

Narrative and World Building - Frankie Snow

by Frankie Snow

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Creating Storytelling Elements for Existing Universes

Fallout Game Series – Fictional Product Creation 1500-2000 Words

Zalkon

A pre-war antiseptic eyedrop containing both Benzalkonium chloride and lidocaine, created by the Biomedical Sciences Research division of the West Tek Corporation. While created as a solution to a recruitment problem shortly before The Great War, the product ended up being marketed to the public with claims to improve eyesight in those with poor vision, and reduce pain and irritation from dust, pollen and pet allergies.

The formula was tested initially on frontline soldiers with poor eyesight to help improve their aim and willing participants in medical facilities around the world for accuracy in more everyday tasks. From these tests, the concentration of Benzalkonium chloride in the product was found to be too high, and corrosive to organic material, causing severe reactions and chemical burns.

The concentration was reduced and Zalkon was working as expected; however, it was found with regular, repeated use that the product still produced horrific side effects. Not wanting to waste the funding, NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical) decided to market the product to the general public as a cure-all for eye ailments and slapped a warning label against overuse on the box.

Poster

AI Mock-up:

<https://deepai.org/machine-learning-model/text2img> - using the prompt '1950s eyedrop advertisement allergy'



Brand Backstory

Corporate Culture:

NBC has a very hierarchical and militarised culture, considering heavy funding from the Department of Defense and many employees coming from a military background. Lower-level employees are expected to respect and follow their superiors without question, and decisions are never made by lower-ranking employees.

Ethics are a moral grey area, and human testing is not only allowed but it is also encouraged within the NCB – it is seen as the most effective and cost-efficient way to ensure true efficacy of products and to ‘work out the kinks’ before widespread use.

Employees have different dress codes based on their rank within the company – lower ranks wear similar grey uniforms (shirt and trousers) displaying a name badge and the West Tek logo, whereas higher ranking employees are able to add short white coats on top of this uniform. Eventually transitioning to longer white coats and dark grey trousers for those at the top.

Pre-War Motives:

With tensions continuing to rise, in 2074 the US Federal Government wanted to find ways to utilise every civilian, including those unable to be drafted due to medical conditions as they were planning a counter-invasion of mainland China.

NBC had already been tasked with researching into immunization agents and biochemical weapons, so they were no strangers to creating products to be used on the frontline. A low-level technician called Sunny McMillan came up with the idea of an eyedrop that can cure all vision problems, allowing for the blind and partially blind to be called forwards for service.

Real-World Examples:

War-time products being released to the general public was a more common practice than most know. Antibiotics such as Penicillin and sulfanomides, while developed pre-WWI, were used mainly during the war with release for civilian use coming after.

As well as this, feminine hygiene products were changed by war time inventions. Kimberly-Clark, a company known for their military-grade bandages, developed a more absorbent material for plugging and covering wounds, which later became used in tampons used by women worldwide.

WW2 also sprung the inventions of superglue and freeze-dried coffee, everyday products that were essentials for frontline soldiers have become everyday household items.

Pre-War Location

Location:

Zalkon was mainly manufactured in the West Tek Research Centre in the Savage Divide in Appalachia; West Tek wanted to keep all of their biological research in the same area, as this was where their 'Greenhouse Initiative' and FEV related experiments were taking place.

Evidence of the development and production of the product can be found in the lower floors of the research wing, cases of labeled vials containing various formulations of Zalkon can be found in amongst the lab equipment. As well as this, not too far from the West Tek Research Centre is NBC's Advanced Production Facility, where the majority of Zalkon was produced. This is a location that players are able to discover, nestled between the National Isolated Radio Array and the Emmett Mountain Disposal Site, just east of the West Tek Research Centre.

