Getting Your PC/Console Game Noticed: A Comprehensive How-To Guide

Joel Dreskin

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE
MARCH 18–22, 2019 | #GDC19

My Background

Marketer for range of games, studios and projects of different sizes

PC GAMING SHOW

and more …

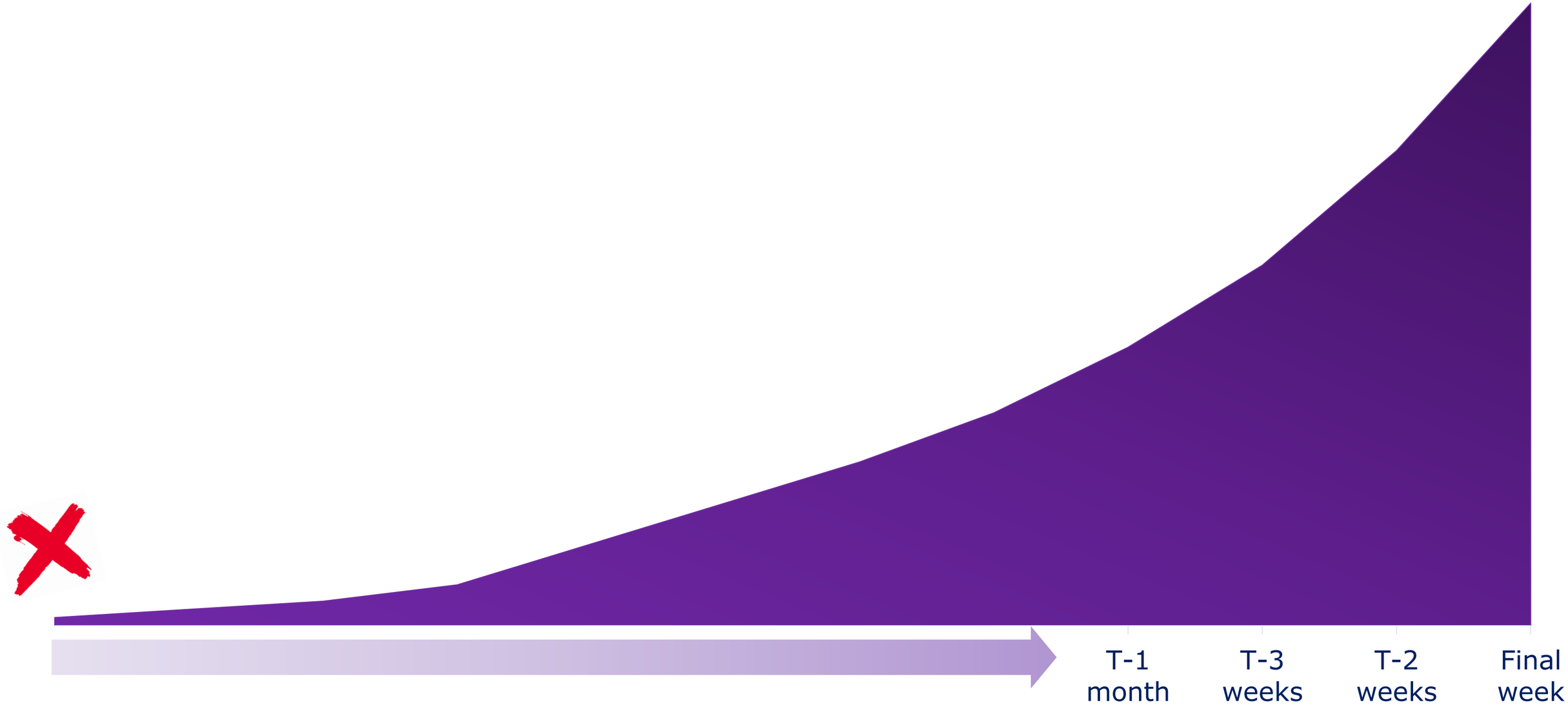
Outline

Tools

Planning Framework

Examples

Drill Down


T-1
month
T-3
weeks
T-2
weeks
Final
week

Key timing considerations for public communications kick off

If too early:

- Over what length of time can interest be sustained / built – based on depth of game, possible news/announcements/reveals, assets to share, expected audience engagement levels
  - Recommend mapping this out in advance
- Planned release dates slip, despite best intentions and planning

If too late:

- May not factor in enough time to establish and build awareness and interest

Don't be this guy

Launch Planning

- Look at expected game release plans for other notable games
  - In similar game category, on platform/channel, AAA
  - Q4
  - Holidays
  - Big sales
  - Summer
- Other, such as
  - Big news, national elections
  - Big sports/entertainment events, etc

