jobs. Back then, gaming websites were quite new, something he needed to get used to and convince his managers to spend resources on it. "I would sum it up by saying that I was taught the basics and then refined them over the years." He works remotely for CD Projekt Red, but still travels a lot around the world. "CD Projekt Red has a very international setup, the studio language is English, I have colleagues all around the world. There is tons of information and opportunities to learn and work on new projects and topics. And it always feels like there are no limits. If you want to try out new ideas, you will get the support you need. When he talks to people in the German games industry – especially in development – he finds everything incredibly slow and stiff. "Not the people, who are great, but the projects and how they are brought to life."

M

any people from GSA to work for international companies. We have interviewed

ten others about how they got to this point in their careers – and what tips they have for those just getting started.

Saitek, Blizzard and Tencent are some of the milestones in the career of **Martin Metzler**. He studied business economics at the University of Munich, specialising in information and communication research. "Originally, I had envisaged that the final phase of my studies (specialisation, dissertation) would take me into the tourism sector. However, a job advert piqued my interest in technology and I ended up as Product (Marketing) Manager for DACH at Saitek, a manufacturer of consumer electronics, primarily input devices." After a stint in a magazine as an editor and project manager, his path led him directly into the industry



MARTIN METZLER

Senior PR Manager EMEA, Level Infinite | Tencent Games Global, China

as Product (Marketing) Manager for GSA at US company Acclaim. "As a gamer since my early youth, this was of course the fulfilment of a dream! Later, I also took on responsibility for press relations for consumer media there – and from then on, Public Relations determined my future career path," says Metzler. After gaining a lot of PR experience, his career led him to regional, international and global planning of communication strategies, for example at Blizzard Entertainment, where he was responsible for PR for Northern Europe and GSA. "I currently work as Senior PR Manager for the EMEA region for the Chinese technology group Tencent, where I am responsible for global and regional communication strategies in close cooperation with internal and external studios and work directly with PR agencies in the European market." The university course is not only the foundation for his career, but also for his personal development. "During my studies, I learned organisation, information management, autonomous work planning and an interest in independent further training. All essential



BORIS GOJIC

Senior Territory Marketing Manager, Activision Blizzard, UK

"This might sound like a bit of a cliché but like a lot of things in the industry, you learn by doing it, by learning from your mistakes and by perfecting what went well. If there was a playbook on 'how to market a video game', our industry would be a sad place. The creativity you see around the globe in video games is mostly thanks to trial and error, which I find beautiful."

for professional life." The focus on communication helped in PR, both in terms of understanding the processes and tools, and later in practical application. "The third pillar is what you could call "learning on the job": constant observation of the market environment, new technologies, international trends, practical application, dialogue with other market participants, etc., lead to a wealth of experience and building blocks that are used

on a daily basis." Metzler recommends a solid professional education, good knowledge of the market context and players, and a strong profile with details of knowledge and experience on professional networking sites. English is essential, and another foreign language is an advantage. "Patience is a must, especially at the moment and especially in Germany. You should try to at least slowly find your way into the industry – even if it's not your dream job – and gain experience."

"The only thing I always knew for sure was that I wanted a job I can thoroughly enjoy," says **Boris Gojic**. He studied economics at the University of Frankfurt. When it came time for internships, he tried his hand at video game journalism, and it worked out really well. "Mainly because I spent a lot more time playing games than studying. I stayed on as a freelancer until Electronic Arts agreed to take me on for my final thesis on the digital distribution of video games. After finishing that thesis and graduating, EA offered me a permanent position on their PR team. And from that moment, I enjoyed every day at work, just as I hoped to." Gojic went on to work for Microsoft as PR Manager and then 3rd Party Marketing Manager, followed by a stint as Director of Business Development at Loots. From there, he moved to the UK and has been with Activision Blizzard since 2021, currently as a Senior Territory Marketing Manager. He has the following advice for interested newcomers: "Use your network. If you don't know anyone in the video game industry, I bet you know 'a friend of a friend'. Don't be shy and ask for an intro. Luckily, the entire ecosystem is quite welcoming and friendly." He also encourages people to try and, most importantly, to learn new things. "The times have passed where recruiters ask about every single gap in your resume. Take advantage of that."

