

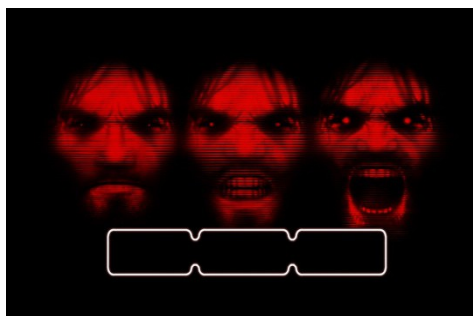
The Beta to Cert Push – Condemned 2

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Our Beta was originally due on December 3rd, 2007 but we didn't complete it until December 21st. We've been running about 3 or so weeks late since October but we'd reached that crux where making cuts to pull the schedule in by three weeks would have created more than three weeks worth of work (a true paradox) and would have definitely added more risk to the ongoing project than us just sucking it up, moving forward and getting the game done.

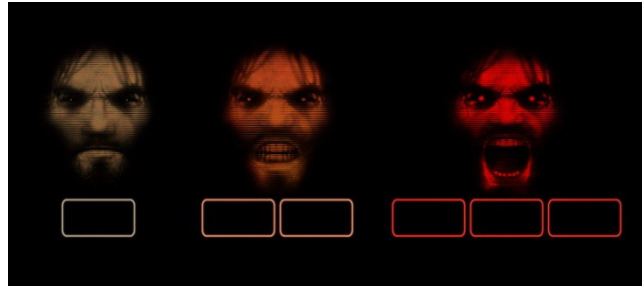
One of the areas of high risk in the development process was the user interface. Before *Condemned 2*, our UI system was our own creation. Even though it was sufficient for past products, we needed something that would allow for greater artistic expression and would be able to be updated more quickly and efficiently by artist types. We eventually settled upon the Flash-based Scaleform solution. We also expanded our UI team to include 2 Flash-based UI Engineers, 2 C++ UI Engineers and we had our Art Director cranking out assets for the UI as quickly as possible.

An area of concern was getting enough of the core gameplay locked down so we could focus on the UI support. One of the new features of the game is the Attack Chains. When we first worked on the UI, we wanted to get Ethan's rage across so we tied the meter into a face graphic of Ethan. Once you hit a new Attack Chain level, you'd see the second face and have a 2-part meter. Once you hit the third and final level, you'd see the face on the far right and you'd have a 3-part chain attack meter (see image 001) It was a bit large and sucked up some screen real estate – but was quickly ignored by the player as they were more focused on the action on screen.



(image 001)

We then tried to find a way to pop the face further through a colour variation (see image 002). We had hoped the player would see their progress made by noting the updated coloured graphic. Again – the player didn't seem to care.



(image 002)

At this point, we decided to make some fundamental changes. We moved the icon out of the player's way to the upper-right corner. We also wanted to use Ethan's iconic chest target icon as the basic design element (see image 003). We found a much stronger success with this image. The rings would pulsate to let you know that a meter section was full and we'd add more rings based upon your Attack Chain level status. We also 'dirtied' it up more. We also included this grunge pass to all the UI elements.



(image 003)

Another HUD element that proceeded through a similar iteration pass was our Weapon Stats box. This is a carry-over from our Condemned 1 days. Going inline with our first style, we tried a clean but loose interlacing approach. It not only felt too clean but the 1 to 3 pluses or minuses per stat had the playtesters counting them. We needed a new method of showing the amount of disparity between weapons.



So this time we tried using a size and colour value change. This worked well in usability. But the style still wasn't sitting that well with us overall – and we really liked the 'dirtied-up' approach...



So we brought not only the 'dirt' but we also brought the blood splat mess that we've incorporated elsewhere.



So here is a quick mock-up of the original UI. It looks pretty strong, visually clear – adequate... But then it does feel too clean, too techno – and also too large.



Here is the final UI style. As you can see we repositioned and resized nearly every element. The player's health went to the upper left corner. The weapon and stun gun status icons were reduced dramatically in size – plus we bloodied them up. The attack chain icon was reduced in size but is more realistically visible now. Also you see representations of nearly every icon that can show up – breakable weapons, liquor timer, spectrometer alert, and a holstered weapon status icon. There is also a radio communication icon that pops up when someone is speaking with you.



Overall, we're very satisfied with our final HUD. It actually took 4 to 5 iterations to get to where we are today – and this was over the course of 5 to 6 months. With a completely new UI system, new resources and a new approach, there were some major challenges to face – but we pulled it off. We hope that you find the HUD and menu system in the game to be a strong improvement in *Condemned 2* as we feel it is.