

Posted on **February 28, 2012** by **Jamil Moledina**



GDC is next week. Don't panic. Here is your cheat sheet for taking on the biggest game industry business opportunity of the year. This article will be your walkthrough, your ultimate guide to uncovering all the easter eggs, as you are in the hands of experts. You see, I ran GDC from 2004-2008. I then managed developer deal meetings at GDC for the top game publisher, from 2008-2011. I now speak, run parties, and sponsor a booth at GDC, representing a leading multiplatform social developer. And Shawn, well, he's been to my parties. So between the two of us, we know what it takes to win GDC.

**SF:** The EA VIP was the highlight of my GDC. Jamil knows how to throw down.

## Preparation

This part is probably too late, but if I had thought to write this two weeks ago, I would say start with your health. Run, eat less, eat natural whole foods. Stock up on antiviral foods like ginger, garlic, and Odwalla. Get sick now, get it out of your system. Get a haircut the week before. Get that mani/pedi, that massage, see that stupid movie, whatever it takes to be human the weekend before the show.

Speakers, complete your decks by Wednesday at the latest. Rehearse with friends and co-workers the rest of the week. Do a real dry run, standing up, referencing your deck, projecting to the back of the room. You do not want to come off sounding like a boob, with ums and uhs all through your presentation. You are being recorded. You are consuming the time of people who have spent money to hear you speak. Please make it worthwhile.

Sponsors, get your staff badges registered. Set up a Google Doc assigning booth duties. Order all the demo equipment you need, plus a backup. Assign people to carry each piece in. Familiarize yourselves with union rules. Get all your art, T-shirts, and shwag sorted. Program the mobile numbers of key contacts into your phone. Texting may be the only working means of communication when the warp field encloses the Moscone complex.

Party planners, again this needed to go out a month ago, but get your invites out a month before the date. Everyone targets Wednesday 6-9pm, so try to be different. Unless you've got a very unique hook. Make a pretty invite, that includes iCal and Google Calendar links. Don't make your invitees work too hard to remember your party. Invite your VIPs, colleagues, and friends at competitors. Attempt gender balance.

**SF:** Dear lord, anything other than Wednesday. I've 6 parties scheduled. It's a train wreck.

Partygoers, trade invites you receive with colleagues and friends. Ask on the e-mail lists you're on, which are the best parties to attend. Contact the organizers, share what you do. This puts them on notice as to how you may improve the networking of the party. Ask politely to attend. The same applies for getting invited to dinners. I actually prefer small group dinners, to spending the whole evening at loud, dark parties. An even balance gets you your quality and quantity for the evening.

Attendees, book your meetings starting from 10-6 Wednesday and Thursday, and then fill in Tuesday and Friday last. The bell curve of attendance is Wednesday and Thursday. Plus, you don't want to be scheduling or attending meetings at 9am if you can avoid it. Sometimes the best deals are made after midnight over cocktails, and you don't want to lose that opportunity over something as mundane as having to wake up early. Figure out who you want to meet

with. Scan the GDC program to see who's speaking, or the top blogs to find out who runs the companies you want to meet with, and see if you can connect with them via LinkedIn or Facebook. Once connected, get the mobile number for any last minute triangulation. Use Google Calendar or Outlook to organize all your meetings, sessions, and parties, and to corral all your colleagues.

Also, review the GDC schedule for any interesting talks, and block out the sessions you want to attend. For example, I'm on a panel titled [Guidelines for Building Cross-Platform Games](#), and giving a talk titled [Making Cross-Platform Work: Social and Mobile Lessons From Crime City to Modern War](#). My Funzio colleague and lead game designer/producer, Dan Chao is on a panel titled [From the Trenches: Developing Games for Google+](#). I would, you know, attend those for sure. And in all seriousness, my all-time favorite GDC talk is back this year, the [Experimental Gameplay Sessions](#). Nothing at GDC previews the future better than this presentation of the top prototypes, curated by designers at the top of their game.

Everyone, pack 250 business cards, your mobile phone charger, and your iPad. Bring just one pair of jeans, one pair of shoes, and five shirts. Install Bump, Yelp, Evernote, *Crime City*, and *Modern War*. Speakers, bring both VGA and HDMI mini-DisplayPort adapters for your Mac, your preferred clicker, and/or your beast of a notebook PC. When you check into your hotel, go to the [Whole Foods at 4th and](#)

**Harrison.** Get some water bottles (the only time I will recommend this silly expenditure on an otherwise free natural resource), and fruits that keep, such as apples and tangerines.

### **On Site**

Attend sessions. Ask questions. Meet speakers, and other interesting people in the hallway. Attend official parties. Attend unofficial parties. Keep tab of your day job on your iPad, not your iPhone. If you check email on your phone, it will die by the evening. You need your phone working in the evening. Find out what's hot at the show, and check it out.

For meetings, plan for networking between appointments. Pad at least five minutes onto your transit time, because people will stop you, and you will want to stop them. Have lunch meetings at nice places. Eating well is essential to keeping your energy up, and building a solid base for the evening's networking. Take notes in Evernote for all meetings. You won't remember everything, and with Evernote, your notes appear on every device you use.

Go back to your room after the day's meetings. Recharge for a bit. If you can, take a 30-minute power-nap. Eat a fruit. Wash your face. Change into a fresh shirt. Wear comfortable shoes. Load your business card holder to full. Grab your fully charged and operational battlephone. This is when the real GDC starts.

For parties, plan to hop between multiple

events. Use the buddy system. Say hello to friends. Draw in people you don't know. Talk about things that interest you outside of games. Ask people if they've read SoMoFos. Talk about how evil cable is. Work the room. Complete one revolution. Thank the party host. Move on to the next party. Repeat. Now, whatever you do, do not, under any circumstances, actually get drunk. First, it's never good to be drunk in a work setting. But at GDC, you are additionally representing your company. You are still on point. And perhaps worst of all, if drunk, you are squandering the best business opportunity of the year. So focus. Order light. My own trick is to alternate with water. Have a drink, and then ask for a water bottle (okay, this time I mean it, this is one of only two acceptable reasons to pay for water). Drink said water bottle. Laugh off people calling you a lightweight. Watch them get silly. Take pictures. Get photographed and tagged, looking almost sober but definitely upbeat. Track Paul Philleo to ensure this happens.

And of course, leave time in your schedule on Thursday to get your iPad 3.

And that's it. Mission accomplished. Achievement unlocked. Relax, detach, and spend the weekend in detox. Even with the water, your liver still hates you. But look at that pile of business cards, T-shirts, plushies, and USB sticks!

**SF:** GDC is a pretty magical adventure. I don't have a ton to add, but I will say that there are a few hot spots just by Moscone which are a great place to unwind and

catch up with folks (W hotel comes to mind in particular).

I'd say the parties are probably the best place to get your serious networking done. I'll echo Jamil's suggestion to fly with a wingman; it helps open up conversations and you can often piggyback on each other's networks. Look for parties with a tightly controlled invite list; that's usually your ticket to a premium event.

I also suggest blocking off a few hours to walk the floor and just wallow in how awesome being in this industry is. I like to wander around and see what is drawing the largest lines and the most buzz. It's often a sign of things to come.

**JM Update:** Looks like the iPad 3 is going to be announced Wednesday, per Apple press invitations, reported [minutes](#) after I posted this. Coincidence? Well, probably.