

gamescom

dev daily

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gamescom dev **leadership summit**

March 23–25, 2027
Lisbon, Portugal





Reignite the Spark

I welcome you to our first gamescom dev!

It is your first gamescom dev, as there previously only ever was devcom. It is also, in a sense, my first gamescom dev, as I just started in my new role.

"A magic dwells in each beginning" says one of my favorite German authors. And boy does this seem like a new beginning for so many of us – if we like it or not. Old and proven rules of our industry seem to vanish overnight, technology seems to get ahead of itself, and around us is a geopolitical world that doesn't differ much from that.

So where's the new beginning, where is the magic, where is the spark? I believe it can be right here.

It can start with an open conversation about the challenges that you face with the next person you meet. To share what you've learned, and to find inspiration in each other. And it can also be a chance to reconnect with something that can easily get lost amid all those difficult decisions we face every day: the spark that will build the future of gaming.

In just a few days gamescom, as one of the biggest shows for games on earth, will put the spotlight on big deals, finished products, and, of course, the players. Here, at gamescom dev, we focus on the people and the indispensable work that they do at the heart of our industry. This is where we exchange our ideas, our methodologies, and our experiences, good and bad, all of them necessary to keep making great games. The thing that brought us into gaming in the first place.

While the name is new, what remains unchanged is our ambition to preserve what makes this event special – serving this industry and its people with the goal to entertain and to delight our fellow humans – so let's go create some sparks!

Frederik Hammes
Managing Director, *game events GmbH*

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IMPRINT

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Xsolla Unveils Its Largest Product Rollout Yet: New Tools Give Studios Control Over Their Own Growth

X

solla has launched six major releases. Mobile developers gain the Web Shop Ecosystem, a full

direct-to-consumer package built for mobile titles. PC developers get a new set of engagement features centered on a Community Hub. And studios across all platforms get access to over 15 additional local payment options worldwide, Xsolla AI Toolkit paired with a new CLI (an AI-guided route from opening a publisher account to launching a functioning web shop), an enhanced creator marketing platform, and a new backend partnership with AccelByte.

Each addresses a distinct challenge, but they all share one goal: studios owning their player relationships without needing a dedicated platform team.

What's New for Mobile Studios

Direct-to-consumer commerce is furthest along in mobile gaming, and Xsolla Web Shop, currently powering 800+ mobile storefronts, has grown to keep pace. The Web Shop Ecosystem ties together four pillars, Core, Engagement, Monetization, and Op-

erations, under a single Mobile Games Account on Xsolla.com. From one integration, studios can manage loyalty programs, subscriptions, chat-based commerce, and no-code LiveOps complete with analytics and attribution, all running alongside their existing shops. A checkout page moves a transaction. The acquisition, engagement, and live operations work around that transaction is the part most studios never staff on their own, and it will live in the same integration.

Storefronts generate revenue only in markets where they can actually complete a sale. In many regions, that fails simply because checkout doesn't support how local players pay. Xsolla Payments now supports more than 15 new local payment methods spanning three continents, including ShopeePay in the Philippines, Konbini 7/11 in Japan, Zip Co in Australia, Wero in Germany and Belgium, CliQ in Jordan, and Aeropay for Pay by Bank in the U.S. Since these all run through the existing Xsolla Payments setup, each new method opens another market for developers to capture sales previously lost at checkout, with zero additional payment coding required.

What's New for PC Studios

Being listed on an app store or PC platform gets a game seen, but it's

the platform, not the studio, that owns the resulting player relationship. Xsolla's Publishing Suite aims to change that, led by the Community Hub: a studio-branded engagement space featuring news, quests, loyalty programs, user-generated content, and referrals, where the studio retains first-party player data. It's joined by a no-code Live Ops Event Template for in-store seasonal promotions, a Cosmetic Items Showcase with video-based product pages to merchandise skins and premium items, in-Launcher notifications for delivering patch notes and offers directly to players, and self-service onboarding for PC studios. Together, these tools let studios keep players engaged on a channel they control, on their own timeline, while retaining the player data generated along the way.

What's New for Every Studio

For teams starting from scratch, Xsolla has added CLI functionality to its free AI Toolkit, allowing a developer to move from creating a publisher account to a live web shop in one sitting. The CLI handles publisher account setup, API credential generation, and webhook configuration from the command line, while the Toolkit walks through integration inside familiar AI coding environments like Claude Code and Cursor, checking each step before it goes live. Previously, setup meant combing through documentation, manually provisioning an account, and then troubleshooting AI-generated code that seemed correct but broke in production. Now developers can verify what's being deployed before deployment happens.

Beyond that are the players studios haven't yet reached, the ones who discover new games through creators they follow, not ads they scroll past. The expanded Xsolla Partner Network

folds creator marketing directly into the Xsolla Publisher Account, where developers already manage their business operations. Every creator undergoes automated identity verification, campaigns are managed through a unified workflow with attribution tracking down to individual clicks, sales, and dollars, and a built-in recommendation engine pairs campaigns with well-matched creators. Flat-fee campaigns are coming alongside revenue share, and Xsolla handles payments, payouts, taxes, and compliance throughout.

Underneath everything lies the infrastructure studios need before any of the rest can function. Through a strategic partnership with AccelByte, an extensible platform built by seasoned industry veterans, Xsolla is rolling out integrated backend solutions that combine AccelByte's player management, matchmaking, storefront, and analytics capabilities with Xsolla's payments, subscriptions, monetization, and identity tools. A closed testing phase has opened, with early partner studios helping shape the feature set ahead of a wider release. The goal these studios are testing: whether backend infrastructure and global payment systems can be launched together, without separate teams managing each, to get to market faster.

What's New for Players

Studios are only one side of this launch. At gamescom, Xsolla is also unveiling three new player-facing experiences, plus an early look at the rewards system that powers them all, built around one core principle: whatever a player earns should remain theirs.

"Every one of these came from the same conversation with developers, just at a different point in the journey," said Chris Hewish, President of Xsolla. "How do I find players I can't reach, close sales I'm losing, keep the players I've earned, and do it all without hiring a team I can't afford? The same runs to the player side. A five-dollar card shouldn't be a one-time purchase. It should start a relationship between a player, their games, and the things they collect."

Six releases, one mission. Xsolla builds and delivers everything developers need to launch, grow, and monetize their video games, putting studios in charge of their own success: the storefronts they operate, the players they retain, the shops they build, the sales they capture, the creators amplifying their reach, and the backend infrastructure supporting it all.

Learn more at xsolla.pro/gmktgc, or connect with the team at gamescom, Hall 2.2, #A030-B035.



DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER

Floating Stone Studio

A narrative stealth adventure about journalism in a surreal totalitarian state. You play Saga, a state-branded 'Liar', working for the resistance to expose a regime built on manufactured truth.

