

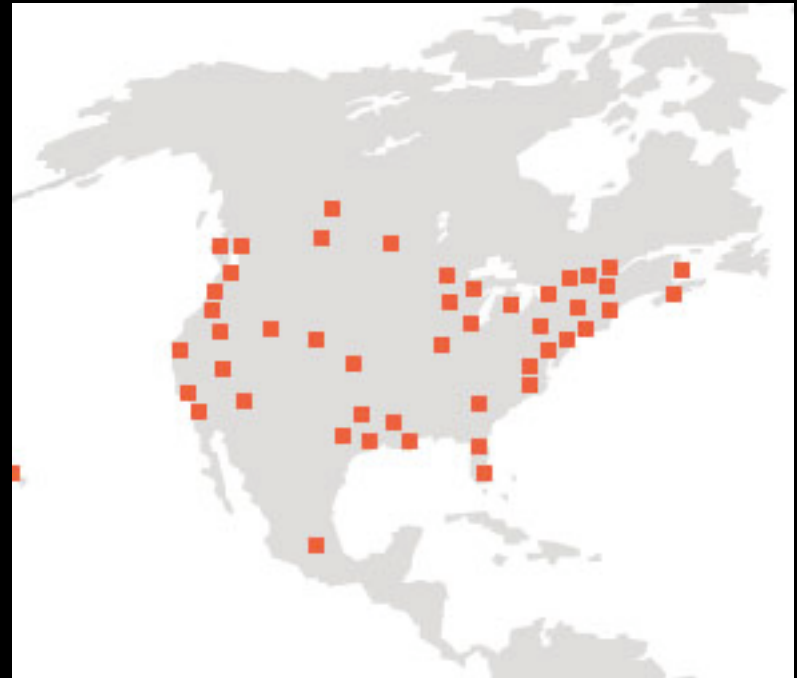


# Get Into the Game

a primer

# Austin at a Glance

- ~40 companies, 1200 employees
- COA projects 250% growth by 2010
- [www.ci.austin.tx.us/redevelopment/](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/redevelopment/)
- [www.gamedevmap.com](http://www.gamedevmap.com)
- [www.igda.org/austin/](http://www.igda.org/austin/)



# Why Austin?

- Creative culture – art + music + film a happy game make
- College town – industry needs/exploits new talent
- Tech town – can earn more in tech but have more fun in games
- Quality of life/cost of living – easy to sell to Californians
- Keep Austin Weird – gamers do our part

# Game Development Roles

- Programmer
- Artist
- Designer
- Audio
- Tester
- Producer

# Game Development Roles

- Programmer – comp-sci, math, physics
- Artist – fine art, graphic design, architecture
- Designer – all the above
- Audio – performance, composition, editing
- Tester – varies
- Producer – liberal arts, journalism, comp-sci

# Essential Skills for ALL

- Written and verbal communication
- Project-based experience
- Problem solving
- Teamwork
- Cool headedness
- Sense of humor
- An dash of masochism doesn't hurt either

# Counterbalance your strength

## Be a double-threat:

- A coder who also writes well...
- A great artist who's also tech minded...
- A designer who also codes or draws...
- A producer who codes/draws/designs.

# Just the facts

- It's entertainment.
- It's not your dad's job.
- It's a young industry.
- Ready today? See you in two years.



# Fact: It's entertainment

- If radio is show business for ugly people, games are show biz for geeky people.
- Many applications for every opening.
- Many jobs not advertised.
- It's who you know.
- Network, network, network.
- Pay your dues.

# Fact: It's not traditional

- Irregular and long hours
- Tumultuous
- No dress code – shoes recommended
- Can't major in game design (not true!)
- Paid to play games?! Get a real job!

# Fact: It's a young industry

- Didn't exist 30 years ago.
- Not taken seriously by many, particularly digital immigrants. Digital natives take it very seriously.
- Old timers have been at it for 10 years. Ancient ones for 20.
- Just starting to gain mass acceptance – market, schools, government, policy

# Fact: Two-year rule

- Plan on two years from the time you're ready till you land a job.
- Every day, no matter what, do one thing to better your chances.
- Read the industry press: Gamasutra, IGN, Nintendo Power, the list goes on.
- Separate yourself: grades, school, contest, start clubs, build projects, take leadership roles, get arrested.



# Is there a school for this?

- Yes! It might help.
- Older folks stumbled into game dev.  
Younger folks targeting it as a career.
- Don't need "game" degree. But it may help.
- Don't need a degree at all. But it WILL help.

# What are the schools?

## Non-degree

- Austin Community College – certificate
- UT – Bridging Disciplines Program concentration

## Four-year

- St. Edward's University
- USC
- UCLA
- University of Michigan
- MIT
- Georgia State
- NYU
- Northwestern

## Grad school

- St. Edward's University – Digital MBA
- SMU's Guildhall
- Carnegie Mellon

## Vocational

- Art Institutes of Pittsburgh, Seattle, Dallas, etc.
- Savannah College of Art & Design
- ITT
- Full Sail
- Digipen

[www.igda.org/breakingin/resource\\_schools.php](http://www.igda.org/breakingin/resource_schools.php)

# Networking

- It's who you know
- Leaders, decision makers and even game industry celebs are accessible. Heck, they might be right next to you.
- Informational interviews
- The Malcolm Gladwell approach
- Be persistent but not a pest
- Call, email, snail mail. Stay fresh in mind.

# Correspondence

- In email, refresh the memory of your audience and include your contact info.
- Don't forget snail mail. Your audience receives hundreds of email per week but receives little to no hand written cards and letters. Stand out. Do something different.

# Bad touching base email

to: [rgibbs@amazeent.com](mailto:rgibbs@amazeent.com)  
from: [bigbaddaddy@baddaddy.com](mailto:bigbaddaddy@baddaddy.com)  
re: job

---

hey r,  
anything new with the job? i'm ready.  
--j

[This is a real email I received, although I changed the return address. Who is J? What job is he applying for? Have we spoken before? Why shouldn't I immediately delete this?]

# Good touching base email

to: [rgibbs@amazeent.com](mailto:rgibbs@amazeent.com)  
from: [michelle@baddaddy.com](mailto:michelle@baddaddy.com)  
re: Animator opening

---

Hello Rodney,

I enjoyed speaking with you two weeks ago about Amaze and the openings you may have for an entry level animator this spring. As I mentioned, my internship on an animated TV show coupled with my certificate from ACC's game development program have prepared me for such a position. I'm a big fan of the DS and would jump at the opportunity to contribute to one of your projects.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Garson  
555-5555  
See my portfolio here: [www.michellegarson.com](http://www.michellegarson.com)

# Interviewing

- It's casual but not that casual
- Bring your resume and portfolio
- Research the company
- Play its games or at least its platform!
- Ask smart questions
- Be the person someone wants to be stuck working with at 2:00 am
- Thank you notes!

# Conferences

## Local

- SXSW ScreenBurn
- Austin Game Developers Conference
- Independent Games Conference

## National

- Game Developers Conference – San Fran
- Penny Arcade Expo – Seattle
- D.I.C.E. – Las Vegas

# Need more info?

- [www.igda.org/breakingin/](http://www.igda.org/breakingin/) – extensive site devoted to career paths, tactics for breaking in and resources.
- [rgibbs@amazeent.com](mailto:rgibbs@amazeent.com)