

Enduring Play Season 2 Episode 10_ Desirée Rincón

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SPEAKERS

Speaker 1, Desirée Rincón, Enduring Play Computer, Cheryl Platz

- E** Enduring Play Computer 00:00
Initializing Enduring Play podcast season two engine. Decompressing audio. Synchronizing waveforms. Reticulating splines. Launching podcast lobby.
- C** Cheryl Platz 00:13
Welcome back to Enduring Play, the podcast where we explore what it takes to create video games that don't just survive but thrive.
- E** Enduring Play Computer 00:22
Loading episode preview.
- D** Desirée Rincón 00:24
And then I had to fly out to Tennessee to personally witness them all getting thrown into a wood chipper, basically like an industrial size destroyer, because I had to sign off that they were all that they were all destroyed, that there was not a surviving copy out there and that, yeah, yeah, that was and I died a little inside that day. So, so yeah, that's consequences of somebody like missing a memo somewhere along the line,

C

Cheryl Platz 00:52

I'm your host. Cheryl Platz, video game designer, director and author of *The Game Development Strategy Guide* from Rosenfeld Media. *Enduring Play Season Two* is about scaling our game development ideas beyond the individual. A common thread through most of our conversations is the collective: through communities of game developers, through game education, through games research, and through the events and systems that support the releases and people making our games. Few games are released in a vacuum, so how do we scale together?

C

Cheryl Platz 01:23

Desirée Rincón is a community leader focused on expanding access opportunity and impact within the games industry. She serves as head of gaming partnerships and outreach for Gold Star Gamers, a nonprofit that provides gaming PCs, mentorship and a supportive community for children who have lost a military parent. She is also the head of creative and social media administrator for Always Supporting the Games Community, asgc.gg, where she helps shape content resources and visibility for a rapidly growing network, supporting people pursuing careers in games. With over 15 years of leadership experience from US Army operations to management roles at Xbox, she brings a direct practical experience on how games are made, who gets access, how to collaborate together, and where the industry can still do better.

C

Cheryl Platz 02:09

Desirée's work centers on turning games into something more than entertainment, a pathway to connection careers and tangible support for those who need it most. She's a committed community builder. She mentors emerging talent. Supports veterans and their families and champions greater access across the industry, usually with her service dog, Sydney at her side. Today's episode is going to hit you emotionally in ways you didn't expect, whether it's stories about an amazing dog, or whether it kids who have lost their families using games for emotional comfort, this episode speaks deeply to the motivators of play and what gaming can do to lift up our lives. And at the center Desirée is lifting up the values of community that have run through this entire season, whether you're looking to understand the true power of accessible gaming, whether you're looking to understand how the newest generation of gamers is playing games, or whether you are somebody who's experienced a layoff and is looking for community, this episode is for you. Let's get into the game.

E

Enduring Play Computer 03:09

Player One. Cheryl Platz, pronouns, she, her. Player two. Desiree Rincon, pronouns, she her. Podcast level start.

C

Cheryl Platz 03:23

Welcome back to enduring play, the Podcast where we explore what it takes to make games that don't just survive but thrive. And I am thrilled that I am here with Desirée Rincón , who is the head of gaming partnerships for Gold Star Gamers, head of creative and social media administrator for Amir Satvat's Game Community... and the universe did not want us recording this. This is take two. There was a whole fire alarm the first time. And I call that a compliment. Thank you for coming back.

D

Desirée Rincón 03:54

Of course, of course. Hey, life happens and and we just have to roll with the punches too.

C

Cheryl Platz 04:00

We do. Well, I'm thrilled that you're making the time today. Your background is so varied and yet and so unique. And I think that this is going to be a really important conversation help a lot of people feel seen in a variety of ways. And it fits so well with the themes of this season, with community and, you know, with resilience and representation, all those kinds of things. So we usually start by having folks describe their background in their own words, like they would if they would be introducing themselves at a conference. And I know you're heading to your next event, you have a very packed travel schedule. So what's your elevator pitch for your next event if you meet somebody new?

D

Desirée Rincón 04:36

Oh, goodness, way to put me in the spotlight. Well, first and foremost, my name is Desirée. I come from the operations side of the industry. I was a third party Operations Program Manager at Xbox. I worked on all the backend items, things like publisher licensing agreements and vendor management for physical disk manufacturing, the anti-piracy program, royalty billing, game revenue share - things... It was pretty varied. I had; I wore many hats.

D

Desirée Rincón 05:04

These days I am involved in a few different spaces. I help run community efforts with alongside Amir Satvat in the Always Supporting Games Community. I lead gaming partnerships and outreach for Gold Star Gamers, which is a nonprofit that uses gaming to support kids dealing with loss and trauma. And I am the founder of a multimedia studio, Digital Dame. I do freelance graphic art. I'm currently working on a collaboration with Gold Star gamers alongside clinical psychologists on a game concept that we're focusing on mental health on. And, you know, at the end of the day, I am just a helper. I like connecting with people. I like connecting people as well. I like to hear different perspectives from all these different folks that care about and are just as passionate as about this industry, as much as I am, and I'm all about figuring out how to turn these conversations into collaborations and pushing pushing ourselves ever forward.

C

Cheryl Platz 06:07

Thank you so much for that exploration and helpers are never just helpers, especially in the games industry, where everything is so complicated and so interdisciplinary. I'm grateful for people who are so community minded like you.

E

Enduring Play Computer 06:22

Loading podcast, level one, field tested flexibility.

C

Cheryl Platz 06:27

Let's start with your background as a veteran, and how that helps sort of shape your engagement in the community. Because I think that was something we talked about to take one that I think was a really compelling story and helped kind of explain some of the choices you made and some of like the unique skills that you bring to the table.

D

Desirée Rincón 06:51

The one thing that I can say... I spent 12 years in the US Army that included three combat tours. One was to Afghanistan for 15 months, and the other two were year long tours to Iraq, and during all that time that there were like two things that have stayed with me throughout my entire military career. And that is resilience, because you there is no there is no room for failure. There is no room for mistakes. You have to operate because you're talking about in certain instances, life and death situations, and you have to ensure that that you can pick up, pick up that ball, you can carry it the whole way, and you can pass it forward to the next person without dropping it, because so many, so many other people depend on that ball staying up. So resilience is definitely important. And adaptability, like we used to always say, our running motto in my unit was "Semper Gumby", which was "always flexible". We we had to, we had to remain very flexible because, because things could change at any moment and all of a sudden, there was a lot of, there would be a lot of ambiguity that would just get dropped in your lap, and you'd have, like, "you gotta accomplish a certain mission," you know, and you- "this is the deadline, and this is what you've got to work with." And you're handed like, a Styrofoam cup and a paperclip and a rubber band and, and, and you have to MacGyver, you know, a jet engine out of it somehow and but you you work with what you have, and that's what you do. So you have to, and you have to be super flexible about it, because things will change every freaking minute, and you have to end up, you know, having to drop everything to, like, pick up this other task that you have that has to be done, because that's way more important. Or, you know, you just have to keep your head on a swivel. In many ways, that mindset is so relevant to video games.