PRAVDA

Germany

**DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER**

designmatic

Explore this immersive 2.8D Metroidvania fantasy world to uncover its mysteries along with forgotten secrets. Slay monsters with visceral combat skills to survive.

AYNA: SHATTERED TRUTH

Germany

**DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER**

Rocat Games

A third-person cinematic sci-fi space horror inspired by Alien: Isolation, Dead Space, The Thing, and the biomechanical art of H. R. Giger. Set aboard a derelict orbital station struck by a parasitic outbreak, the game captures the sense of isolation, paranoia, and survival.

**INVASIA**
Poland**DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER**

Acariño Games

An exploration and puzzle game with a unique artistic style. The game invites you to harvest energy and use mechanics such as transfer or sacrifice, while switching between different avatars to solve puzzles, open paths and continue advancing.

XERME

Spain

**DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER**

Talent Digital

Pecking Order is a chaotic, physics-based multiplayer party game for 6-16 players. Two constantly shifting teams - birds and worms - face off across shrinking, hazard-filled arenas.

PECKING ORDER

South Africa

**DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER**

Cosy Den

You are the Mountain. Stop climbers before they reach the summit using the raw power of nature. Trigger avalanches, reshape the terrain, and strike back.

**SUMMIT SMASH**
Czech Republic

THE LONG NIGHT

Denmark

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER
Birdisland

A run-based renaissance-slavic-horror RPG with turn-based combat, about a young man returning to his birthplace to treat an outbreak of the plague.

INDEPENDENT DARLINGS

Indie Expo @ gamescom dev

The showfloor features many **upcoming treasures**. This article covers just a few highlights. Definitely make space between your meetings to **try them out!**

MUTTER

Chile

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER
DeadlyCrow Games

In the midst of war, a far more personal horror takes root at home. Your mother is becoming a monster. Survive, uncover the truth, and navigate a heartbreaking bond in this unique stop-motion narrative horror adventure.

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER

Most likely no reason for hysteria

The lighthouse has gone dark! In this action packed adventure you climb, fight and explore the depths of Cliff Kingdom searching for the lost light.



MIDNIGHT WATCHER: VILLAGE Cyprus

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER
RainStyle Games

You are a shift guard sent to an abandoned village deep in the Siberian taiga in this tense survival horror with simulation elements, where everything you do during the day determines whether you survive the night.



FROSTLINER Australia

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER
GaneDev Studio

Take command of a nomadic train city hurtling through a war-ravaged frozen wasteland. In this survival city builder on rails, gather survivors, scavenge resources, and do whatever it takes to keep the engine running and stay ahead of the frost.



CLIFF KINGDOM Norway

GAMESCOM DEV SPEAKERS

Economic Challenges and Changes Through AI Dominate Opinions



The results of the [gamescom dev 2026 speaker survey](#) shows that economic uncertainty, a [broken junior-to-senior pipeline](#) through AI and [bad discoverability](#) are on the industry's mind.

For the annual gamescom dev speaker survey, 100 speakers have given their opinion on a set of questions around the industry this year. You can find the full questionnaire and the answers in the box below, but let us first highlight a few choice results.

One of the key topics of the survey has been the influence of AI. 36% believe AI will change roles rather than reduce teams, 33% expect smaller team sizes, and 14% anticipate increased output per person. 34% see the greatest value of AI in Code & Production, while 30% would prefer as little AI involvement in game development as possible. The result remains broadly consistent with the 2025 survey.

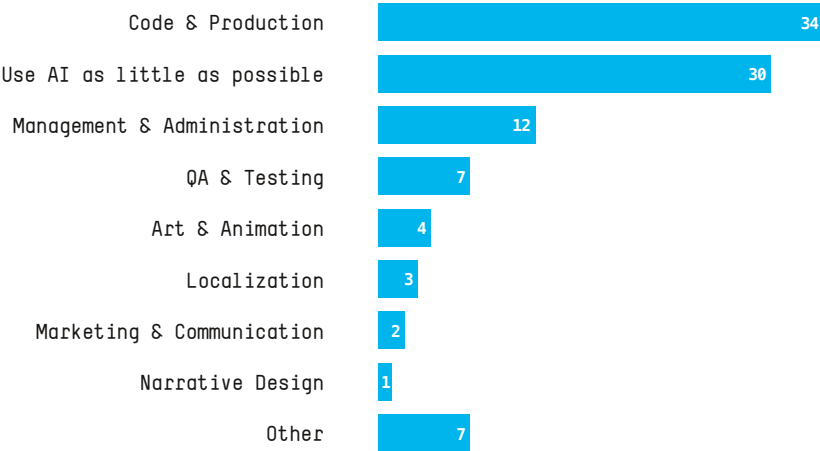
When asked about the biggest current challenges for the industry, economic uncertainty received the most echo by the speakers with 54 responses, followed by market saturation with 38, discoverability with 35, and increasing development costs with 30. Multiple answers were possible.

With regards to better discoverability, more than half of participants have uttered concrete wishes for changes to storefronts. 32% ask for more transparent platform algorithms, and 22% want better store-

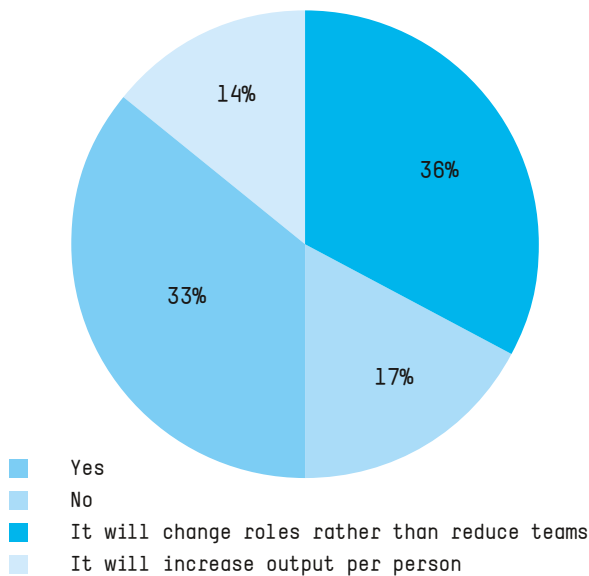
front recommendation systems. Another feature with huge impact would be more curated editorial features, say 21% of speakers.

