

# Go It Alone? Finding a Partner for Your Mobile Game

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FEATURING APP DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE™  
LOS ANGELES CONVENTION CENTER · LOS ANGELES, CA  
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# Introduction



# Background

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Consultant working with mobile game developers, publishers and service providers

- Previous role at social & mobile game publisher 6waves working on the launch of over 150+ games
- Currently working with 10+ mobile game developers to help them source partnerships for their games around the world; secured partnerships covering Western market & Asia
- Spoken with over 100+ companies looking to partner with developers in the recent past
- Work with leading mobile messaging platform & Chinese mobile game company on their publishing strategy & games sourcing



# Why this session?

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Sessions around game publishing usually fall into 3 categories:

1. Developer tirade on why publishers are evil
2. Publisher monologue on why you have to work with one
3. Publisher vs. developer panel with a lot of arguing around the same 2 topics above

***The goal of this session to provide mobile developers who want to work/are considering working with a partner tips and tactics to help them execute on finding a high potential partner for their game***



# What I will & won't cover today

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- ✓ When is the right time to begin outreach to partners based on the stage of development of your game
- ✓ What materials & info you need to compile before beginning outreach
- ✓ How to build a relevant and targeted list of potential partners for outreach regarding your game
  
- ✗ Making the decision whether to partner or self-publish your game
- ✗ How to build a list of what you need from a potential partner
- ✗ Managing discussions with potential partners & keeping the discussions moving forward
- ✗ Working through the partnership negotiation & finalizing the deal



# When to Begin Outreach



# Development stages for this discussion

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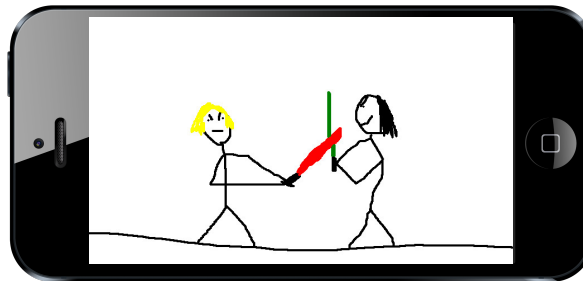
## Phase I

Concept on paper, i.  
e. GDD,  
presentation, mock-  
ups



## Phase II

Prototype, alpha  
build



## Phase III

Beta build with full  
features, potentially  
with early data





# Phase I: Paper concept

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- Most likely pitching at this stage to secure development **funding**
- Reality of the market is that a **minority** of partners offer any funding for a mobile game at **any** stage, let alone without even a working prototype
- Partners are **rarely** looking to offer funding for projects not at least in Phase II of development, a stage that provides them with the confidence that the developer has the **capabilities** to bring the game concept “to life” successfully







# Phase I: Paper concept

- As always there are exceptions:
  - ✓ teams that have already built mobile games that have reached the **top grossing** charts
  - ✓ teams that have had **significant success** building games on other platforms
  - ✓ teams composed of **veterans** of free to play/mobile gaming companies



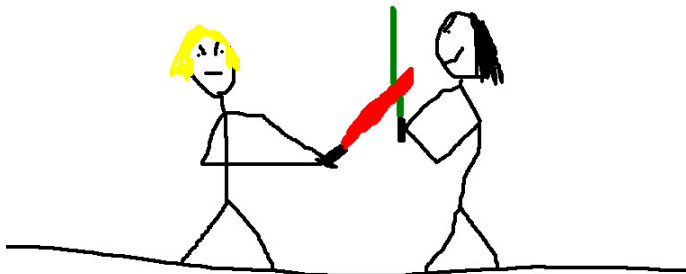
***Securing a partnership for a project in Phase I is a low probability for the majority of devs  
Look to either "bootstrap" or find alternative funding to initiate development***



## Phase II: Prototype, alpha build

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- Right time for developers:
  - with some team experience in the mobile segment, i.e. **not the first game**
  - also have **strong team experience** in the industry in general
- Potential partners will be able
  - to see how the game concept is **coming to life**
  - understand the developer's **vision**



