



Player ID:
Daniel Dolui

Classification:
CEO and
Co-founder



Player profile

Player history

Daniel Dolui is the CEO and Co-founder of Wolcen Studio, a company that emerged into existence following a successful Kickstarter campaign. Along with Simon Majar, Daniel set out to create a dungeon crawler, an action role-playing game that tugged on the nostalgic roots of Diablo II. Using the money raised, they stayed true to their vision, and today, Daniel continues to drive the studio's commitment to becoming the best in building fun, beautiful and disruptive games.

Studio

<p>Nice 43°71'N 07°26'E</p> 	<p>Founded 2015</p> 	<p>Employees 60+</p> 
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One studio. One vision. A crowdfunded passion project.

Kickstarter has become a haven for gamers looking to invest in games that recapture the nostalgia of the past. Games that use modern technology to weave in the storylines, mechanics and the magic that first drew legions of players into their riveting webs. From board games like Gloomhaven—designed to offer players the ultimate in dungeon crawling control—to Wolcen: Lords of Mayhem, a game built specifically to recapture the extraordinary depth of Diablo II, these titles have been funded by gamers and fans who want something more than standard fare.



In 2015, Daniel Dolui and Simon Majar launched a Kickstarter for Wolcen: Lords of Mayhem. They wanted to build the ultimate isometric action role-playing game (RPG) focusing on the freedom of character development and exploration. Want to be a ranger with the magical prowess of a mage? No problem. Fancy the muscle of a tank while still wielding the skills of a squishy? Done. This new

approach plus the extraordinary visuals of the game and the gaming market's need for fresh isometric RPG content, turned the studio's dream into a hard and fast reality when the game launched in February 2020. Working in collaboration with AWS, Wolcen Studio was able to flex their game development muscles to create a rich game world capable of handling multiplayer engagement at scale.





“Kicking the story of our studio into action”

We wanted to create a modern hack and slash game that reignited all those old school gaming memories. Diablo II has been the reference game for this genre for the past 20 years. While we didn't want to just make another Diablo II, we did want to build this transformative and immersive gaming experience to remind people of the magic of that game. We chose Kickstarter as our platform in 2015 because it was a big thing at the time for gaming, and we

showcased a high-quality prototype of what we wanted to build. The response was extraordinary. We raised more than \$400,000, and were the biggest Kickstarter campaign in France at the time. This gave us the confidence we needed, and set the story of our studio in motion.

We didn't have any money of our own. And you need money for salaries, technology and development. This was the first challenge we had to overcome, which is why we decided to use Kickstarter. The second was to find the right people; to ensure the quality of the game never

slipped. Finding the right people at the right time was a long process, made tougher as we added in new features and had to learn new skills. When we decided to move to full multiplayer, for example, we had to slow down, so we could perfect the process and ensure the player experience was seamless.

There was no structure when we first started out because we were understaffed. One person could be working on three different parts of the game, and there were lots of opportunities for people to learn new skills. However, the result was

communication problems and limited visibility into how well the different parts of the game worked together, if at all. Today, the studio has almost doubled in size since we started—from 30 at the start to nearly 60—and now that everyone is in a specific role, we have a far stronger team. People appreciate having the time and space to dig deep into a topic or explore the full functionality of a feature. This is what we believe is key to our long-term success, and to ensuring we really refine all the mechanics and features of our games.



“Gamers need infinite ways to crush their enemies”

We built the kind of game that we wanted to play; that created the experiences we wanted to share with other people and that told the story we wanted to tell. Our goal was to create the next big game mythology, while also ensuring what we built was sustainable and would stay a part of gaming culture well into the future. At first, the dream that drove Wolcen was a bunch of people trying to create the best game possible—now we want to establish ourselves as a game studio capable of releasing AAA titles. For us, our games need to be intense and immersive, offering gamers immense freedom and infinite possibilities to crush enemies.

