

Ghostbusters UI Design

The on-screen Ghostbusters UI had two design passes on it during development. The original publisher requested an integrated UI with no direct “on the screen” UI components to reflect the cinematic nature of the game. Given the “techie” nature of the proton pack, it was a natural fit for all the player’s pertinent UI information. The most significant were (1) **player’s health**, (2) **pack’s temperature**, and (3) **target’s health**. Considering the size of the pack on-screen and the possible variable viewing angles, I decided that these UI elements needed to be mirrored in at least 2 places on the pack with an accompanying unique sound to provide the player with as much feedback as possible. With this design players wouldn’t have to look at the pack as often to know their status. When the final player’s animation and game camera started coming on line, the upper right quadrant of the pack became the focal point for the proton pack’s UI. As an additional bonus, since it was also a holster point for the Ghostbuster’s gun. So during cinematics, when the player was safe, this information was covered since it was not pertinent.

This integrated proton pack UI was the only on screen UI until the game changed publishers mid development. The new publishers requested an action game style UI to reflect the more action elements of the game. Instead of redesigning the UI, I incorporated a second complimentary set of on-screen UI elements. In the end, I felt this resulted in a stronger integrate UI where the player had multiple UI elements to give them information.



1. Player’s health

- In the pack’s UI two green horizontal lines of LEDs were added to indicate the player’s health. It was centrally located for visibility and doubled to maintain realism of the strip of LED, while maximizing space. On the back of the pack next to the crank handle a red flashing light was added that pulsed in a heartbeat fashion the closer the player got to death. I didn’t want this light confused with the flashing lights of the cyclotron so I made it more saturated red in color, added a cage, and put it as far away from them as possible. For the action UI integration an increasing red blurring of the edges of the screen was added when the player was under 25% overall health.

2. Pack's temperature

- I wanted the packs temperature as close to the players health as possible since the two were directed related to the player. While the player's health was represented by green horizontal lines, I wanted to contrast against this by making the packs temperature red and vertical. For the back of the pack, the crank handle was enlarged to become a vent port for an escaping steam FX as the pack neared overheating. This was also used when the pack was manually vented. Lastly, the speed of the iconic cyclotron lights were tied to the overall heat of the proton pack causing them to cycle faster the "hotter" the pack got. This was also accompanied by a warning tone as the pack reached critical mass before performing an emergency venting.

3. Target's health

- The target's health was integrated into the target area by replacing a round label. I wanted a different shape to both the "chunks" of health as well as the overall shape of the gage since the same green to yellow to red color scheme was used elsewhere. To contrast the other gages even further the target's health could turn off or would glow brighter when a ghost was targeted. When a ghost was stunned or reduced to zero health a corresponding dazed FX was activated on them to indicate to the player they were ready to trap. In the action game overlay, the same round indicator on the pack was mirrored over the targeting reticle.

4. Pack states

- When designing the different equipment states of the proton pack, I decided that the pack needed to have a moving visual silhouette beyond the "clip ons" for the upgrades. Each of these states was also accompanied by an overall color theme as well as changing the color and pattern of the iconic red cyclotron lights. With the action game overlay, the D pad weapon wheel was added that would quickly fade after selection.



5. Income gage

- With the action UI also came a money for trapping ghosts and upgrade tree. We needed to indicate the player they were making money for trapping ghosts without resorting to pop up numbers. I designed and integrated this gage using a material shader. I had the "cost" of the ghost getting sucked into a ghost trap to mirror the on screen trapping of the ghost as the source of the income.

6. Breakable combo gage

- The other major action UI element added was the breaking items combo system. The player had a 5 second timer that would get reset with every item broken and the value of the broken item was added to the overall damage total. This was represented with a dynamically shattering glass that produced more glass shards with larger amounts.

7. Slam gage

- The last major action addition was the slam gage. The lightning that ran through the gage mirrored the lightning around the proton beam, while the red block indicators mirrored the effect the player got when successfully pulling a ghost. When a ghost was wrangled and was struggling, this gage would slowly fill. The player needed to slam a ghost to stun it before trapping.