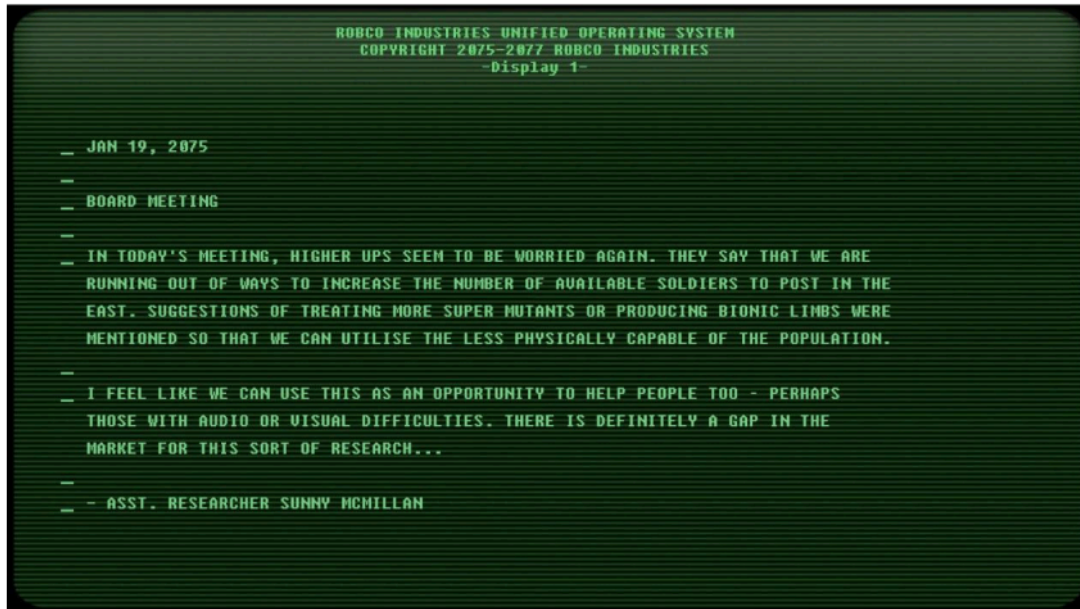
**Production Facility Location:**

As well being found in their own facilities, NBC researchers sent samples of the product to numerous medical facilities, doctors' offices and hospitals around the country. Medical staff were instructed to pitch and administer the experimental drug to willing participants, monitor, collate and send back the results. This allowed for a massive increase in the speed of which research could be done, and effectively halving the time that it took for the product to finish human trials and enter full-time production.

Environmental Interactions/Storytelling:

Within the West Tek Research Facility, the player will be able to interact with various terminals to view three different diary entries made by a researcher named Sunny McMillan, creator of Zalkon, mentioning the initial stages of development of the product.

The first speaks about McMillan's first ideas for a new product to help the war effort;



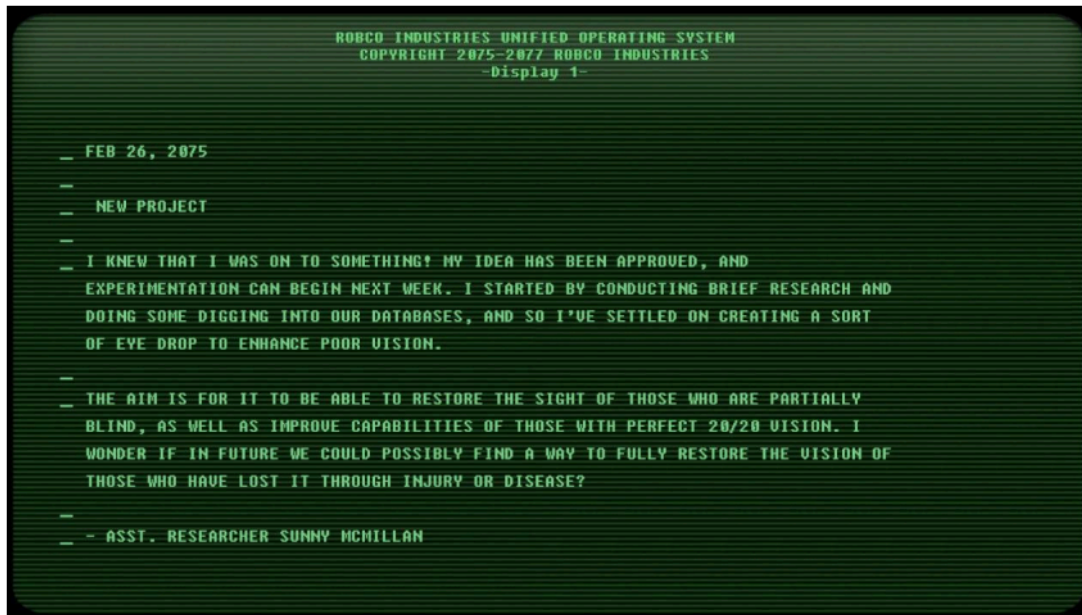
'Jan 19, 2075

Board Meeting

In today's meeting, higher ups seem to be worried again. They say that we are running out of ways to increase the number of available soldiers to post in the east. Suggestions of treating more super mutants or producing bionic limbs were mentioned so that we can utilise the less physically capable of the population.

I feel like we can use this as an opportunity to help people too – perhaps those with audio or visual difficulties. There is definitely a gap in the market for this sort of research.'

