

Door Kickers Action Squad Report

by Seren Williams

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Name: Sêren Williams

Student ID: 2501567

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Introduction

Gaining a throughout understanding of this game design and the degree of detail required to create a video game is the aim of this report. This report examines how design decisions affect player experience and engagement by analysing the game Door Kickers: Action Squad and its design using data acquired from gaming. A real-time tactical game, Door Kickers: Action Squad is a part of a larger franchise with several downloadable content additions [1]. Playable in both single-player and multiplayer modes, the game is presented as a 2D scrolling experience where the user controls members of a SWAT team. Despite deviating from standard action game norms, the game offers a compelling illustration of tactical design that prioritises strategy and accuracy. The game's genre, visual style, target audience, audio and visual impact, game structure, challenges, game flow, replay value and both positive and negative features are all covered in this report. A fuller comprehension of how successful game design ideas lead to captivating and immersive gameplay experiences is supported by analysing these elements.

Game Overview

Door Kickers fits into the 2D side-scrolling action shooter genre which has multiple character characters, as shown in figure 1. It is very heavily based on tactical shooting and relies on the players hand-eye coordination, logic and memory. The hand-eye coordination is used when the player is either playing the game using a controller or keyboard and mouse, and the player must quickly decide which part of their hand needs to be used to choose what to do in the game. The logic comes in use when the player needs to strategically puzzle what enemies they should defeat first. With this game there is a certain way you need to kill each enemy, and because there is so many different enemies in the different rooms, you must tackle each room strategically. So, with each time the player loses, they must logically decide which path to go. Whether that's left, right, up or down.

The game 'Door Kickers' is generally aimed at people aged between 25 – 44+ but the people who mainly play the game range from ages between 16 – 25, mainly being young boys. The game is age restricted on certain platforms as it is not suitable for young children to play. The game is not suitable for children to play as there is a lot of violence and tactical shooting.



Figure 1 - Door Kickers: Action Squad's 2D side-scrolling tactical gameplay

Visual Style

The visual style in Door Kickers: Action Squad [1] has a pixel-art aesthetic, and in the book "Level Up" by Scott Rogers [2], he stresses the importance of visual style. He stresses that the game design should prioritise readability and player understanding. An example of good visual readability in the game is that it is easily distinguishable between enemies and the players character and weapons are easily recognisable. This is good design as it reduces cognitive load and helps with fast tactical play. This links to another book called "Game Design and Development" by Ernest Adams and Andrew Rollings [3] where the author writes his theory that information clarity improves decision-making, ensuring that players stay engaged. Finally, the developers using bold animations and clear visual cues like weapon reload animations allow the player to see that the weapon has fully reloaded, allowing visual communication. The visual style in the game also conveys the games environmental storytelling. The author Rogers, promotes environmental storytelling to convey narrative without interrupting gameplay [2]. The variety of the buildings and interiors that are in the game visually communicate each mission's context, reinforcing immersion without relying on cutscenes, as shown in figure 2.

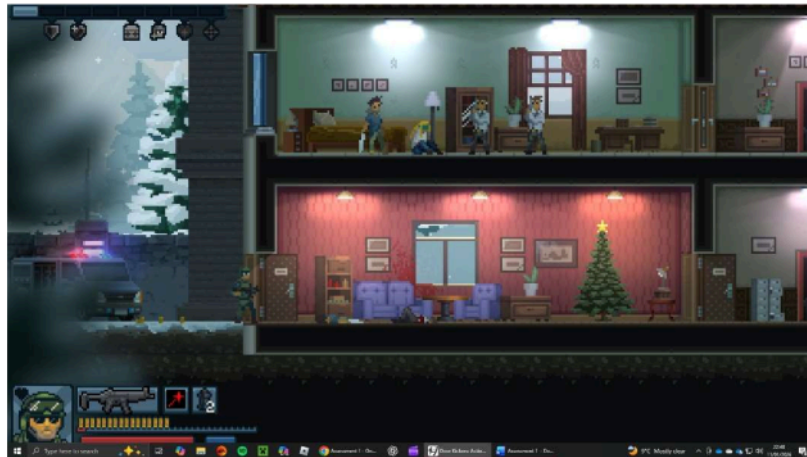


Figure 2 - Pixel-Art visual style showing clear distinction between player and enemies and interior environments

