

THE WISDOM OF FUN: HARNESSING GAMES & PLAY FOR USEFUL WORK

Organized by VAGUE INNOVATION, LLC

HUMANS are habitual problem-solvers, so obsessed with puzzles and patterns that for millennia we've posed riddles and created games to fill our "idle time." But these obsessive problem-solving habits are traditionally seen as a *distraction* from the "real work" of business, scholarship and public policy.

That is no longer true... if it ever was.

This is the first of a series of two open-format workshops scheduled for 2010, where we'll gather to explore *the new ways game play is becoming "useful" work*—useful for people and institutions.

In April, 2010 please join us for an open-format meeting in which the attendees set the schedule and specific focus for each session. In this first of three workshops, we hope to discuss

- **immersive economic games** and **MMORPGs** with developing social norms and virtual economies *larger in actual value* than some real nations;
- **serious games** designed to use humans' innate skills to support search and optimization;
- **prediction markets** and related **collective intelligence systems** that harness the wisdom of crowds for robust business decision, forecasting and policy-making;
- **crowdsourcing** systems that divide up otherwise insurmountable complex problems so that thousands of distributed *human* solvers can incrementally attack them;
- **agent-based simulations** used to understand emergent behavior, and game-inspired classical **artificial intelligence systems** for exploring decision-making and analytics;
- changes in the **business and technology of game design** within the entertainment industry;
- Second Life and similar **game-like virtual platforms**, and the social worlds developing there, in which real institutions are struggling to discover their role.

Each of our workshops is a day of *presentations, discussions, demonstrations, question-and-answer sessions...* and above all *conversation*. The breadth of our topic leaves room for you to join us if you're interested in public policy, 3D graphics, sociology, social networks, business planning, decision support, artificial intelligence, entrepreneurial opportunities, history of technology, programming and software design, game design, economics, diversity, organizational behavior, open source technology, social psychology, economic development, innovation, user experience, complex adaptive systems, management science, modeling, marketing—*or if you're just curious*. You don't need to be a presenter, manager, game-player, programmer, or academic to join us: just be willing to contribute and further the discussion as we explore the growing practicality of game-play.

The first workshop in this three-part series will be held **during April 2010** (details forthcoming) at the **Workantile Exchange at 118 S. Main Street in Ann Arbor, Michigan**. Unlike many meetings you may have attended, the *entire day* will be composed of "break-out sessions". We'll convene at 11AM, 2PM and 5PM to coordinate discussions and share what we've seen and learned in small groups. We expect the event to include a mix of a formal presentations, group discussions, technical workshops, and demonstrations. **All attendees are encouraged to attend the 11AM planning session where the day's schedule will be set collaboratively.**

Catered lunch and an afternoon snack will be provided.

WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

The second workshop is tentatively scheduled for November 2010—even if you can't attend in April, please help us identify good weekends in the autumn when you might join us. If you have any questions or comments, please email us at unitedtalk@vagueinnovation.com. We encourage you to suggest colleagues and friends who might be interested in joining us, or propose topics we might have missed.

ABOUT UNITED TALK

UNITED TALK is a project of Vague Innovation, LLC. It's an open-ended series of conferences and meetings which differ from most you may have attended—not because they're open-format (like a [BarCamp](#)), but because **our explicit goal is bringing people together productively who would not otherwise have met**. Past the obvious benefits of sparking engaging conversation about innovative ideas, *we aim to remove obstructive social boundaries between stakeholders who haven't yet discovered one another*.

COMMUNITY AS DELIVERABLE

When you pre-register for a UNITED TALK workshop, we'll publish a brief summary of your interests and ideas for sessions. Throughout the workshop we'll provide open channels for publishing notes, images, video and social media feeds, both for internal coordination and our online audience. During the final session of the workshop, *we'll decide collectively* which of the many possible “physical deliverables” we'll create from our experience: printed articles or a book, online community or edited blog, software or document repository... or a new company or nonprofit institution.

ORGANIZERS

Vague Innovation, LLC is an Ann Arbor business development firm that supports non-employer companies and social entrepreneurs in Michigan and the upper Midwest. We help consultants, contractors, artists, craftspeople, scholars, engineers, philanthropists, investors, designers and mavens engaged in “project-driven work”: people pursuing innovative ideas for communities and products *that they wish they could use for themselves*. We support small businesses by helping them discover and join unexpected communities of peers, who can collectively offset the risks of a modern independent worklife, and help one another realize success.

The logo for Vague Innovation features the word "VAGUE" in a large, bold, sans-serif font above the word "INNOVATION" in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font. The letters are black.

[Workantile Exchange](#) is a membership-based coworking community working together in a shared space. We offer space for meetings and work in downtown Ann Arbor, Michigan. The space is available for member-run and public workshops and classes with educational and practical focus.

The logo for Workantile Exchange features the words "WORKANTILE" and "EXCHANGE" in a bold, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized orange and white geometric pattern consisting of interlocking shapes.

contact *William Tozier* at unitedtalk@vagueinnovation.com

734.477.9085