*Thought out and thorough supporting materials, such as a presentation describing missing features as well as the game's monetization strategy, will be essential accompaniment to an early game build*



## Phase III: Beta build

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- At this stage the game:
  - includes nearly all **key features**, including **monetization**
  - potentially has also been soft-launched and has **initial key metrics**
- Most teams with minimal mobile and/or industry experience will **need to reach this stage** before initiating partner discussions
  - due to the competitiveness of the mobile market, partners having to put in money upfront, coupled with the reality of the low probability of (financial) success for any mobile game, translates to partners wanting to see the game they are putting money into as **far along in development as possible**



## Phase III: Beta build

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- Pushing things forward even further, many potential partners will encourage developers who are at this late stage in development to **soft-launch** the game in a few territories to collect **additional metrics** around retention and monetization before finalizing a deal
- Games in **crowded or saturated genres** like card battle, match 3, strategy, resource management, endless runner, etc. most likely will need to be at this stage before initiating partner discussions, as potential partners will want to understand the nuances of what **differentiates** the developer's project from what is already in the market before signing a partnership





# Preparing for Outreach

List of essential materials & info  
for partners



# Essential checklist of materials and info for outreach

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- Short & catchy “blurb” about your game
  - will be included in outreach to potential partners
  - make sure to highlight how your (1) game is **differentiated**, (2) will **delight** users, but also (3) make **money**
  - your goal here is to **grab the attention** of the evaluators receiving the hundreds of in-bound game pitches - how can you **stand out**?

*Strong female fashion [game] from a small and experienced team (CEO previously worked on top grossing games from [company X]) from [location] that will appeal to proven audience of top grossing hits like Glu’s Kim Kardashian: Hollywood or Crowdstar’s Covet Fashion. Hire, train and compete with your agency’s suite of supermodels for world fashion domination, culminating with a show down on the runway. Leaderboards and rankings emphasizes competition. \$0.10 - \$0.20 ARPDAU in early testing, but the game still has more features and content, as well as a new, highly polished art style, in development.*



# Essential checklist of materials and info for outreach

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- **Company presentation** (highlighting)
  - **previous projects**, specific metrics of those projects if online or mobile (ARPDau, LTV, return rate, etc.)
  - team member **experience**
- **Game presentation** (highlighting)
  - key & differentiating game features
  - a well thought out & thorough monetization strategy
  - a few attractive screenshots
  - as available, any early metrics from the game
- **Game play video** (highlighting)
  - game play experience at the later stages of the game, as those evaluating the build may never make it that far
- **Game build**
  - link to download



# Preparing for Outreach

Tips when creating materials &  
info for partners





## ✓ Keep it short

- Brevity is so, so, important; this can be hard when you are quite passionate about your game projects
- Those evaluating games are reviewing hundreds of games a month and don't (and potentially won't) have time to review a 50 page presentation on your game

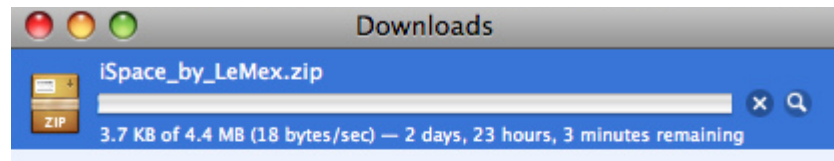




## ✓ Keep it small

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- Do what you can to keep the file size of everything down to a minimum so that those looking to review your game materials aren't having to wait 10 minutes to download everything, as they might forget to come back and review the materials
- Use a service like Box, Dropbox or Google Drive to host the materials online for potential partners, so as not to flood inboxes with emails with massive attachments & keep things organized
  - make sure to include your studio's contact info in every file





## ✓ **Keep it relevant**

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Regarding your game play video...

