



Getting to the Fun Part

by Brad Buchanan

This week BarrelEye made steady progress on Torch, building up our momentum for the next three weeks, which we expect to be the busiest part of our semester.

Our week began with our second guest playtest. After the EA employees we invited were unable to attend, we sought out fellow ETC students who had not tried our game yet. We arranged a focused test with a group of three players, giving us the freedom to hold an extended interview with the group afterward. Two of our testers self-identified as non-gamers and one identified as a gamer, giving us a good group dynamic that may be reminiscent of the show floor audience we are targeting. One of the most interesting results from this playtest was how each player interfaced with the game differently - it's becoming clear that our controls will require lots of iteration.

During the week we had multiple opportunities to demo the game to our client as well. In each case they confirmed that our progress is visible and they think we are headed in the right direction. However, we still feel that we are just beginning to find the fun in our

game. Feedback from all sides has suggested that players only need to feel lost for a few seconds at a time to create a satisfying contrast when they enter the light, and that we can push them toward success and more interesting interactions sooner. It's all about timing! To help us rapidly iterate on the level design and explore that timing we put together a simple map editor for the game.



In addition to adding features, our programmers did lots of planning work this week. They jumped into the details of our network architecture and pinned down their strategy for integrating the many platforms and technologies we are using. We also pulled in technologists from the OCCO to review our networking plan and give us feedback on our approach. These partners have committed to provide us with ongoing

feedback and assistance as we uncover new engineering challenges with our platform. Another bit of good news is that we've received a few more details on the smart TV hardware we will eventually deploy to, which has allowed us to review our plans for feasibility. So far we think we will be just within the capabilities of the TV, with a few "bonus" features set aside to explore if we have time.

Thursday marked the beginning of our third work sprint, and the team carefully reviewed our remaining tasks before Halves and distributed the work to make sure everything will get done. Our biggest concern by far is the unforeseen implementation challenges the new smart TV hardware will bring, so we may have a little crunch time next week to solve those problems as early as possible. Otherwise we are on schedule and having a lot of fun as we watch all the elements of Torch fall into place. There will be a lot to share in the next newsletter! Until then, have a great week!