Community Audience Building

Social Media

Influencers

Channel Programs

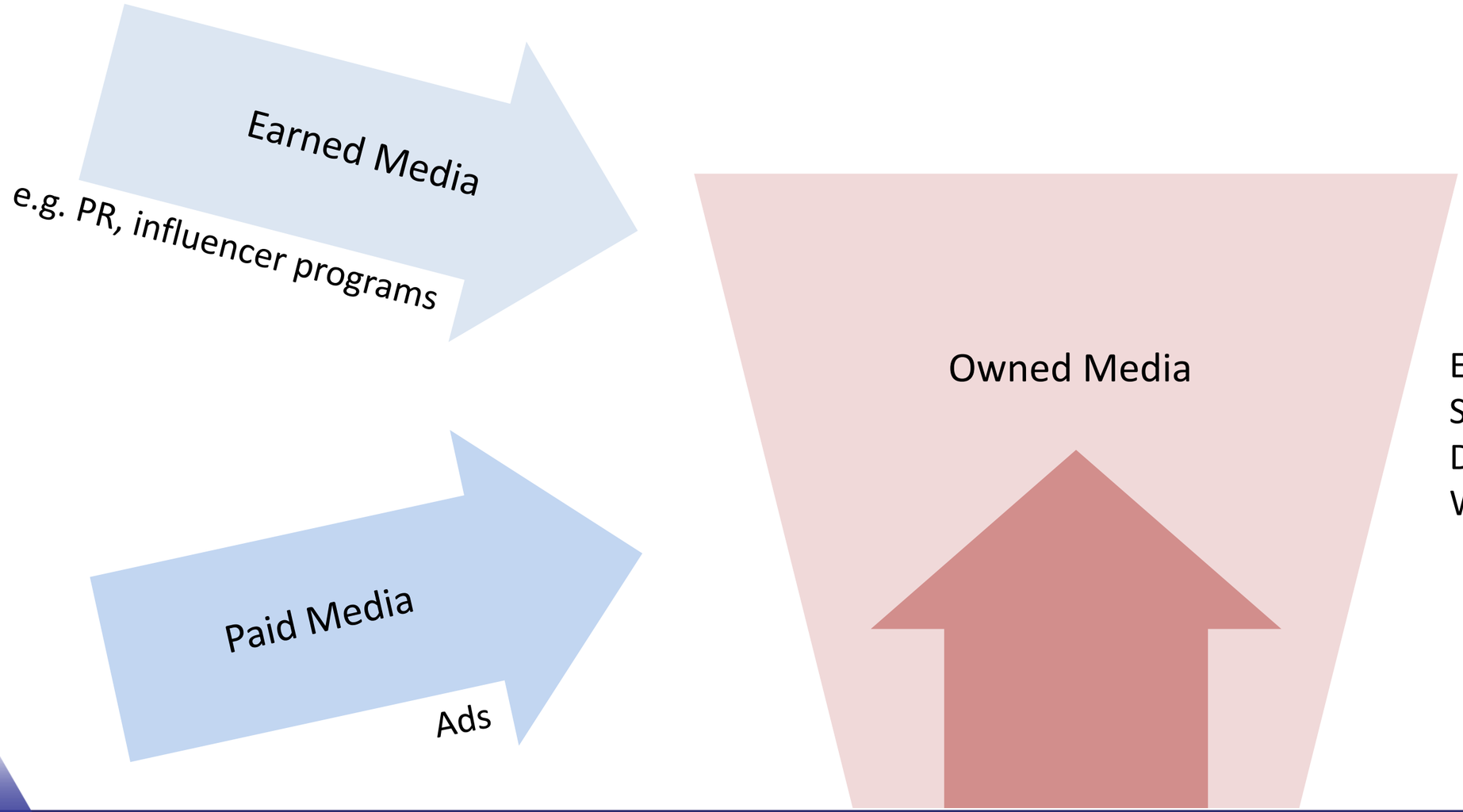
Paid

Events

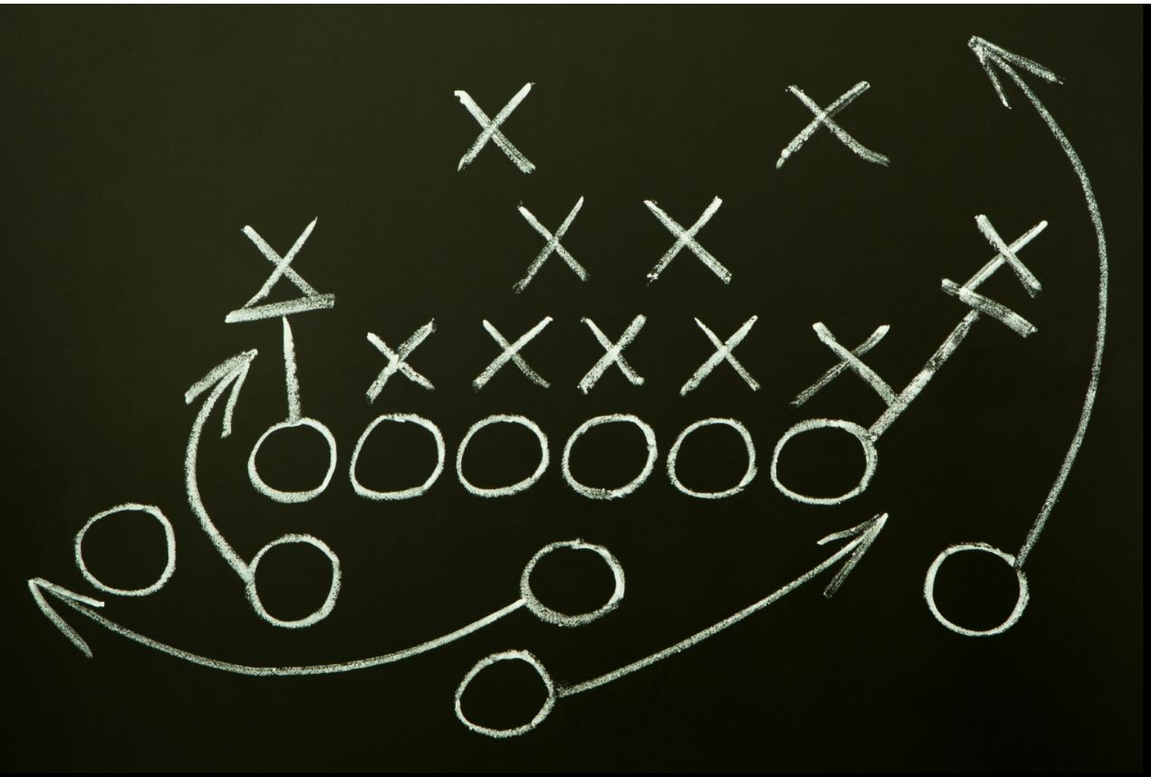
Promos

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec

Integrated Plan



Devise Strategy



Multiplayer game with strong community potential

Game with compelling new mechanic, team profile, or other interesting hook(s)

Project that can tap into established / related audience(s)

Game with budget $$$

or other / none of the above?

Tales of Monkey Island

Overview

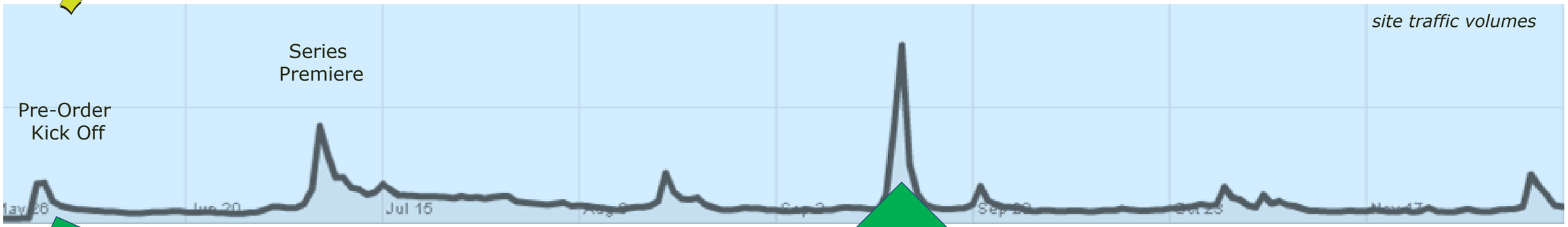
- New installment in all-time great gaming series after 10 year hiatus
- Established audience, although fairly dormant
- Different studio developing game for the first time (continuity with original series in a number of areas)

Strategy

- Key content, messaging and timing planning to maximize announcement while addressing potential concerns
