

## Missouri Career Mentor video transcript



### Rick Lucas

Game Programmer

Light Play

My name is Rick Lucas and I work for a game development company. I have been doing this for about 15 years, originally was doing this for one of the larger companies in North America and decided I wanted to do it on my own, so I started my own company.

#### Early Interest

When I was in high school there really wasn't a video game industry. I was always interested in games, played board games with my family. Once I got to college and video games were on the scene, I made the transition to video games. I always enjoyed playing them and was interested enough that I wanted to learn how they were made.

#### Joys & Challenges

Well, I enjoy my career first and foremost, and I feel lucky to be able to say that. I enjoy the ability to create game designs probably more than any other element of my career – just having the ability to use your imagination at work is wonderful. But I think anybody coming into this field shouldn't harbor any illusions – it is a difficult and challenging field. There's much competition in game development as the whole game development industry grows at a rapid rate.

In my particular case, running a business, there are a number of challenges related to that which are just as important as what I do in the area of game design and development. If you are running your own business, certainly you need to be just as committed to excelling in those areas as you do with development.

#### “The question”

One thing I would mention to folks who are interested in a career in game development is you gotta get used to hearing the question: well, what do you really do for a living? Or when are you going to get a real job? Those are probably the two questions that I get asked the most. It's funny because despite the game development industry being larger than the film and the music industries combined, I think because they are games people don't necessarily see this as a real business or a real opportunity for a career when in fact it's quite robust and growing at a tremendous rate.

#### Skills

Well, if I am looking to hire a game developer, I am looking first and foremost at their ability to communicate. Can they communicate clearly? Can they work in a team setting? Are they detail-oriented? Are they good time managers? In terms of their particular discipline, certainly if they are coming as a programmer, I am going to look very closely at their skill and mathematics and physics. If they are coming in as a designer, I may be looking at other areas. How knowledgeable are they about arts and humanities?

---

View video in video room at [www.missouriconnections.org](http://www.missouriconnections.org)

Copyright 2008. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

All rights reserved.

And that is why I suggest that students have a well-rounded approach to their coursework, because it's quite common for someone to come to game development, for example, as a programmer and then later in their career transition to a design position.

I do teach a course in game development and just get a tremendously talented group of students coming through that course. I will say the one thing I wish I saw in students - really at every level - were stronger written and verbal communication skills. Again, I don't think people necessarily relate that to game development or understand the importance of that, but not just in a classroom setting but certainly in a workplace setting. Those are skills of tremendous importance, and I would encourage students to get as much exposure and experience in those areas as possible.

### **Classes**

Well certainly the coursework that I had in English - whether it's communication arts or composition - that's going to be useful to you whether you are in game development or virtually any field. The ability to communicate well will pay benefits. In my particular area, certainly mathematics. In fact, looking back, I wish I had been even more dedicated to math. Math and physics certainly are at the root of virtually every video game ever made. But I also do recommend coursework in areas that don't, at first glance, seem related to game development. But even things like world history, certainly technology, business.... You would be surprised how some of those areas might pay off down the road.

### **Early Influence**

I think that the teachers that I tend to remember most, even to this day, were the ones that tended to push me the farthest. Farther than I thought I could go, and that is how you grow.

### **In Retrospect**

If I had known that I was going to have a career in game development, certainly there would have been some things I would have done differently in high school. First and foremost I would have stepped up my commitment to mathematics and certainly to physics as well. In fact, algebra and mathematical physics are at the heart of virtually every video game ever made. We don't really think about physics when we play a game, but everything that takes place on the screen - all the movement, any collisions, any interaction between any objects on the screen - are driven by mathematical physics.

### **Advice**

Well, certainly one bit of advice I would give to anybody who is considering a career in game development is to make sure you are fully committed. Don't confuse playing games with making games. Playing games is fun, making games can be tremendously difficult and challenging. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it.

### **Memorable Moment**

Yeah, I have had a lot of memorable moments in game development. One of the more memorable was when I was working for the large game publisher, one of the games that I developed, come to find out, somebody handed me a magazine - I can't remember if it was the New Yorker. I don't know what the magazine was. But it was an article about Steven Spielberg and right in the article it talked about how he and Robin Williams used to enjoy playing this game against each other. And it was the game I developed. So you don't necessarily think about other people playing these games, but there are people - and you never know who might be playing these games - somewhere in the world, some time.