We designed Wolcen: Lords of Mayhem the way we wanted it—Doom meets Diablo II, blending the intense action of Doom with the rich layers of an RPG like Diablo II, where every player and character has

a role. The combat is designed to follow a similar style as that in the famous FPS, Doom, where every enemy is like a chess piece with its own specificities in combat. This rich action quality is supported by strong visual effects and a hack-and-slash style that challenges the gamer. Player skills are critical to ensure battlefield survival.

We wanted to give players a lot of freedom to explore the world and different character abilities. Using the Gates of Fate skill tree, players can change their character and skills as they see fit. They can start as a ranger, introduce some mage attacks—maybe even specialize as a necromancer. We wanted our players to have immense freedom in how they interpreted their characters in the game. For us, it was essential that gamers could adapt their skills and gameplay to their own unique style, and have a truly interactive experience.



“For us, our games need to be intense and immersive, offering gamers immense freedom and infinite possibilities to crush enemies.”

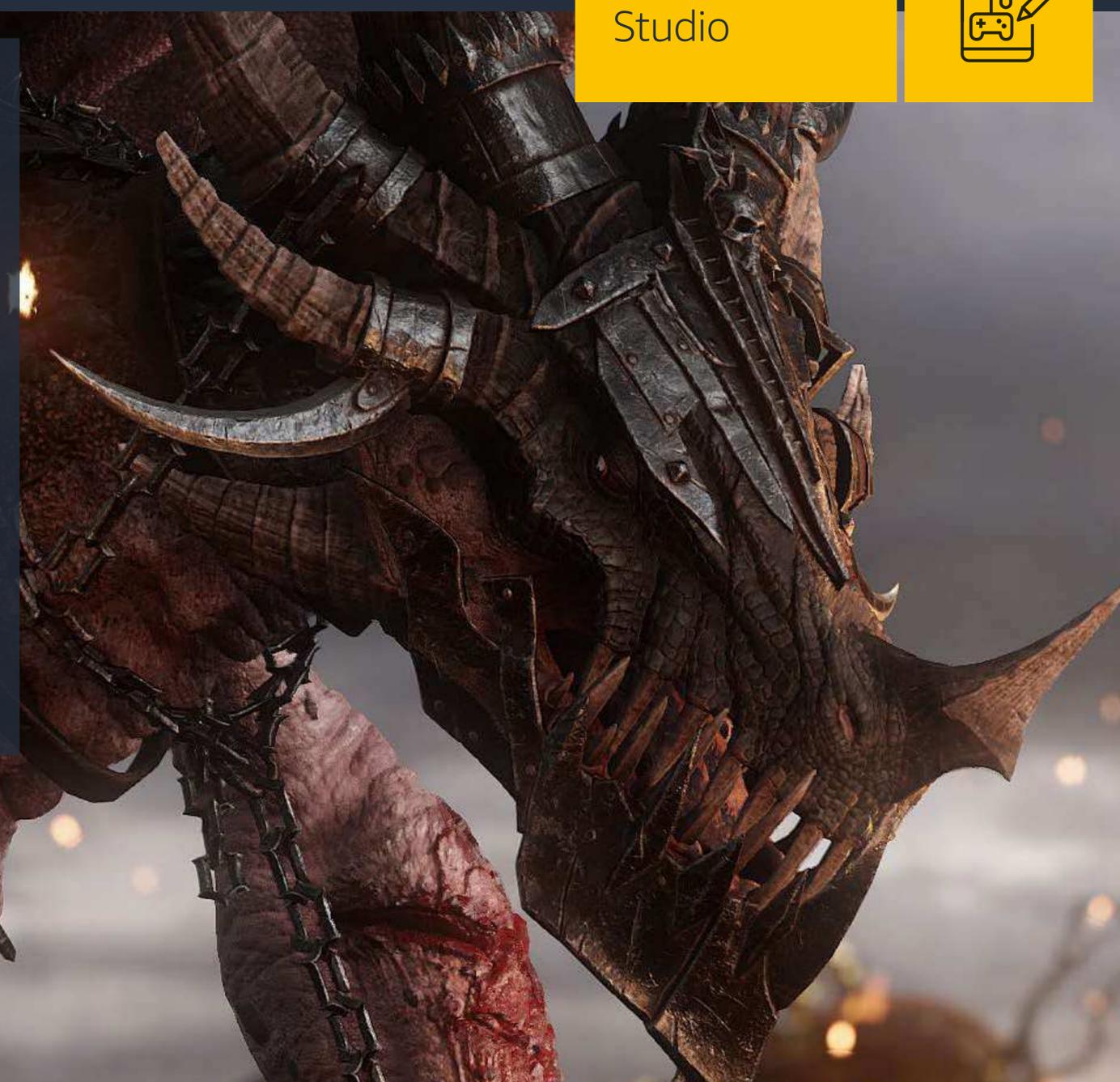


“We wanted a partner with experience and quality”

