

**DISRUPT NYC**

Extra Early Bird Discount Has Been Extended [Get 40% Off Your Tickets Now](#) ▶

# How This Teen Turned Her High School Internship Into A Game Design Career

Posted Jan 17, 2015 by [Kyle Russell \(@kylebrussell\)](#)

**10.7k**  
SHARES



Paulina Raguimov never expected to get paid to make video games when she walked into her high school's career fair at 16.

She played them, sure. But when she walked up to the [JumpStart](#) booth to chat about the internships they had available, she had absolutely no experience with making games. "I didn't even have a resume, I had only just become eligible to get a job at all," she told me last week.

Despite that, she liked what she heard and applied for the position. When she got to the interview, they didn't ask about her lack of experience or place too much emphasis on her grades, instead focusing on her interests and personality. "I got lucky," she says. "I was the worst student until I got the job."

Raguimov's first role at JumpStart was as a production intern. Her responsibilities included quality assurance, the job that sounds appealing when you're 12 but in reality is incredibly dull: endlessly playing games to find their bugs. She was taught to use bug-tracking tools and how to update the game studio's documents.

The team also made time to teach her how to describe gameplay mechanics in a design document and to use their custom tools built on top of the Unity game engine. Nine months after starting at the education game studio, she was struggling in her chemistry class when something clicked.

She was looking at the periodic table and its grouping, thinking about Match-3 games (she had been playing a lot of [Candy Crush](#)), when she had the epiphany that she could combine the concepts to teach the basics of chemical groupings and reactions in a fun way.

She started building out the concept in her own time, using what she had learned on the job to piece together a 30-page design document. She showed the idea to the studio's curriculum designer, who really liked it and passed it up to her boss. Who then passed it to the CEO of the company. "Suddenly," Raguimov says, "it was a top priority to get it out." As this was happening, the studio promoted her from intern to production assistant.

Raguimov and a team were given about two-and-a-half months to roll the game out. It wasn't going to launch as a standalone title; instead, the team built it as a mini-game within [School of Dragons](#), the studio's massively-multiplayer online game based on Dreamworks Animation's "How to Train Your Dragons" universe.



*Paulina got to meet “How to Train Your Dragon” star Jay Baruchel at Wondercon.*

It killed it. A month after the mini-game’s release, JumpStart CEO David Lord decided they were going to commit even more resources to the concept. It would be a full-on mobile title, with actual level progression and some of the more complex gameplay mechanics Raguimov had thought up in her original design document but weren’t feasible to quickly build into the first release.

The team didn’t simply take her idea and run with it, either. She got to lead the creative side of the entire project: while she spent time constructing levels, artists would come to her and ask, “Hey, does this match up to what you were imagining?” Raguimov gained experience managing a team of remote programmers, who she would send GIFs and videos to illustrate exactly how the game should feel to play. “It felt awesome to have all that responsibility,” she says. “I’ve been craving it ever since.”

The end result was [How To Train Your Dragon: Alchemy Adventure](#). Out since fall, the game still gets updates and has received an average of five stars from reviews of all versions on the App Store.





Raguimov is officially a Game Designer at JumpStart, working on the studio's upcoming flagship title. She can't give any details about it, though she did say, "After a year on that last game, I couldn't look at Match-3s for the longest time."

Now 19, she's working at the studio full-time. She tried to apply for a college program that she could do while still keeping the job, but was turned down for the student loans needed to afford the classes. While she says college could still be in her future, she's happy to keep gaining actual experience at the job she'd like to do going forward.

Down the road, Raguimov hopes to start her own game development studio. She already knows the kinds of games she'd like to make. "Mobile is always a good place because you can reach so many people. But I also like handheld games on the 3DS and PlayStation Vita. They're great platforms for the games I like: RPGs, beat em' ups, hack n' slash. I really like puzzle games with RPG elements on mobile."

