

MIGHT & MAGIC HEROES VII

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q&A respondents:

Gary Paulini (Game Producer) and Stephan Winter (Limbic Entertainment CEO)

How long have you been working on Might & Magic Heroes VII?

[Gary] The discussions about the project started in late 2012. Around March 2013 we began *Might & Magic Heroes VII* pre-production with Limbic Entertainment. We are now roughly 15 months into production.

What was your main motivation for developing Heroes VII?

[Gary] *Might & Magic Heroes VI* was a good game, but not without its flaws. To create the Heroes game that the fans want we decided to start anew, with an experienced studio (Limbic Entertainment) and a tried-and-tested technology (the Unreal Engine 3).

Our main ambition with this game is to deliver the best Heroes experience ever and to do so we felt that first and foremost we needed to go back to the very essence of Heroes.

Now that we have a solid game architecture combined with the depth of the Might & Magic universe, we know we can tell players captivating stories and deliver to our fans the Heroes game they all deserve.

Can you tell me more about the studio in charge of the development of Heroes VII?

[Gary] Limbic Entertainment is the development studio currently working on *Heroes VII*. They are based in Germany, close to Frankfurt. They have been working with Ubisoft Partners for many years and in that time we've managed to establish a great collaboration with their talented team of multicultural developers. The team is very experienced, it has a good understanding of the Might & Magic IP, and it is really passionate about strategy gaming and Heroes titles.

Limbic worked first on *Heroes VI* post launch and then went back to the roots of the franchise with "Might & Magic X – Legacy" which was released in January 2014. During the development of this classic Might & Magic game, a second team of Limbic developers was formed to start working on *Heroes VII*.

What are the main features you have updated in the formula?

[Stephan] Basically, our goal is to take the best out of the previous Heroes titles and build *Heroes VII* from there. Of course we're also bringing in new features or new ideas without compromising the spirit of Heroes, such as more interactions on the Adventure Map allowing more strategies. For now we won't delve too much into the details but we have brought in hundreds of small improvements which will help to perfect the formula. All in all we believe that we have the perfect mix of proven features, adjusted ones and new ones.

Another important development change is that we are developing *Heroes VII* with the Unreal Engine 3. This enables us to focus on game architecture, features, gameplay and narrative instead of worrying about the underlying technology.

In addition, one of the main parts of our vision for this new Heroes title is to empower our players wherever we can. To do so we have designed powerful yet accessible tools to put at their disposal. Our fans have repeatedly requested these features, and we consider these tools as being part of meeting their expectations.

Finally to bring this concept even further, we have designed a unique community platform—spoiler ahead!—allowing our fans to create avatars, access info, influence the game, create and share content, and get rewards.

What did you learn from the previous Heroes' installments Ubisoft developed?

[Stephan] From a developer perspective, Limbic Entertainment learnt that Heroes games are challenging productions. The nature of these games is that they are made of multiple layers of gameplay which have to fit each other. In a Heroes game you have to make sure at every single stage of the production process that the adventure map and the combat map, along with the economic and the RPG dimensions constitute a coherent structure. Such challenges make working on such a game very exciting!

[Gary] We also learnt (the hard way, let's face it) that we should invest more time in tools for our players to create content, but also for our development teams to maintain an effective level of support once the game is released. With *Heroes VII* we have anticipated those needs and we are ready to offer both to players and developers the means to make their wildest ideas a reality in the game.

What Heroes VII story is all about? What is your main inspiration?

[Stephan] The story of *Heroes VII* depicts the civil war that changed the ruling dynasty of the Holy Empire. The Empress' murder has left an empty throne, a realm in flames and too many hungry rivals intent on claiming it. Our main character Ivan, the Duke of Griffin, is the only one who may restore peace and prosperity. On his way to claiming the throne, Ivan will learn what it means to become a true leader - including all the tough choices and consequences it implies - with the help of "The Council".

"The Council" consists of six councilors who have their own agendas, have their own backgrounds, and have their own goals. Each councilor represents one of the playable factions and with each campaign Ivan will learn about these factions, their uniqueness, and eventually how they can impact his own quest to the throne.

We obviously do not want to spoil the *Heroes VII* story, but you will know more soon!

You mentioned councilors. What is their role and how do they shape the game experience?

[Stephan] Each councilor represents one of the six unique factions. During the *Heroes VII* campaign each of them will tell Ivan ancestral stories that shaped the fate of their people. Each councilor's story results in an important lesson Ivan will learn that will help him fight his way to the throne and face his destiny.

The interesting thing with the councilors is that the game campaign is structured around a Hub allowing the player to play the 6 different campaigns in the order of his choosing.

With the game announcement at GamesCom, we heard about The Shadow Council. What is The Shadow council all about? And to which extent does it differ from the "classic" council?

[Stephan] The Shadow Council concept is probably the biggest community empowerment we have ever done. Starting today we would like to invite fans, players and people new to the Heroes franchise to join us and live a unique experience which will influence the game's development.

There are decisions to be made that will forge the final game experience forever, and we put some of these choices into your hands. As an example we picked four factions we want to have in the game but we offer you the power to vote for the two remaining factions. It's a huge decision that deeply impacts the game development, affecting everything from the story line to the environments to the available creatures and their abilities.

Beyond this "Voting" feature, The Shadow Council is a unique platform where you will be given the opportunity to get the latest info on the game, interact with the community and the dev team, play and progress to level up and unlock exclusive rewards. More info on The Shadow Council will be available soon!

So please don't miss the opportunity to join The Shadow Council and actively participate in the game's development--ultimately helping you to play the Heroes game of your dreams!

To join The Shadow Council you simply have to visit www.mmh7.com website and log-in with your Uplay account.

Why did you opt for a co-creation development process?

[Stephan] We are not developing in an ivory tower. We have many team members who are either active community members themselves or have been board lurkers for many years now.

In 2012 when we worked on the patches for *Heroes VI* we followed all the discussions from the Heroes community including those related to the faction choices, the random map generator, simultaneous turn gameplay, the skill wheel, the map editor and many other topics.

All these discussions already had a huge influence on *Heroes VII* pre-production, but we wanted to bring the concept to the next level. In the end we came with this idea of "The Shadow Council", a platform dedicated to the players by gathering feedback from the whole Heroes community. In this way we get continual inspiration, helping to nurture the production.

What are the advantages and drawbacks of such a development process?

[Stephan] The main advantage of such a process is that we are constantly challenged by fans. We always need to question ourselves about decisions, design choices that have been made, iterating and reinventing the way we conceived games. On our side it also pushed us to be as transparent as possible about on-going decisions and stuff we are working on.

The main drawback is that we have to constantly anticipate what's going on. Depending on the feedback we receive we have to adapt our development schedule. As a consequence we need to be as flexible as possible to limit the impact on both project timing and budget. Another frustrating aspect of this process is that given the huge amount of opinions we have to deal with, we can't simply answer every request. That's why we consider the voting feature as the most democratic tool to take into account players' opinion.

Will Heroes VII propose an online multiplayer experience?

[Stephan] Of course! Skirmish and Duel modes are already in!
Ah and by the way, Hot Seat mode is still there! More stuff about multiplayers mode will be revealed soon.

Gary Paulini & Stephan Winter