LIONBRIDGE

PLAYERS GONNA PLAY:

THE MAKING OF A LIONBRIDGE GAME TESTER

A LOVE OF GAMES ONLY GOES SO FAR

LOADING

It's 1988, and you're good at video games. Really, really good at video games. When it comes to mastering all the moves on your Commodore 64, no one's better. Then 25 years go by, and you find yourself at a crossroads. On the one hand, you could continue on the path that's led you as far from that Commodore 64 as imaginable. On the other, you just discovered that game testing is a thing.

Could you bring back that game-lovin' feelin'?

PERSONALIZATION STARTS WITH LANGUAGE

Welcome to the life of Piotr Jasinski,
Lionbridge game tester in Warsaw, Poland.

In 2013, Piotr found himself at an unusual fork in the road. He had a choice: he could keep teaching Polish literary classics to public schoolchildren, or he could respond to a Lionbridge job posting seeking game testers. Curiosity won.

"I assumed games were tested—but I didn't know much about it," recalls Piotr. "It turns out [game testing] is far, far more complicated and important than I could have imagined."

The hiring managers at Lionbridge Gaming appreciated Piotr's gaming skills, but they were truly awestruck by his attention to detail. During his interview, Piotr was asked about teaching classic Polish literature. It soon became clear that he had a knack for retaining even the most minute details. His obsessive attention to detail caught the hiring managers' attention.

"It turns out being good at gaming is one of the least important characteristics of being a good game tester," Piotr explains, now six years into his tenure at Lionbridge. "Patience isn't just a virtue—it's a necessity. I've spent weeks working through the same part of the same game to ensure it runs flawlessly."

Michael Friend, Senior Director of Global Games Testing, echoes this sentiment. He explains, "The Lionbridge process is incredibly detailed and accurate—from detailed certification testing in a wide variety of geographies to automation that generates coverage for large test matrices. At the same time, we're testing every part of the game organically. Testers get a 'feel' for which areas will benefit from the most focus. Need scale? If a game is designed to have 100 gamers playing simultaneously, we have 100 gamers play it simultaneously. There's no substitute for real-world testing—and it takes time and patience."

If patience is a necessity for game testers, scale is a necessity for game-testing companies—and this is where Lionbridge Gaming demonstrates its prowess. The company's network of game-testing labs spans the world, connected by knowledge-sharing tools that allow game testers to communicate and collaborate in real time. It also gives clients something unprecedented: a dedicated team within an hour of their time zone—whatever that time zone might be.

WHAT DO GAME TESTERS DO?

Simply put, game testers break companies' games, so their customers can't. Game developers and publishers hire game testers to make sure their games are as fast, engaging, and bug-free as possible for every user in every market and every language.

FOLLOW THE SUN

As the sun sets in Warsaw, Steffen Strohmann has just finished his mid-morning caffeine refill at Lionbridge's game testing headquarters in Costa Rica, 6,300 miles westward.

This is a testament to Lionbridge's "Follow the Sun" philosophy. "Wherever our clients are, we are," says Steffen. "When they need to talk, we're there to pick up the phone."

Case in point: Lionbridge is rapidly expanding its Boise, Idaho testing lab to support a growing roster of West Coast customers. Michael Friend is supervising that expansion.

"This is a big one," explains Michael. Within a month this place will have expanded to over 100 game testers and test leads. The place will be buzzing with energy. It's a complex endeavor; it's not just hiring and expanding the space. It's ensuring every component—human and machine—is fine-tuned to integrate into our established, proven systems, our secure global test lab structure, our Business Intelligence models. On the machine side, it's also having the right specialized equipment at scale and integrating into our partners' systems for seamless testing and reporting. We work collaboratively with our clients, and we've built an ideal system to accomplish this."

Gaming controller in hand, Steffen Strohmann gets into the details. "We've been working on our current project for a year—because that's what it takes to make the game right. We test, we try to break it, we log the errors—we suggest ways for the developers to fix it. It's more analysis and data sharing than game-playing." In fact, it's not uncommon for a Lionbridge team of game testers to find many thousands of things that need to be fixed in a single game.

"Games have become unbelievably complex," explains Steffen's colleague Carolina Montero in Costa Rica. "Imagine all the variables—all the possibilities that a character could encounter. Every move creates new possibilities, and every possibility has to be tested and retested, taking into account all the possibilities that preceded it and all that can come after it. A flaw in a game is unacceptable—and we make sure there aren't any."

