Project Proposal:

"Play the News"
Training a New Generation
of Journalists

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COMPANY OVERVIEW
ImpactGames is a world-renowned pioneer in creating compelling interactive experiences around current events. From the internationally acclaimed PeaceMaker™ game to the web platform Play the News™, we have created products that change current event consumption from passive reading to active engagement. On May 28th 2009, Play the News won the prestigious Knight Foundation Award that honors "the best of an exciting new genre: games which are journalistic and strengthen people's ability to make decisions in a democracy."

Our aim is to partner with and enable organizations to change the way people consume information and understand the world around them.

PLAY THE NEWS OVERVIEW
ImpactGames' "Play the News" platform is an engaging community driven experience: where fantasy sports meets the evening news. The web-based platform brings interactive gaming elements to the online news / media industry. This experience is made up of the "game" component (or news games) and the community of participation around them such as commenting, rankings, and many features to come. The players through their activity build snapshots of their socio-political profile on a range of issues.

A news game is a short interaction aimed at accomplishing three things:
1. Give players background and context around the headline or event being presented, and to highlight a core issue to be examined.
2. Allow players to role-play and put themselves in the shoes of the different perspectives so they can voice their personal opinion on the subject.
3. The last is to give players the chance to test themselves or show how smart they are by predicting what will happen next in the real world.
All of this is accomplished in a very simple and casual experience that is intended to be a short interaction (10-20 minutes).

The highly flexible game template and has been proven to be versatile enough for the creation of interactives on a range of subject matter as seen on the Play the News Beta website (www.playthenewsgame.com).

THE PARTNERSHIP
ImpactGames is looking for a forward thinking institution and/or educators who is/are interested in exploring the teaching of interactive journalism. This partner should be interested in challenging their students or trainees to think differently about how to craft a story and engage their audience. The partner will drive:
1. Development of the learning elements associated with the interactive creation process
2. Integration of the experience into a discussion and analyses of the broader new media trends

ImpactGames brings an existing publishing platform and a history of exploration into best practices in writing interactive news stories. ImpactGames will provide:
1. Deployment, customization, and support of the technology platform
2. Training and support in creation of content, use of the tools, and the management of community

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project is to use the ImpactGames' interactive news platform in a journalism school setting. The partner will use the Play the News platform to create a new media newsroom with their class focusing on anything from world news to local content or even campus specific stories. The course would use the Play the News platform to challenge students to create non-linear, rich contextual interactive articles and as a result - leverage that experience to drive discussion around the new possibilities surrounding interactivity and online news media.

The process by which ImpactGames was able to create approximately an interactive a day for a six month period (See Appendix 1) followed the production cycle of a traditional news room with the added challenge of addressing the interactive nature and community elements of this new type of experience. This process is highly challenging to writers that we work with, who while very talented in traditional journalism techniques, found the new format and tasks involved in creating an interactive story using our platform a new way of considering and engaging breaking news.

The creation of these interactive elements requires a blend of skills that are used to differing degrees in the writing of online news content - whether it is a front page article with related links, deeper investigative reporting, publishing an op-ed column, or crafting the "poll of the day". The added challenge of the Play the News platform is incorporating all of these into one seamless experience that can be consumed in a much shorter period of time than each of those disparate parts.

The goals of the use of the Play the News platform in a journalism school could be:

• To provide an experiential framework for teaching journalism and new media

• To give the students hands on experience in the creation of multi-media and non-linear news stories

• To form a solid basis for discussing future news media approaches

PROJECT MODES

Mode 1- The Interactive Newsroom as a Single Exercise:
ImpactGames is looking for a journalism program / teacher to integrate Play the News into course work as a single exercise. ImpactGames will train the Professor on the use of the platform, aid in the training of the students, and will provide resources about best practices for writing games on a diverse set of topics. Together ImpactGames and the partner will develop a publishing strategy for displaying the student work including student branded channels for publishing and managing their content. The teachers will have full access to the Play the News platform for overseeing and tracking student content. In this scenario the creation of a Play the News powered game would be part of a broader course and each student or group of students would engage the platform one time to create and individual game.