"Once upon a time, amidst the echoing lectures of medieval and modern history, a restless student found →



FLORIAN EMMERICH

Head of PR THQ Nordic GmbH, Austria

"For anyone thinking about going to the games industry: just do it! Don't expect to work for the same company for years, be flexible, take your chances and try to leave a good impression everywhere you go — you'll never know who you'll meet for a second time. Don't be afraid to do things you've never done before or you have not learned — learning by doing will eventually let you get good or even great at something."

→ himself drawn to the prospect of an internship he stumbled upon just the day before: an Editorial position at PC Games, a renowned German gaming magazine and website. This student, having squandered a semester or two in the realm of *World of Warcraft* (Arthas server, mind you!), decided to take the plunge. Thus, on a crisp January morning, I ventured to Nuremberg and Fürth, where fate introduced me to the legendary deputy editor-in-chief, Dirk Gooding. To my astonishment, he extended the offer, though in fairness, they were hiring interns like wildfire back then. And since I had nothing in my CV apart from 'tried to study history', it was great", with these words, **Florian Emmerich**, Head of PR at THQ Nordic in Vienna, looks back on his first steps. After six months at PC Games, however, things didn't work out and he moved on to Buffed, covering MMOs. "Here, thanks to amazing co-workers, I learned to craft articles and stories, organize myself, get on stages and do shows, do video streaming and podcasts — and how important it is to build up a network. Fast forward six whirlwind years, and my journey culminated in a final escapade to Larian Studios, reporting about their forthcoming masterpiece, *Divinity: Original Sin*." Today, the Belgian studio is best known for *Baldur's Gate 3*. After a brief stint as Media Manager at Infernum, where he learned to create trailers and take the creation of screenshots to the next level, fate leads to Munich, where he joined EuroVideo's 1-man-gaming division, a company primarily known for DVD movie sales in Germany, but eagerly charting its course into gaming publishing. "Thus began my tenure as a PR maven and a Jack-of-all-trades.

Dealing with Steam's back end, getting games or trailers approved by USK and other age rating agencies around the world and getting involved in the game-making process by reviewing milestones, providing feedback (valuable or not) to the creators and discuss with them the next PR & Marketing ideas, booking advertisements in all different forms, setting up and managing social media channels, planning, organizing and doing trade show appearances as well as scouting for new games and being part of the business-deal discussions was part of my job there." He is still proud of his work with partners from Larian to Haemimont, Triumph and Red Thread. "There was *This Is the Police* with Weappy, *The Dwarves* with King Art Games, and a plethora of adventures awaiting within the catalog of a small Austrian publisher named Nordic Games — whom I joined in 2016. As Nordic Games burgeoned

into the titan that is now THQ Nordic, I found myself still tethered to the realm of PR, aided by two remarkable colleagues, Golnas and Jennifer, who, let's be frank, bear the brunt of the workload while I bask in their awe-inspiring prowess." But working for an international company comes with challenges (time zones, anyone?), thinks Emmerich, but also gives the chance to meet great people around the world and learn about their culture. "Something I would have deeply missed in many other jobs. So is the gaming industry a good place to work? It's the best!"

How **Jennifer Bigell** got started is a bit of a wild ride, so buckle up! "Shortly after I started studying art, I realised that it wasn't what I wanted to do for the rest of my life." As video games have always held a special place in her heart, it seemed only natural that she would gravitate towards them. "Honestly, my expectations of breaking into the gaming industry weren't high but I didn't want to let my dream fade just like that. I decided to start afresh. New university, new subjects. I immersed myself in communities, started networking with people, and grabbed every opportunity that came my way. Fun fact: back