Audio Style

Audio style in Door Kickers: Action Squad has many elements to do with good game design theory. The game uses audio to determine things like enemy attack direction, reload sounds, footsteps and doors being broken or kicked. This is good game design as the sound communicates danger to the player, supports tactical decision making and reduces the reliance on HUD, which connects to Chris Crawford on Game Design, where he argues that games communicate information through systems rather than explicit instruction. [4] Another good audio game design choice is the choice of music and the music settings that happens throughout the game. The high energy music during combat enhances tension, which links to Adams and Rollings theory that pacing is essential to maintaining the players engagement [3]. There are also moments in the game where the music gets quieter, indicating that emotion is being conveyed. This is a good game design element as Rogers believes that good game design should have emotional engagement, therefore allowing the player to be emotional encounters from time to time creates tension and builds immersion [2].

Game Structure

Adams and Rollings discuss theory where game structure is essential for controlling pacing and difficulty within a player's experience [3]. Door Kickers: Action Squad applies this principle in many ways throughout the game, as shown in figure 3. For example, because each mission is short, clear and include a its own objective throughout the levels, it makes good game design by encouraging replay and mastery. The game as the use of risk and reward by players either playing aggressively or cautiously makes good game design as it creates meaningful decisions and prevents repetitive playstyles. Crawford believes that meaningful choice must have clear consequences [4] Door Kickers forces players to balance speed and safety, creating constant risk and reward decisions during each mission. Another good game design element is the players limited health and punishing damage model. This element causes tension and encourages tactical positioning and realism to the game. Adams and Rollings note that high risk systems increase tension and player focus [3]. The limited health system in Door Kickers reinforces cautious and tactical gameplay rather than reckless action.



Figure 3 - Mission-based structure with clear objectives and level progression

Challenges

Some challenges in the game Door Kickers show high lethality, this ensures that when a player has poor positioning or timing results in immediate failure, reinforcing careful and tactical play. Author Crawford states that challenge becomes meaningful when player actions have clear consequences [4]. There is an element of trial and error throughout the game. When the player has been eliminated a few times, the player learns from their mistakes. Things such as frequent deaths, quick restarts and encouragement to retry is good game design as it supports skill development, reduces frustration and encourages experimentation, as shown in figure 4. Rogers states that failure should teach rather than punish a player [2]. More good game design throughout the game is resource management under pressure. Things like limited health, ammo constraints and tactical equipment choice forces prioritisation, encourages efficient play and prevents reckless behaviour. It gets the player to think about what they need to do next. Adams and Rollings describe resource management as an effective form of challenge [3]. Limited health and equipment force players to carefully plan engagements rather than rely on brute force.



Figure 4 - Example of high-risk combat resulting in player failure due to poor positioning

Game Flow

Adams and Rollings state that effective game flow is achieved when challenge scales with player skill [3]. Door Kickers: Action Squad gradually increases difficulty through enemy variety and level complexity. Examples of these are elements like early levels introducing the mechanics gradually, difficulty increasing as a players skill improves and later levels demanding mastery of movement and positioning. This prevents boredom and frustration, supports immersion and engagement while also maintaining the players focus without disrupting the flow of each mission. Rogers argues that good game design is when quick failure and fast retries are present and is essential to maintain players engagement [2]. Elements like instant level restarts after failure, the absences of long loading screens and encouraged repeated attempts help keep players engaged, prevent frustration and supports learning through repetition. Finally, another game flow design that is really important is Door Kickers clean HUD. Throughout the game there are no intrusive pop-ups and information is presented subtly, as shown in figure 5. This is good game design as it keeps player immersed and reduces cognitive overload. Both Crawford and Rogers believe that a games UI and HUD should stay minimal to avoid clutter and to support the player during gameplay, rather than interrupting [4] [2].



