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It's never too late to change

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By Ruby Harfield

After successful but stressful career a Wellington economist and policy analyst decided to retrain as a game developer. Jayne Gale realised she needed a career change so decided to work part time while she studied art.

During this course she was attracted to digital art, 3D modeling and game engines.

"The big breakthrough for me was realising that I had written myself off as a technophobe and had a fear of new technology."

But being taught to see technology as a puzzle turned it from a fear into a fun challenge to solve, she said.

In 2018, wanting to further develop her skills, Gale quit work at the age of 60 and began a full-time two-year Game Art and Development course at Yoobee Colleges Wellington.

There she created over a dozen games while learning the art of coding and design.

"It's not for the fainthearted, you have to have strength, be determined, work hard... by definition, learning something new means looking stupid, and that is magnified when it's second nature to all your younger classmates.

"In the first year I had to resubmit five of the six assignments."

She remembers at one point feeling so dejected she kicked her sofa crying that she couldn't do it and that her mind wasn't built for programming.

"My tutor said he'd said exactly that on his first job.

"His boss told him that everybody feels like that; nobody's brain was built for computers - computers think differently."

Gale also often found herself thinking she was too old to learn game development but she now hopes to inspire people of all ages to embrace technology.

"We're living much longer, healthier lives than previous generations.

"We don't have a use by date... It isn't too late to retrain.

"I want to encourage you, you can learn to code at any age."

After graduating, during lockdown last year she completed Harvard's free CS50 online Computer Science course and this year did more coding at Victoria University of Wellington.

She has now landed a role as a Game Economy Designer at PikPok – one of New Zealand's fastest growing game development companies.

"It feels like magic to walk around in a world I made from my imagination."



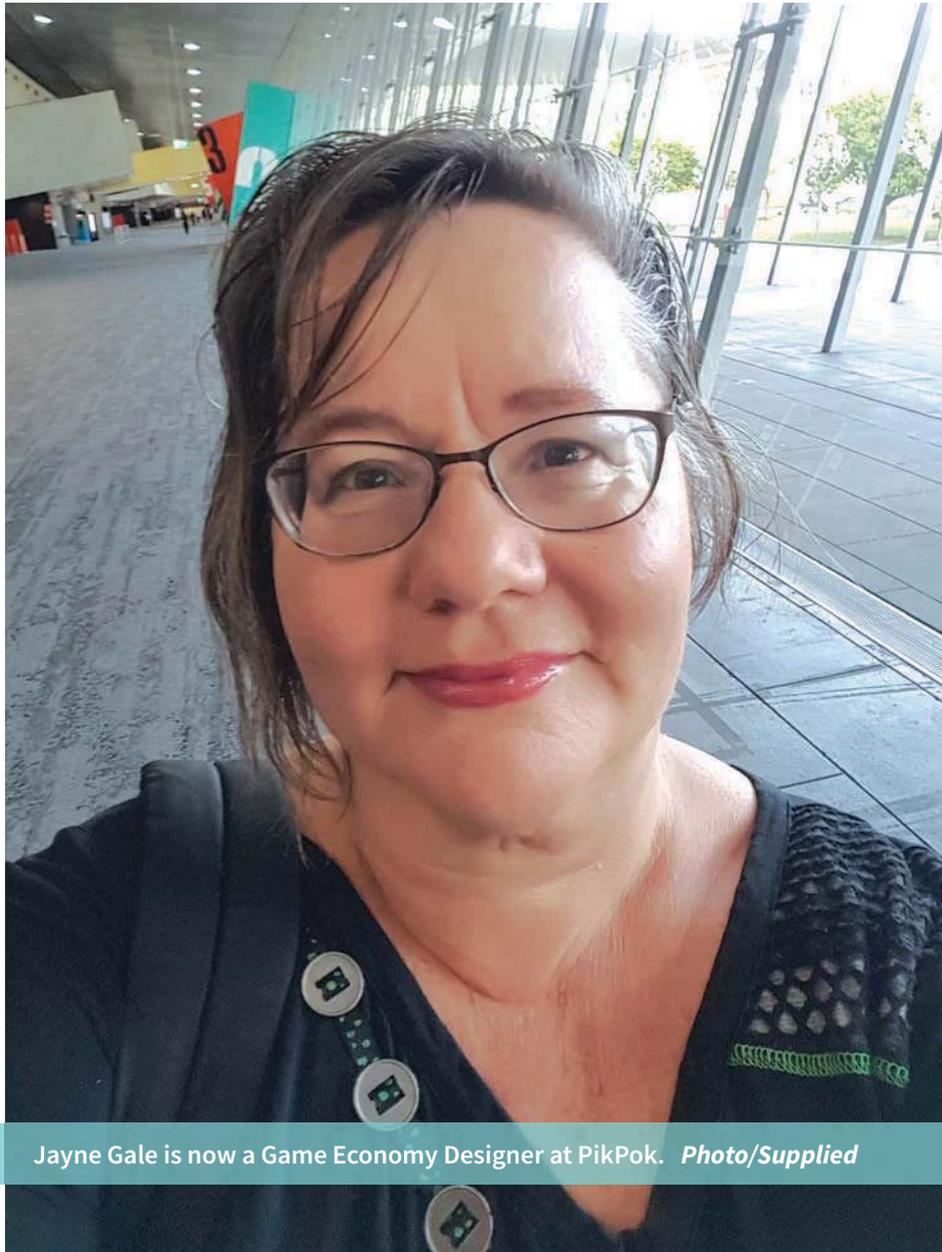
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Jayne Gale is now a Game Economy Designer at PikPok. *Photo/Supplied*