- Developed roadmap for best harnessing online traffic dynamics and funnel for this franchise and maximizing revenue conversions

Results

Telltale's highest-selling series at that time (200K+ full seasons), with new peak metrics for pre-order sales volumes, single day product sales and site traffic as well as mailing list subscriber increases



Big Bang Surprise Reveal

Announcement unveiling that included compelling pre-order offer page and trailer, leading to best pre-order sales volumes up to that time

Talk Like a Pirate Day

Tie-in with long-running online celebration

One-Day Episode Giveaway

All-time high traffic day for Telltale

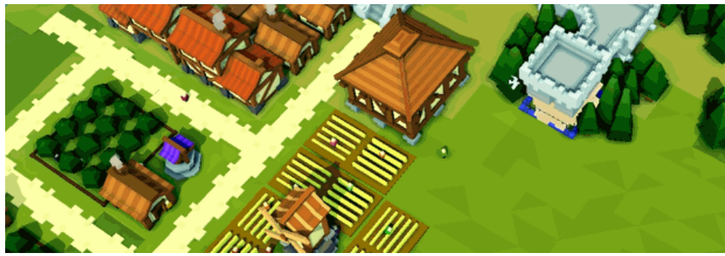
Plus, substantive sales and mailing list subscriber increases (sign-up required for free game)

Cultivated Incremental $ via Merch

As follow up to prior healthy programs for other franchises, developed Telltale's highest grossing merch program to date, with high upsell conversions