Mode 2- The Interactive Newsroom as the Core Activity:
ImpactGames is looking for a journalism program / teacher to integrate Play the News into course work as a core ongoing learning and training experience. ImpactGames will work with the Partner to create a branded portal for posting student generated games on a weekly basis. ImpactGames will train the Professor on the use of the platform, aid in the training of the students, and will provide resources about best practices for writing games on a diverse set of topics.

As in mode 1, the teachers will have full access to the Play the News platform for overseeing and tracking student work, but will also be trained in the community management and publishing aspect of the portal site. The teachers will integrate the maintenance of the site as an exercise in running an ongoing newsroom. The class / institutions' branded site will become an ongoing destination site for student generated work and the discussion around it.

Funding Needs
ImpactGames is looking for funds to cover training and all technology expenses of undertaking this project. This includes the following:
Training – Overhead expense of training and supporting educators in the use of the platform
Content Development – Expenses of creative and technology teams for the creation of a partner branded home page for the publishing of the student content.
Technology – Expenses of hosting and maintaining technology platform for the delivery of content, and any required customization based on partner's needs

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APPENDIX 1 - NEWSROOM 2.0: A Day in the Life

Imagine a day in the newsroom of the future, where the next generation of journalists creates interactive news stories on a daily basis. (Demo site: www.playthenewsgame.com)

9am: The Morning Pitch - begins like any other newsroom with a set of pitches for the story of the day. However, the focus isn't only on the "Who? What? Where?" - it is primarily on the "Why?" and "What Happens Next?" Each event is presented not just as a static event or isolated headline but in the context of a higher-level story arch, an underlying issue and the proposed roles to be played.

Review Discussion: Each story is subjected to questions such as, "how does the event play into the broader story arch and underlying issue?", "Will the selected roles be the next to act independent of each other?","What perspectives do the different roles bring to the issue?"

10am: Interactive Feasibility Test – Before any content writing begins the journalist outlines the specific roles and actions that would be the core of the role-playing and future story development.

Review Discussion: "Do these actions represent the very next possible events in the story", "Are these actions inclusive of all possible outcomes?", "Do the actions illuminate the different perspectives?"

11am: Context Information Draft - The journalist submits a list of background data points, stakeholders, issues or viewpoints, and an advisors list.

Review Discussion: Each of the items above is challenged on its relevance to the story and how it will inform the players about the roles and actions proposed to them. The list is also checked to verify that it creates a comprehensive view of the underlying issue from all relevant or addressable perspectives.

2pm: Context Information Lock - The journalist submits the final list with generalized text. When approved the list is passed to the designer to source necessary supporting graphics and visual materials.

6pm: Final Submission - All art resources are uploaded to the editor tool. The journalist uploads all written content. Final game is submitted for editorial review. When final edits are completed and game is checked for text clipping the game is published to community.

Day 2+: All published interactive games are tracked to assure that new developments are updated. At future morning pitches there is an update as to the status of all "Open" games.

Story Resolution: If a new development occurs in an existing game that impacts the roles and actions outlined it is then "Locked". The game is still playable but due to the new information, the prediction portion ("What Happens Next?") becomes unavailable. A "Closed" game story is then drafted and the roles and action outcomes are determined for scoring and announcing results. If the event lends itself to ongoing coverage a next "turn" is then created following the same story generation process.

APPENDIX 2 - Reviews, Publicity, and Musings:

Play The News: PlayTheNewsGame.com

Play the News embedded in live News Media Sites:
Read Write Web: http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/play_the_news_data_portability.php
Haaretz: http://tinyurl.com/r4cxg9

Winner of the Knight Foundation Game Award:
http://tinyurl.com/p8xer2

PoynterOnline:
http://www1.poynter.org/column.asp?id=47&aid=158642

Other mainstream publicity, media embeds, and individual blogs available upon request.

PeaceMaker: PeaceMakerGame.com

Edutopia Magazine:
http://www.edutopia.org/serious-games-computer-simulations

Gamasutra:
http://www.gamasutra.com/features/20070131/adams_01.shtml

Peres Center (Distributed 100k Copies in Israel and Palestinian Territories):
http://www.peres-center.org/SectionProject.asp?cc=01120212