C

Cheryl Platz 08:48

And I don't know if people who are outside video games understand that. Maybe if you just come out, you're like, I don't understand how a background in the military would prepare you for a big background in video games. Like when I was working on the Sims early in my career, we'd be MacGyvering like, "well, we don't have any more room on this cartridge. This is the animation we have. How are we going to get the most out of this animation that like to tell this story? Like repair low that's what we're going to do. We're going to use it in 18 different ways." Or "we have, like, an hour left before we're finally and we can't change the code terribly much. These are the sound effects we have. So what are we going to do about it?" And the other thing that was really compelling about, well, there's lots compelling about what you were saying, but the mindset of, like, you know, you just, there's, there's no room for dropping the ball, because it is life or death. You keep things going until there's a handoff, or until you get to the end of the path. And that's where I've seen teams fall down that don't have that mindset, right? Like, they're just kind of, like, "I'm done my task. I'll leave it over in there, in the corner, and someone will get it eventually." That's not how games get made. That's how games get delayed and delayed and delayed.

D

Desirée Rincón 09:49

I can't tell you how many instances of the whole team not all being on the same sheet of music because somebody dropped the ball and didn't pass off the memo. That's led to absolute chaos that I somehow have to eventually, like, pick up, and, you know, at least to dumpster fires, that you have to go grab the fire extinguisher for for sure,

C

Cheryl Platz 10:11

It's such a gift that you're like, "I'm a helper. I want to help people with the dumpster failure that they made by just leaving that work in a corner until it's smoldered into a giant explosion."

E

Enduring Play Computer 10:21

Tutorial level: platforms, publishers, and gold master builds.

C

Cheryl Platz 10:28

Desiree's role at Xbox bridged the gap between the publishing and platform worlds. As a program manager for Xbox third party operations, she worked with external developers to help them through Microsoft's processes, but because she was on an internal team for one of the major platform companies (in this case, Microsoft's Xbox) part of her job was also navigating the minutia of getting these console games to market after they've gone "gold master", which is when a build is finalized for manufacturing or distribution purposes. Once a developer hands off their build to a platform a whirlwind of secondary activity occurs, from additional certification checks to a lengthy provisioning, manufacturing and distribution process, particularly for consoles that have physical media, like blu ray discs or cartridges. When traditional physical media is involved, any mistake in the gold master can be incredibly costly, either requiring a recall or a large and painful Day Zero patch, which will usually cause fan unrest. Nobody wants to buy a game and then sit there and download it again. Note that I said traditional physical media, not all physical media these days works as it used to. We'll talk more about that later.

E

Enduring Play Computer 11:38

Loading podcast level 2: 50,000 lost copies.

C Cheryl Platz 11:43

Let's, let's dig into that a little bit more, because I think it's an important point for listeners. But maybe, maybe we haven't sent it all the way home yet. Are there any examples from your time in games like, where that that dumpster fire, just like, just jumps out at you?

D Desirée Rincón 11:58

Yes, absolutely. Well, all right, all right, let me, let's okay.

C Cheryl Platz 12:06

You don't have to name names. We can, we can, like, change, company, change... Nobody has to know what company!

D

Desirée Rincón 12:12

People remain, companies that shall not be named, companies that shall not be named, yeah, yeah. So there was, we put out, we we we ended up shipping a title from a very well known organization. It's a very well known game, and we ended up making 50,000 physical disc copies of this game. They sent us the master files. We got them. We got them all QAed, everything was good. Everything was great. We went ahead and I signed off on getting them manufactured and getting them pressed. And so all these discs ended up getting produced and getting put out and shipped to like their location, their respective locations to be distributed, to be put on shelves, so that they would be there by literal ship date. We- we get a phone call from the organization, and they go, "You have to pull all those and you got to bring them all back." And I was like, "why?!" It turned out somebody at their organization dropped the ball and decided that they were not they they accidentally put a piece of unlicensed music on the game. And my first thought was, well, I called an emergency meeting because we're looking at something along the lines of, like, \$1.2 million worth of product that I really did not feel like pulling back, especially after it had already been shipped out and the whole nine yards. I was like, "No, there's got to be something better that we can do." So I called an emergency meeting of all stakeholders, basically, kind of sat down with like, the legal team, and said, "Listen, is there any possible way that maybe we can, like, put a day one update that gets triggered that's mandatory. That's a requirement that, like, once you put the game into the console, somehow, that it'll trigger this," and we can then, like, I don't know, overwrite the you know, is there any way we can do something about this that doesn't require us to have to pull all the discs back and we we went through and tried to reason with legal. But at the end of the day, legal was not having it, and legal basically said, "No, this is a really, really bad violation of our terms, and we really cannot have these games floating around out there that have we're going to get our pants sued off of us." So I had to make the executive decision that we had to recall all those games, and then I had to fly out to Tennessee to personally witness them all getting thrown into a wood chipper, basically like an industrial size destroyer, because I had to sign off that they were all that they were all destroyed, that there was not a surviving copy out there and that, yeah, yeah, that was and I died a little inside that day. So, so, yeah, that's consequences of somebody, like missing a memo somewhere along the line.

C

Cheryl Platz 15:11

Thank you for sharing that. I'm sorry to open up the trauma again. But I mean, you know, I talk about Opti-pessimism, like the worst consequences of success, or, like, successfully, like, launching a title all the way to the end line, but like: the placeholder music might get out there. What are your processes for catching that? That's, Ah, man, that... And, you know, and I believe every single word of it, and I've seen games get close to recalled, like, there's a variety of reasons. And there were some public recalls, like the Hot Coffee thing that happened. But yeah, copyrighted stuff that's that's just, if this, that's the public service announcement here today, don't put other people's copyrighted stuff in your game without the right, without the right legal protections, it's very expensive. But the bigger memo is, hey,

D Desirée Rincón 15:59
Games are hard.

C Cheryl Platz 16:00
Just, you know,

D Desirée Rincón 16:01
games are hard, and

C Cheryl Platz 16:02
games are hard.

D Desirée Rincón 16:04
And mind you, like we had a few instances where we had games that the devs were trying to to enable, like cross platform play and trying to get it to work with Xbox and all the others. And it wasn't all working all fine and dandy. And that led to a few botches that we were trying to, kind of like, put band aids on behind the scenes and whatnot. So I always made it a point to stay on top of devs and be like, "is there anything you need? Is there anything that we can help you with? Is there anybody I can connect you with to get you any resources that we have in order to make it easier for you to get your game on our platform?" Yeah, it led to a few of those, like emergency meetings, where we had to try to, like finagle stuff behind the scenes, but at the end of the day, you know what? That's why Xbox paid me.

E Enduring Play Computer 17:01
Loading narrative cutscene, a history of video game recalls.

C

Cheryl Platz 17:07

Game recalls, where physical copies or digital binaries are pulled from release, triggering player and retailer refunds are hugely expensive blunders. 100,000 copies of Tiger Woods 99 PGA Tour were recalled when it was discovered that a South Park short was placed into buffer data on the disc. One of the most notorious recalls was Grand Theft Auto San Andreas in 2005 - also known as the Hot Coffee exploit. A player used programming tools to inspect the game's binaries and uncovered an unpublished mini game of an explicit nature that was functional and could be enabled just by changing a feature flag in code. The functional nature of the exploit led to the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, or ESRB, retroactively rating the game from M for Mature to AO for adults only. Most retail stores won't carry AO titles, and as a result, Walmart, Target, and Best Buy all immediately pulled the game from shelves. Developer Rockstar spent 10s of millions of dollars recalling, replacing and repatching the game. Even more significantly, the scandal triggered a Federal Trade Commission investigation and eventual settlement. Of course, nowadays, developers and publishers can be fined up to \$1 million for undisclosed content that ships to players that measurably changes the rating, Yes, even hidden content, if it can be easily re-enabled. And a small subset of determined players uses tools to deconstruct game binaries on a regular basis. Life finds a way, and it will find a way to the parts of your game you don't want them to find. Secret content, date locked content? These examples demonstrate how roles like Desirée's at Xbox can be so high stakes. Even when you think you're getting everything right at the platform end, a publisher or developer might unintentionally sneak something through that could trigger a massive scandal and break trust with your brand. That's why it's so expensive and time consuming to get console titles certified. Once you cross the manufacturing and distribution threshold, the consequences are massive.