The second details the early stages of production;



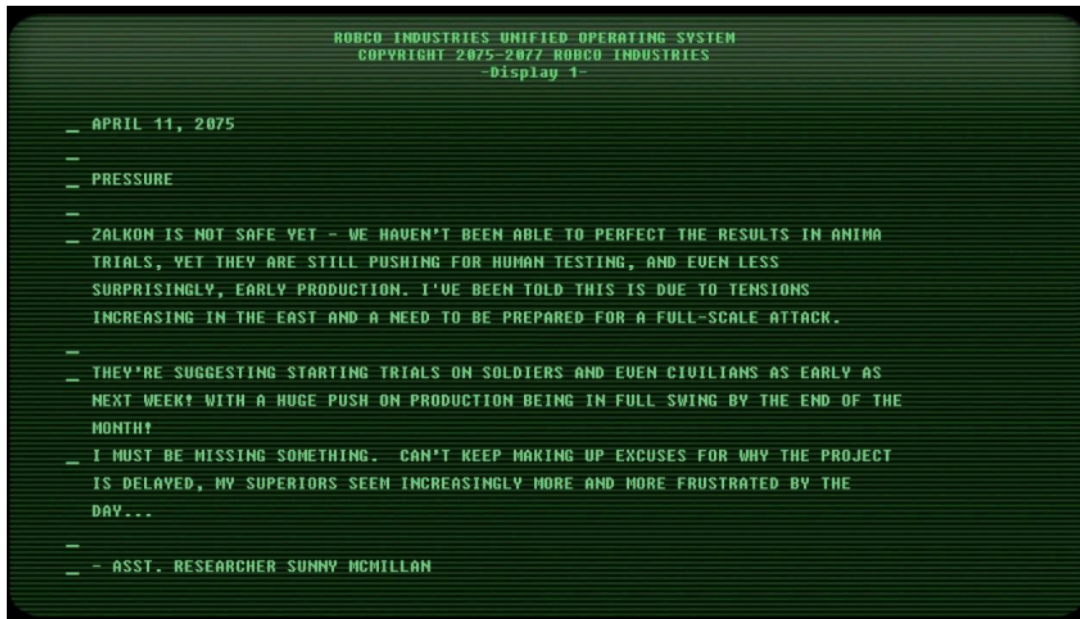
'Feb 26, 2075

New Project

I knew that I was on to something! My idea has been approved, and experimentation can begin next week. I started by conducting brief research and doing some digging into our databases, and so I've settled on creating a sort of eye drop to enhance poor vision.

The aim is for it to be able to restore the sight of those who are partially blind, as well as improve capabilities of those with perfect 20/20 vision. I wonder if in future we could possibly find a way to fully restore the vision of those who have lost it through injury or disease?'

The third becomes a bit more worrying, research has slowed, and Sunny is concerned about her product;



'April 11, 2075

Pressure

Zalkon is not safe yet - we haven't been able to perfect the results in anima trials, yet they are still pushing for human testing, and even less surprisingly, early production. I've been told this is due to tensions increasing in the east and a need to be prepared for a full-scale attack.

They're suggesting starting trials on soldiers and even civilians as early as next week! With a huge push on production being in full swing by the end of the month!

I must be missing something. Can't keep making up excuses for why the project is delayed, my superiors seem increasingly more and more frustrated by the day.'

Environmental Storytelling Elements

Environmental Cues:

The player is able to find this item in chem boxes, lockers and mirrors, empty boxes/packaging can be found on the ground around cities, in shop buildings and hospitals, and in junkyards. Advertisements will be found on billboards and bus stops in cities, and posters in hospitals and shops.

Pip-Boy Example:



Evidence of use of this product can be seen throughout the in-game world – the player will come across ghouls without eyes and deep scarring around the eye socket.

Narratives:

The player will be able to learn more about this product and gain backstory surrounding NBC by talking to Sunny McMillan, now a ghoul who can be found in Huntersville.

Unfortunately for Sunny, after the initial formulation of Zalkon was created, she became the first human test. After animal testing, she was certain that the product wasn't ready to begin human trials. After expressing this to her superior, arguments ensued as the deadline was fast approaching, she was detained and from there became the first human test subject.

Mechanics:

Use of the item will cause an increase in the percentage of VATS targeting, making the player more accurate when taking shots at enemies.

VATS Example:



Overuse of the item will cause players to become tired - activating the over-encumbered status effect and adding a red haze to the edges of the screen, this can be stopped by using the product again or by the player resting. Text at the bottom of the screen will tell the player to either rest or use a few more drops to reduce the status effect.

Status Effect Example:



If this effect is present when interacting with NPCs, a dialogue option will appear allowing the player to ask about Zalkon and describe their symptoms. The NPC will tell the player that a few more drops of Zalkon can rid them of their symptoms.

Continuing to use the item after this status effect has appeared and without resting will cause the player to start taking damage, eventually killing them if use continues.

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

75/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall a great story idea that could fit very well into the Fallout series universe. The duality of the product as both a blessing and a curse fits well with the themes and illustrates a clear understanding of the source material. Well done.

Terminal entries and Pip Boy mockup using provided templates does a lot to further the believability of your fictional product in the world, well done. The history of the product is also very grounded and considered well.

It would have been interesting to see a potential quest line illustrated that could see Zalkon being involved in a more over arching plot point (side quest) for the player, or even as a means of introducing it to the world.

 A voice comment was left for this paper.

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