JENNIFER BIGELL

Global PR Manager THQ Nordic, Austria



then, I was incredibly shy! Really had to push myself out of my comfort zone. To finance my studies, I took on various jobs – hi McDonald's! Eventually, I landed a side gig at Next Gamer, writing articles and also contributed to a large Metal Gear community group." While studying abroad in the UK, she met the owner of Loading, a gaming bar, and was offered the opportunity to help with some of their gaming events. "Then came the daunting job hunt after university." It took six months, but she finally landed a marketing job at Plaion, formerly Koch Media. "I remember getting the call while I was in London. Loved my team, loved the projects, we worked on a ridiculous amount of games, it was great! Due to some organizational changes, I transitioned from marketing to global PR (yay!) and found myself single-handedly managing everything for about two months. Crazy stuff!" In 2022, she joined THQ Nordic. "I couldn't pass up the opportunity to work alongside Strife and Crypto, well, kind of. You get the idea. As I go into my third year with THQ Nordic, I want to give a huge shoutout to my PR colleagues Golnas and Florian, as well as the rest of the team. They are not only exceptional at what they do but also reliable friends and

the whole crew is a powerhouse of industry knowledge!" Sometimes her PR position comes into play in such statements, but she clearly enjoys working for THQ. "If you aim to work in gaming, go for it! I understand that the current job market can feel like a shark tank, especially for those trying to break into the industry. Nonetheless, take a chance, be active in communities, level up your skills, stay informed about industry developments, don't hesitate to reach out to someone for advice, and most importantly, be kind!" Working for a global company means constantly learning new things, including moving to different countries such as the UK and Austria, and dealing with different paperwork. "It's an ongoing adventure; traveling, making new connections, taking on diverse tasks, and I love every bit of it! I mean, if you don't enjoy what you're doing, what's the point?"

"My father had an Apple computer for work purposes very early on in the 80s. He thought my sister and I could program our own games if we wanted to play them. It was a nice try – but unfortunately it didn't work out for us," says **Barbara Kugler**. Later, when a PC found its way into the household, she played *Lemmings*, *Sim City* and,



BARBARA KUGLER

Head of Merchandise and Specialty Products THQ Nordic, Austria

while at university, *Need for Speed* all night long. At the time, she was studying education and was interested in learning theories and educational software. "My first contact was actually at university, where I was involved in a large study of learning software by Cornelsen. It was incredibly exciting to see how primary school children were motivated by the playful approach. I then did an internship in project management at Tivola and knew from then on that this was exactly what I wanted to do." In addition to her studies, she worked as a tester at Tivola for a few years, and by the end of 2005 she was responsible for the production of children's games at.dtp. After her publishing experience, she wanted to work more in development and moved to Vienna in 2009 to work as a producer at Sproing. After the company's first bankruptcy, she thought about changing industries, had several job interviews, and then "THQ Nordic came out of the blue. When I went to the Vienna office, there were very few people there, but the atmosphere was immediately so warm and open. And the coffee was really good! It just felt right." At the time, the plan was for her to oversee the publishing process and, above all, keep an eye on deadlines. "That's how it all started, and I still do parts of it. I oversee all the physical productions and create project plans for them. But what I missed back then was having my own projects to be responsible for. And that's how I ended up doing the Collector's Editions on the side." For her, the proof of the pudding is in the eating – and management positions in particular should not be categorically ruled out. "Try it out and do internships to find out which area is right for you. If you can prove that you have the relevant training or practical experience, you have the best chance of getting a job. Women are increasingly in demand. And then have the confidence to take on new roles, especially management roles. For me, it was very helpful to have different positions in the games industry. →