E

Enduring Play Computer 18:52

Loading podcast level three, the evolution of physical gaming media.

C

Cheryl Platz 19:00

And what I love about that is it resonates so deeply with me that you're just leading with curiosity all the time. Like you mentioned, like, "Oh, I'm calling people, I'm asking them what we could do." And you did it in your example earlier, where you were like, "hey, could we, like, I don't know, patch the game?" And the way you described it made it sound like patches weren't super common at the time. I don't know what game it was, but like, it was, but like, it made it sound like it was kind of groundbreaking to patch the game. And so it was like - that's bold, if it's not, if patching isn't common to be like, "Could we just change the game?" And I love that. I love that spirit of, "okay, what? What are the possibilities here?" We're, in the end, we're trying to solve problems.

D

Desirée Rincón 19:38

Well, for physical disk manufacturing, yeah, for physical disk manufacturing was a little different, because here's here's the thing that not many people know, half of the discs that are now being produced are empty. They're empty disks. All they have, all they have is your product key, and that triggers a download. But yeah, the overwhelming majority of your discs are just empty.

C

Cheryl Platz 20:04

Oh, my God. Oh boy, we are gonna get some messages about that one. But, I mean, I believe it, because there's, you know, you see that, and not just like disc based media, but a lot of physical media has shifted to that model, and you hear that story, and you can see how a trail of publishers and platforms might have got to the point where they're like, "It's just not worth it! I don't want to burn, I don't want to burn bits on there. They're just going to change the second we release!"

D

Desirée Rincón 20:28

That's very accurate, And that's why!

C

Cheryl Platz 20:32

Okay, I hear you, but then, but then, why disc? Why disc? Why box and disc and waste and things, right?

D

Desirée Rincón 20:39

Well I feel like there's still an a market for discs. There's people that like the concept of physically having something to put on their bookshelves, physical cover art. I remember, I won't lie, I like the idea of going to a retail store like Gamestop and buying a game and buying merch and touching grass and talking to like, managers, and then coming home and being able to put a game - and if I bought, like, the deluxe edition, or the steel book or something like that - like having setting up a display for it somewhere in my home. And, yeah, so, so I can see some of the desire to have that, especially for people that, like, collect cover art, and I'm guilty. I'm one of those people. I still buy tons and tons of physical discs for for cover art purposes.

C Cheryl Platz 21:28
You answered my question, why? Because cover art? Well, I'm glad we're keeping artists in business.

D Desirée Rincón 21:33
Well, I also take my games to to events and get them signed by the people that worked at them, too.

D Desirée Rincón 21:40
Oh, I like that

E Enduring Play Computer 21:43
loading podcast level four, an anti piracy saga.

C Cheryl Platz 21:49
You know, when we were developing cartridge based games, we had the toaster because you couldn't burn, like, CDs, and so you could take, you had special cartridges that could be re-burned. You'd have a new building, be like, "I gotta go toast the build." And you take all the cartridges, you'd put them in the little slots, and you'd be like, "yeah, it's toasting." I kind of wish that you could do that with purchased media, where you're like, "Okay, you're gonna give me physical media and I have this version of it, but like, I can go and exchange it and toast it and get the new version, and then I still have a physical copy that doesn't need dependence on the internet or a hard drive." I wish there were build toasters in real life and not just in development. I understand why not, but I still miss build toasters.

E Enduring Play Computer 22:29
Podcast level, paused. Loading, tutorial level, shipping on physical media.

C

Cheryl Platz 22:37

Physical media requires physical quality assurance before shipping. Running a build on your hard drive is not the same thing as running it on target hardware. The graphics processors, memory, input, output, sound engine and other constraints can vastly affect how a game runs on final hardware. I've literally seen situations where a game ran fine, even on current generation hardware, but future generations of hardware broke the game because key libraries were loaded into memory in a different order. So how do you deal with this? In the golden days of real time development for cartridge based hardware platforms like the Sega Genesis and Nintendo DS, there were a few pathways. One was hardware emulation, where special software emulated the processor locally, but streamed the build to a controller rigged like the target screen and input device tethered to your PC for real time debugging and QA another was rewritable removable media used to get temporary builds onto production hardware for testing that could be inserted into the cartridge playback device. If you head to the show notes on enduringplay.com you will find some links to articles about developer kits. The IS-nitro emulator was the primary hardware emulator used during first wave Nintendo DS development I had one of the first North American units at my desk at Electronic Arts. An Xbox 360 development kit recently made the news when it turned up at a flea market with a pre release build of Grand Theft Auto four still recoverable on its hard drive. I've also linked an article with a grainy photo of an original Famicom rewritable cartridge and a Sega Genesis development cartridge in a video that exposed silicon looks exactly like the early rewritable cartridges I had to travel with going to demos for The Urbz: Sims in The City DS. To be clear, rewritable media for a production platform is typically against Terms of Service, unless you are a licensed developer. The home brew USB devices typically violate licensing terms in some way. It is a very convenient tool for testing your game on target hardware as a licensed developer in certain circumstances, and more graceful than burning and shredding DVDs. But as gamers move on to expect bug free software, the days of data dense disks and cartridges are likely behind us. As Desiree points out, the movement is towards minimal data on media, assuming patches will be desired and necessary. As time moves on, many of these devices are becoming internet dependent to get a full build onto the device.

E

Enduring Play Computer 24:50

Resuming podcast level four, an anti piracy saga.

D

Desirée Rincón 24:55

Yeah, that's the whole anti piracy part, which is part of what I did at Xbox. This was actually centered around coming up with hardware that we could implement in order to be able to put in anti piracy measures into our physical disc games, which is hysterical, because I came full circle on that. I - when I was in the Army like forever, a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, I was deployed to to Iraq on my second tour. And while I was out there, I wanted to implement something for like, my platoon to do. So I actually had my Wii and my PlayStation three and my Xbox 360 sent to me. And you go and win hearts and minds. That's what you do. That's what you go out into the populace, and you go meet the civilians, and you talk to them and show them that you're not a bad person. And I did exactly that. I went out with into into town on patrols, and got to meet a lot of the civilians. There were two that ran their own business, and their whole business was modding video game consoles by putting chips in them so that they could play burn games and then selling the burn games at 50 cents a pop. And I immediately gave them all three of my consoles to put shifts in. I still own those consoles. I spent so much money on burn games. I found it hilarious that 12-13 years later, I came full circle by being put in charge of the anti piracy program at Xbox. I'm like, "oh my goodness,"

C

Cheryl Platz 26:43

"I have no idea, who would do such a thing?"

D

Desirée Rincón 26:47

"I've never seen this before!"

E

Enduring Play Computer 26:53

Podcast level paused. Begin host commentary.

