

GTD_GDD_2308680

by Josh Morgan

Submission date: 10-Dec-2024 05:25AM (UTC+0000)

Submission ID: 245341633

File name: 49582_Josh_Morgan_GTD_GDD_2308680_634883_1101876466.docx (676K)

Word count: 2033

Character count: 11114

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Student Number: 2308680

Course title: BA Computer games design

Module title: Game Theory and Design

Module assignment title: Your game idea: Game Design Documentation

PROJECT IMPULSE – *by Joshua Morgan*

Audience & Marketing

- Target demographic
- Intended PEGI rating
- Competitors and similar products
- Target platforms

Design bible

- Narrative summary
- Characters
- Game experience

Game features and content

- Game structure
- Challenges and core mechanics
- Enemies and hazards
- Control systems
- Equipment and unlockables

Target demographic - Audience & Marketing

The target demographic for project impulse is young adults and older (19-35) who are interested in skill-based gameplay with a high skill ceiling, an array of customisation options for creative self-expression and an intriguing sci-fi narrative and world.

Our target demographic also needs to be interested in sci-fi space combat with movement mechanics unlike typical vehicle action games.

Intended PEGI rating - Audience & Marketing



Project impulse aims for a PEGI 16 rating. Given a 16 rating project impulse's narrative will be able to utilise bad language, and (unglorified) depictions of alcohol and drug consumption to sell harsher characters and a bleaker world.

Project impulse's main gameplay loop consisting of vehicle combat is a depiction of violence, a pegi-16 rating will allow project impulse to depict this violence without much hinderance.

Other vehicle combat games are rated PEGI 12, however project impulse will utilise the greater lenience afforded with a pegi 16 for its narrative.

Competitors & similar products - Audience & Marketing

Competitors to this project can be grouped into two categories;

Vehicle combat games

- Ace combat 7 (2019)
- Armored Core 6 (2023)

And **Space flight simulators**

- Elite dangerous (2014)
- Star citizen (2017)*

Project impulse will combine these genres into a cohesive singleplayer experience, with hands-on gameplay reminiscent to space flight simulators, and mission/level/narrative structure similar to popular vehicle combat games, along with their ease of access.

*Playable demo, actual release estimated 2026.

Target platforms - Audience & Marketing

Project Impulse will target a release on major last generation consoles (Playstation 4 and Xbox One) alongside a PC release (digitally via steam).

Targeting last generation consoles, which are backward compatible with current gen consoles (PS5 and Xbox Series X/S), provides Project impulse a wide potential userbase.

A digital release for listed platforms would be ideal with fewer logistical costs, however limited physical releases could be planned in future if project impulse sees the demand as the project becomes public later down the line.

A release on Nintendo switch will be considered once graphical demands for project impulse are better understood, however control accuracy will be compromised with the lack of analogue triggers.

Narrative summary – Design bible

A solar system run by conglomerates, companies without faces, logos with voices.

Hired guns do all the dirty work, piloting sponsored vehicles firing one brand's bullets into another's fuselage.

While there is no shortage of pilots seeking wages, they eat into the companies' bottom line.

On the brink of revolutionary bio-technologies, ships that fly themselves, the companies fight tooth and nail to be the first to dominate this new market, and eliminate the need for costly pilots.

Ironically, it's never been more profitable to be a mercenary, despite fighting for your inevitable replacement, the pay is good.

Characters – Design bible

All characters follow a stylized, anthropomorphic look

The player character

A fresh mercenary, getting the job as a favour from an old friend.

Low on funds and a fresh face, **the player is determined to prove their worth**, and eventually take the fate of this conflict into their own hands, be that for better or for worse.

The player character's appearance is customisable from a handful of species and presets, allowing the player to insert themselves creatively into the narrative and make choices based on their own judgement.

An old friend

A top pilot in a small mercenary group. She generously takes the player on-board her ship in the back seat for their first job. She's clearly familiar with the player through a shared past.

A boar in her 30s, her reputation fuels her confidence to the point of arrogance. She's been handed a position where her talent gets her far with little effort, and it's blinded her objectivity.

The player's first mission/tutorial is on a high-stakes mission in the back of her fighter she assures will be a breeze. She's showing the player how easy money comes in the mercenary business.

The mission ends with the player ejecting and her perishing with the ship after the mission goes horribly wrong. Her mission sets the mood and expectations for the oncoming narrative while also providing the player an initial safety net to start to learn the controls of the game.

Game experience – Design bible

Project impulse is a gritty sci-fi, wearing the mask of corporate futurism. Tattered brand logos decorate aging fighters, Pilot's wear worn suits and hand-me-downs from those fortunate enough for their bodies to be found.

Flickering LED screens of colourful adverts light the dirty corridors of the station. Voices echo out from loudspeakers, disembodied, muffled like an airport terminal.