THQ NORDIC is headquartered and operates its own store in Vienna



→ **Jenni Wergin** traces her passion for the gaming industry back to her childhood, where games like *Crystal Warriors* on the Sega Game Gear and classics like *Age of Empires 2* and *Heroes of Might & Magic III* ignited her love for gaming. These early experiences drove her to pursue media studies focusing on games. Shortly after that, Jenni Wergin became a project manager for Womenize! Games and Tech at Booster Space, marking her entry into the gaming industry in 2015. Simultaneously, she launched her own indie games channel, Two Into Indie, showcasing well-known and lesser-known indie titles and hosted her first game events. Transitioning from Womenize!, Wergin joined Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, where she served as a funding specialist, supporting both emerging and established studios in realising their creative visions. "At a networking event in Berlin, many local developers approached me and welcomed me with open arms when my funding manager job was announced. This warmth and acceptance characterise our industry, and I was pleased about this special moment. Especially as I now get to work with some of these people." Her professional journey continued as a Product Manager at Swedish Publisher Thunderful, where she collaborated closely with developers on titles such as *Viewfinder* (Sad Owl Studios), *Planet of Lana* (Wishfully), *LEGO Bricktales* (ClockStone), and *Laika: Aged Through Blood* (Brainwash Gang). Currently, she works for Headup. As their Creative Producer, she champions player and game vision within Headup's publishing arm. Her responsibility lies in building and maintaining deep product knowledge, reviewing milestones, and analysing the player experience to help developers create a better product.

What do the over-the-top shooter *Serious Sam 4* and the philosophical puzzle adventure *The Talos Principle 2* have in common? They both come from Croteam, and German writer **Verena Kyratzes** played a leading role



The Talos Principle 2



**JENNI
WERGIN**

Product Manager
Headup Games
Thunderful
Publishing,
Sweden; Creative
Producer Headup,
Germany



**VERENA
KYRATZES**

Narrative
Designer
Croteam, Croatia

in both. Her journey into the industry has been a wild one. She originally studied English and American literature, but dropped out, and continued with interior design, also without a degree. She then worked for a while "haphazardly" in a museum, in advertising and in bicycle retail. But she was always creative on the side: "As a director in the theatre group at my old school and as a graphic designer for my husband's point-and-click games. But I can't honestly say that I was working towards a specific career goal at the time," says Kyratzes. In 2014, she broke into the games industry at Croatian development studio Croteam, starting with translating *The Talos Principle* into German and submitting a script for *Serious Sam 4*, initially under a different name, but it was so well received that she was offered a job as a narrative designer. She has been a full-time computer game writer ever since. For her, writing for the medium of interactive games is not so "different". In conversations with other game writers, she has repeatedly come to the conclusion that it makes no difference to the actual writing process whether a dialogue is interactive or not. "I see myself as an author, the medium is secondary". Nevertheless, she believes that the industry underestimates the importance of good stories — and therefore authors. "There's no question about it. And I'm not talking about puffing myself up, no. But what makes a game 'good' depends on many different components," she explains. "Gameplay and graphics — of course — but also music and story.

Without good gameplay, the best story can be perceived as lame or annoying, but conversely, I firmly believe that a game can only be emotionally engaging with good music and a good story. A game can be good without one of those components, but to really enjoy something, to reach that level of quality that makes me think about a game five or ten years later, I need both." Although the "aimlessness" of her career means she's not sure she's qualified enough to give newcomers tips on how to break into the industry, she says: "As a writer, I'd say read a lot, and a lot of different genres. Write, even if you're not perfect. Practice makes perfect. Say no if you don't know what to do with a project, because you're not doing anyone any favours, including yourself."

Sometimes bad timing can be good. When **Michaela Polach** moved to Prague in March 2020 to work for SCS Software (*Euro Truck Simulator 2*) the nationwide isolation that followed the onset of the Covid pandemic began just two weeks later. Socialising was difficult, especially in a new city. Net-



**MICHAELA
POLACH**

Game Designer &
Game Producer SCS
Software, Ambassado
Women in Games WIGJ,
Czech Republic

"It showed me a different professional world, where creativity, resilience and hard work are more important than status, gender, colour and appearance."

working in the games industry shifted to online meetings. Without further ado, Polach decided to digitise an event in Prague that she had attended before moving to the Czech Republic from the Netherlands. The result was the online event Game Beer, where game devs from Germany, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic meet online every month to chat. The events are now taking place physically again and are much bigger. That the psychology graduate would one day work for a games developer and organise an event was not a foregone conclusion. During her studies in Nijmegen, she initially wanted to become a neuropsychologist, but abandoned this career option for reasons of self-discovery. That's when she came into contact with the games industry. "At the end of my bachelor's degree in psychology, I got to know the Dutch Game Garden in Utrecht, where I worked with small indie studios and started going to games conferences. This showed me a different professional world, where creativity, resilience and hard work are more important than status, gender, skin colour and appearance". The indie experience gave Polach the confidence to enter the industry, even though she hadn't learned a traditional game development role. She realised that there was a lot of scope for lateral movement in game production and that, especially in smaller studios, different roles often come together in one person. And she is an ambassador for Women in Games, an organisation that promotes female representation in the games industry.