PASCAL WAGNER

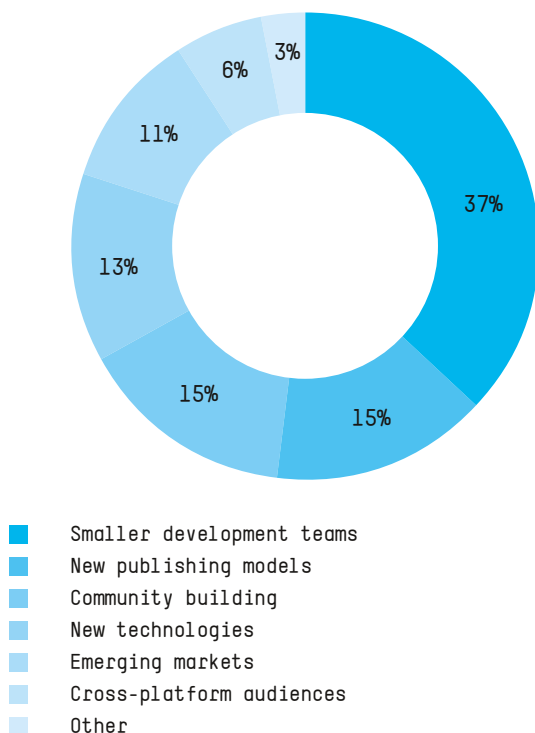
Where do you currently see the most value of AI in game development?
(in %)



Will AI reduce development team sizes over the next three years?



What represents the biggest opportunity for game developers over the next three years?



2026 Speaker Questionnaire Summary

What is currently the biggest challenge facing the games industry?

Economic uncertainty received the most responses with 54, followed by market saturation with 38, discoverability with 35, and increasing development costs with 30. Adapting to new technologies received 16 responses, talent acquisition and retention seven, monetization four, and other answers twelve. Multiple answers were possible.

Which industry development will have the biggest impact over the next three years?

47% selected AI-assisted development. Hardware and RAM prices ranked second at 28%, followed by the creator economy at 7%, user-generated content at 5%, cross-platform ecosystems and new hardware platforms or generations at 4% each, cloud gaming at 1%, and other answers at 4%.

What represents the biggest opportunity for game developers over the next three years?

Smaller development teams ranked first at 37%. New publishing models and community building received 15% each, followed by new technologies at 13%, emerging markets at 11%, cross-platform audiences at 6%, and other answers at 3%.

Which business or monetization model will dominate the games market over the next three years?

Digital and physical premium games ranked first at 29%, followed by live service at 24% and free-to-play with in-game items at 21%. Community-funded models received 10%, free-to-play with advertising 6%, subscriptions 5%, and other answers 5%.

Where do you currently see the most value of AI in game development?

Code & Production ranked first at 34%, while 30% would like to see as little AI involvement in game development as possible. Management & Administration followed at 12%, QA & Testing and other answers at 7% each, Art & Animation at 4%, Localization at 3%, Marketing & Communication at 2%, and Narrative Design at 1%.

Will AI reduce development team sizes over the next three years?

36% believe AI will change roles rather than reduce teams, while 33% expect it to reduce team sizes. A further 14% believe it will increase output per person, and 17% do not expect it to reduce teams.

How do you personally discover most new games?

Friends and communities received the most responses with 68, followed by social media with 46, gaming media with 41, and video and streaming platforms with 32. Digital showcases received 26 responses, digital storefronts 25, events such as gamescom 21, and other answers two. Multiple answers were possible.

Which change would most improve game discoverability today?

More transparent platform algorithms ranked first at 32%, followed by better storefront recommendations at 22%, more curated editorial features at 21%, and greater visibility through creators and influencers at 19%. More industry events and showcases and other answers received 3% each.

What skill will become most sought after in game development?

Leadership ranked first at 27%, followed by technical programming at 19%, Art & Design at 12%, and AI literacy and other answers at 11% each. Community management received 10%, while Production and Narrative received 5% each.

WESTERN MARKETS

How Much Money Can I Make In Gaming?



We have aggregated salary data from **US, EU and Non-EU Europe** to provide **wage comparisons** over the **Western gaming markets**. The comparison paints a picture of the **state of games** in 2026.

Making your dream game can be rewarding in its own way, but let's be honest: Work must pay the bills. And the games industry has historically been a place where salaries have been contested quite heavily, because other industries looking for comparable skillsets often featured higher wages. As an

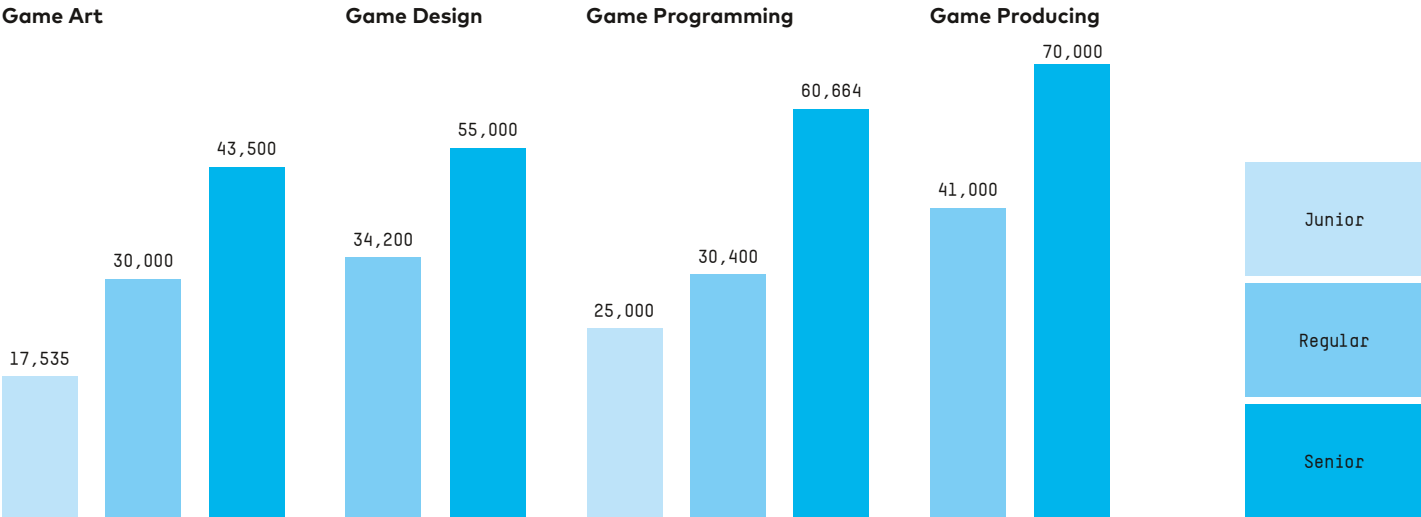
example: In a 2024 survey Games-Markt/GamesMarket conducted on the German salary situation of game programmers, we found that game programmers earned around 24% less than what a salary survey by Consulting Partners found for comparable positions in the overall IT industry in Germany. So when people try to break into the games industry now, salary certainly hasn't become less of an important factor in the face of industry layoff

waves. We therefore collected salary data from three different surveys from around the Western hemisphere and put them into comparison. If you are looking for a games job in Europe or the US, this data aggregation is indispensable. The comparison is based on two surveys: The Games Industry Employment Survey 2025 by Values Value and IngameJob for data on the two areas EU+CH+UK and Non-EU Europe, the 2025 Game Industry Salary Report by GDC and Informa and the renamed 2026 State of the Gamesreport by GDC and Informa.