Project impulse is initially meant to make the player feel as though they are a small part in a situation much larger than themselves. In completing missions and making a name for themselves, seeing the effects of the narrative choices they make, the player will seat themselves as a major player in this conflict, once an underdog, now able to manipulate the fate of the entire system.

Game structure - Game features and content

Project impulse is a mission-based vehicle combat game.

The game starts with the first mission/tutorial with the old friend. The player is in the back seat and is given an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the game controls, HUD and fire on some stationary targets.

Once the player has taken their time to familiarise themselves with the controls, they navigate the first level from the back-seat. Taking out light drones and maneuvering past asteroids. As they reach the end of the mission the player is attacked by another mercenary. Overwhelmed and wrestling the controls from the player, the old friend fails the encounter and the player is made to eject and watch on (in a scripted sequence) as the ship and their friend is lost.

The player is picked up and taken back to a company station, where the player is introduced to the second gameplay mode where they can explore the station, purchase weapons and upgrades, and interact with other mercenaries and NPCs.

From there the player is tasked with choosing their next mission alone.

From this point on the gameplay loop is solidified: mission → station → mission → station, and so on.

After each mission, the player is rewarded with currency they can spend in the station on ship weaponry, customisation and upgrades.

Narratively, the game is split into linear chapters, with a number of missions making up each chapter of the narrative. At any given time the player may be presented with a single mission to move the story forward, or several they must complete in any order to reach the next chapter. Several missions present choices where the result will change the narrative and the resulting missions available.

Challenges and core mechanics - Game features and content

For the main mission gameplay mode, where the player is piloting their vehicle, there are several mechanics at play;

- **Ship reactor load**
The player can only perform so many actions (firing weapon, activating ability) at once before they overload the ship's reactor and become vulnerable to additional damage.
- **Weapon ammunition**
Weapons carried on the player's ship have limited ammunition. The player will be required to manage their weapon use to complete missions without running dry.
- **Shield management**
The player has finite hull hit-points, which takes permanent damage (for the mission) when the ship's shield has burned through. The player needs to manage their encounters to preserve their shield and hull.

Each of these present baseline atomic challenges which the player will manage throughout the course of their playthrough. **These get mixed in with more unique and varied challenges presented within each mission**, such as;

- **Destroying targets**
- **Navigating space**
- **Chasing targets**
- **Defending targets**

Fewer challenges are present during the in-between, secondary gameplay mode station sections, as to give the player a break between missions and a lower-stress environment for them to plan toward their next mission.

Challenges still exist however, an example being the management of currency, equipment and ship statistics.

- **Ship loadout**
The player ship's hull will have limited hardpoints to attach weapons. The player will have to manage what weapons they take into each mission, some taking up multiple hardpoints due to size. Hull upgrades will allow the player to gain additional hardpoints to the detriment of other ship statistics (ex: acceleration).

Enemies and hazards - Game features and content

As the player takes on more and more missions, the variety and difficulty of enemies and hazards will increase. From stationary satellite turrets to other mercenary aces, the player will be faced with significant resistance in each mission.

Satellite turret

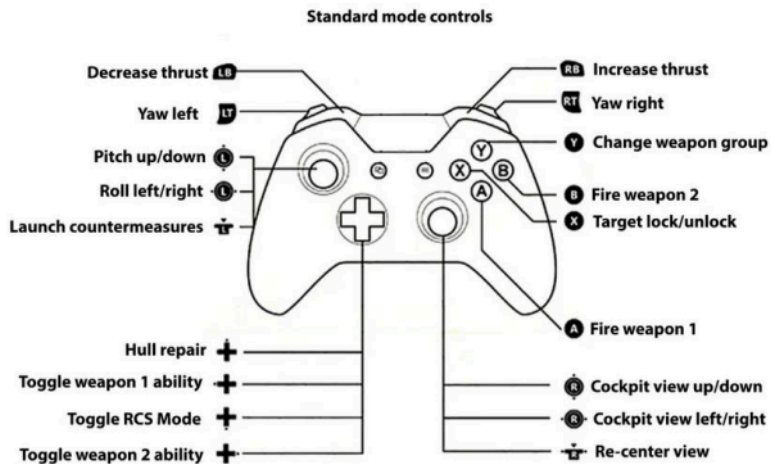
- Stationary enemy
- Fires volleys at the player once they're in line-of-sight. (slowly for the player to learn dodging)
- Appear regularly, in almost every mission as fodder enemies which can still pose a threat to an inexperienced pilot, especially in numbers.
- Enemy lacks shield, takes immediate hull damage upon being fired upon, taken out extremely quickly.