Christoph Pardey took the communications route by studying media and communications management after leaving school. He spent the first few years of his career working on various online projects before proposing and implementing a gaming-related website for his employer at the time. "This brought me into contact with a company specialising in browser games, which I joined. After another two years, I decided that I wanted to work

with games that I played privately. So I applied for jobs that were advertised or sent unsolicited applications to my favourite game companies. That's how I ended up at CD Projekt for their digital storefront GOG.com," said Pardey, who worked as a GSA product manager and then head of



CHRISTOPH PARDEY

Territory Director DACH Techland, Poland

"If you see yourself more in publishing or the back office, the path into the games industry can be less straightforward. So, if you don't get a job in your dream games company straight out of school/training/university, you might want to start by gaining experience in your desired field and then move into the industry later".

territory management. In 2021, he was promoted to Director of Partnerships & Business Relations. Because he didn't join the games industry straight out of university, he's been able to work in a variety of roles, including brand management, business development and partnership implementation. "And because I don't work in the development, such as design, programming, etc., but in the publishing side of things, such as marketing, PR, etc., I have learnt many aspects that are also helpful in marketing games," he explains. Pardey is no longer with the Witcher and Cyberpunk developers, but with Techland in Poland. As Territory Director DACH, he is responsible for raising the profile of the company's titles and brands like *Dying Light 2* in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

"I was already fascinated by gaming websites as a teenager and soon started writing reviews for fan sites and forums just for fun. This helped me get an internship at a games magazine in Vienna," says **Thomas Reisenegger**. He wanted to report on games. From then on, he wrote regularly for the magazine's print edition and website throughout his school and university years. "After graduating in marketing, I switched

to PR because I wanted to help indie developers get their lovingly crafted works of art into the limelight. I moved to England for my first PR job and later started my own PR agency." That agency is Future Friends Games, and it specialises in marketing, PR and go-to-market support for very small indie teams whose concepts can be a little more adventurous. As well as highlights such as *Laysara: Summit Kingdom*, the agency also handled the smash hit *Vampire Survivors*, which sold millions of copies worldwide and even won two BAFTA Game Awards, including Best Game. "I learnt some business basics while studying marketing, but most of my skills have come from working independently and, most importantly, from my interest and enjoyment of video games. For example, watching GDC talks on YouTube, spending too much time on Twitter and observing other PR and marketing campaigns helped me the most," says Reisenegger. "I was also very lucky to have always had super nice bosses as mentors in my jobs, who believed in me. I also always found colleagues who enjoyed trying out new marketing things. Being open to new things is one of the things that the Future Friends founder has always



THOMAS REISENEGGER

Gründer von Future Friends Games, UK

"Find something you enjoy and just start doing something similar as a hobby. For example, when we're looking for new people for our agency/publisher, it's always a big plus if people are already making TikTok about games, writing articles or streaming for fun. It shows that you can work independently and that you already have experience in the basics. That's a big plus!"

emphasised. One example is the social video platform Tiktok. He tried things out early on to see what was feasible, how the service worked and how it could be used to market games. Reisenegger is also a regular speaker at conferences, including six times at the GDC, where he shares his knowledge and experience.

MARCEL KLEFFMANN

GAMESMARKT SURVEY 2024

How Much Money can I Make in Games?

What salary do different vocations in the German games industry make? We surveyed the salaries of the six biggest job areas in games from junior to senior and cross-referenced them with last year's results.

