

Marshall Smith

Carmel, CA · Remote — USA
mail@marshallsmith.com

Principal UX & Game Design Leader

Creative Direction | Player Experience | Prototyping

marshallsmith.com
linkedin.com/in/marshallsmith

Hands-on UX and game design leader with 20+ years creating games that connect with and entertain players. I bring together creative direction, player-centered design, rapid prototyping, and technical execution to turn ambitious ideas into intuitive, cohesive, and memorable experiences.

SELECTED IMPACT

- Worked as the connective designer between internal teams and external studios, giving direction that raised experience quality without taking over a title's creative vision.
- Set player-experience direction across more than a dozen shipped titles spanning card, word, puzzle, match, merge, bingo, social, and casual genres on mobile and web.
- Designed across the full audience range, from preschoolers on PBS Sprout to Adult Swim's late-night viewers, adapting onboarding and information density to each.
- Adapted established brands into games and marketing, among them LEGO, Hasbro, Crayola, Disney, Star Wars, Harry Potter, and the NBA, designing to each property's established tone and audience.
- Led UX for Blackout Bingo from concept through years of live operation to a Top 20 Free Apps ranking on the App Store.

CORE CAPABILITIES

Game UX and Player Flow · Creative Direction · Multi-Genre Game Design · Internal and External Studio Collaboration · Onboarding, Progression, and Navigation · Wireframes and Interactive Prototypes · Playtesting and Data-Informed Iteration · Cross-Disciplinary Leadership

EXPERIENCE

Founder & Principal Designer · Hightop Games

Mar 2026 – Present

Solo studio · Aces and Daily Reword · iOS and web · card, merge, puzzle, and word genres

- Designed, built, and launched two titles as a solo founder, owning player experience, visual design, engineering, App Store release, and live iteration.
- Used rapid prototypes to test mechanics, first-session flows, and interface decisions before committing to deeper production.
- Built AI-assisted tools for prototyping, creative production, playable ads, and analytics that shorten the distance between an idea and something playable.

Distinguished Game Developer & Creative Director · Big Run Studios

May 2019 – Mar 2026

Remote · mobile portfolio · card, puzzle, bingo, simulation, and casino genres

- Led game design and player experience for Blackout Bingo, helping define the skill-based bingo category and carrying the game through years of live operation as the studio's flagship title.
- Directed player experience across a widening slate: six card and puzzle titles including Solitaire, Hearts, Big Cooking, and Farmsweeper, plus Sweeps Night's licensed games and original mini-games.
- Reviewed every title at every development stage, turning player-flow, onboarding, and friction problems into changes teams could implement immediately.
- Set shared quality practices and built internal tools that sped up iteration, prototyping, QA, and implementation across the portfolio, working with an international team across time zones.

EXPERIENCE, CONTINUED**Founder & Creative Director** · Kid Magic

Jan 2009 – May 2019

Independent studio · games, microsites, and campaign experiences for film, television, and game launches

- Created games and interactive experiences for partners including Adult Swim, HBO, TNT, TBS, PBS Sprout, Nickelodeon, Xbox, Sony, Disney, Hasbro, Crayola, and NCSoft, working to each property's tone and each partner's production model.
- Worked hands-on from concept and experience design through visual design, build, and launch, bringing in contract specialists as scope required.
- Shipped browser-based games across desktop and mobile web, holding a consistent experience together over the fragmented browsers and devices of the era.
- Delivered against fixed theatrical, broadcast, and launch dates, making clear creative decisions quickly while aligning clients and production partners.

Principal UX Designer · Zynga

Oct 2011 – Jan 2018

San Francisco · multiple studios and titles · social, simulation, card, match, puzzle, and word genres on web and mobile

- Served on a company-wide principal committee focused on technical innovation, research, shared practices, cross-studio collaboration, and experience quality across Zynga's portfolio.
- Led FarmVille's six-person UX team, partnering with product, engineering, art, game design, and analytics on one of the largest live games of its era.
- Shaped Zynga Poker features including Leagues and player progression, designing around the social dynamics of a shared table.
- Designed the match game Puzzle Charms and prototyped CityVille mobile, alongside reviewing player flows and supporting designers on titles beyond my embedded teams.

Senior Designer · Cartoon Network / Adult Swim

Apr 2007 – May 2009

Atlanta · entertainment publishing · major Flash game destinations

- Designed and shipped games for two of the era's largest Flash game destinations, working with internal teams and external development studios on a continuous publishing schedule.
- Created award-winning digital and on-air marketing for the networks and for major licensed properties.

SELECTED TITLES**Blackout Bingo** — skill-based bingo, mobile**Sweeps Night** — slots and table games, mobile**Aces** — card merge puzzle, iOS and web**Solitaire · Hearts · Big Cooking · Farmsweeper** — card, puzzle, and cozy cooking simulation, mobile**FarmVille** — social simulation, web and mobile**Zynga Poker** — social card, web and mobile**Daily Reword** — word puzzle, web and mobile**Entertainment and campaign games** — Cartoon Network, Adult Swim, PBS Sprout, and others

TOOLS & METHODS

Unity UI Design and Development · Figma · Adobe Creative Suite · Wireframing and Interactive Prototyping · Playtesting · Analytics and Funnel Interpretation · Experience Reviews · C# · HTML/CSS/JavaScript · AI-Assisted Design, Marketing, and Production Tooling

EDUCATION

University of Maine · Business Administration, Marketing