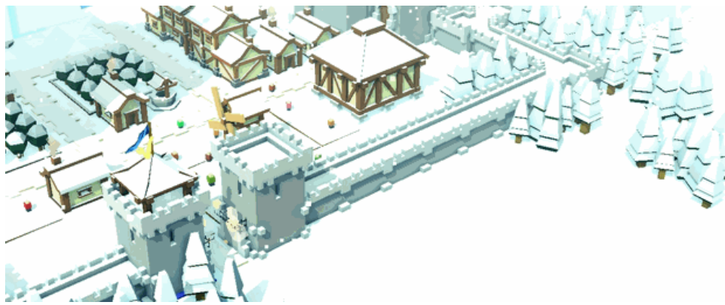
Overview

- Medieval city building game from two person team that first met in high school
  - Pete shipped indie Cannon Brawl with different partner, previously worked at Maxis and on Abzu; Michael was at thatgamecompany and EA
  - Moderate sales for Cannon Brawl (won Activision Independent Games competition)



Strategy

- Market fit testing – social media, Fig crowdfunding campaign with small funding goal ($15K finishing funds and to establish base for alpha / beta testing)
- Campaign focused on core targets with compelling assets, paid social media boosts and partner support
- Established audience base, foundation and launching pad which built through successful alpha/beta, “pre-orders”, game release and post release updates



Alpha code to moderately sized YouTuber (100k) after he learned about the game through Steam Greenlight page.

Other streamers saw the video, tried the game and it bubbled up and down the streamer hierarchy.

Bump in videos with each build update when streamers want to try out the new stuff.

NEW Halloween Update! GIANT Wolf Army vs Knights! (Kingdoms and Castles Update Gameplay)

BaronVonGames • 82K views • 2 months ago

Welcome back to Kingdoms and Castles Halloween update gameplay! Today we will be checking out the new items in the game such ...

Cemeteries update - Kingdoms and Castles #54

wolf grim • 274 views • 2 months ago

►Subscribe for more great content ►Twitter : https://twitter.com/wolfgrim1 ►Instagram : https://instagram.com ...

Kingdoms and Castles - Ep. 1 - Keep Building and Food Production! - Kingdoms and Castles Gameplay

Blitz ✓ 998K views • 1 year ago

Welcome to **Kingdoms and Castles** part 1! **Kingdoms and Castles** is a medieval city building game where you construct castles to ...

BUILDING THE GREATEST KINGDOM | Kingdoms And Castles #1

jacksepticeye ✓ 1.3M views • 1 year ago

Join me for a relaxing adventure. Building my very own empire in **Kingdoms and Castles**! Banished ...

CC

Why did it catch on with streamers?

- Game is clear from a thumbnail
- People want to try themselves (“I would have built my tavern over there”)
- Easy to make into a series of videos
- Matched well with the genre specific fan community

Key is viewers have to be able to do something after seeing a video - buy into the alpha through ‘late’ backing with crowd funding campaign, Steam wishlist, newsletter sign up.

See also: “Slime Rancher: A Preemptive Postmortem” from Nick Popovich, GDC 2017

Community

DISCORD

Discord from early on … spreading the word through Steam, social media and elsewhere.

- Team engaged
- Game feedback
- Hands off ideas channel

Results

Focused, well executed game concept that resonates well with target audience

Very strong streamer coverage, including multiple alpha / beta builds and updates

Dev leads engaged and responsive with community – particularly on Steam and Discord

Over 650K units sold to date

Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct

Launched Fig funding campaign late Nov.

Achieved goal following day, on road to $200K (includes post campaign / pre-release $).

~1,400 base

Alpha / Beta game releases

Game picked up by streamers with sizable subscriber counts

Streamers covering updates too

Game launch

Includes Keymailer campaign for streamers and additional paid support on social media

Game updates

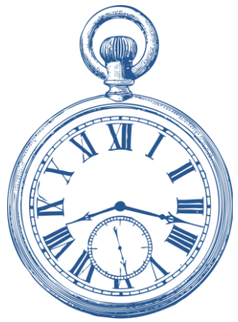
TOOTH AND TAIL

Overview

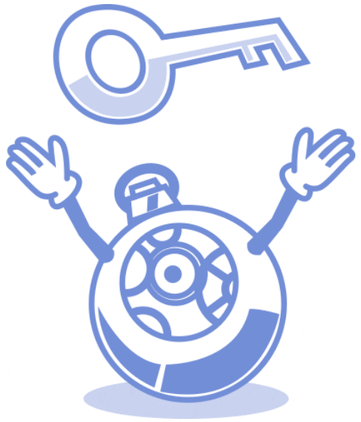
- Real-Time-Strategy game featuring single player, online competitive play, split screen, replays
- From Pocketwatch Games (Monaco, Venture Africa, Venture Antarctic)
- Online game that thrives on having an active, friendly community

