

How to Not Screw Up Your Dialogue Project!

Presented by

Hugh Edwards



HighScore
productions

ITINERARY

Part 1

- **What is Needed for a Successful Dialogue Project?**
- **The Devil is in the Detail - Preparing Your Scripts**
- **How to Plan to Prevent Repetition in Your Game**
- **The Importance of Directors/ Actors Info**
- **Working to Cover Localisation**

ITINERARY

Part 2

- Preparing for Cut-Scenes vs Wild Dialogue
- Subtitles and dialogue tracking
- Why Is a Voice Director Important?
- Why is a Casting Director Important?

THE TALK PURPOSE

- To Help Developers to Practically Prepare for Outsourced Dialogue Projects
- To Help Developers Run Their Own Dialogue Projects
- To Improve the Standard of Dialogue & Voice Acting in Gaming

Who is Hugh Edwards?!

Voice Director & Casting Director

- Directed and cast over 190+ projects
- Harry Potter for Kinect
- Iron Man 2, Captain America
- WarThunder, IL2 Sturmovik, Birds of Steel

Games, Films & TV Industry – UK and USA.

Who?



Game Production is Difficult with Huge Amounts of Time, Effort & Money Spent:

Get the graphics wrong... **The game will fail**

Get the gameplay wrong... **The game will fail**

Get the music wrong... **The game will fail**

Get the dialogue production wrong... **The game will fail**

Successful Dialogue



What is needed for a successful dialogue project?

- Engaging the dialogue team early on
- Good scripting & story writing
- Good characterisation
- Good casting
- Good voice direction
- Professionally recorded
- Good Performances

Successful Dialogue



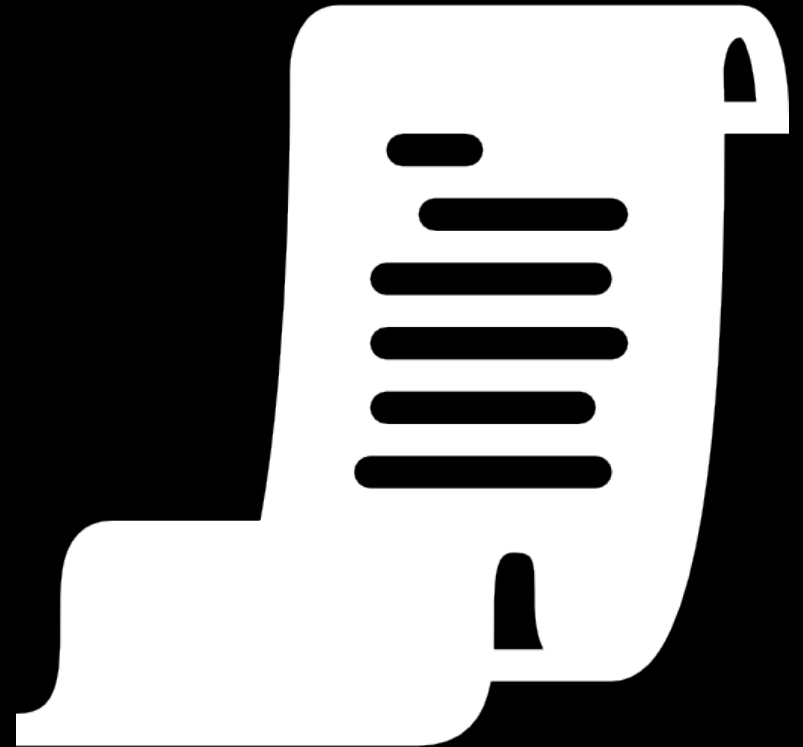
What is needed for a successful dialogue project?

- Humanisation
- Non Scripted Vocals (NSV)
- The avoidance of repetition (alt files)
- Good post-production & QA
- Good and sympathetic implementation

The Devil is in the Detail – Preparing Your Scripts:

- **The script should be delivered in spreadsheet form (even if written in screenplay format)**
- **Unique Filenames!**
- **Script/Scene-Order Column**
- **Character**
- **Directorial notes**
- **Alternative Version Marker**