The main reasons we chose AWS were cost and reputation. We wanted to partner with a big technology provider that had worldwide reach, experience and a commitment to quality. AWS GameLift really surprised us. It’s so easy to set up, and it allowed us to create our own server system that wasn’t too complex for our company, and that we could optimize to suit our requirements. The platform gave us the freedom to explore rich special effects and features without compromising on the quality of our servers. AWS has been our preferred technology from the outset, as it’s light on cost and heavy on functionality. AWS also helped us on launch day when we had issues with the game

lobby—we were having problems with the bridge connection to the server and they helped us to build our own system.

We’ve found Amazon GameLift is perfect for optimization and cost reduction, and it offers us reliability with its security and scalability. We only have to pay for what we need and we can scale according to the players—this is critical for us, as you never know how many gamers will show up at any given time. An article in a magazine, a TV interview and suddenly a thousand new players show up. We need a service that’s capable of adjusting to player demand; one that can provide server availability in the right region to minimize latency. AWS GameLift helps us scale on demand without compromising on quality.



VIVID ACTION

Wolcen’s combat is dynamic, fast and responsive. Wield a great variety of weapons and find your own playstyle.

CLASSLESS PROGRESSION

Carve your own path to power through 21 uniquely themed classes in the rotating Passive Skill Tree.