Other mercenaries

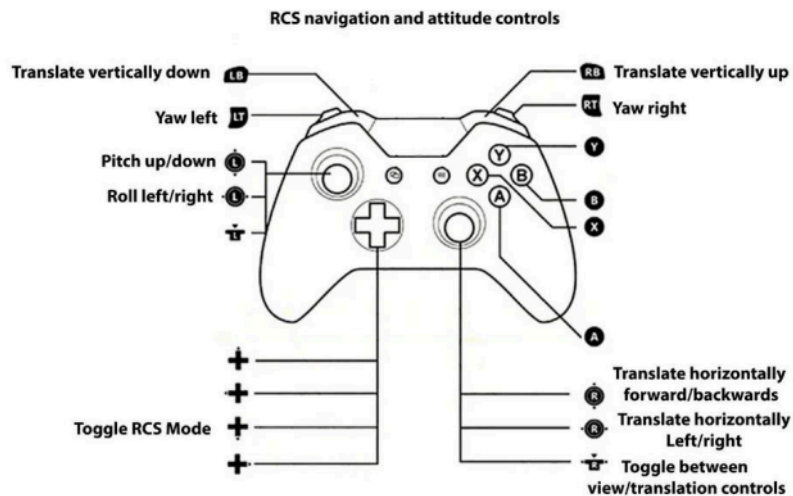
- Appears as a miniboss in several missions, more than one in later missions.
- Maneuvers around the player, makes an effort to avoid player weapon's and position themselves advantageously (behind the player)
- Weapons are similar to those the player has access too, with similar restrictions, thus each encounter with another mercenary will feel unique with their unique loadouts, but familiar as they utilise weapons and deploy tactics the player would be using.
- Mercenary ships have shields, like the player does, with varying strengths requiring the player to decide whether or not to waste ammunition burning through the enemies shield or bait the enemy into overloading their reactor to make them immediately vulnerable to attack.
- Mercenaries act differently depending on the context of their character, are they an old ace? Are they on their first job? These narrative factors will reflect on how they act in gameplay (overloading reactor more often, missing shots, etc).

Control systems - Game features and content

For project impulse's main gameplay mode, the following is the main control system, focusing on gamepad support as it provides the most varied input methods. This control scheme will feel somewhat familiar to those experienced with flight-based vehicle combat games.



'RCS Mode' Changes the movement controls to the following;



Which makes the vehicle control as though it is a spacecraft, able to translate in all 3 dimensions.

Equipment and unlockables - Game features and content

Project impulse features several items the player is able to purchase to customise their ship. While a handful of these are available in the station shops, with more becoming available as the player progresses through each chapter, some will be hidden within missions as additional completion rewards or items hidden within the mission itself.

Ship Weapons

- **Gatling cannon**

Standard equipment. High fire rate with significant ammo and low damage.

Targeted enemies provide a reticle to help aim the cannons with the nose of the ship. Activating this weapon's ability allows the cannons to automatically aim at nearby enemies independently. Continuously adds to the reactor load while ability is active.

- **Railgun**

Bought in station store. Low fire rate with low ammo and significant damage.

Targeted enemies provide a reticle to help aim the cannons with the nose of the ship. This weapon can have one of two abilities; ability 1 allows the railgun to auto-aim independently when activated, ability 2 allows the railgun to pierce shields. Ability 1 continuously adds to the reactor load while active, while ability 2 adds a static load to the reactor when activated that dissipates regularly.

Ship hull, Reactor and thruster upgrades/replacements will also be available at shops, allowing players to further customise their playstyle.

Bibliography

[1] Pan European Game Information, "What do the labels mean?" Pegi.info.
<https://pegi.info/what-do-the-labels-mean> (Accessed Dec. 10, 2024).

[2] The Incredible Art Department, "Animal_Symbolism.pdf."
whitcraftlearningsolutions.com. https://whitcraftlearningsolutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Animal_Symbolism.pdf (Accessed Dec. 10, 2024).

FINAL GRADE

57 / 100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Marks Breakdown

1. Engagement With Literature Skills (52%)

A bibliography is included with references in IEEE format, though this is a little light on sources. You can also include Andrews and Rollings here as you discuss atomic challenges, plus any competing products can be listed too.

2. Knowledge & Understanding Skills (64%)

Demographic and PEGI ratings have been addressed in the GDD with interests and gaming habits as well as an age approximation (And PEGI guidelines). This is more useful to you as a designer rather than a simple age bracket.

Competitors are listed in the GDD which is good, though more visual materials might be useful to see here – particularly of any similar gameplay elements related to your proposal pointed out.

The narrative driven tutorial feels like it will engage players and show what's at stake with missions. This should be a good introduction to the game.

Gameplay loops are considered – this is an important aspect of a game to bear in mind – good work. In addition, a challenge hierarchy is proposed, which is a good application of course content into the coursework.

3. Cognitive & Intellectual Skills

(Not assessed in this assignment)

4. Practical Application Skills (56%)

More visual content would be useful and good to see here.

Consider using AI generated content for visuals to approximate what your ideas will look or feel like. AI art isn't great generally but as a prototyping tool it can be very useful.

Control systems are labelled clearly with diagrams – this is good to see and useful for a dev team using the GDD to follow your design proposals.

5. Transferrable Skills for Life and Professional Practice

(Not assessed in this assignment)

Overall Mark: 56.8%

PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7