W

e have asked more than 100 companies from Germany,

Austria and Switzerland for the average gross salary data of their employees. Specifically, to gather finer data about the different vocations, we requested monthly salaries in six areas of development: Game Design, Programming, Art, Writing & Narrative Design, Communication and Producing & Product Management. Since seniority is an important factor in the salary options of a single person, we asked for differentiations in the salary data for junior, regular and senior employees in each vocation. All data was gathered anonymously, and participant from Switzerland were asked to transfer their salaries into euros on the current exchange rate of their participation day. The data mixes, necessarily due to the anonymity of the participants, big and small corporations and companies from all kinds of game industry backgrounds.

As this survey marks the second volume of salary data collection, we were able to compare valuable information to last year's data. In 2023, too few companies gave information on Communication and Narrative Design

salaries, and as such, we had to exclude those vocations from our statistics last year. This year however, a thirty percent increase of companies shared their data over all vocations. We can therefore share sufficiently anonymized data for 2024's salary options over all expertises.

It is still worth noting that both Communication and Narrative Design had the lowest submissions each. In case of Communication, this becomes clear with a side view on the overall structure of games communication in the industry. Most studios outsource this work to PR and marketing agencies, thus having themselves no information on the specific salary data of the account managers. Narrative

TOTAL AVERAGE OF THE GSA GAMES INDUSTRY

€ 3,680

HIGHEST AND LOWEST CONCRETE SALARY

Junior Narrative Designer

€ 2,333

Senior Programmer
€ 8,022

Design, in contrast, is often done by combined job occupants, like game designers, especially in smaller studios. Their salary data then would often be included in the respective parent job column instead of in Narrative Design specifically.

Producers and Programmers Make the Most

Looking at the average number over each vocation and each seniority level produces the most openly interesting results. On average, a programmer in the German-speaking games industry earns 4,142 Euros, followed by producers and/or product managers with 3,965 Euros. Programmers show massive salary growth compared to last year, when they averaged 3,886 Euros. This is not, however, because of generally increased salaries, but because of more senior position data provided by companies this year. Producers, in turn, suffered a slight decrease of averaged salaries from 4,055 Euros in 2023.

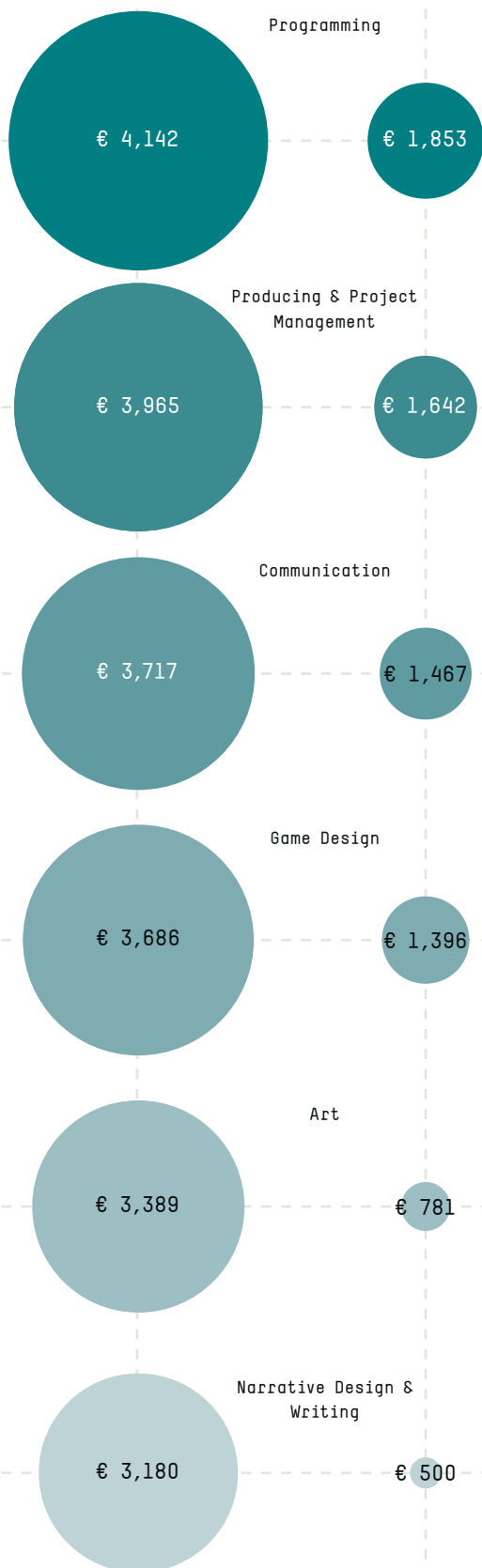
The biggest growth in average salary goes to Game Design, with 3,400 Euros in 2023 and 3,686 Euros this year, without outliers in senior positions like is the case with programming, meaning game designers indeed profited from some salary promotions in the last year.

