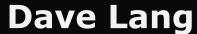# We Failed at Publishing Competitive Games So You Don't Have To

Dave Lang
Founder, Iron Galaxy Studios

Introduction

- Iron Galaxy
  - Developer founded in 2008 with studios in Chicago and Orlando.
  - Stumbled into lots of fighting game deals.
- Dave Lang
  - Was Engineer, now dreaded Business Person.
  - Hates Windjammers!

Divekick - Overview

- Prototype created by Adam Heart and collaborators.
- Acquired by IG and brought in-house to take it from prototype state to completion.
- Originally published on PS3, PS VITA, and Steam. Eventually showed up on PS4 and Xbox One as well.
- Launched with 13 characters, a light story mode, and online head-to-head play.

Divekick – Launch Plan

- Targeted FGC first.
- Had to overcome how simple it appears.
- Lots of dev streams with character reveals.
- All of this stuff went really well.

Divekick – Sales

- ~200k units across all platforms.
  - Most of this at discount prices.
- Steam ended up being best platform by far.
- PS4 and Xbox One sales were very poor.

Divekick Post Mortem

- Had good platform support.
- Had great reaction at live events.
- Good press/enthusiast following.
- Why did we lose money?
  - Shipped too much game.
  - Marketed to wrong group.
  - Squandered goodwill with press.

Assets From Publishing Divekick

- Publishing experience.
- Built-in audience.
- Better understanding of the market.
- Experience engaging with customers directly.
- Discovered our "Voice."

New Publishing Business!

Theory: Given our experience, audience and voice, if we can find other competitive titles that don't require a large investment to get to market we can be successful.

Business Model

- Find games that we believe can recoup on Day 1.
- Offer dev support that other publishers can't.
- Build portfolio of similar-ish titles that can help each other build and audience and interest.
- Do exactly what we did for Divekick with these new titles.
- Cash large checks.

Mefford's First Law of Game Dev

"The worst thing that can happen to a young developer is to work on a successful game, because you end up thinking you had something to do with it"

– Nathan "Gun Show" Mefford

Implementation of Model

- Capsule Force – 80's Space Anime Nidhogg with Lasers.

- Gunsport – Volleyball with guns; future-sport.

- VIDEOBALL – Abstract minimalist electronic sport.

Results?

- Capsule Force
- Gunsport
- VIDEOBALL

Faulty Assumptions

- Divekick and IG fans would immediately take to these new games.

- The timelines/budgets of games would be predictable/remain small.

- We could reach out to the casual/indie market as easily as we had the FGC.

Learnings 2.0

- People like very specific things about games.
- Ship minimum viable product and support.
- Have a plan for extending the game if it finds an audience
- Hype can't be created.

Learnings 2.0

- Need the discipline to stick to your original business plan.
- If you're having trouble generating interest in what you're doing, you need to re-evaluate.
- Don't artificially limit your potential audience.
- Don't assume anything about your external dev teams.

Mefford's First Law of Game Dev

"The worst thing that can happen to a young developer is to work on a successful game, because you end up thinking you had something to do with it"

– Nathan "Gun Show" Mefford

Questions?

Dave Lang, @JosephJBroni
Iron Galaxy, @IToTheG