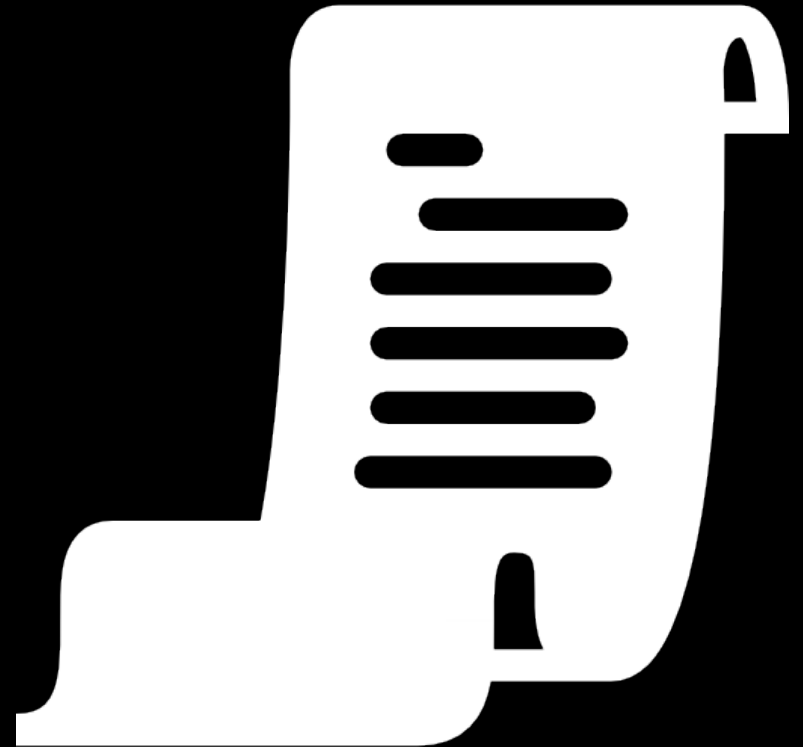
The Scripts



The Devil is in the Detail – Preparing Your Scripts:

- **Localisation Translations** (if applicable)
- **Time Constraint** (if applicable)
- **Cut-scene or Wild VO marker**
- **Wireframe/movie reference** (if applicable)
- **NSV Information** (Per Character)

The Scripts



Repetition



How to Plan to Prevent Repetition in Your Game

- Metacritic does not like dialogue repetition!
- Walk through the game & work out where your user-repetition will occur
- Write in numbers of alt files to the script
- **On implementation, ensure that repetition occurs least often at these points!**

Repetition



There are Two Types of Alt File:

1. **Alternative reads of the same copy (with VO variation)**
2. **Alternative copy which has the same intent**

#2 Must also have VO variation!

Play once implemented and listen to the beta testers.

Record pickups if necessary

The Importance of Directors/ Actors Info

- Give the actors as much information as you can
- Once the NDA is signed - trust the teams you work with: voice director & talent
- Share the overall game design document

Information



The Importance of Directors/ Actors Info

- **Prepare good character bio's. Try and include as much info as possible**
 - Graphics
 - Videos of movement
 - Give references (if applicable) of examples or known characters
 - Share the full script with the actors

Information





Ensure this information is available **well**
before dialogue recording!

Prepping for Localisation



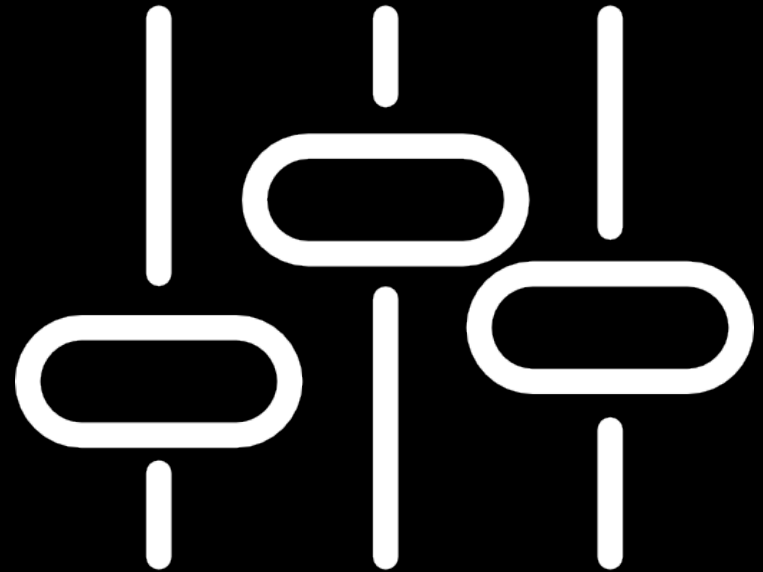
Working to Cover Localisation

- Work out your cut-scene vs wild VO
- Mark them in your script
- Work out which languages you will localise into (even if in the future)
- Inform the Voice Director
- **Do not allow the cut-scene lines to be delivered too fast in the base language**