DEVASTATING POWERS

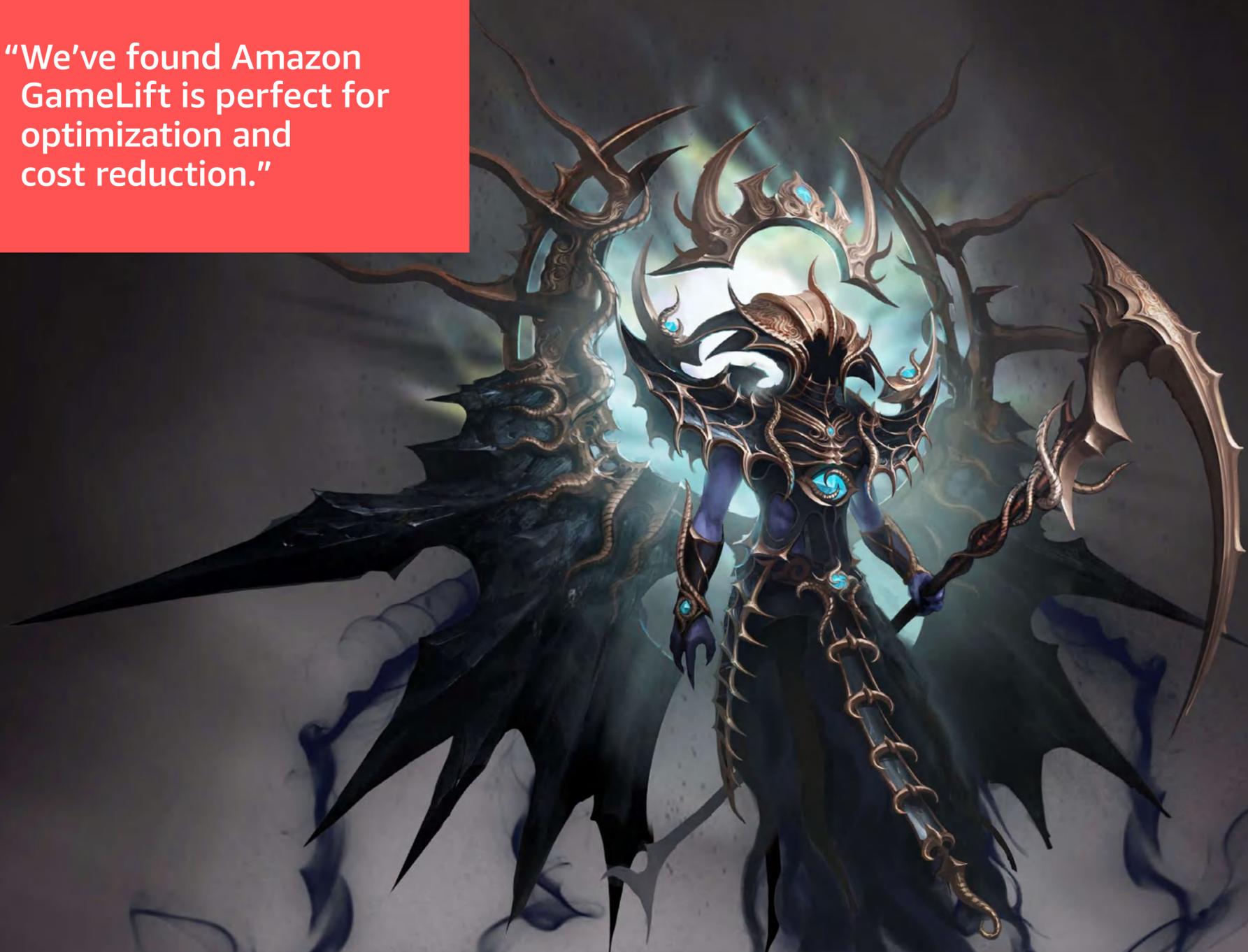
Fuel your apocalyptic power to unleash fury on enemies by transforming into a ultimate avatar of destruction with unique skills.

CONTENT DIVERSITY

Discover secondary areas with deadly creatures, secondary objectives and awesome loots.



“We’ve found Amazon GameLift is perfect for optimization and cost reduction.”



“Four years of feedback shaped the game”

The launch was hard. We had bugs and kinks to iron out and issues that we needed to resolve. It was a tough time as we worked to make sure that we fixed issues for the players as fast as possible. During this time, our players sent us cake and pizzas to keep us going. It was crazy. I mean, it’s hard to find our address online, especially with French directions, and yet they went to so much trouble to send us food and gifts that showed their support. It made us realize that our players believed in what we were doing, and it inspired us to keep on going and deliver a game that would keep gamers immersed and entertained.

We relied on feedback throughout the four years of game development to make sure we were always happy with what we’d built. If something didn’t work, we would reboot it. We did this a few times—one element was redone three to four times because it didn’t quite achieve the levels of quality we were looking for. The particle effects, the animation, the character movements—these were the features we focused on the most. We then used feedback to refine these features until we felt they were ready for launch.

Our plans for the future revolve around upgrading the game and ironing out all of the bugs and kinks that have affected performance to date. We’re taking time to polish the game, to implement quality improvements, and we’re also working on some expansions to add new levels, bosses and functionality. We want to refine Wolcen: Lords of Mayhem until the quality is exceptional. Then we’ll introduce new features and expansions that match this quality and take the game even further.