Community Development Strategy

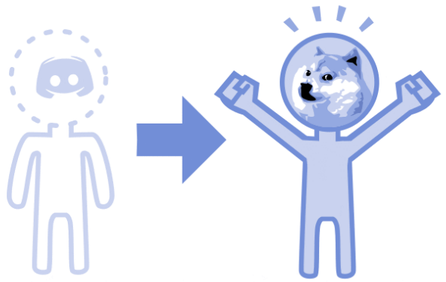
- Lock in, empower and grow core community through Discord
- Discord tools for facilitating, simplifying and expediting matchmaking
- Metagame – “The Crown”



Start
early
Alpha

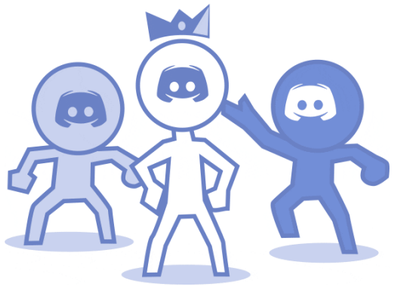


Automating keys
Onboarding
!key



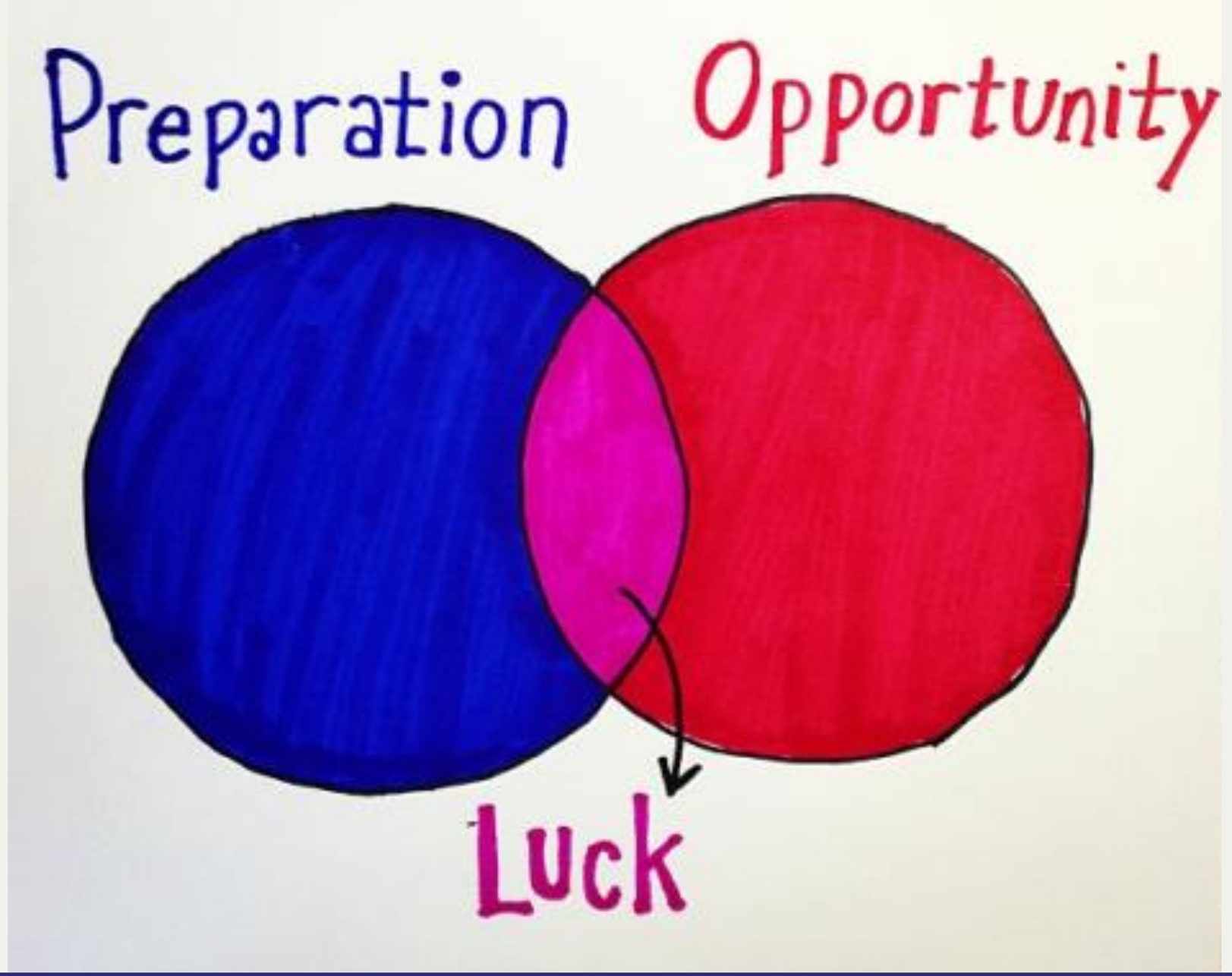
Personality
Character
Status

Matchmaking
!ready
!unready
Looking for game



The Crown

Over 300K units sold to date


Preparation
Opportunity
Luck

Takeaways from Campaign Examples

Assessing analytics
Building from established audience and re-igniting interest

Gameplay style that resonated with community
Creating engaged base and expanding in lead up to launch, and beyond

Identifying key needs to establish success for game, and tools to assist with addressing these needs

PR

Most Newsworthy Info

Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Important Details

Other General Info
Background
Info

Subject: Tron meets iOS in "Octagon", new arcade game out Nov 7 -- want iOS/Mac review copy?