Preparing for Cut-Scenes vs Wild Dialogue:

- Wild VO: Record single voice at a time
- Cut-Scenes: Record single Voice at a Time (**Old school!**)
- Cut-Scenes: Radio-Play Style

Wild vs. Cut-Scene





HighScore
productions

Script Recorder

Develop Game

Name	Length	Rating	Ke
00001	0:03.87		<input type="checkbox"/>
00002	0:04.63		<input type="checkbox"/>
00003	0:00.00		<input type="checkbox"/>

Inputs

Stop

Keep Take

Redo Take

Done

Recording

Shirley,

We'll never make it! Come on, quick! We have to be faster than that!

Romero

Oh come on, pipe down Shirley old girl, it's not that important!

TigerLord

But surely she's right! Grrrr!

Romero

No she's not. And she's Shirley, not me...

Changing Dialogue



Subtitles and dialogue tracking

- Changing Scripts Mid-Recording Needs Pre-Thought
- Create a Process for feeding back changes
- Amend subtitling accordingly
- **There are potential differences in translation if changes in dialogue are not tracked!**

Why Is a Voice Director Important?:

- Performance & VO Technicalities are our area of expertise

Voice Directors



Why Is a Voice Director Important?:

- **A good voice director will:**
 - Maintain a healthy, positive relationship with the voice artist
 - Properly setup the characterisation with the VO Actor
 - Ensure there is no 'character creep'
 - Ensure appropriate projection is consistent

Voice Directors



Why Is a Voice Director Important?:

- A good voice director will:
 - Manage mouth-noise (pops/clicks)
 - Direct the script line-by line
 - Realise the game director's vision through the voice
 - Listen for room/clothing noise
 - Ensure the VO has appropriate inflection & prosody

Voice Directors



Why Is a Voice Director Important?:

- A good voice director will:
 - Protect the VO Actor's voice over longer projects (shout-out's, regular breaks etc)
 - Ensure the lines will be loc' ready
 - Properly direct NSV sessions
 - Ensure that alt lines are actually alternative

Voice Directors



Why Is a Voice Director Important?:

- **A good voice director will:**
 - Understand how to fix voice issues as they occur
 - Feed into the script/subtitle change process
 - Manage the post-production & QA process
 - Assist with the implementation with directorial notes

Voice Directors



Why Is a Voice Director Important?:

- A good voice director will **NEVER**: :
 - Say “Do it like this.....”
 - Demotivate or bully the voice artist
 - Put the VO’s voice under unnecessary strain (see Sag/Aftra Strike!)

Voice Directors





The relationship between the Voice Director and the Producer/Game Director **is Symbiotic**

The relationship between the Voice Director and the actor **is Symbiotic**

Casting Directors



Why is a Casting Director Important?

- We have huge access to known talent
- Casting Directors deliver a known quantity - trustable Voice Actors
- Often casting is a long and laborious task!



Casting is arguably the most important aspect of Dialogue Production. Get the casting right and your job is half done!

The Post Production Process:

- Individual files are spliced and renamed
- Files are 'Topped & Tailed' to give a uniform start and end time (50ms top, 200ms tail)
- Files are sympathetically compressed and possibly normalised.
- Files are de-clicked/edited
- Files go through QA process

Post Production



Script Reader Pro Online

Import
Approve/Reject
View

	Id	Project	Filename	Copy
⌵	eg 12	DevelopGame	eg. rfj_016	eg. Hello

Get Data From Database

	Id	Project	Filename	Copy
⌵				
	226485	DevelopGame	00001.wav	We'll never
	226486	DevelopGame	00002.wav	Oh come c
	226487	DevelopGame	00003.wav	But surely
	226488	DevelopGame	00004.wav	No she's n

ID: Project:

Filename:

Character:

Copy:

Direction:

Notes:

Autoplay

Start Beep 4.20s / 4.20s

End Beep

Accept/Reject

- Excessive background noise
- Excessive mouth noise
- Dialogue spoken incorrectly
- Dialogue not as script
- Audio not edited correctly

Accept

Reject



**Game dialogue production is important.
Give your game's dialogue the time, focus
and energy it deserves, from the early
planning stages, not as an afterthought!!**

Q&A

**Tweet [@Hugh_Edwards](#) if you
enjoyed the talk!**