C

Cheryl Platz 26:58

As they say in Jurassic Park, Life finds a way in Desirée's story about encountering video games while on military deployment, odds are those games weren't widely available in those regions, or weren't accessible at prices those people in those regions could afford, and humans often accept a challenge, which in those cases leads to piracy. Indeed, the motivator of play around mastery can be observed adjacent to gaming in the communities that drive hacks, cheats and piracy into and around the video game industry. Some players seek mastery over the concept of the game in this way, and not the game's mechanics. Mod chips are a fairly involved piracy method, which involves permanently altering the motherboard of a previously valid console, altering physical computing conditions to allow games to run that would otherwise be blocked due to regional or economic restrictions. The existence of these continued techniques is what has driven so many game companies to more of an always-on internet connected model to verify the legitimacy of licenses on a regular basis. Players are frustrated that ownership doesn't work the same way that it used to. But the problem is also that methods of forging software and hardware have become so sophisticated that in many ways, providing a live service is the only surefire way that companies feel certain folks will reliably engage without circumventing the system. But in the end, piracy of games on Steam isn't rampant. Why then is there still discussion of console piracy? That gets back to access. Most consoles are expensive, and there is good reason for this. Consoles cost a great deal to make. They are highly specialized and standardized hardware supported by a large company enforcing software standards and services at scale. But when people can't access something within means, they will begin to look for alternate ways to get the experience everyone else is having. The lower the friction to paying for your experience, the less piracy becomes an issue. Most players are playing for comfort and immersion, not mastery over your BIOS settings, the motivations are complicated, but the law is not. Piracy is illegal, but more importantly, bypassing the exchange of money for services, more often than not, is going to contribute to the conditions that cause industry layoffs. If no one is paying for the servers, for the developers, for the disks to be printed then the industry fades away. So how can we all get to a cost benefit equation that works for as many people as possible?

E

Enduring Play Computer 29:05

Podcast level five gaming for children of veterans.

C

Cheryl Platz 29:11

Since we're on the military topic, why don't we shift to Gold Star Gamers? And your work there and how, how that's showing up for you. So tell me more about the organization Gold Star Gamers, and what it means to you.

D

Desirée Rincón 29:22

I am the head of gaming partnership, so my whole role in life, really is to reach out to game devs and gaming studios and try to set up collaborative efforts with them, where they share their games with our kids. Come possibly play with our kids. They they offer our kids opportunities to meet them, to maybe go on tour of their studios to develop right now, for instance, I am talking with Xbox about getting some of our kids who are interested in junior development to go to Xbox game camp, where they get to learn how to code and develop a possible career in game development. We primarily use video gaming in this nonprofit, because video games, as anybody in our industry can tell you, they obviously speak to us. It's a place that can reach anyone; that anyone can relate to. Video games are something everyone can relate to. So we basically kind of come to their level and reach them in a medium that they understand fully. They play video games, and in doing so, they play with each other. They oftentimes will talk to each other. We have a Discord by the by that is that that is- fully, it's fully monitored. Every adult that is in this Discord has been background checked and vetted. We we make sure these kids remain fully secure. We run this discord where we have community days. We play video games together as a community. We have a dedicated Minecraft server. The kids will go into this minecraft server and build monuments to their parents

C

Cheryl Platz 30:59

Oh, my heart.

D

Desirée Rincón 31:01

And and, yeah, and they, they like to play Fortnite Friday, we give out V bucks and small prizes. And often we give out like game keys too, for like, for performers. Or we, we will actually run the wheel of doom. It's a roulette basically, like, like, "Okay, who, who gets, you know, who's gonna get a couple of keys or or robux" or things like that. We tend to play the, what I call the trifecta of gaming for kids, which is Minecraft, Roblox and Fortnite. But we do play a variety of lots of different games. We have a program where we have mentors that are military veterans or employees from from corporations like USAA, that either come in and do group mentoring, where they play with the kids or help them out with homework or give them life advice. Some of these kids sometimes, like, don't know how to tie a tie, and so they teach them how, or they you know, they need advice on how to talk to their crush, or how to navigate that obnoxious bully at their school, or something like that. And and so we have mentors for that. We have a one on one program too that's very much like Big Brothers Big Sisters, where mentors will be paired with a child for a year. And they dedicate two hours a week just to that child, and- which is... a lot of children in our group, it's very important, especially if their loss was more recent than the others. We do run a very wide range, because we our youngest kid right now in the program is six years old, Red Ranger, silly Red Ranger, and he's adorable. And our oldest kid right now is 19, because we allow kids to stay until they're 18 or until they graduate high school, whichever comes later. And some of these kids, like they dropped out of school for a year when their parents passed too. So they're also, you know, trying to get back into the groove of things, and we have mentors to assist them with that. So it keeps me busy. It's very engaging, but it's very rewarding. I get so much personal satisfaction from talking to these kids and hearing their stories and hearing them support each other too, because the kids are so supportive of each other in the Discord too. And whenever we get new kids in there, they are very welcoming, and they're just so good, like kids- Kids are so pure.

D

Desirée Rincón 33:34

And you know, they didn't ask for their parent to pass, and they didn't ask for their parent to be put in a situation where they don't come home. And it so, so it's, it's heartbreaking, but at the same time, it just makes me just awe inspired, because they are so resilient about it. They are so good at being able to, to... to they... I am sorry. I am.

C

Cheryl Platz 34:10

No, no, you don't have to apologize at all. I mean, it's deeply moving. I mean, you know, the second you were like, "They build monuments to their families in Minecraft" and it's just, you know, it's next level. And you when you think about how far gaming has come, you know that's it's it defies a lot of the stereotypes that we might have had 20 years ago about how kids use gaming, right? When, when I was growing up, it's like, "oh, like, we're gonna go run around and stuff." But you're talking about people being welcoming and creating communities and connecting with each other, and like, self expressing and creating space and processing grief through games. That's-

D

Desirée Rincón 34:48

Exactly! If you put in some adult who wants to throw like, adult therapy practices at the kids, it's gonna go right over their head, and it's not gonna be, like, even remotely impacting. But you give a kid a controller or or give him a video game, and I can't tell you how often kids will like tell you about their entire like week at school while they're building you roller coasters on Roller Coaster Tycoon.

E

Enduring Play Computer 35:22

loading Tutorial level: the motivators of play.