Subject line – get them to take next step and open the email

Hi [name],

Imagine if the movie Tron had been set within the iOS interface. That's what you'll get with Octagon, a minimal arcade game coming to iOS and Mac on November 7. Octagon is a cousin to recent hits Super Hexagon and Boson-X: fast paced, intensely challenging, and unexpectedly beautiful with its colorful yet minimalist graphics. Can we interest you in a review copy?

Grab their interest

In Octagon, you're trapped inside an 8-sided tunnel that never stops moving. Your goal is to survive each 60-second level without falling out. (It would be pretty simple if not for all the speed bumps and gaps in the way…) Flick the screen horizontally to spin the tunnel, flick vertically to flip upside down, and most importantly don't stop to think—Octagon moves too fast for that! Only super-quick reflexes will get you to the finish line.

Octagon has unlimited, procedurally-generated levels, a trippy visual style influenced by the minimalist iOS aesthetic, and music by electronica artist Sqeepo that keeps the adrenaline pumping. Upon its November 7 release it will sell for $1.99 USD or equivalent, with no in-app purchases to water down the challenge.

You can get an idea of Octagon's look and feel from this gameplay video:
https://everyplay.com/videos/1086351

Assets

Screenshots and a press kit are available at the official website:
http://octagongame.com

We hope you'll check it out for yourself:

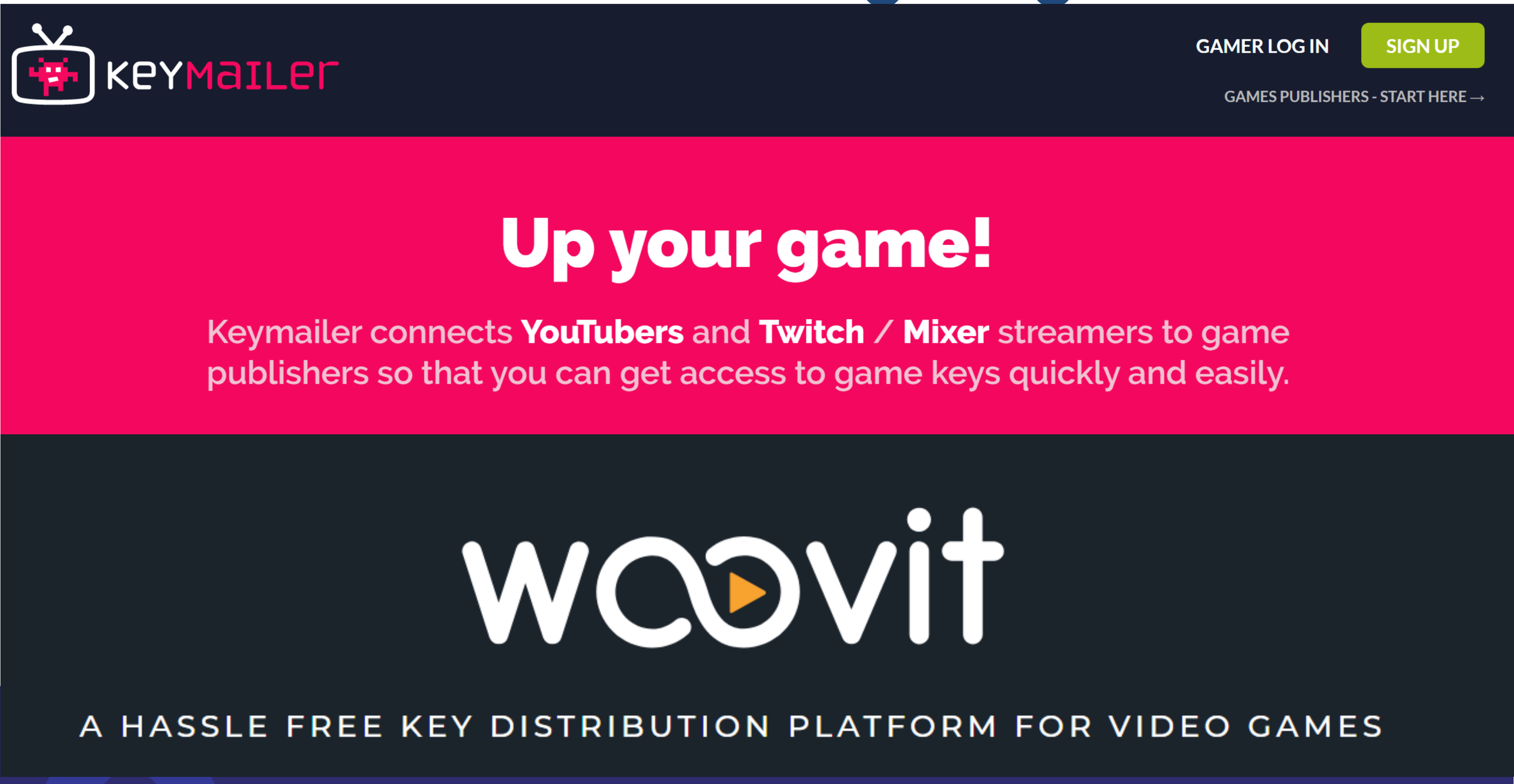
Code / Take Action

- iOS App Store: [promo code provided]
- Mac App Store: [promo code provided]

If you decide to review the game, we ask that you hold your coverage until 8:00pm Eastern time on November 6.