Median Salary Data: Artists and Designers Earn the Least

The European study gives median salaries for four fields of game work: Art, Design, Programming and Producing/Project Management. Apart from some omissions in the Junior range, both also see this data divided into Junior, Regular and Senior seniority levels. The US survey is given as average instead of median data, and also it does not divide its data into seniority levels but gives an overall average instead. Notably, the yearly GDC report has changed its approach after

Median Annual Income by Area and Seniority in €: EU+CH+UK



2025 as well, and the report renamed in 2026 into State of the Games Industry does not cover salary anymore at all.

Nevertheless, the comparison between the 2025 datasets shows relevant relations between the salary markets of EU+CH+UK, Non-EU Europe and the US. In all areas except Non-EU Europe, Game Producing is the highest-earning field or tied for highest-earning. In Non-EU Europe, Programming is the highest earning field, hinting at the enormous boom of support studios and contract workers that the European study had also worked out in the years before.

Cost of Living is Not Calculated into the Comparison

And while the difference between the salary numbers in those areas seem daunting, with around 17,000 Euros in-EU and 8,000 Euros out-of EU at the low end, and double to almost triple as much as high-end EU workers that the averaged US worker makes, it is important to keep several factors in mind: Firstly, the relatively weak US Dollar in contrast to the Euro with high cost-of-living prices in

the US overall. Secondly, the comparably low cost-of-living in a lot of non-EU European countries, contrasting the massive cost-of-living spikes of a lot of game development hub cities in the US, and how much additional health insurance and other cost-of-living expenses US workers have to pay which EU workers often do not. It is impossible from the given data to find *the* one medium worker over all areas. Ideally, all of this salary overview has to be interpreted from each national living standard perspective.

US Layoffs go Up, Europe's Stay High

Lastly, an important decision factor apart from the salary for many is whether they have a job already or not, and if they feel hard-pressed to take any job in the industry, even for a potentially lower income. For the US the 2026 report becomes useful for a direct comparison: Layoffs in the twelve months before the survey went up from 14% to 17% according to the 2025 and 2026 GDC studies. In Europe, with EU and non-EU together, 26,7% said they were laid off in the twelve months before the survey.

US Annual Median Salaries in 1000\$

(in % out of 505 respondents)

Median 129k	
<30K	7%
30K-50K	3%
50K-75K	10%
75K-100K	13%
100K-125K	14%
125K-200K	25%
200K-300K	19%
300K-500K	8%
>500K	4%

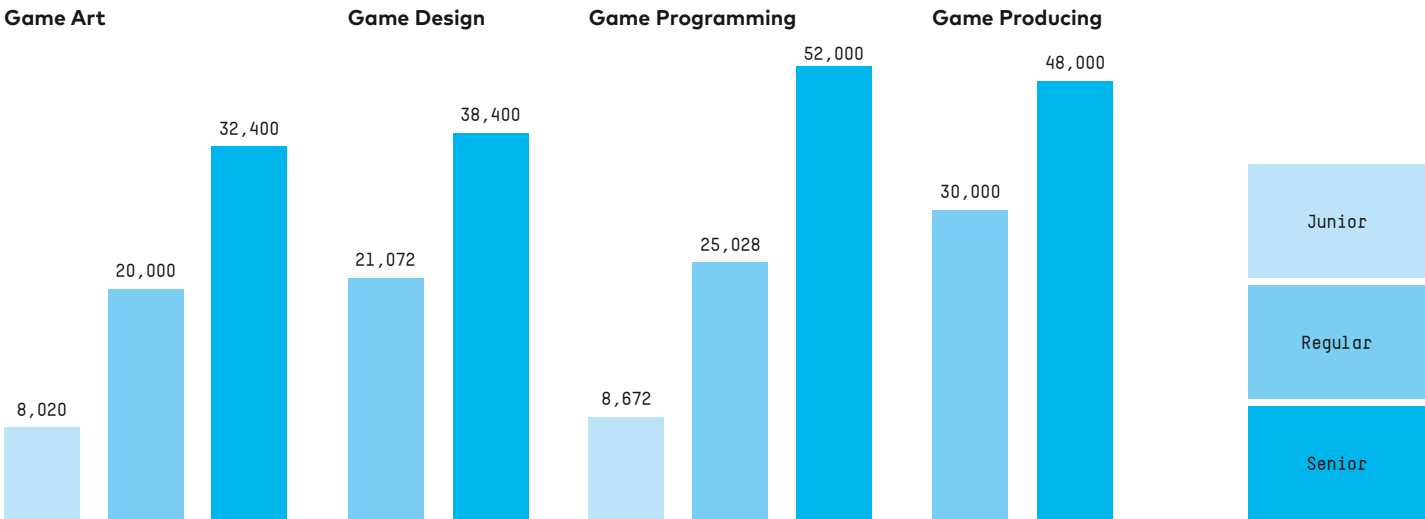
Average Annual Income by Area in \$: USA

GAME ART	124,000
GAME DESIGN	133,000
GAME PROGRAMMING	150,000
GAME PRODUCING	160,000

This data is important in an industry that tends to get even more competitive due to ongoing layoffs and consolidations.

PASCAL WAGNER

Median Annual Income by Area and Seniority in €: Non-EU Europe



HALL PLAN AND EXHIBITORS

A quick guide to Confex



Koelnmesse's Confex is huge, and so is gamescom dev. 380 speakers will be presenting 230 sessions across 18 stages. There will also be over 50 exhibitors and indie developers. Here's an overview.