C

Cheryl Platz 35:27

I could have chosen any number of topics for the first chapter of my book, *The Game Development Strategy Guide*, but I chose to center the motivators of play because of stories like Desirée's. For too long, gaming has been undersold as a time drain and not as the genuine and complex solve for human psychological needs at scale that it really is. While the six classic motivators of play I call out: fun, mastery, competition, comfort, meditation and immersion - have been present for decades, there are three more modern motivators - companionship, self expression and education, which have taken greater hold as a result of the prevalence of broadband, cloud services, and more advanced portable computing devices, like smartphones. In particular, comfort and companionship shine through in Desirée's story, and these are supported by many recent emergent studies. A 2026 Boston University study found that 64% of their 350 student respondents used video games as a method of coping with stress, with slightly more reporting playing multiplayer games (57%) than reported playing single player games (52%). In the Entertainment Software Association's 2025 Global Power of Play report 58% of their 24,000 global respondents reported playing for stress relief as a separate motivator of play than playing for fun, and 71% reported the video game introduced people to new friends and relationships - while 64% reported that video games helped them feel less isolated and lonely. The ESA report also cites research from American psychologists that states "gaming may be among the most efficient and effective means by which children and youth generate positive feelings." The focus Gold Star Gamers puts on gaming is supported by real data. Keep in mind, the more players turn to games for stress relief, specifically, the less they're going to look for stressful games like competitive or mastery based games. And players may choose different types of games based on context,

E

Enduring Play Computer 37:25

loading, podcast level six, comfort and companionship and play

D

Desirée Rincón 37:31

Games are profoundly therapeutic. Anyone who is a gamer can tell you that for sure, obviously. Like... and I say that not just as somebody who's witnessed it through Gold Star Gamers, but as a cancer survivor. Oftentimes, like during my treatments, that's what I was doing. I was playing video games. I was bedridden for a timeframe, and it was like my platoon who was playing games with me online during my recovery. And when we were deployed, that is how we as a unit... That's why I had, literally, my Wii and my Xbox, 360 and my PS3 sent to me, because I knew that I could set those up in a common area, and my whole unit would be like just playing. And that's exactly what we did. And we would set up like little LAN parties and play Call of Duty. And I met my best friend sitting in the internet cafe. Why- I was playing half life, and he was playing fable. And he started geeking out over each other's games, and then looked at each other and said, "Did we just become best friends?" And he was like, "yeah!" and our love language to each other even now, like, like, 20 years later is literally, like, the Steam winter sale. That is how we send each other Christmas presents.

C

Cheryl Platz 38:51

I believe it. And, you know, that's something too on Twitch that I've noticed is that, like, the power of gifting in the game community is something that a lot of companies sleep on. That was something I kept bringing up at Riot. I'm like, "Why can't people gift? Can't people give people stuff? Like people want to gift, gift other people stuff. They just want to give you money to exchange for services for other people. Why aren't you letting them do that?" That's a love language in gaming. Like people are doing that all the time on Twitch. Give people subscriptions, give people stuff, buying steam codes for other people, exchanging those things, it's there's like this surprising well of generosity and sharing enthusiasm for games, and especially when you play multiplayer games, it's also like self serving, because you're like, "I would like you to like this game, so you will play it with me, and we will be friends in the game".

D

Desirée Rincón 39:34

And nailed it. That's exactly, that is no lie. That is exactly- one thing that we're we only recently got our Twitch channel at Gold Star Gamers like, kind of up and running. And it's been wild that in the course of only a couple of months, we've gone from not having a channel to having like, 200 followers, and many of them are subscribers, and it's because people just gift each other subscriptions because they think it's cool. We've had a couple of Humble Bundle programs. We actually have one going on right now. And a lot of people will say, well, "I already own those games." I'm like, "so gift them. Give them to us. Go ahead and purchase them and give them to our kids." I mean, I have, I have half my Discord group playing Roller Coaster Tycoon as a result.

C Cheryl Platz 40:17
Amazing - which is a quality game!

E Enduring Play Computer 40:20
Loading podcast level seven, self expression mastery and user generated content.

D Desirée Rincón 40:28
Yeah, I think our kids genuinely like being able to discover new games too and trying to figure out how they can recreate it in Roblox, because that seems to be the thing too.

C Cheryl Platz 40:43
Well. I mean, there's so much to unpack about that. In a way, it's like a great problem to have. They're so curious and that they're so determined, that they're like, life will find a way. I will figure out how to do this. I went to a talk at the Game Developers Conference earlier this year about genshin impact and their user generated content world. And you know, one thing that stuck out of is they were like, "here's some stuff people did when we released this. One person created a neural network." I'm like, "I'm sorry, but what!?" That's the thing you create. You create sandbox worlds, and humans will just human the heck out of it, right? Like, we love a challenge, and it's like, it's not fun. If you give us blue sky, you have to give us, like, back to your MacGyver example, you have to give us, like, the paper cup and the paper clip and be like, make me a Ferrari. Like, great. I got you.

E Enduring Play Computer 41:32
loading podcast level eight when the spirit of play endures.

D

Desirée Rincón 41:40

Yeah, we have kids again. Kids are something else. Kids will literally come up with the wildest things too. And I think it's one of the... it really adds up to, like I said, the personal satisfaction I get from just being in their presence more often than not. I love to get in group chats with them in the Discord while they're playing Fortnite, and get into the ridiculousness of them. And a lot of them are, they go through the same problems that like we did when we were kids, when we were as teenagers. The difference is that they don't have one of their parents is not necessarily, is not there, and the other one is probably, oftentimes shut down by grief themselves, and can't be fully there for their kids.

D

Desirée Rincón 42:25

And our founder will oftentimes tell a story about how she, herself is a Gold Star Widow, and when her husband passed her son, she had to tell her son that her young son, who was, I believe, like nine at the time. And he didn't fully grasp that his dad was gone, so he went down to the basement, and he went and turned on his Xbox, and he went and put on his headset, and he went looking for his father online.

C

Cheryl Platz 42:55

Oh, oh my God.

D

Desirée Rincón 42:55

Because he thought that maybe he would be able to find him there, and that, yeah, yeah, she tells that story, and it breaks me every time. And I know this kid, I've known him for... and he's such a good kid. Maddox is, is a really, really good kid. He's, he's, he's definitely a shining example of what, of what this program can do for for all our kids. But, but, yeah, I can't even fathom little kids having to deal with, with not, Suddenly, not having a father there. and I saw, I saw, I lost friends when I was in military service, and friends who had kids. So this was a very, so it was personal to me. I felt like I needed to involve myself in some capacity so well.

C

Cheryl Platz 43:58

Thank you for that work, and thank you for sharing the stories like it's so, so poignant. My God, just there's like a wisdom there. The like, the looking for your lost loved one in in like that digital space, there's something like, maybe

D Desirée Rincón 44:16

Because his dad constantly played with him online, he just knew he's like, "Well, maybe if I just go online and go look for my dad, he'll be right there, and it'll be, everything will be fine,"

C Cheryl Platz 44:25

And maybe,

D Desirée Rincón 44:26

And it wasn't.

C Cheryl Platz 44:27

Why not? Right? Why the veil? Why is the veil like that? Why can't? Why can't we game with our loved ones? Let's figure that out. I think he's right. But thank you. This is- we'll talk at the end of the broadcast about how people can support the work of Gold Star Gamers, because it's obviously really, really impactful for those kids, and a great example of how games create third space. Games create connection and companionship and help us process grief and help us cope with the difficult things in life. So thank you so much for all of that.

E Enduring Play Computer 45:02

Podcast level nine, Sydney, the service dog, a case study in accessibility.

C Cheryl Platz 45:08

creating spaces that are very inclusive for those kids. And speaking of trying to find spaces that are inclusive, one of the things we were talking about getting set up for the podcast. You are often seen with your service dog, Sydney. And can you talk about your partnership with Sydney a little bit, because it would, I would be remiss if I did not ask about that partnership. One of the things we've also spoken about in this series is events and their relationship to gaming. You know, eSports conferences and you have a very specific and important take on them.

D

Desirée Rincón 45:35

Yeah, absolutely I am convinced that if I gave Sydney her own LinkedIn platform, I would have literally zero connections, and my dog would just have all the connections. At this point, she is definitely better known than I am. I have been to events where people know who she is and don't have a clue who I am. That happens way more often than I care to admit. That happens way, way more... matter of fact, GDC. You mentioned GDC earlier. My dog, we went to the GDC awards. And my dog, not me. My dog got VIP seating at GDC. At the GDC awards.