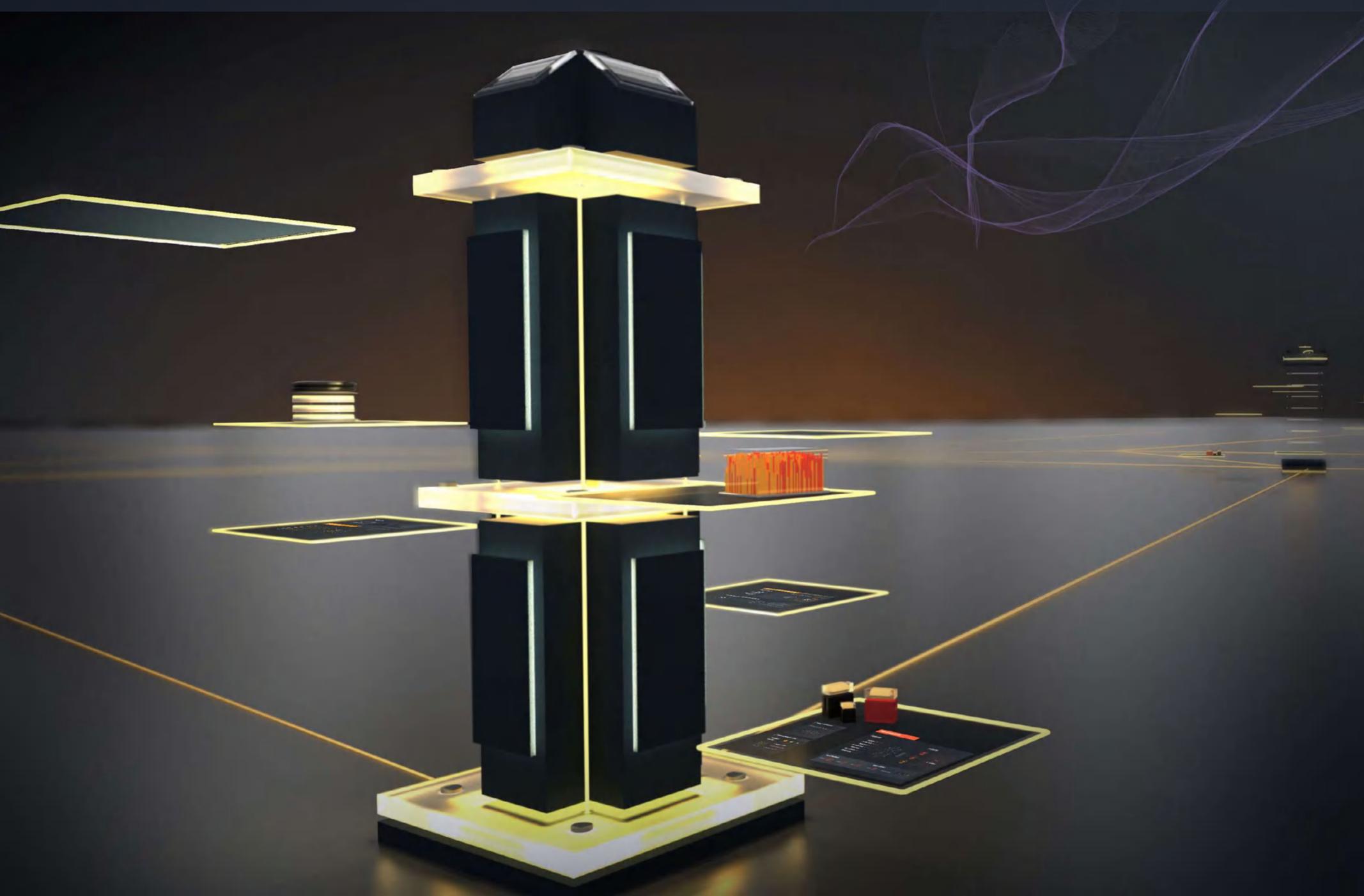




“Choose your technology wisely”

If I were to give anyone advice on how to start their own studio today, I'd tell them to choose their technology wisely. Pick the tech that fits your needs. Also, never underestimate the business side of things —money may not be your problem today, but at some point, you will have issues, so

make sure you aren't setting yourself up for regret. Always stick to your budget, don't underestimate good management and take the time to find the right people. Always consider the human element, and remember to give as much as you take.



AWS Services used:

<p>GameLift</p>	<p>Cloudwatch</p>	<p>S3</p>
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Key games:

(2015)

Fast fact:

The game is unique in its genre, in that it doesn't restrict players to specific classes, allowing for constant adaptation and a more open world experience.

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