Exhibitors – Confex Level 0

NAME	BOOTH
Abstract Group	E01
Amber	D07
AMD	E05
Artmer Studio	D01
Brazil Games	C01
Cyigma	B03
Cyprus Country Pavilion	B03
Diversion	D04
FastSpring	C03
Games Syndicate Cologne	E03
GameSkills	D02
GDCy	B03
Giants Software	D05
Google Cloud	A03
JetBrains	C04
k - ID	D06
Neogames	E08
NosisGUI	A05
Petforce	D09
Photon Engine	D10
Pragma	C02
Rive	B04
Sentry	B04
Solsta	E06
Tencent Games Central Tech	A02
Thinking.ai	B01
Unlimit	B03

Indie Showcase

NAME	BOOTH
Acariño Games	I21
Birdisland	I06
Chase the Bunny	I07
Cosy Den I04	D01
DeadlyCrow Games	I23
designmatic	I10
Finish Line Games	I09
Flamehead Games	I25
Floaring Stone Studio	I08
GaneDev Studio	I14
Goreng Games	I13
Guild Studio	I24
Laserbread	I26
Lofty Sky Games	I15
Most likely no reason for hysteria	I20
Niebla Games	I17
Nieko	I01
RainStyle Games	I05
Ripe Render Games	I16
Rocat Games	I22
RotxBlau	I11
Speculative Agency	I12
Studio Laaya	I18
Talent Digital	I02
Zamarkand	I19

Level 2

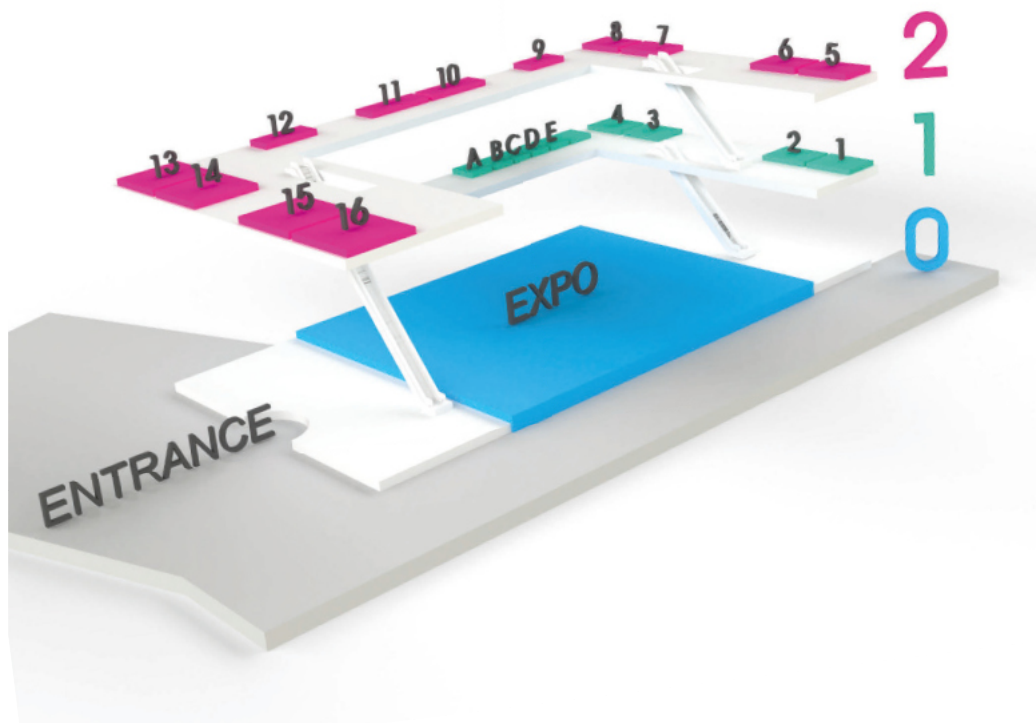
- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 5 stage | 11 stage |
| 6 stage | 12 workshop |
| 7 stage | 13 stage |
| 8 stage | 14 stage |
| 9 workshop | 15 stage |
| 10 stage | 16 round table |

Level 1

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1 stage | A AWSfor Games |
| 2 stage | B silent room |
| 3 stage | C awareness team |
| 4 stage | D The Helpshift Player
Engagement Hub |
| | E Apple |

Level 0

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| • keynote stage | • Supercell lounge |
| • expo area | • reception area |
| • indie expo | • gamescom dev loot zone |
| • speaker & VIP lounge | • press & media lounge |
| • business area | • snack point |



PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Crème de la Crème



The schedule for **gamescom dev 2026** is packed with excellence, but if you are not sure which talks, panels and workshops to visit, take a look at our curated **highlights packages** for different industry branches!

THESE ARE JUST SOME HIGHLIGHTS,

but the schedule holds much more great talks, of course. Also remember that time slots can be subject to change, so always check the full schedule in your gamescom biz app or here:



Game Design, Tech & Coding

Automated Testing in 'Grave Seasons' from the Ground Up

When? Monday, 24 August, 12:15 PM to 12:45 PM

Where? Stage 3 - Confex Level 1

Who? Nikky Armstrong, Lead Programmer, Perfect Garbage

What? This session will explain how we built Grave Seasons from day one with automated testing in mind. As a game with a focus on branching narrative and player impact, automated tests have allowed us to have confidence throughout development that we can create the game in a healthy and robust way. The talk will explain the different types of tests we have implemented, and the way in which we architected the game to separate out the core logic and allow all teams to "fail fast" during development.

Beyond Pathfinding: Unit Navigation and Base Building in 'Dawn of War IV'

When? Monday, 24 August, 4:45 PM to 5:45 PM

Where? Stage 11 - Confex Level 2

Who? Thomas Jahn, Technical Director, King Art Games; Hanka Fritz, Game Programmer, King Art Games

What? In 'Dawn of War IV' units fight in large chaotic battles, while free-form base building adds further com-

plexity. This talk shares the problems the developer faced and the solutions they built in over a decade of developing Realtime Strategy Games.

Glacier: Platform Adaptability and Performance Lessons from '007 First Light'

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 12:15 PM to 1:15 PM

Where? Stage 3 - Confex Level 1

Who? Cris Vega, Executive Producer, IO Interactive; Kristofer Hammar-sköld, Principal Programmer, IO Interactive A/S

What? In this talk, the team behind Hitman and '007 First Light' explores how Glacier's architecture enabled efficient platform adaptation under its constraints, and how they approached performance optimization across CPU and GPU without compromising creative ambition. Using '007 First Light' as a case study, they share lessons from optimizing modern rendering, scaling complex simulations, and maintaining predictable performance across devices - all while evolving a 20-year-old engine for today's and tomorrow's platforms.

Feeding the Beast: Keeping a Live Service Game alive and Thriving for a Decade

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 3:15 PM to 4:15 PM

Where? Stage 11 - Confex Level 2

Who? Rémi Veilleux, Senior Programming Technical Director, Behaviour Interactive; Rose Li, Senior Product Director, Behaviour Interactive

What? This session offers practical lessons for developers on scaling live service games across both product and technology - balancing innovation, stability, and player expectations over a decade of continuous growth in Behaviour Interactive's 'Dead by Daylight'.

Why Good Code is Bad - A Coders Conundrum Explained for Everyone

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 5:15 PM to 6:15 PM

Where? Stage 3 - Confex Level 1

Who? Oswald de Bruin, Owner, Obsessive Science Games

What? This talk explains game programmer's problems to non-programmers and helping programmers write better code that is usable for the whole team.