Thanks!
--
Petr Fodor and Lukas Korba, developers

Tools for Reaching Targeted



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KEY REQUESTS | FIND GAMERS BUY | INVITE BY EMAIL | FAVORITES | KEYS OFFERED

KEYMAILER

GAMER FILTER

LOCATION

Select Regions/Countries (default=Global)

☐ Steam Users Only ☑ Accredited Accounts Only ☐ VR Verified Only

☐ Favorites Only

REQUEST FILTER

PLATFORM: Steam — Global

ADVERTS: — All —

FROM: 2018-11-01

TO: 2019-01-26

REFRESH

GAMERS: 39
REACH: 1,882,742

♥	GAMER	LOC	GAMER RANK	YouTube CHANNEL SUBS ▼	YouTube INFLUENCE	twitch CHANNEL FOLLOWERS	twitch INFLUENCE	mixer CHANNEL FOLLOWERS	mixer INFLUENCE	Twitter CHANNEL FOLLOWERS	Twitter INFLUENCE	PLATFORM REQUEST	SELECT STEAM	
♡	Kyle SpyCakes ✓			875,037		-	-	-	-	1,572			☑	✓ ✗
♡	Admiros ✓			403,503		532		-	-	166			☑	✓ ✗
♡	Maugly ✓			326,172		1,353		-	-	146			☑	✓ ✗
♡	juanantonio ochenta ✓			63,254		594		-	-	3,262			☑	✓ ✗
♡	biscuitfacegaming ✓			40,309		13,929		-	-	11,818			☑	✓ ✗

GAMER FILTER

LOCATION

Select Regions/Countries (default=Global)

Accredited Accounts Only | VR Verified Only | Favorites Only

OFFER FILTER

PLATFORM

— All —

FROM YYYY-MM-DD

TO YYYY-MM-DD

REFRESH

89 GAMERS

♥	GAMER	PLATFORM	LOC	KEY STATUS	FULFILLMENT		PLAY TIME	Steam COVERAGE ▼	YouTube COVERAGE	twitch COVERAGE	mixer COVERAGE	Twitter COVERAGE
♥	Cheru ✓			Redeemed 2018-12-15	Find Gamers		0h	3	0	0	3	
♥	Cheru ✓			Rejected	Find Gamers		0h	3	0	0	3	
♥	KeriaG69 ✓			Redeemed 2018-12-21	Requested 2018-12-18		0h	2	0	0	0	
♥	Scott E ✓			Redeemed 2018-12-17	Requested 2018-12-13		0h	1	0	-	0	
♥	Nalyo Gaming ✓			Redeemed 2018-12-15	Requested 2018-12-13		0h	1	0	0	0	
♥	RalFinger ✓			Redeemed 2018-12-15	Requested 2018-10-20		0h	0	0	0	0	
♥	Scythe Plays ✓			Pending	Find Gamers		0h	0	0	-	0	

facebook

Locations: Everyone in this location

United States

United States

Include | Add locations

Add Bulk Locations...

Age: 18 - 65+

Gender: All | Men | Women

Languages: Enter a language...