Figure 5 - Clean user interface supporting uninterrupted game flow

Replay Value

Door Kickers: Action Squad is a score-based, performance and mastery game. It focuses on mission scores and ratings, rewards for efficiency and accuracy and penalisation of damage and slow play, as shown in figure 6. This is good game design as it encourages and forces self-improvement. It gives players measurable goals and promotes optimisation rather than completion only. This links to Rogers's theory that score-based systems are an effective tool for encouraging mastery and replayability [2]. Another game design element in the game is its multiple tactical approaches. For example, there are different entry points of a mission, different characters to choose from and improve, aggressive and cautious playstyles and use of equipment and positioning. This is good game design as it prevents repetition, encourages creativity and supports player agency, as shown in figure 7. Crawford's theory states that meaningful choice increases player engagement [4]. And allowing players to have choice in the way they can play allows creative freedom and supports players experimenting with different tactical choices. Finally, increasing difficulty modes and higher skill levels have good game design elements. As the game increases in difficulty, enemies get harder to defeat and stakes are higher as punishments increase. This is good game design as it appeals to experienced players, allows the lifespan of the game to go further and encourages mastery. Adams and Rollings believe that good game design means a game should be scalable to extend its replay value by improving challenges for skilled players [3].



Figure 6 - Post-mission score screen encouraging replay and performance improvement.



Figure 7 - Different tactical characters available within each mission

Positive & Negative Aspects

Some positive aspects about this game are it has consistent rules and fair challenge. Elements like predictable enemy behaviour, deaths feelings deserved and difficulty feeling skill-based is good game design as it builds trust encourages retrying and supports learning. This links to Adams and Rollings theories where they state that fair and consistent rules are essential for player mastery [3]. Another good game design element is the games meaningful player agency. Things like player decisions having a strongly affected outcome, lack of there being any “correct” way to play the game and tactics chosen by the player having an effect is good game design as it increases player ownership and encourages strategic thinking, which links to Crawford's theories where meaningful player choice is central to game design [4]. A negative game design choice in the game is its accessibility limitations. There's a lack of assist options and limited difficulty modifiers which is bad design as it excludes some players and reduces inclusivity. This negates Rogers's theory as he argues that accessibility features broaden a game's audience [2]. Finally, Adams and Rollings explain that strong design identities often come at the cost of broader appeal [3]. Door Kickers: Action Squad embraces a niche tactical focus, which strengthens its identity but limits its audience.

Conclusion

To conclude this report, Door Kickers: Action Squad's emphasis on tactical decision making, significant player agency and mastery-based gameplay showcase excellent game design. The game demonstrates how fair difficulty and consistent procedures can produce a compelling player experience by using well-known game design theories. Strong game flow is supported by the mission-based structure, high risk highting and quick restart mechanism, while score based performance and a variety of tactical methods greatly increase replay value. The game's restricted accessibility options and specialist emphasis may make it less appealing to a larger audience, but they also reinforce its identity as a tactical action game. All things considered, Door Kickers: Action Squad is a clear illustration of how deliberate and careful design choices lead to successful and captivating game design.

References

- [1] Kill House Games, "Door Kickers : Action Squad," 17 November 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://inthekillhouse.com/actionsquad/>.
- [2] S. Rogers, Level Up : A Guide to Great Video Game Design, Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2014.
- [3] E. A. & A. Rollings, Fundamentals of Game Design, Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007.
- [4] C. Crawford, on Game Design, Indianapolis, IN, USA: New Riders, 2003.

Door Kickers Action Squad Report

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

74/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

This report demonstrates a strong and confident understanding of 'Door Kickers', with particularly effective application of established game design theory to support analysis.

The discussion of tactical decision-making, risk and reward, game flow, and replay value is well developed and consistently linked to player experience, showing clear analytical intent rather than simple description.

Visual and audio design are thoughtfully examined, and the use of theory from Rogers, Adams & Rollings, and Crawford is integrated well throughout.

While the report is occasionally dense and could benefit from tighter concision and clearer signposting in places, the overall quality of critical engagement and theoretical grounding is very strong.

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