Art, Animation & VFX

From Instinct to Intent: Making Design Decisions that Scale

When? Monday, 24 August, 3:15 PM to 3:45 PM

Where? Stage 6 - Confex Level 2

Who? Emi Nguyen, Visual Design Artist, Riot Games

What? Design often starts with instinct. Over time, you develop a sense for what works. You can feel when something is right. But instinct is difficult to share. As work moves across a team, things slow down, feedback becomes more subjective, and even strong ideas can lose their shape. This talk explores what it takes to turn instinct into intent. Through examples across different types of design work, Emi shares how clarifying what a design needs to do helps teams make decisions more consistently and build work that holds up as it evolves. You'll leave with a way to recognize when instinct is no longer enough, and how to define clear intent that others can use to move the work forward.

'Mafia: The Old Country' - Seamless Cinematics Deep Dive

When? Monday, 24 August, 5:45 PM to 6:45 PM

Where? Stage 6 - Confex Level 2

Who? Theodore Hilhorst, Senior Technical Mission Designer, 2K Czech; Igor Sobolev, Senior Cinematic Editor, 2K Czech

What? Join us for a deep dive into the creation process of seamless transition between gameplay and cinematics, as we developed them in 'Mafia:

The Old Country'. Learn how to keep players engaged and make cinematics feel like an integral part of the game world. Explore practical approaches, do's and don'ts, and how to avoid common but costly pitfalls, that will keep your producer happy. From narrative to planning, from design to tech, from mocap to animation, we'll break down what it takes to get rid of jarring camera cuts and fades and opt for smooth flow between gameplay and cinematics.

Earth, Wind & Fire: Approaches to Technical Art for Video Games

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 12:15 PM to 1:15 PM

Where? Stage 6 - Confex Level 2

Who? Casilda de Zulueta, Project Lead / Technical Artist / Fem-DevsMeetup Co-organizer, Achtung Autobahn, FemDevsMeetup; Joana Almeida, Senior Technical Artist; Mathew Varkki, Senior Technical Artist, Fishlabs; Finley Baguio, Game Programmer, Blue Backpack

What? Technical Artists: the sought-out unicorns in gamedev. But as every mythological creature, everyone imagines them differently! Not a programmer, not an artist, but something in between, a bridge among both disciplines. And how does that manifest? It depends! Come hear three tales on development and the various responsibilities that come with the tech art job title. You may need one in your next adventure.

Look and Feel - The Art of Standing Out

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 11:15 AM to 11:45 AM

Where? Stage 6 - Confex Level 2

Who? Chris Cox, Art Director

What? We live in times of sensory saturation, in an age where concepts can be generated at the touch of a button it seems like there are a fewer and fewer stones left unturned for game art styles. Chris Cox shares his approach to creating human-made art styles which not only stand out in a saturated market, but are fueled by game makers' unique creative signatures.

Behind the Seven Seas: A Deep Dive into a Large-scale Water Rendering System

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 3:15 PM to 4:15 PM

Where? Stage 6 - Confex Level 2

Who? João Silva, Graphics Programmer, Limbic Entertainment

What? 'Corsair Cove' is a pirate city-builder game set in a world largely covered by water. This presents a unique technical challenge: How does one render an ocean with high visual quality and performance when the player can zoom out from a tiny bush to a bird's-eye view of the entire map? This talk aims to answer this question by deconstructing the water rendering system we developed for Cove.

Efficiently Automizing Workflows with the Asset Pipeline Team

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 5:15 PM to 6:15 PM

Where? Stage 6 - Confex Level 2

Who? Jakub Kościelniak, Pipeline Engineer, CD Projekt Red

What? In this talk you'll learn how to improve artists' workflows through smart automation and tools. Featuring real production examples, this talk shows how simple solutions, good UX, and thoughtful design can save thousands of hours and deliver long-term efficiency.





Accessibility, Equality & Sustainability

Integrating Accessibility Into Your Production Pipeline : It's Possible!

When? Monday, 24 August, 11:15 AM to 11:45 AM

Where? Stage 8 - Confex Level 2

Who? Amélie Chiasson, Accessibility Lead, Player Research - a Keywords Studio

What? Bridge a gap between design teams and production when it comes to accessibility objectives. Commit more confidently to accessibility by adopting methods to better prioritize, integrate, assign and track accessibility progress while avoiding scope-creep.

Closing the Loop: Integrating Charitable Donations

When? Monday, 24 August, 3:15 PM to 3:45 PM

Where? Stage 8 - Confex Level 2

Who? Matthias Hellmund, Head of Customer Insights, ShareTheMeal / UN World Food Programme

What? Inspiring examples and recipes of integrated charitable donations that spark joy and have a real-world impact - on gamers and other humans. Together we can end global hunger. Matthias Hellmund shares case studies of games & donations which go beyond the classic corpo-

rate \$\$\$ or deco/skin purchase. Food for thought and learnings for games and communities that want to make a dent in the universe.

Saving in Progress - Preserving Your Games in Europe

When? Monday, 24 August, 3:45 PM to 4:45 PM

Where? Stage 8 - Confex Level 2

Who? Willem Hilhorst, Media Manager Games & Online Preservation, Beeld & Geluid

What? Preserving video games is a new field, but archives and museums are hard at work to make sure that your legacy can be accessed in the future. In this panel you will learn how to prepare for working with cultural institutions and what is needed to safeguard the legacy of your work as a developer or studio, with perspectives from across all of Europe.

AI-mageddon: Killing The Planet One Byte at a Time

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 11:15 AM to 12:15 PM

Where? Stage 8 - Confex Level 2

Who? Charlie Kenihan, Creative Director, Bin Chicken Studios

What? Learn about the environmental impact AI is having on our planet. The talk will explore the history that led us to this moment and speak plainly about the realities we face as workers and citizens. It will then dive into the facts and evidence around the catastrophic environmental impact and the energy usage of different AI tools. This will help developers make more informed decisions around whether to use AI or not.

New Power-Saving Plugins for Unreal, Unity and Godot - Better Player Experience and Energy Efficiency

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 12:45 PM to 1:15 PM

Where? Stage 8 - Confex Level 2

Who? Hauke Thießen, Technical Artist, Deck 13; Oliver Stock, CEO, Walk The Frog; Ashe Foltin, Creative Director, Bold Beetle Games

What? This session focuses on the Power-Saving Plugins for Unreal, Unity and Godot, developed to optimize your game's energy efficiency in a pragmatic and time-efficient way - in fact, even enhance the player experience by improving battery life, reducing heat-induced slowdowns, and minimizing fan noise, making them a benefit for developers.

