

SVEN SCHETZKE

GAME DESIGN / PRODUCT DIRECTOR

17+

years building teams, games
and software across AAA,
F2P and live service

5 → 25+

design organization built,
scaled and led

50%

YoY EBIT growth · 3
consecutive fiscal years

Double-digit

early- and mid-term
retention gains within
months

50M+

registered-player live
product

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Game leadership from concept to live operations

Game design and product leader across AAA, free-to-play, live-service games and software. Combines creative direction, systems design and player understanding with team leadership and product strategy. Builds teams and products from concept and playable prototypes through launch, live operations and sustained business impact.

Jun 2026 - Present

Games Director

Hands-on product development and consulting

Lake System · Berlin / Remote

- Create game concepts and define vision, product positioning, core loops, gameplay systems and progression for a PC game studio.
- Build and iterate playable prototypes to validate player appeal, replayability and feasibility; define production scope and inform portfolio decisions with founders and directors.
- Direct design development with art, design and production; develop pitches, presentations and visual briefs that turn concepts into executable plans.
- Set up and position Steam store pages, including VIP Scandal; select and prepare gameplay media, shape store messaging and communicate key features.

Dec 2023 - 2025

Associate Game Director and Jr. Product Director

Gunzilla Games · Frankfurt am Main · Off The Grid and mobile companion product

Off The Grid · Game of the Year, GAM3 Awards 2024

- Directed product strategy for Off The Grid, an award-winning AAA Web3 shooter, across progression, economy, monetization, engagement and LiveOps.
- Owned game and product design, development and LiveOps for a mobile game/companion product, coordinating delivery across teams.
- Represented Product and Design in executive planning; set roadmaps, KPIs, experiments and release priorities with engineering, analytics, marketing and studio leadership.
- Owned multiple features across teams and coordinated their priorities, aligning creative direction, player value, technical feasibility and commercial goals.
- Managed first-party, technology-partner and creative-leadership relationships, including Neill Blomkamp; directed release planning and certification for PC (Steam / Epic Games Store), PlayStation and Xbox.
- Served as local site lead for approximately three months during a transition, overseeing operations, facilities, administration and invoice approvals.

Professional experience continued

Oct 2021 - Nov 2023

Lead Game Designer

Gunzilla Games · Frankfurt am Main · Off The Grid

- Built, scaled and led the Design organization from 5 to 25+ designers across multiple feature teams; hired, coached and developed senior designers and leads.
- Owned product-level design and delivery across multiple feature teams, coordinating gameplay systems, metagame, progression, economy, monetization, engagement, UI/UX and LiveOps.
- Led multidisciplinary teams across engineering, design, art, VFX, audio, UI/UX, QA, production, product management and analytics from concept through live operations.
- Established design standards, documentation practices, career and performance frameworks, scalable workflows, KPI dashboards, experimentation and structured prioritization.

Jan 2021 - Oct 2021

Senior Player Engagement Systems Designer

Gunzilla Games · Frankfurt am Main · Off The Grid

- Established foundations for player motivation, retention, progression, economy, rewards, monetization and long-term LiveOps during early AAA development.
- Built and led an initial design team; defined company-level design guidelines, workflows, production pipelines and monetization principles.
- Used player psychology, rapid prototyping, playtesting and cross-disciplinary collaboration to turn early concepts into scalable systems.

Apr 2019 - Dec 2020

Game Lead and Monetization Designer

Ubisoft Blue Byte · Düsseldorf · The Settlers Online

- Led creative direction, LiveOps, development planning, content, progression, economy, monetization and engagement for a product with 50M+ registered players.
- Owned roadmaps and releases with production, engineering, art, UI/UX, QA, analytics, community, marketing, publishing and external art partners.
- Drove the turnaround of a title considered for sunset into a profitable long-running live service, delivering 50% YoY EBIT growth across three consecutive fiscal years while protecting player trust and product quality.
- Designed cost-efficient production and outsourcing approaches and aligned the team through changing constraints.