The bottom rungs are taken up, sadly, however not surprisingly, by artists with 3,389 Euros and narrative designers with 3,180 Euros. This means that averaged over all professions, a German, Swiss or Austrian game worker makes 3,680 Euros – a slight increase over last year's 3,589 Euros.

The comparatively well-off positions of programmers and producers are especially obvious in regular and senior positions. Both vocations feature the most gross salaries over 4,000 Euros in the dataset. Likewise, the highest-paying position in the dataset falls to a Senior Programmer, followed by several other senior

AVERAGE SALARY IN EACH VOCATION

DISCREPANCY BETWEEN JUNIOR AND SENIOR POSITIONS, AVERAGED



programmers and senior producers. The best paid junior positions are also of the programming vocation as well.

The unfortunate mirrored position then falls to the narrative designers. The worst-paid salary in the dataset goes to a junior narrative designer. Averaged over all junior positions, junior narrative designers and junior artist make the least money on their entry-level positions. However, the difference over all juniors positions from all six vocations is much, much smaller than the difference over all senior positions, meaning that while entry-level salaries are somewhat fixed due to most juniors not being able to leverage much experience for pay-rises, a lot of seniors managed to get promoted into higher salaries. While the biggest numbers are again found in programming and producing, artists are pulling the shortest straw when it comes to senior salaries: In the dataset, artists are the only vocation where some seniors make less money than some juniors.

Artists and Writers Have Less Chance of High Salaries

Compared over all seniority levels, an average programming senior makes 1,853 Euros more than a programming junior. In Producing & Project Management, this discrepancy averages to 1,642 Euros, in Communication to 1,467 Euros, in Game Design to 1,396 Euros. Perhaps most interesting are the dramatically lower discrepancies within Art and Narrative Design, with 781 Euros and 500 Euros between junior and senior, respectively. Is salary distribution over seniority in these vocations fairer than in others? Or do artists and writer indeed start out low and not experience much salary growth over their career, making the fields comparatively precarious? The findings from our dataset suggest the latter. Because while a lot of junior applicants can live somewhat comfortably with low entry salaries in most fields due to lower costs of living, low salary growths in senior posi-

tions suggest unsustainability of better standards of living.

Game Workers Make Less than Comparable Industries

In general, the data, while not representative of the full gaming industry, paint a relatively bleak picture of the appeal of working in the industry. Taking comparable data from the IT industry in Germany, for example, data from salary consulting agency Consulting Partners shows an average gross salary of 5,500 Euros over all IT jobs in Germany. That's more than 1,300 Euros more than a programmer in the games industry, and almost 2,000 Euros more than the average salary over the whole dataset. With ever more harsh competition over professional workers in all fields, the German-speaking games industry will have to step up its game when it comes to attractive salaries, or experts may wander off to adjacent industries.