Detailed Targeting: INCLUDE people who match at least ONE of the following

Add demographics, interests or behaviors | Suggestions | Browse

Sample Roadmap

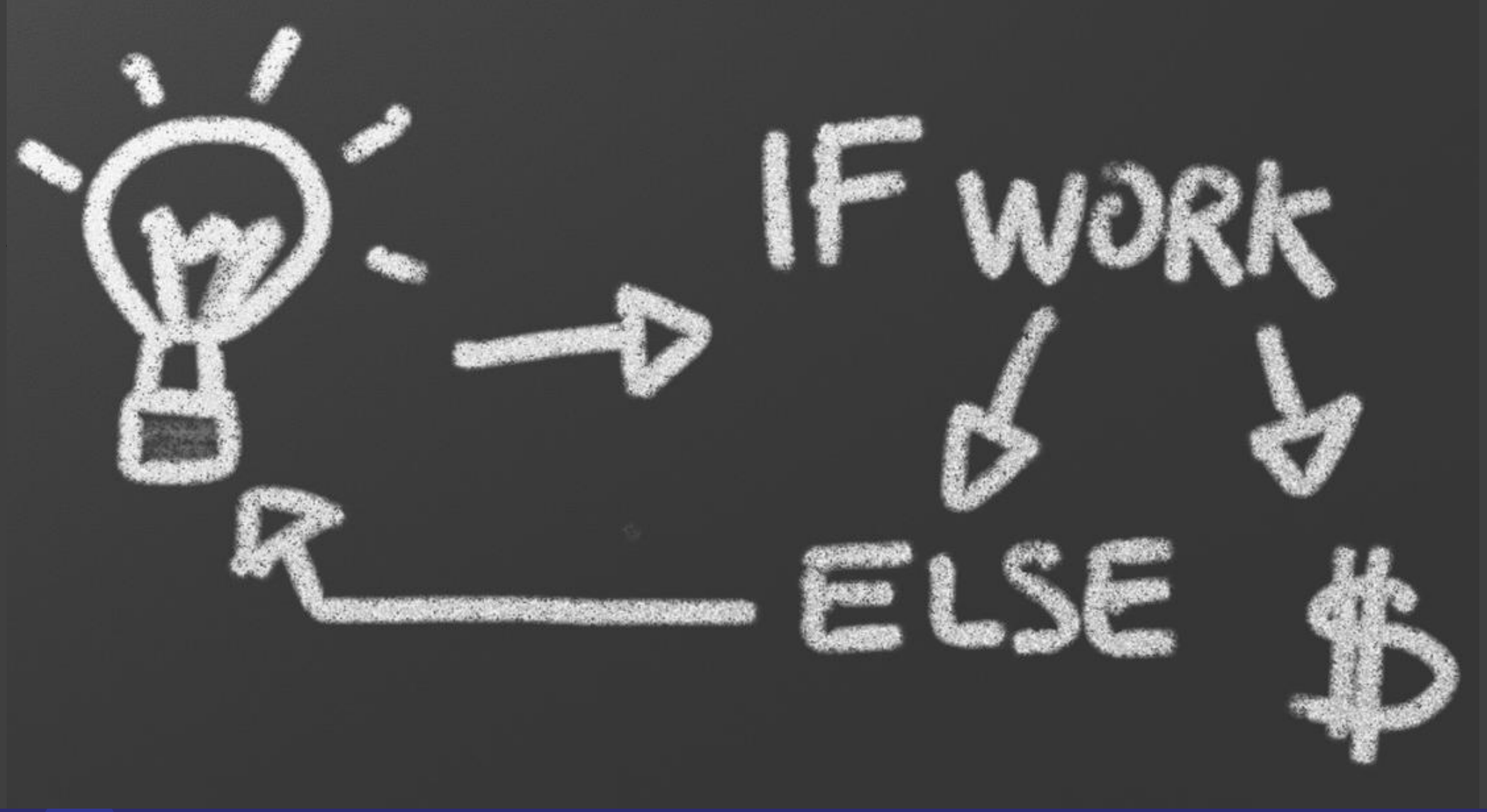
Timing	What	Tactics/Vehicles
L minus 9 months (9 months prior to expected launch date)	Announce	PR/Press Release and/or through your website/blog/social media if you'd previously built a reasonably sizable audience. Including assets like screenshots/videos/key art can make for an even stronger announcement. Community building
L - 6 months	New assets reveal Concept art, screenshots, video	PR – article placements and/or through your website/blog/social media Community building / communications
L - 5 months	First playable code at industry/consumer event	Event Possibly supplement with PR Community building / communications
L – 4 months	Release new game assets – screenshots, character reveals, video Project update	PR – article placements and/or through your website/blog/social media Community building / communications

Sample Roadmap continued

Timing	What	Tactics/Vehicles
L – 3 months	Post first look/teaser video and announce release timing	PR – article placements and/or through your website/blog/social media Start ramping up frequency through online communities, social media
L – 2 months	Project update	Blog post on your website and/or prompt for article through PR outreach Continue ramping up frequency through online communities, social media
L – 1 month	Playable code to press outlets	PR – prompt for preview coverage, interviews
L – 3 weeks	Post new gameplay video	PR – article placements and/or through your website/blog/social media
L – 2 weeks	Distribute final review versions of game to press	PR – prompt for reviews to post at launch time
Launch week	Release launch trailer	PR/Press Release and/or through your website/blog/social media Paid programs

“I'm not sure any marketing convention can be described as 'reliable', everything is a risk and you can't underestimate the role chance plays. I'm always going to try and mix up the way I talk about our games to the audience, because every game we make is so different, and the landscape out there changes very rapidly.”

- Mike Bithell


IF WORK
ELSE
$

Connection to Your Projects

- Game assessment
  - Identify unique game characteristics, potential opportunities
  - Determine strategy, tools, timelines
  - Execute with focus, diligence, persistence
- Build expertise and ideas with input from others
  - Great marketing, community or other programs
  - Identify opportunities with new platforms, tools, channels, innovations (e.g. Twitch, Discord, Epic Store)
- Reassess, tune and refine as needed

Q
A

Thank You!

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