PR, Marketing & Community Management

Let's Screw up a Game Launch - Choose Your Own Adventure

When? Monday, 24 August, 11:15 AM to 11:45

Where? Stage 7 - Confex Level 2

Who? Lauren Hunter, Publishing Director, Digital Ronin

What? Step into the driver's seat for a live indie game launch - will you reach your destination or drive the car off a cliff? In this 'Choose Your Own Adventure' session, you and your fellow audience members vote on every critical decision, from scouting a title and reviewing milestones to navigating the maze of console release. Experience firsthand just how much work goes into shipping a game on top of making the the game itself and steer your project to a successful release candidate - or face game over! Your guide for this session, Lauren, share's the ups and downs of her six years publishing experience with indie teams at Square Enix and working on client projects at a small independent studio before that.

Is Your Community Sick? A Hands-on Diagnostic for Healthier Games

When? Monday, 24 August, 12:15 PM to 1:15 PM

Where? Stage 7 - Confex Level 2

Who? Joi Podgorny, Marketing & Partnerships, GGWP

What? Community health is not a support queue - and most games are operating with blind spots they don't know they have. This hands-on workshop gives attendees a practical framework for assessing and improving community health across the full operating lifecycle: policy, detection, response, and culture. Drawing on cross-industry data and operating patterns, facilitators guide participants through a structured self-audit across five operational lenses: compliance and legal risk, brand and commercial trust, player experience, op-

erational scalability, and community legitimacy. Working in small groups, attendees score their own game or community - whether a multiplayer title, a Discord community, or any interactive social space - identify their biggest gaps, and leave with a concrete action plan they built themselves. No slides. No pitch. Just the framework, the data, and the work.

The Anatomy of Attention: How Owlcat Games Crafts Video Assets that Keep Players Watching

When? Monday, 24 August, 3:15 PM to 3:45 PM

Where? Stage 7 - Confex Level 2

Who? Margarita Pustelenina, Sub-Lead Graphic & Video Design, Owlcat Games

What? In this session, Graphic & Video Design Sub Lead Margarita Pustelenina will talk about the main techniques and tools that the Owlcat Games video production team uses to keep viewers' attention when creating trailers.

Inside Creator Campaigns: Real Stories, Data, and Lessons from the Trenches

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 11:15 AM to 12:15

Where? Stage 7 - Confex Level 2

Who? Kirill Akimkin, Co-Founder, Pol-den Publishing LTD; Jake Kulkowski, Founder and Director, Guillotine Agency Ltd; Anna Schultze, Creative Lead and Influencer Marketing Manager, Black Soup; Sarah Gloeckler, Country Manager DACH, Riot Games; Dennis Quaisser, Business Development Manager, Pixel Maniacs

What? Real creator campaigns from Indie Games to AAA, real data, and real decisions, and a chance to step into how others approach influencer marketing and what goes through their heads along the way.

Strategies and Action Plans for Game Discoverability

When? Tuesday, 25 August, 12:15 PM to 12:45 PM

Where? Stage 7 - Confex Level 2

Who? Gregory Queste, Brand Marketing Manager, Not a Shark Company

What? A practical talk for indie studios on improving Steam discoverability, optimizing store pages, and driving external demand through creators, PR, community, and social media.



Leadership Summit

The Cologne edition of the [gamescom dev leadership summit](#) features exclusive sessions tailored to C-level professionals and senior decision-makers in the games industry. This summit is a closed, invitation and VIP pass holder only afternoon.

TIME SLOT	MONDAY
11:15	Welcome & Ground Rules Lars Janssen
11:30	
11:45	Keynote: Where Does This End? Amir Satvat
12:00	
12:15	
12:30	The Bets You Can't Take Back Lars Janssen, Luis Villegas
12:45	
13:00	
13:15	Who Absorbs the Shock? Lars Janssen, Tommy Thompson, Kat Stoica Ostenfeld, Gregory Off, Johanna Uddst�hl
13:30	
13:45	
14:00	
14:15	Break
14:30	
14:45	
15:00	
15:15	The Chair is Open (open for all attendees)
15:30	
15:45	
16:00	
16:15	Closing Reflections Lars Janssen
16:30	
16:45	
17:00	
17:15	
17:30	
17:45	



Legal Summit

For the first time, gamescom has a dedicated **program for games lawyers**, embedded into gamescom dev. It's offering practitioners from around the world both a reason to make the trip to Cologne and a full afternoon of substance once they get there.



CREDITS GAMESCOM DEV

TIME SLOT	TUESDAY
11:15	
11:30	Light Lunch & Welcome Anselm Rodenhausen, Henner Hentsch
11:45	
12:00	
12:15	
12:30	
12:45	Keynote: From Brussels with Love Axel Voss
13:00	From Regulation to Reality: EU Video Games Law through the Inhouse Lens Anselm Rodenhausen, Henner Hentsch, Virginie Gringarten, Cordula Zimmer, Daniel Penfold, Clemens Mayer-Wegelin
13:15	
13:30	
13:45	
14:00	Digital Fairness Act – A Game Changer for the Games Industry? Anselm Rodenhausen, Jari-Pekka Kaleva, Kasia Colombani, Nic Murfett, Rafal Kloczko
14:15	
14:30	
14:45	
15:00	Break
15:15	New Common Standards for Age Ratings: How PEGI and USK are Tackling Interactive Risk Categories Anselm Rodenhausen, Elisabeth Secker, Dirk Bosmans
15:30	
15:45	
16:00	Age Assurance: The End of the "I'm Over 18" Click Ryan Black, Sophie Lewis, Joseph Newman
16:15	
16:30	
16:45	
17:00	Bridging the Atlantic: Legal and Policy Trends Shaping the US Games Industry Konstantin Ewald, Michael Lewis
17:15	
17:30	3B: Legal Conferences for Games Industry Lawyers Henner Hentsch, Gaetano Dimita, Sergei Klimov
17:45	

DRINKS AND MINGLES

Beyond The Business Conference

Looking for more than banter and sessions?
Then don't miss these [side events](#) for gamescom dev.

FastSpring Beer & Banter

When? Monday, 24 August 2026, 3 pm - 5 pm

Where? Confex, Reception Area

What? FastSpring, the payments platform behind D2C web stores for game publishers worldwide, invites all gamescom dev attendees to join them for an informal beer reception on Monday afternoon. Connect with the people you've been meaning to catch up with over cold drinks in a relaxed setting. No agenda, just good company and great beer. See you there!

gamescom dev leadership dinner

When? Monday, 24 August 2026, 6 pm - 11 pm

Where? The ASH Köln MesseCity

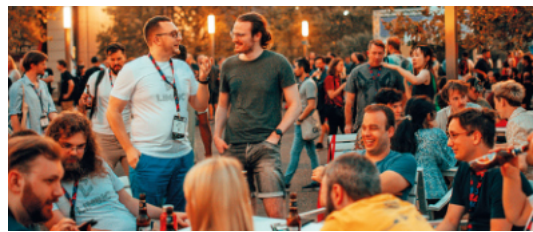
What? The leadership dinner is one of gamescom dev's most exclusive networking events. Bringing together decision-makers and senior executives from across the games industry, this intimate evening creates the ideal environment for high-level conversations and valuable new connections.