C

Cheryl Platz 46:11

Oh, there's a lot to unpack there.

D

Desirée Rincón 46:14

Needless to say, yeah, she's definitely more popular than I am, which is a good thing. I mean, she is the social one, for sure. I am a very high functioning introvert. I have to admit that that events, oftentimes, like the amount of people and crowds, they very, very quickly overwhelm me, and my dog is very good at managing that. For- that is not her primary duty. She isn't just my companion. She is an actual medical service dog. She is a critical part of how I operate. She is trained for seizure alert, and I cannot drive legally without her. So I live alone, so I have to have her everywhere I go, basically. And when I travel to other places, I usually will rent a car. I have to have her with and Sydney is amazing at her job. She's really, really good. She does item retrieval too. I have some complications that stem from my time with cancer, that include neuropathy in my hands, and I also have a recent hand condition too, called Dupuytren's contracture that that is now affecting my ability to be able to hold things. So my dog spends half her day just picking up things that I drop, which is accurate, like I drop so many things, and she just will pick them up and very patiently give them back. She She is. She does do PTSD support, and she's actively helping me manage real day to day challenges. So like I said, in environments where, in environments that you were talking like, you know, loud, crowded, generally unpredictable, she really gives me stability. She gives me early warning when something's off, so I can stay present and in control. And because of her, I'm able to attend all these events and be seen, which actually goes a long way to being able to connect with this community. I'm able to really show up, really engage, really be able to perform at the level that I expect of myself. My profile picture on LinkedIn is literally me and my dog, because people will forget what I look like, but nobody forgets my dog. So then when I send out connection requests, they see dog, and they go, "Oh, it's the woman with the dog. Cool. I know exactly who that is now."

C Cheryl Platz 48:27

And, I mean, that is good branding. And hey, I got my dream job, I think because I posted a picture of me after the Riot layoff with, you know, a specific toy, giving me advice, right? So live your most authentic life, if that's it, then be authentic. I think that's a big part of the puzzle. It doesn't always work out immediately. Sometimes it takes 30 years, but we get there.

E Enduring Play Computer 48:50

Podcast level 10. Gaming doesn't stop with disability.

C Cheryl Platz 48:57

What advice would you have for event organizers, whether they're like professional game development event organizers or maybe gaming event organizers, like, for example, at Penny Arcade, about creating spaces that are more inclusive for people like you and for their famous dogs, or whatever other sort of accommodations you might need, like, what would if you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about the events you go to, what would it be?

D

Desirée Rincón 49:24

Oh, goodness, that's a really good question. One I actually like answered yesterday, because PAX East set out their survey, which I'm always all too happy to fill out, because I love giving feedback, especially when it comes from an accessibility perspective. When accessibility is missing people, you're not just inconveniencing people. You are literally shutting them out. And that's not just in theory. That's an actual reality. We had an event up here that shall remain unnamed, that came under heat because their their ADA was absolutely... the way that they navigated ADA access was basically non existent and caused a massive uproar in the community. But if I can't safely navigate a space with my service dog, I can't be there period. And I've turned down speaking opportunities at this specific con that I mentioned because the response that I got when I asked about ADA, accessibility was unacceptable. This isn't just abstract for me. Aside from me having my own dog, I also have a lot of friends who are gamers that are literally missing limbs. My friend Noah lost an arm in both his legs in Iraq. My friend I recently connected with, with Dave: he plays he only has one arm and one leg, and he plays using standard controllers because he's adapted himself to it. I have deaf friends, blind friends, friends with cognitive disabilities, and all of them game. And all of them figure out how they're going to make it work. They all game. They all find connection through gaming. So when accessibility isn't considered, it's not minor. It's a real decision about, like, you know, you're really gatekeeping, and it's a decision about who gets to be included. And if you apply that same thinking to games, you start to see just how many into events as a whole. You start to see just how many people we're like, pushing out of our community every day. So I always make it a point to bring up any, any, anything that I see. GDC, for instance, had several instances where I provided my contact information and said, you know, your staff can absolutely make this better if you provide seating for people you know out here in the in the lines that you're waiting for. Make, make room for wheelchair access in certain pain points. Or, or restrict elevator access to people who need it. I try to be a voice for anyone else who might not be able to speak out. I do appreciate that many events now do offer things like quiet rooms. I especially took like, at GDC is I absolutely took advantage of every quiet room I could get, namely because I had to find a quiet space to not only decompress and give my dog a break, but also to administer medication on myself, like I needed space and a room to be able to, like, shoot myself. So a lot of my medication is administered via syringe, so I had to make sure that I an ample space to be able to do that, because just stabbing myself in the middle of a hallway is not really convenient for anyone involved.

E

Enduring Play Computer 52:41

Podcast level 11, turning public platforms into positive momentum.

C

Cheryl Platz 52:47

I thank you for... you know, I can't know what you're going through, but I know in those situations where I've been at workplaces and I've had to speak up because things are not accessible, like, it never feels good, right? Like you're the squeaky wheel. You're like, "am I gonna get more excluded because I'm speaking up? Is this the end of my career?" I don't know about you, but like for me, there's always a fear that comes with it. But I'm also also very conscious of, "Well, I have power, and other people don't, so I better say something."

D

Desirée Rincón 53:13

Absolutely, yeah, no, absolutely. My dog has a platform. And, I mean, she has a pretty powerful platform. She's a cute dog. I mean, you can't really, you can't really fight that. She's an adorable dog that cosplays at events, and she wears like little sunglasses at industry events and and everybody loves her. And I know that that I have visibility, and I try to use that visibility for for good things. So I try to push forth community endeavors like Amir sat bats, games community, the always supporting games community. I try to, you know, push forth nonprofits, like gold star gamers. I try to put, put out good karma by, you know, offering help and assistance to anybody who needs it. And I try to stand up for for people who might not otherwise be heard, because I know that I have a platform where people will hear me if I actually use it.

E

Enduring Play Computer 54:13

Podcast level 12, crowd sourced gaming accommodations.

C

Cheryl Platz 54:20

You mentioned that you are going through some physical challenges in your hands right now, and I'm sorry to hear that. I don't know what you're going through, but like, I have had several hand surgeries and things myself. And are you adapting the way you play?