Professional experience continued

Apr 2018 - Mar 2019

Game and Monetization Designer

Ubisoft Blue Byte · Düsseldorf · The Settlers Online

- Designed systems, economies, campaigns and monetization features; applied pricing psychology to offers, perceived value and payer behavior.
- Designed and led recurring LiveOps events; selected YoY results included +58.7% revenue, +20.2% paying users, +37.4% payer conversion and +31.6% ARPPU despite lower monthly active users.
- Created a complete end-game campaign from scratch, defining new mechanics, progression and resource sinks; led XML scripting and hands-on content implementation.
- Designed LiveOps monetization systems that increased paid-currency spending by 185% year over year.

Nov 2015 - Mar 2018

Junior Game Designer

Ubisoft Blue Byte · Düsseldorf · Multiple projects and internal tools

- Worked on the original Settlers 8 development before its redesign; designed mechanics, systems, content, quests and UX flows, with prototypes and implementation documentation.
- Pioneered procedural map and content generation approaches at Ubisoft Blue Byte, creating the PILGRIM procedural-design framework for scalable content creation; this work later informed a publicly funded Ubisoft technology initiative.
- Participated in user research for Far Cry 5, gaining experience in structured player research and development feedback; contributed to tutorial and onboarding design for For Honor.
- Member of the Ubisoft-wide Overclock PC Expert initiative; participated in BB Academy and the employee council.

Feb 2015 - Oct 2015

Worldwide Payment and Support Coordinator

Ubisoft Blue Byte · Düsseldorf · Payment customer relations across Blue Byte games

- Led and coordinated a team of 25+ support agents handling payment customer relations for Blue Byte games across regional teams and external providers.
- Investigated payment and service issues with development and partners, maintaining service quality and improving cross-regional processes.

Professional experience continued

Feb 2014 - Oct 2015

Lead Game Designer and Project Lead

Independent side project · Düsseldorf · Alongside professional employment

- Formed and led a small indie team, owning project direction and game design.
- Organized collaboration infrastructure, development timelines and milestones, connecting creative decisions with production planning.

Jun 2014 - Oct 2014

Worldwide Payment and Support Coordinator

Ubisoft Blue Byte · Düsseldorf · Might and Magic Heroes Online

- Coordinated and led worldwide customer support across more than a dozen markets and language regions.
- Aligned regional support operations and communication around player needs and service workflows.

Apr 2012 - Feb 2015

Lead Customer Support Specialist

Ubisoft Blue Byte · Düsseldorf · The Settlers Online and Ubisoft online games

- Led and coached support specialists in direct player relations, onboarding, quality and service workflows; handled priority escalations and VIP player cases.
- Translated player feedback on UX, product pain points and live-service issues into reports for development and community teams; maintained response standards and Jira issue records.
- Coached the contracted Respondez team on site in Hartlepool, UK, in November 2013; advised on workflows, team motivation and operations, shared best practices and delivered a training lecture.

Oct 2011 - Apr 2012

Customer Support Specialist

Factor V for Ubisoft Blue Byte · Cologne · The Settlers Online

- Handled direct player and customer relations for The Settlers Online, working daily with player expectations, frustrations, motivations and live-game problems.
- Built firsthand insight into player behavior, UX pain points and retention drivers that later informed Game Design, player engagement, LiveOps, user research and product decisions.

Sep 2008;

Nov 2009 - Feb 2010

Game Tester

Ubisoft Blue Byte · Düsseldorf · Part-time during B.Sc. Game Design studies

- Performed gameplay and quality-assurance testing for Anno 1404 - Venice.
- Gained early production and release-quality experience while completing a Game Design degree.