10.7k  
SHARES

8,702 1,067 385 554 0 0 0

f Share t Tweet in Share g+ r J e F

### Recommended For You



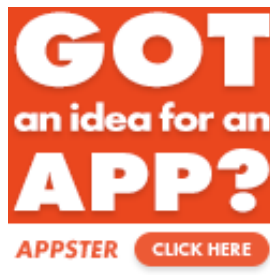
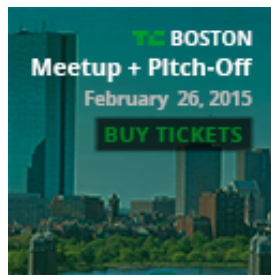
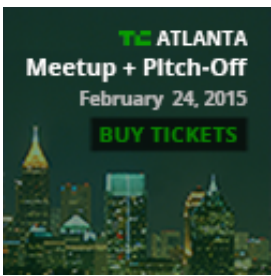
- 1. [Apple Will Spend \\$848 Million Building A Massive...](#) a week ago [techcrunch.com](#) [Gravity.com](#) [Greg Kumparak](#) [Greg Kumparak](#) TC



- 2. [Raspberry Pi Sales Pass 5 Million](#) 4 hours ago [techcrunch.com](#) [AOL Mail](#) [Natasha Lomas](#) [Natasha Lomas](#) Europe



ADVERTISEMENT



ADVERTISEMENT

7-8 ก.พ.นี้ **เปิดโซนใหม่**  
**SKY VIEW** 3 ชั้นบนสุด  
พบห้องสวยทุกมุม  
พร้อมโปรโมชั่นพิเศษ\*  
**เริ่ม 3.9 ล้าน\***  
\*เงื่อนไขเป็นไปตามบริษัทฯ กำหนด  
apthai.com | 01623

---

**CrunchBase**



---

**Newsletters**



---

**Related Videos**



Add a comment...

Comment



**Dustin Bledsoe** · Top Commenter · Johnson County Community College

My future wife ♥ We could make games together instead of go on dates!

Reply · Like · 25 · January 17 at 7:54pm

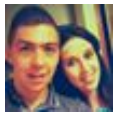


**Paco Álvarez Lojo** · Works at Mano Autoexistente Azul


¿This is the comment with most "likes"?

 Reply · Like · 15 · January 19 at 11:21am


---

 **Dean Meehan** · Top Commenter · St. Colman's College  
Like (y)  
Reply · Like · January 20 at 9:25am


---

 **Douglas Finley** · Top Commenter · Georgetown University  
Great Article  
Reply · Like · 9 · January 17 at 2:41pm


---

 **Glen Watson** · Top Commenter · Charlotte, North Carolina  
Your credit has to be a total disaster to be turned down for student loans, I don't believe that excuse. Someone told her not to go college. Most people in the game industry know that talent always outweighs education.  
Reply · Like · 7 · Edited · January 17 at 5:57pm


---

 **Michael Sall** · Owner at FarmVille 2  
she makes too much money to get the loans - my guess.  
Reply · Like · 10 · January 17 at 6:12pm

---

 **Dustin Bledsoe** · Top Commenter · Johnson County Community College  
\*\*Semi-Rant Warning\*\* This is totally true. I am a game designer and I get my job solely based on my portfolio, I've never been asked about any kind of education... of course it always does help to be able to say, 'ya, I also got taught a bunch of useless junk in college too, like they say, 'it shows that you see things through'. One problem with almost ALL schools that teach game design is that they use obsolete or outdated software and the teachers I had in the classes I took before dropping them all were all just teaching and not producing anything anymore, teaching techniques from a decade or more ago which can often be couter-productive, and these schools for the most part use obsolete crap like google sketchup and Blender, which are decent software on their own, but in game design there's mainly 3-4 3d software kits and no... [See More](#)  
Reply · Like · 12 · January 17 at 8:34pm


---

 **Glen Watson** · Top Commenter · Charlotte, North Carolina  
Michael Sall I've never see places like Sallie Mae turn down private education loan applications, they even have special creative education loans for things like game design programs. Private loans are also the last resort, you never want to take one if possible.  
Reply · Like · 1 · Edited · January 17 at 8:47pm


---

[View 11 more](#)


---

 **Aditya Vardhan** · Aditya PG College, Kakinada  
super.....Raguimov...you are the best example for talent.....  
Reply · Like · 1 · January 21 at 2:56am

---

 **Jon Torrens - Communication Coach**  
What an inspiring piece - she'll go far. Extra kudos for creating a great game that's also educational!  
Reply · Like · 1 · January 19 at 7:42am

---

 **Justin Chau** · New York, New York  
No programming experience or work experience, not the best or brightest student in her school, and we are to come away with this story is that she's somehow amazing? I tried pulling something like that and got sent away despite being self taught and competent. Something reeks of BS here.  
Reply · Like · January 26 at 7:52am

---

 **Chris GallaMaria**





<http://www.dorkly.com/post/27379/the-dorklyst-7-reasons-you-dont-want-to-work-in-the-video-game-industry>

Reply · Like · January 18 at 7:13pm

---



**Techpreneur Bernard** · Omama Academy Prima

exciting thing coming out of daily experiences, we can start recreating history in a more fun way.