D

Desirée Rincón 54:31

I have hand surgery next month, and yes, I am actually. I recently have gotten, I recently bought a an additional keyboard and mouse to try to operate it's a little modified, and it's to be able to operate gaming differently so that I can try to get over the fact that, like on my left hand, two of my fingers don't really work so well. Hopefully that will get fixed in the next two months, because I am going in for hand surgery as well. But I also have, I'm part of a lot of communities online, and I'm, I'm genuinely impressed by this. Reddit, for instance, has a lot of subreddits, and there are subreddits completely dedicated to, I kid you not, 3d printing for modification. So when people need, like, modified joysticks, you know, because they are missing fingers. Or I have a friend of mine, his name is Zach, and he actually his nickname is "Nubs", because he's literally missing, like all, all the main fingers in one of his one of his hands, he had an accident. But they have, like, 3D printed modified attachments to gaming controllers and to, like, Steam Decks and things like that, where you can actually modify so you you basically will put in, you know, your request per se, like, say, "Hey, this is what my hands look like, or this is what I'm dealing with. This is my disability, and I need to adapt to it somehow." And people will just brainstorm things and make, make things happen, and then send you like, send 3d plans to like, to make things. And if you don't have the means to like 3D print, a lot of them will do it for you and send you the product themselves. And many of them do it out of pocket. It's, it's amazing what a community that does- will like, you know, a community of gamers can do when they come together. I see a lot of collaboration. You might not see a lot of the collaboration here in the United States. In Canada, it's really common. It's wild how often you see people that will be like, Hey, I'm a programmer, but I'm not an artist, but let's go ahead and combine forces, combine our powers with this group that's all artists, but need an actual programmer to put games together and make games happen. That is a very common thing that happens, from what I've seen in events in Canada, it's really, really common. I know that the efforts starting down here, to some extent, Cave Bear games is kind of leading the forefront in that they actually have a partner program where you sign up and you can actually join their network and try to see if you guys can borrow talent from each other there. There are a lot of efforts in this day and age to try to get games out there and try to make really cool things happen, which is a... it really makes me, it puts a little bit of faith, my faith in humanity is replaced a little bit. And also it makes me feel a lot better about the future of gaming, especially in the environment of layoff that exists,

E

Enduring Play Computer 57:41

Narrative cut scene: the asgc.

S

Speaker 1 57:45

ASGC aka Always Supporting the Games Community, or previously, Amir Satvat's Games Community was founded in 2022 and has become the largest game support community in the world. Asgc started as a response to the chaos of 10s of 1000s of layoffs. It has grown into something much more enduring, as described on their LinkedIn page, which has 15,000 followers: "We help gamers get hired, zero profit, infinite caring." ASGC provides practical, real world help for job seekers and professionals at all stages of their career. And these job resources with role by role guidance and mentorship, lists and resume and portfolio support, all of that requires coordination on the internet, which is where Desirée comes in. They are proud about having no upsells, no paywalls and no monetization. Amir has channeled his passion for community organization data analysis and his love of the game to place 1000s of game developers back into the game and keep 1000s more informed about the state of the industry through his LinkedIn page, and he was awarded the first TGA Game Changer award in 2024 when you see him taking the stage for that award, beaming in his gamer gear, you can't help but think that there might be a place for you in that community too.

E

Enduring Play Computer 58:57

Podcast level 13: supporting the asgc

C

Cheryl Platz 59:01

To hear you talk about communities on Reddit that are building prosthetics for each other with 3d printers? Like it just reaffirms the importance of these community themes, and that's probably a good segway into probably the last topic for us to talk about today is your work with the Always Supporting Games Community. And that probably resonates for a lot of listeners, because it's very large community, and is very large force in the larger game development community right now. Can you talk a little bit about your work with Always Supporting Games Community and what it means to you and how you see the trends shaking out?

D

Desirée Rincón 59:33

Yeah, absolutely. I joined that community. Well, it basically in its infancy. It was didn't really exist when I met with Amir. Amir, at the time, was putting out spreadsheets with all the combined games jobs that were out there in in the hopes that maybe he could offset some of these layoffs and get you know, people rehired and by other companies in some way, shape or form. He really, really wanted to do something more to bring more visibility to this ever growing pool of people that were being laid off. And he really wanted to, he genuinely loves this industry. He genuinely loves video game and he he really wanted to put a genuine effort out there. So he tried at the beginning, doing a lot of this by himself, and realized that he couldn't, that there was no way for him to do it. Not even so much, because he didn't. You're talking about a man that barely sleeps. He has three young children. They're all like under the age of 12, and you know, he's got a wife and two aging parents then and he, and he has a an actual, you know, job, and yet, this man is up at all hours of the night trying to make, make the make his resources better, trying to talk to organizations about hiring people that are on his like you know, that That put themselves up on their list of hiring. And basically reading a lot of emails from from folks that are just at this point hitting desperation. I was one of those people. I still am. I mean, I'm still unemployed and really in dire need of a job, but I wanted to be productive and I wanted to do something with my... I don't call it. It's not really downtime, because I'm still applying for jobs. I'm still looking for work, but I wanted to to do something to put a little love and karma out there, because I mean being being laid off twice in the last three years is brutal. There's just no clean way to package it. And what got me through was basically treating lay off like a full time job. And so I tightened my network, I stayed visible, I reached out, I offered help where I could, and that's how I connected with Amir. And I wanted to contribute, even without a paycheck attached, and help in some way, shape or form. And the way that I could help was, well, I can draw, I can build web pages and I can make, I'm a graphic designer, one at least I have a bachelor's degree that says I am. So I said, okay, yeah, that's, that's what I that's what I can help you with. Amir had put out his web page, and it was so painful to look at that. I immediately, I immediately messaged him and said, "just give me your password and just let me- Let me go on there. I will, I will rebuild your site for you, because this?"

C

Cheryl Platz 1:02:31

"Just give me your password, It's gonna be fine!!"

D

Desirée Rincón 1:02:32

Yeah, like, like, "this hurts, and I'm sorry, but I gotta go in and do something about this." So, so he kind of did. And he just, he just handed me, like, the keys, and I said, "I got this," and I went in and built this webpage for him, and which is what you see now in the community. And again, it's, it's that feeling of satisfaction at being able to have contributed in a small way to other people being able to, like, get a job and being able to, you know, navigate resources that will help them in the long run. One, I mean, there's, there's several other ways that you can help. You can sign up to be a mentor. You can sign up to be a LinkedIn reviewer. You can sign up to be an art portfolio reviewer. Or you can, you can do mock interviews with people, or underselling yourself. Many people would be like, build a functional website for 1000s of job seekers and also do the graphical design. I mean, don't undersell yourself there. It was fun, and I enjoyed it tremendously. I think one of the things that, one of the things I have the most fun with, actually, is getting on the phone with Amir. When Amir gets gets a an idea because, and he he will get them at random times. And he'll be like, "Okay, Des, I want you to draw me this:" And then he'll just like, say the most unhinged stuff. And I will be like, "That sounds amazing. Let's go with it."

C

Cheryl Platz 1:03:58

And you turned one of those things into like a plushie, right?

D

Desirée Rincón 1:04:02

Yes, I did. I turned Amir the diver into a plushie, which I then converted. I converted into a plushie, and then we did a campaign on it, and all the the net proceeds from the plushie sales went to Gold Star Gamers. So it was a win, win, all around for everybody. Yeah.

E

Enduring Play Computer 1:04:19

The final boss level, the unicorn and the platypus on the job hunt.

C

Cheryl Platz 1:04:29

That is not a small thing, that is a lot of things, and it's amazing, and people are sleeping on you and your talents. And I want to talk about that for a second, because I think it's a struggle I've seen with the market the way it is. And I don't know if you've noticed this, but because you have many talents, you started talking about how you were a program manager, also, just like a general leader, and able to solve a bunch of problems. And then you're also like, doing marketing and business development stuff for a nonprofit, and then we casually walk to the end of the conversation, like, also, I'm building websites, and plushies and graphics. That's why. Why aren't people hiring this person? And my experience when trying to navigate the job market was like, the more things I tried to throw at people, the more scared they were of me in this market.