Precision is one side of the coin. Speed is the other. As development cycles accelerate, so too do content release cycles—and Lionbridge is poised to tackle the challenge head-on. "Games have features this week that didn't exist last week," explains Lionbridge Gaming Managing Director Tugdual Delisle. "New characters, new episodes, new weapons, new story arcs. That requires constant testing. We need to work everywhere in the world to guarantee the consistent quality of the product. That's what consumers are buying: quality. We make that happen."

WHAT GAME TESTING SERVICES DOES LIONBRIDGE OFFER?

FUNCTIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE TESTING
Verify game mechanics, performance, stability, playability, graphics, balance, platform certification, and device compatibility in secure test lab facilities with Functional QA testing services on mobile, console, PC, and streaming platforms

TEST AUTOMATION
Get more test coverage done in less time by applying the latest in game testing automation methods—bots for multiplayer simulation, crash logging, soak testing, scripting, physics evaluation, screen captures, and more

LOCALIZATION QUALITY ASSURANCE TESTING
Meet player expectations for bug-free experiences worldwide with testing of translation accuracy, user interface/text controls, VO sync and triggers, localized mechanics, string formatting, and geopolitical checks on localized builds

IN-MARKET TESTING
Verify the "last mile" functionality and performance of your globalized apps with local market devices, mobile operators, ISPs, and payment providers with in-market testing in over 80 locales

TEST ANALYSIS
Put our business insight analysts and real-time metrics to work for you. Identify and analyze patterns in testing and apply those insights to optimize schedules, resources, quality, and budget

NOT JUST LOCAL. *NATIVE*

One of the most important aspects of game testing is understanding your market. The market you know because it's your home, and no amount of research could teach you how to live, breathe, and feel that culture.

"It's slang, it's a full cultural perspective, it's contextual understanding, it's history. And it's a lot of gut instinct," says SongYee Han, a game tester and localization expert in Lionbridge's Beijing office. "It's the deepest of deep understandings about a place and its people."

Beyond understanding their own culture, game testers must understand the culture within the game—grasping not only the characters' personalities but also their relationship with each other. "In many Asian languages, there are formal and informal ways of speaking," says SongYee. "We have to make sure the character, the situation, and the surrounding circumstances all work properly together with the correct cultural intonations."

Getting into specifics, SongYee continues: "Right now we're testing a game for the Korean market, and it's critical to get the nuances of the language correct, so the game feels native. We have to take into account every character's age, background, and family history—and also each character's relationship with the person playing the game. Language definitely matters."

And the risk of getting it wrong?

"There's huge risk. It's not a matter of translation just being wrong—it can be offensive," cautions Steffen, back in Costa Rica. "We can all cite examples we've heard or seen firsthand where a game developer didn't catch an error in their native language, and it can sometimes be horrifying. We make sure that doesn't happen."
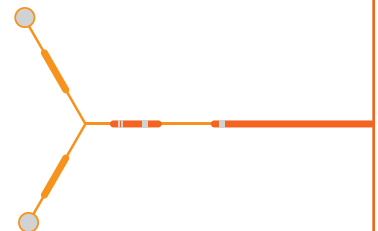
ENTER THE ROBOTS

While humans are great at determining nuanced meanings and spotting language faux pas, Lionbridge game testers depend on technology for consistency.

" Our linguistic tools use sophisticated AI algorithms," explains Warsaw's Piotr. "The algorithms cross-check translations and ensure they're using the language the client expects."

Proprietary machine intelligence can also help predict which areas of a game are likely to have issues, so Lionbridge can allocate human talent to solve them most effectively.

Putting a fine point on it, Steffen says: "Artificial intelligence is a critical component, and we've invested a tremendous amount to create the smartest there is. But there's no substitute for actual human intelligence. Game testing is a job that will never be outsourced to robots. There's just too much heart in it."

Back in Lionbridge's Warsaw game testing lab, there's buzz about the rumored release of a retro version of the classic Commodore 64.

"I'd love to play it," sighs a nostalgic Piotr. "It's nice to take a break from game testing once in a while and just *play*."

READY TO TAKE YOUR GAME TESTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

Ready to take your game testing to the next level? Lionbridge brings the highest quality and most precise testing to every game you develop—everywhere it will be played.

CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PEOPLE AND TECHNOLOGIES THAT MAKE IT POSSIBLE.

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