- The video should focus on **game play highlights** and not be a consumer facing trailer
- Skip the fancy intros or animations and just show snippets of gameplay
- For many potential partners this video is the first and only thing they will review for a project, which can therefore make or break things
- Again, **keep it short**, i.e. 60-90 seconds; accelerate the video speed to reduce the video length

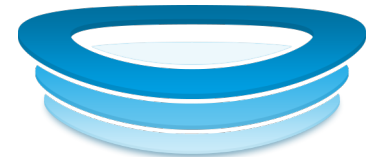


## ✓ Keep it easy

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Regarding your game build...

- Linking directly to an APK of the current build is the most efficient & least error prone way to distribute builds
- While TestFlight is common, it can be cumbersome & lead to delays in getting your game evaluated
  - busy partners are bad at remembering to accept invites
  - invites are blocked by their email provider
- Consider alternative options
  - HockeyApp (also supports Android)
  - If your game is live in a limited release on iOS, generate promo codes (even for free games) to easily get potential partners access to the build



**HOCKEYAPP**



# **Building A Partner Outreach List**



# **So your game is ready to show and you have all your materials ready, now what?**

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The key next steps now are to:

- (1) Build an initial list of potential partners
- (2) Narrow down your list of potential partners
- (3) Reach out to your final list of potential partners



# **Building A Partner Outreach List**

Build an initial list of potential  
partners



# Build a list of potential partners

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Build your list from:

1. Industry blogs & publications
2. Industry conferences & events
3. App store rankings
4. Developers in your network

*Your goal should be to compile a list of 30-50 (yes, that many) potential partners before starting outreach*





## Industry blogs & publications

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- Stay up to date on new game reviews and general industry news on industry websites, as these articles will provide information on what partners are publishing what new games and industry updates about new companies looking for games to partner on



**GamesBeat**



**GAMASUTRA**

The Art & Business of Making Games

**develop gamesindustry.biz**



## Industry conferences & events

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Industry conferences like Casual Connect or GDC are great events to meet and network with companies looking for mobile games to partner on

Even if you cannot attend these events in person, the speaker lists as well as the sponsor lists provide a great source of potential companies to explore for partnerships





# App store rankings

- Check out App Annie to view the current list of top performing mobile games to identify which potential partners have successfully released games into the market and/or are partnering on content

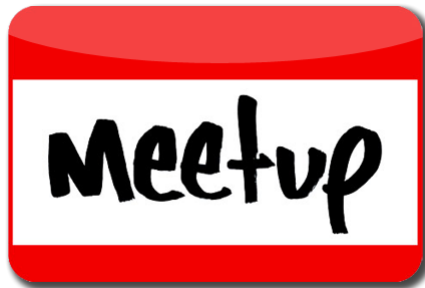
Grossing		
\$	Clash of Clans Supercell	=
\$	Candy Crush Saga King.com Limited	=
\$	Game of War - Fire Age Machine Zone, Inc	=
\$	Farm Heroes Saga King.com Limited	=
\$	Hay Day Supercell	▲1
\$	Big Fish Casino – Free Slots,... Big Fish Games, Inc	▼1
\$	Kim Kardashian: Hollywood Glu Games Inc.	▲1
\$	Pet Rescue Saga King.com Limited	▲2
\$	Boom Beach Supercell	

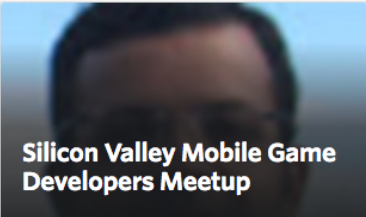
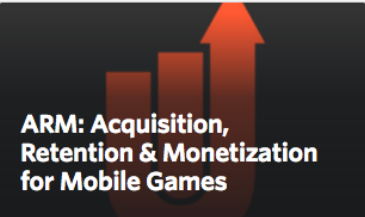