D

Desirée Rincón 1:04:50

Man tailoring, tailoring your resume is almost I personally tailor my resume for literally every job that I apply for. I make sure that I go in and I do at least some semblance of tailoring. I realize that being good at your job, and I'm using air quotes for this like "being good at your job" is just not enough in this day and age, because there's so the market is so overwhelmed right now, with so much good talent, so many people that have been laid off, and they're all they've all got years of experience. How do you differentiate visibility and relationships and being able to articulate the impact that you can make that matters just as much, if not more, than just being good at your job? Because, like I said, there, there are a lot of talented people that just get overlooked because they assume that their job, their work, or their resume will speak for itself, and it doesn't, you have to. And also, access isn't evenly distributed, and talent alone just doesn't unlock it. I thought that, like when I first came into the industry, I thought that it really like, worked hard enough and did great work that all the right opportunities would just like, magically show up in front of me. And that's just not how then the world works. You have to, you have to be actively building relationships, and you have to put yourself in all the rooms, all the right rooms. You have to make your work visible. You have to, like, that's been probably my biggest pain point, because, like I said, I I would rather be in my bedroom playing video games, holed up, than being out in the real world, actually having to engage people,

C

Cheryl Platz 1:04:50

This is the hardest got introverts, no doubt. Like, talk to people who just been laid off and like, "how's your LinkedIn?" They're like, "I don't like it". Like, "I'm so sorry. We're gonna have to have a talk"

D

Desirée Rincón 1:04:50

I can't tell you how many times have rewritten my LinkedIn and my resume, and I'm about to do it again after my conversation last night with Chris. I have to, but you you know, it's part of, you know, learning and getting yourself seen out there the people that move forward. They're not just skilled, they're connected, and they know how to position themselves. And I want to strive to be more of that person you are, because I see you doing it. I try. I'm doing my best. I'm doing my best,

D

Desirée Rincón 1:05:13

That's very accurate. That's, there's, there's two reasons I see for that, one of them being and actually, I had a conversation last night with Chris Tran specifically about this. When you put out all the different things that you can do or whatnot, it can land one or two ways. It can either be that you are a unicorn and because "you're amazing and you can do all these things and, holy cow," or it can come out that you're a platypus. And by platypus, I mean, like, "you're a generalist, and you have a lot of like, different skills and that probably don't belong all together in the same way" that, like a platypus, it probably should never exist because it's it just has all these random body parts that, like, should not exist together. And and so it turns out that you need to also kind of sell yourself so that you firmly place yourself in the unicorn realm, rather than be seen as a platypus. And it's one of those things where I've probably failed at miserably, because, again, I'm an introvert, and I don't really know how to sell myself very well,

C

Cheryl Platz 1:05:36

My last question is, what are you most proud of in your career?

C

Cheryl Platz 1:06:16

And I hate the word failed, right? Like we're all doing our best, and it's like knowing how do you, how you thread the needle to compete with 10s of 1000s of other people, but I just see so many people internalizing the failures, and many of them are so talented like you, and it's not about you're not talented enough.

E

Enduring Play Computer 1:08:59

Bonus level, proudest work.

D

Desirée Rincón 1:09:06

I'm most proud of the fact that I have built things that have actually held up under pressure. In my previous jobs, I've built systems and I've put teams together and communities that just don't fall apart the second that things get hard at Xbox that that meant operations that people could trust and that my stakeholders could trust, and in my community work, it means spaces where people continuously know that they can come and and get help. I'm not a person who who rests on on their laurels. I've always been the kind of person, yeah, like, yeah. So once something works great, but I'm already looking at how to make it better and how to push myself further. And that is how that is one thing that I love about both my work with gold star gamers and work with Amir. Amir is constantly, constantly, constantly on the phone with me, texting me about, like, what if we did this thing? And he loves to run things by me, and I'll be like, okay, but hear me out. What if you did it this way instead? And we're constantly trying to come up with updates or things that will, you know, will make things easier or resources more accessible to people. And so yeah, he does a lot of the same. He'll he'll turn around and ask me, like, " why are you up at this hour?" ? I'm like, "Well, I was busy putting in an improvement into, like, the mentorship slide deck for Gold Star Gamers" or something. We are really good about trying to make things better. How to push ourselves further. If it only works when everything's easy. It obviously wasn't built right. I take pride in building things that last, and that is, that is my point of pride.

E

Enduring Play Computer 1:10:45

loading final podcast level links and follow up.

C

Cheryl Platz 1:10:57

I hope that this and many other ways in which you are lifting people up will come back around and we can lift you up in return, because that's how communities work. The rising tide lifts all ships and hopefully sooner rather than later. But I really appreciate the time we got to spend together today. This was really enjoyable for me, I know, and I appreciate your tenacity coming back despite the absolutely bonkers first take that we had. So thank you for giving me another chance.

C

Cheryl Platz 1:11:26

How can people follow your work? I know you mentioned that you are an introvert, but you are out there. So how can they keep up with you? Or if they, for example, might be interested in working with someone who builds systems for the long haul that stand the test of time.

D

Desirée Rincón 1:11:42

I mean, I think the easiest way to get my attention or to reach me is just to, for lack of better words, slide into my DMs. I am on LinkedIn. You can't miss me. My profile is literally myself and my dog. Don't just send me a connection request. Actually send me a message and be like, "Hey, I'm an actual living human being, and I would love to connect, and we can talk shop", or, you know, give me the reason why you want to connect with me, and I will, I will absolutely be more than happy to make that connection and converse with you. And if you need assistance with getting a job in gaming, I can direct you to all the resources at asgc. I can if you want to help me with with Gold Star Gamers, again, I'm more than happy to connect it.

D

Desirée Rincón 1:12:30

And for folks who want to learn more about the Always Supporting Games Community or Gold Star Gamers, you can always check out the show notes at enduringplay.com.

C

Cheryl Platz 1:12:37

Well, thank you so much for your time today. I hope that your next convention travel is amazing. I hope that you and Sydney have a great time. I am rooting for a fantastic next chapter that exceeds all your expectations.

D

Desirée Rincón 1:12:50

So we're looking forward to enjoying ourselves in Vegas at level up Expo, and we'll be attending icon down there as well. We will be traveling to the eSports next. Immediately after that, it's going to be a really busy month, because we've got several events lined up in the next like three weeks. We're also going to be at games beat Summit. We'll be at xp summit in Toronto, and we will be at Dreamhack in Atlanta

D

Desirée Rincón 1:13:18

that is intense. I salute you. Some viewers may be actually able to cross paths with you.

C

Cheryl Platz 1:13:23

So look for Desire and Sydney, the amazing dog.

D Desirée Rincón 1:13:27
I've got events lined up for, like, basically the entire year, we will be at most major events. If you see a dog with a lightsaber, that would be my dog and

C Cheryl Platz 1:13:40
and if you don't stop for that, are you human? I don't know. Thank you so much. Desiree, safe travels,


D Desirée Rincón 1:13:51
same. Thank you.

C Cheryl Platz 1:13:54
Continue exploring the craft of game development with my book that inspired this podcast, The Game Development Strategy Guide available worldwide from your favorite online bookseller or from my publisher, rosenfeldmedia.com Enduring play listeners can get 15% off at rosenfeldmedia.com through July, 31 2026 using the code enduringplays2.


C Cheryl Platz 1:14:20
check out season one of this podcast for the interviews that helped inspire the book, or tune in next time for interviews that help expand our understanding of what it takes to create games that don't just survive but thrive. I'm your host. Cheryl Platz, until next time, keep thriving,

E Enduring Play Computer 1:14:40
initiating final credits sequence. Podcast, enduring play,


E Enduring Play Computer 1:14:47
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