Independent developer uses Adobe® gaming technologies to deliver exhilarating multiplayer experience for web, mobile, and board games

Nostalgia runs deep in the world of online games, for a time when players crafted characters, rolled dice, picked cards, and moved tokens along a board. D20Studios understands this paradigm well, as is evident in its initial offering, Hero Mages, a socially driven multiplayer, multi-environment game that uses robust Adobe gaming technologies to deliver classically styled, virtual experiences to today’s mobile and desktop screens.

Hero Mages is the achievement of Ross Przybylski, an independent developer whose day job is building eLearning content. As a longtime fan of board games, Przybylski yearned to create a digital game that had all the classical elements of the tabletop games he used to play for hours with friends. He envisioned a digital game that would provide bursts of highly compelling, visually engaging experiences geared for today’s multitasking gamer, seeking the widest possible audience on the web as well as across all mobile devices.

What started as a hobby is now D20Studios, Przybylski’s company. Hero Mages, the firm’s flagship product, is a free online game where players command a band of mighty heroes fighting to determine the fate of Papillion, as a mysterious prophecy strikes fear into the hearts of others. Virtually equipped with traditional board game elements—a set of dice and a hand of cards that represent magical spells—players must leverage skill, luck, and social politics to emerge victorious as the hero of magic in this exciting battle of turn-based strategy that can be played from any Adobe Flash enabled web browser and across mobile platforms.
D20Studios turned to Adobe gaming technologies to create online and offline, multiplayer, and single-player browser-based versions of *Hero Mages*. Adobe AIR was used to bring the game from the web to mobile for its flexibility to port to any mobile environment while delivering a consistent, compelling experience.

**From vision to worldwide recognition**

Przybyski turned to Adobe Flash Professional to create online and offline, multiplayer and single-player browser-based versions of *Hero Mages*, where players take turns commanding a fantasy battlefield. "I had some programming experience, but had never attempted anything as complex as creating a game engine for use in a multiplayer environment or on mobile platforms," he says. "It was all new to me. Adobe Flash technologies enabled me to make my dream become reality and create a revenue stream at the same time."

Przybyski ported the web version of *Hero Mages* across tablet and mobile platforms, including iOS, Android, and Barnes & Noble NOOK. "I am a huge fan of Adobe Flash Professional because it serves as an ActionScript code development tool as well as a highly visual development environment," says Przybyski.

Przybyski selected Adobe AIR to bring his Flash game from the web to mobile for its flexibility to port to any mobile environment while delivering a reliable, consistent, equally compelling experience everywhere.

"Adobe Flash technologies give developers the power to rapidly create prototypes, import artwork, and build characters in timelines," says Przybyski. With Adobe Flash Professional, he could edit within existing project timelines, having code at his fingertips to test and tweak the layout.

The ease of prototyping and iterating helped Przybyski organize and build components for *Hero Mages* by creating miniature runtime components using the Adobe Flash IDE. As he inserted and tweaked icons and artwork within the user interface, miniature components adapted to the changes in layout, scaling perfectly to accommodate the physical dimensions and pixel density required for phones and tablets.

Adobe gaming technologies also eliminated the need for Przybyski to learn new programming languages to bring the game from the web environment to iOS and Android. "I had already written the game once, and did not want to write it again. Adobe Flash technologies integrate the artist and the developer in me, while other toolsets are less intuitive and keep both sides separate. I like being able to exercise my brain on both fronts."

Przybyski knows that games improve with as much user feedback as possible and so relies on the D20Studios website to connect with *Hero Mages*’ nearly 10,000 registered users. To optimize his online presence, he used Adobe Dreamweaver software for web templates and in-depth searching capabilities, noting that Dreamweaver was extremely useful in finding variables across multiple files that helped keep the underlying code clean and concise. Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator software enabled Przybyski to make *Hero Mages* visually stunning, filled with detailed and engaging illustrations and images—while working in a smoothly integrated Adobe environment.
“I am a huge fan of Adobe Flash Professional because it serves as an ActionScript code development tool as well as a highly visual development environment.”

Ross Przybylski
Founder, D20Studios

Breaking ground online and off
When Hero Mages launched in the Apple iTunes App Store, download numbers exploded. Apple soon designated Hero Mages as “New and Noteworthy” in its App Store. Three months after launch, more than 10,000 players downloaded Hero Mages on a variety of mobile devices. The game is available through Apple iTunes, Google Play, the Amazon Appstore, and Barnes and Noble (for use on NOOK).

As Hero Mages is a community-based game, Przybylski relies on social media to promote it. He uses Facebook and Twitter to generate interest and respond to queries, and participates actively in game forums. On the first day Hero Mages launched on iPad, the response was overwhelming, and people were very excited to learn that just one person is behind the game, not a corporate game publisher.

The industry is equally enthusiastic about a game built entirely with Adobe Flash technologies that can run on any screen, large and small. A community of independent game developers and players called indiePub awarded Hero Mages as a finalist for “Best Mobile Game” in its 2012 Independent Propeller Awards, along with citations for Best Game Design and Technical Excellence in 2010.

Hero Mages is now being transformed from a virtual offering into a physical board game by Game Salute, a major tabletop game publisher that has recently welcomed D20Studios to its family of designer studios. “I believe this is the first Adobe Flash game to become an actual board game,” says Przybylski.

Przybylski also reports that users are clamoring for an asynchronous multiplayer version of Hero Mages, which will be the next big update to the game. He intends to add in-app purchases to mobile versions for additional playable characters and single-player adventure options. Also in the works are blueprints for adding new characters, offering more single-player adventure options, and allowing friends to participate in exciting group interplay—all based on Adobe gaming technologies.

For more information
www.adobe.com/go/gaming