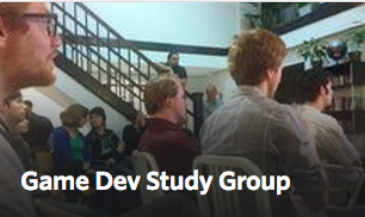
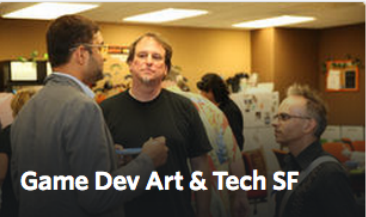




# Developers in your network

- Reach out to developers in your network as well as online developer communities you are a part of, i.e. email listservs, online forums, MeetUp groups, etc. for recommendations



 <p><b>Silicon Valley Mobile Game Developers Meetup</b></p> <p>318 Members Next Meetup: Nov 13</p>	 <p><b>ARM: Acquisition, Retention &amp; Monetization for Mobile Games</b></p> <p>458 Game Devs</p>	 <p><b>Games For Good</b></p> <p>64 Game Developers</p>
 <p><b>Mobile Game Developer Meetup @ EA</b></p> <p>143 Mobile Game Developers Next Meetup: Nov 10</p>	 <p><b>Game Dev Study Group</b></p> <p>390 Game Makers</p>	 <p><b>Game Dev Art &amp; Tech SF</b></p> <p>398 Game Creators Next Meetup: Nov 5</p>



# **Building A Partner Outreach List**

Narrow down your list of potential  
partners















## Filter based on genre mis-match

- Check out App Annie to see what genres of games are in the partner's portfolio
- If you have RPG game and the partner has only released hidden object games, then there probably is not a good fit, especially when it comes to cross-promotion of users

### Chillingo Ltd [App Publisher]

Store	Apps	Company	Parent Company
iOS Store	370	Chillingo	Electronic Arts

#### App

	A Quest Of Knights Onrush
	A.I.R Defense
	A.I.R Defense HD
	Abyss Attack
	Air Mail™
	Air Vacation
	Anomaly 2
	Anomaly Defenders
	Another Case Solved
	Arcade Reality - iPhone 3GS Only
	Are You A Dodo?
	Assault Squadron