Reply · Like · January 19 at 10:15am

---



**Scott Saren** · Lansing, Michigan

I wish there were opportunities like this in Michigan

Reply · Like · January 20 at 12:03pm

---



**Willson John** · Owner at I - Write - Professionals

Wow nice future of these childrens are bright.. <http://bit.ly/14WPYj8>

Reply · Like · January 19 at 3:52am

---



**Bolong Yu** · Top Commenter · Vestal Sr. High School

Lucky.... I wish an opportunity like that would come my way....

Reply · Like · January 18 at 7:33am

---



**Ivan Todorov Dimitrov** · Top Commenter · Wageningen University

Try starting as QA. There is close to no filter. If you have seen a PC and posses 1 opposing thumb on each hand it is going to work.

Reply · Like · 4 · January 18 at 4:48pm

---



**Keith Serxner**

Reminds me of a certain DkL I knew at Uni!

Reply · Like · January 19 at 10:03am

---

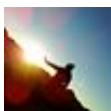


**Mike Dimarcello** · Port Saint Lucie, Florida

as a hopeful game story writer this is amazing!

Reply · Like · January 17 at 10:11pm

---



**Roy Ang** · Biz Dev Dude at E27

She might even be the CEO one day.

Reply · Like · January 17 at 10:05pm

---



**Eddy Edd**

getting paid to do what you love! you'll definitely do well (Y)

Reply · Like · January 19 at 5:00am

---



**Max Woolf** · Top Commenter · Carnegie Mellon University · 2,231 followers

...ok, is clickbait a new TechCrunch editorial policy now?

I'm pointing this out because it's unnecessary and it's detracting from the quality of the article.

Reply · Like · Edited · January 17 at 2:41pm

---



**Phil Nolan** · Top Commenter · Works at Freelance Artist

Well I'll say one thing. I see hundreds of shares listed for facebook but when you share in Google+ the number stays at zero.

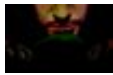
Reply · Like · 1 · January 17 at 3:05pm

---



**Chris Foye** · Top Commenter





Phil Nolan G+ has been messed up since day one, I get tons of likes but not one shows up on my profile.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · January 17 at 3:29pm



**Nitin Kapoor** · Top Commenter · Frameboxx Animation | Visual Effects · 131 followers

Even if it was clickbait, it surely help many to know about the possibilities in Gaming Industry...

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · January 17 at 10:13pm



**Zahir Albudairy** · أعددادية الجهاد للبينين at مدرس

I like the valley between your boobs !!!!!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · January 20 at 1:01pm

Facebook social plugin

UP NEXT

## How Yello Mobile Ate 61 Startups In One Year

Posted Jan 17, 2015

---

# CrunchBoard



## Crunch Network

News

TCTV

Events

CrunchBase

## About

Staff

Contact Us

Advertise With Us

Send Us A Tip

## International

China

Europe

Japan

---

## Follow TechCrunch

[!\[\]\(a870788d6ed9b8fd294b7654a8c8526b\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(18065afa4ef6662bca9f3f6088f7de30\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(b985170eefb48b9b3ef593e79310e8f5\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(65defa7fe6c24be84c2514c965593962\_img.jpg\)](#)

[!\[\]\(de95854c7ee024cfadc48187bbb781b2\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(cef08d8c15d8a8acd5e25ab0d65432c3\_img.jpg\)](#)

## TechCrunch Apps

## TechCrunch Daily

Latest headlines delivered to you daily

SUBSCRIBE

© 2013-2015 AOL Inc. All rights reserved.

[Aol Tech](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [About Our Ads](#) [Anti Harassment Policy](#) [Terms of Service](#)

Powered by [WordPress.com](#) VIP

Fonts by