PASCAL WAGNER

GAMESMARKT+

Editor-in-Chief Stephan Steininger (-422)
(responsible, see publisher for address)

Editorial Team
Marcel Kleffmann (-423), Pascal Wagner (-421)

Graphics
Petra Pongratz

Printing house
Häuser Druck GmbH,
Venloer Straße 1271, 50829 Köln

Editorial Office and Publisher
BG Germany GmbH
Bavariaring 28,
80336 Munich, Germany
Tel.: 089 45114-0,
redaktion@gamesmarkt.de
sales@gamesmarkt.de

GamesMarkt+ is an irregular appearing special publication of the GamesMarkt magazine. It is sent to all subscribers with the regular issues and distributed in special editions for events and special mailing lists. It is not possible to subscribe to GamesMarkt+ separately without the main magazine.

b/g

BG Germany GmbH
Bavariaring 28
80336 München
+49 89 45114-0
General Manager Torsten Glatz

FURTHER EDUCATION

You Never Stop Learning

Just because you already work in the games industry, the joy of learning new things and the urge to educate yourself further doesn't stop. In addition to internal training opportunities at your company and individual wishes such as a part-time doctorate, various educational institutions

have specialised in furthering the education of employees alongside their job. The following overview provides an incomplete selection of programmes that offer further education and training in areas relevant to games, especially in part-time or evening school capacities.

Name	Qualification	Term	Institution	Distance or Attendance
Game Art				
Game Creature Creation	Certificate	8 Weeks	SAE Institute	Attendance (all locations)
3D Game Design	Certificate	1 Semester	Wave Akademie für digitale Medien	Attendance (Berlin)
Animation & VFX	Certificate	1 Semester	Bayerische Fernsehakademie	Distance
Game Communication				
Content Marketing & Management	Certificate	1 Semester	Bayerische Fernsehakademie	Attendance (Unterföhring)
Content Manager und digitale Kommunikation	Certificate	26 Weeks	Cimdata Bildungsakademie	Distance
Retraining: Marketing Communication Specialist, Game Business Focus	IHK-Certificate	21 Months	bm – berufsakademie für medienberufe	Attendance (Cologne)
Digital Games Business	B.A.	42 Months	GoVersity	Hybrid (Karlsruhe & online) or Distance
Game Design				
Game Design	B.A.	6, 8 or 12 Semesters	IU International University	Distance
Game Design	Certificate	2 Days	SAE Institute	Attendance (all locations) or Distance
Game Programming				
Game Development	B.Sc.	6 or 8 Semesters	Wilhem Büchner Hochschule	Distance
Specialist Virtual Reality & Game Development	Certificate	2 Semesters	AKAD University	Distance
Game Development	Certificate	8 Weeks	Wave Akademie für digitale Medien	Attendance (Berlin)
Narrative Design				
Storytelling und Storyboard	Certificate	1 Week	Wave Akademie für digitale Medien	Attendance (Berlin)
Kreatives Schreiben	Certificate	15 or 21 Months	Schule des Schreibens	Distance
Kreatives Schreiben im Überblick	Certificate	9 or 15 Months	ILS Institut für Lernsysteme	Distance
Sound Design				
Audio Diploma	Certificate	4, 6 or 8 Semesters	HOFA-College	Distance
Sound Design für audiovisuelle Medien	Certificate	2 Semesters	Zürcher Hochschule der Künste	Attendance (Zurich)
Komposition und Soundeffekte: Game Sound Design	Certificate	12 Weeks	Audiocation	Distance
XR Development				
Augmented, Mixed and Virtual Reality	Certificate	1 or 2 Months	IU International University	Distance
AR/VR Creator	IHK-Certificate	6 Months	HSB Akademie	Distance
Specialist VR & Game Development	Certificate	12 or 18 Months	AKAD University	Distance

Did we miss an important training programme?

Write it to us at redaktion@gamesmarkt.de and we will include it in the next version of this info page.

GAMESMARKT

Covering the German-speaking games industry since 2001.

PRINT | ONLINE
SOCIAL MEDIA
NEWSLETTER



Subscribe now for free
and stay informed about
the GSA region the easy way
with our...

Daily Update GERMAN
Weekly Update ENGLISH

Contact newsdesk
redaktion@gamesmarkt.de

Contact sales team
sales@gamesmarkt.de



DEIN
SPIEL
RAUM



SICHERE JOBS
IN DER GAMESBRANCHE



CIPSOFT

cipsoft.com/karriere