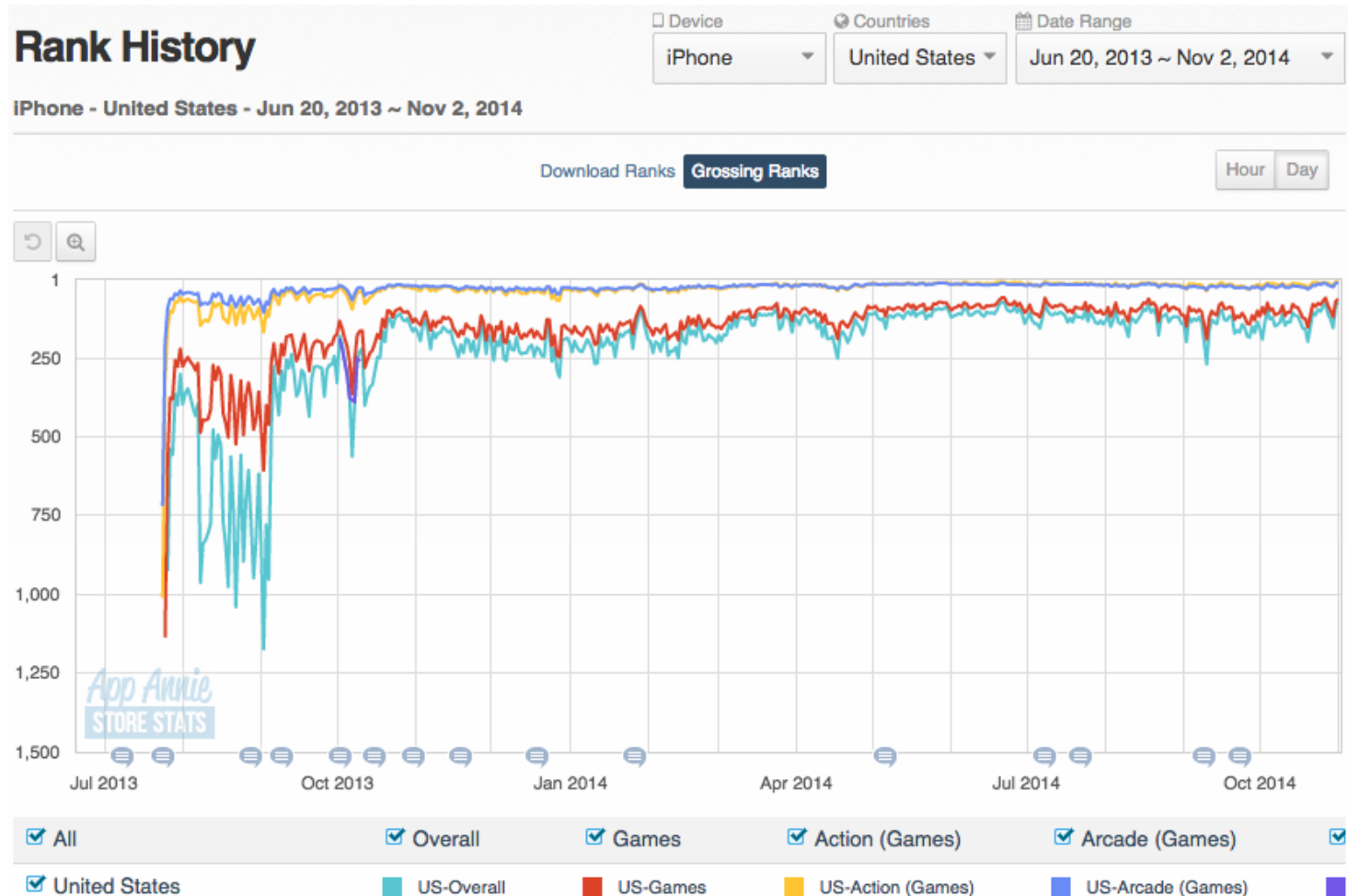
## Filter based on previous performance

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- Also check App Annie to see what success the partner has had with the previous titles it has released via partnerships with other mobile developer
- Check the grossing & download rankings of a sample of games to see if each partner has the capabilities to drive significant installs to a game



# Filter based on previous performance







# Finalize your more targeted partner list

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- Hopefully you can whittle your potential partner list for outreach down about 50% to 15-25 potential companies





# **Reach Out to Your Final Partner List**



# Getting in touch

## Website submission

All companies looking for games for partnership should have some way to contact them via their website, and most do actually review what gets submitted

### Got a Game?

With a proven track record, we feel that we're only getting better at helping developers do what they do best: **make amazing games.**

Use the form on the right to send us some details about your game, and one of our team will be in touch as soon as possible.



## Personal introduction

Obviously if you can leverage your network to get connected to a member of the team that evaluates and makes decisions on potential games for publishing, that is ideal.

LinkedIn is a great tool for identifying the appropriate contacts at each company.





# Getting in touch

## Industry events

Industry events are great opportunities to set-up meetings with potential partners. Some events allow you to send messages via the event website to try to set-up a meeting to discuss your game.

*Pro tip: you won't be the only one looking to set-up a meeting, so make sure to get in contact 2-3 weeks in advance to schedule a meeting.*



GDC

casual connect



## Face to face meetings

Face to face meetings can put you in a significantly better position as many times a partner will move forward with a deal if they believe in a team but are unsure about the game





# Summary & Conclusions



# Summary & Conclusion

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- Be organized, persistent, timely, professional and thorough in your outreach to potential partners
- Before starting anything described in this presentation, make sure your team has sat down and thought about what you are looking for in a partner for your mobile game, i.e. services, expertise, commercial terms, etc.
- Consult with experienced contacts when reviewing final agreements & contracts

**Finding a partner for your mobile game will be a time consuming exercise, but you must find the best possible partner to give your game the highest chance of success at launch!**



# Questions?

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