gamescom dev awards

When? Monday, 24 August 2026, 4:45 pm - 5:45 pm

Where? Confex, Keynote Stage

In four categories, the awards will honor the best titles from the gamescom dev indie expo. Additionally, they will recognise outstanding individuals and teams, selected and voted for by the speakers, who will be celebrated for their work and achievements in the gaming industry in two more award categories.



gamescom dev sunset mixer

When? Monday, 24 August 2026, 7 pm - 11 pm

Where? Confex, Outdoor Area

On Monday evening, all gamescom dev attendees are invited to unwind together at the Confex outdoor area. Join the community for an evening of music, drinks, and relaxed networking in one of the most enjoyable and informal settings of the week.

gamescom dev speaker & VIP mixer

When? Monday, 24 August 2026, 5 pm - 7 pm

Where? Confex, VIP Lounge

What? On Monday afternoon, all speakers and VIP ticket holders are invited to join the exclusive mixer in the VIP Lounge. Enjoy drinks, continue conversations from the conference, exchange ideas with fellow professionals, and expand your network in a relaxed and informal setting.



gamescom dev CTO lunch

When? Tuesday, 25 August 2026, 1 pm – 3 pm

Where? The ASH Köln MesseCity

What? Meet fellow CTOs and technical leaders for an exclusive networking lunch at The ASH, located directly across from the Confex entrance. Exchange insights on technology, production, and leadership challenges while connecting with peers from across the global games industry in a relaxed setting.



gamescom dev pitch it! mixer

When? Tuesday, 25 August 2026, 1 pm – 4 pm

Where? Confex Foyer South

What? This exclusive, invite-only side event brings together indie developers and publishers for curated networking and fast-paced pitch sessions. Selected developers will have the opportunity to present their projects directly to publishing partners before continuing conversations during open networking.

Amber beer reception

When? Tuesday, 25 August 2026, 3 pm – 5 pm

Where? Confex, Expo Floor, Booth D07

What? Meet Amber, a global game development company and network of specialized studios, over a local Kölsch at gamescom dev 2026. Join them on Tuesday for an informal reception and conversations about the production, technology and creative challenges shaping what comes next in games.

gamescom dev VIP & business mixer

When? Tuesday, 25 August 2026, 5 pm – 7 pm

Where? Confex, Business Area

What? VIP and Trade ticket holders are invited to a dedicated networking mixer on Tuesday afternoon. Enjoy complimentary drinks while meeting industry professionals, exchanging ideas, and building valuable business connections with partners from across the games ecosystem.

Courage Cologne @ gamescom dev community night

When? Tuesday, 25 August 2026, 7 pm – 8 pm VIP hour, 8 pm – 9 pm Early Bird, 9 pm – 11:30 pm General admission

Where? HERBRAND's ehrenfeld

What? Mingle and get inspired by 50+ developers, showcasing their latest projects. Stroll around with a drink in hand, and a night full of games, chats, and good vibes. There is one rule: Play a game and get a drink.



gamescom dev community night

When? Tuesday, 25 August 2026, 8 pm – 2 am

Where? HERBRAND's ehrenfeld

What? On Tuesday evening, gamescom dev 2026 concludes with the community night, leading directly into gamescom the following day. Celebrate with the attendees at HERBRAND's, one of Cologne's most unique event locations, complete with a spacious beer garden, great music, and an unforgettable atmosphere.



SAFETY ON SITE

Anti-Harassment Policy

For a [safe conference](#), all participants are expected to honour gamescom dev's [Code of Conduct](#). You can find an overview and important information on how to report unacceptable behavior [here](#).

Expected Behavior

All participants are expected to remain mindful of their speech and actions and take personal responsibility for contributing to a respectful and welcoming environment.

Amplifying marginalized voices:

Give priority to the voices and experiences of individuals who are systemically marginalized in tech and gaming spaces, with particular attention to those who are gender-marginalized and/or racialized. Create and uphold a safe, judgment-free, and confidential space for their expression.

Equitable communication: Actively listen to others and ensure that discussions are shared equitably. Avoid dominating conversations or monopolizing spaces.

Respect boundaries: Always ask for consent before touching someone and ensure you have permission before engaging in conversations on potentially sensitive or triggering topics.

Avoid assumptions: Do not make assumptions about anyone's identity, background, experiences, or pronouns. If you are unsure, ask respectfully or use gender-neutral language.

Inclusive language: Avoid using language that is discriminatory in any form. This includes but is not limited to racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, classist, ableist, ageist, or cissexist language.

Accept corrections with humility:

If someone points out that your words or actions were harmful, accept this feedback gracefully. Remember that the impact of your actions is more important than your intent and take responsibility for making improvements.

Unacceptable Behavior

We have zero tolerance for any form of harassment, violence, or exclusionary behavior. Unacceptable behavior includes, but is not limited to:

1. Oppressive Behaviors

Any conduct that demeans, marginalizes, rejects, threatens, or harms anyone based on their identity, including but not limited to: Gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or nationality, religion or belief system, age, physical appearance or body size, ability or disability status, socioeconomic background or class or political views.

2. Harassment

Harassment includes any behavior, whether verbal or physical, that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. This includes but is not limited to violent, intimidating, or physically threatening behaviors; verbal comments or slurs related to gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, ability, physical appearance, body size, or age; sexual imagery, language, or comments in public spaces

where it is inappropriate or unwelcome; deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following; harassing photography or recording; persistent and unwanted communication after being asked to stop; publicizing non-harassing private communications; sustained disruption of talks, panels, or other event activities; inappropriate physical contact; unwanted sexual attention, such as sexualized comments, jokes, or innuendos.

3. Exclusionary Actions

Exclusionary behavior includes denying participants the opportunity to contribute to the event based on their identity or background. Examples of exclusionary behavior include preventing someone from participating in discussions or activities due to their race, gender identity, or other personal attributes; engaging in favoritism that privileges certain individuals over others.

Consequences of Violation

If any participant is found to engage in unacceptable behavior, the event organizers or staff may take immediate action, including but not limited to issuing a verbal or written warning, expelling the offender from the event without a refund or reporting the incident to local law enforcement or authorities if necessary.

REPORTING A VIOLATION

If you experience or witness harassment or other unacceptable behavior, or if you have any other concerns, you are encouraged to report it:

- Directly to the Awareness Team or Conference Security on Site (At the production office or reception)
- Online via the Anonymous Contact Form (Use the QR code!)
- In threatening emergencies, you can dial 110 for police assistance.
- In medical emergencies, you can dial 112 for medical services.



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Playables: Games by People, Not Companies

Games have to be playable, but do Playables have to be games? With Mario von Rickenbach and



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