Core expertise and design practice

Direction & Leadership

Game Direction · Creative Direction · Design Leadership · Team Building · Coaching · Multidisciplinary Leadership

Product & Live Service

Product Design · Product Strategy · Positioning · Roadmaps · LiveOps · Retention · Engagement · Progression

Player Experience

Player & Games Psychology · Player Motivation · User Research · UX · Tutorial Design · Onboarding / FTUE

Game Design Craft

Game Design Methodology · Rational Game Design · Rational Level Design · Worldbuilding · Procedural Content Generation

Systems & Commercial Design

Systems Design · Economy Design · Monetization · Pricing Psychology · Offer Design · Rewards

Production & Validation

Prototyping · Playtesting · AI-Assisted Prototyping & Production · Workflow Automation · KPI-driven Design · Experimentation · Analytics · Platform Certification · Release Strategy

Applied design methods include Flow Theory and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) for player motivation.

Tools & Independent Development

Production · Jira, Confluence, Excel, Word and PowerPoint.

Technical · XML, scripting, APIs and automation; working familiarity with C#, C++, Java and ActionScript.

Engines & Visual Tools · Unity, Unreal Engine, Godot, Snowdrop, Photoshop, GIMP, Blender, 3ds Max and SketchUp.

Independent Development · Unity/Godot prototypes, systemic design, local generative pipelines, image-to-3D workflows and deterministic validation.

AI-Assisted Development & Production · Concept creation, game, level and systems design, rapid prototyping, development support, debugging, QA and validation, workflow automation, generative asset production, image and video generation, research, documentation and presentations.

Education

2007 - 2011 Bachelor of Science in Game Design

Mediadesign University of Applied Sciences, Düsseldorf · Final grade 1.7

2006 - 2007 Mathematics studies

University of Bonn · Computer Science as secondary subject

Languages

German · Native
English · Fluent professional proficiency

Early Research Experience

2008 IPerG European Research Project

Fraunhofer FIT

Worked on an experimental pervasive-game research project, exploring early mobile and QR-code-based interaction concepts. Participated in the Interference game event, gaining practical exposure to games research and experimental interaction technology.

Industry contribution and development

Industry Contribution, Teaching & Speaking

Teaching practice spans structured game design methods, worldbuilding and player experience.

Jun 2019 Masterclass instructor

Design Methods to Improve Every Game ·
Game Base Saar

2025 Podcast panel guest

Leadership in LiveOps and Player Engagement · Evo
Gaming Podcast

2023 Podcast guest

The Role of Art and Design in Player Experience · Evo
Gaming Podcast

Jan 2023 Conference speaker

Gaming and Animation Confex

Mar 2022 Conference talk

Evolving Genres and Opening Core Genres to the Masses
· Hamburg Games Conference

2020 - 2022 Game Design, Worldbuilding & Image Editing workshops

Nov 2021 Jury member

Game Award Saar

2019 - 2020 Mentor

Ubisoft Gaming School

2019 - 2020 Jury member

Acagamics Game Award

Feb 2018 Keynote speaker

Game Design and UX for VR · SGDC, Technical University
Ilmenau

Professional Development

Game Design & UX

2019 **Worldbuilding** · Erwan Le Breton

2018 **UX** · Bastian Ehl

2017 **Game Balance** · Sebastian Bombera

2017 **Content Design** · Zoltan Meszaros

2017 **UX Design Techniques** · LinkedIn Learning

2015 **Game Design Methods** · Andreas Suika

2015 **Rational Game and Level Design** · Eric Couzian

Product & Monetization

2019 **Monetization Experts Round Table** · Ubisoft

Leadership & Communication

2020 **Leadership** · Olesen Kommunikation

2019 **Non-Verbal Communication** · Olesen
Kommunikation

2019 **Conflict Management** · Olesen Kommunikation

2017 **Success Influence System** · Piero Cioni

2017 **Body Language for Leaders** · LinkedIn Learning

2016 **Communication** · Olesen Kommunikation

2014 **From Employee to Leader** · Chamber of Industry
and Commerce, IHK Düsseldorf

2012 **Business English** · Mediadesign University of
Applied Sciences

Production & Technical

2018 **Advanced Jira** · Yuro Olivier

2016 **Programming** · BB Academy