Platforms, Publishers, & Pitching

Presentation to
UCSC Games & Playable Media Program

Hans ten Cate
November 5, 2018

A lot of info, trying to help give you things to think about, not overwhelm you. These slides will be available later, with notes, so don’t stress about writing this all down. Think of a topic, and if you have a question, raise your hand and I’ll try my best to answer.
Hans ten Cate

- Undergraduate: international relations
- Graduate: MA public policy & MBA
- Career (8 years aerospace, 17 years in video games)
  - Consulting - NASA, FAA, Hughes, Lockheed Martin
  - Sony PlayStation - PlayStation 2
  - Electronic Arts / producer - The Sims, The Simpsons, Dante’s Inferno, Dawngate, EA Partners
  - MaxPlay - new game engine, Pop Dash mobile game
  - Consulting - VR, AR, streaming, eSports, UCSC, business strategy
Lots of data – all of it sourced and you can use this as a starting point for your own research

Even though I use numbers, from some very reputable research and financial sources, it is still all highly speculative and is estimated... subject to change... and to being very ‘off’... approach data with caution and try to use multiple sources

Do research and do a lot of it! A game cannot stand on its own merits.

Going to offer bits of random advice here and there; some of it is industry wisdom, some of it my own experience

Think of this is a starting guide to your game project / team / job
1: Design – aka Ideation, for the purposes of this talk, I’ll put Pre-Production here (where you try out prototypes, start making some content)
2. Production – building it from Pre Production all the way to Alpha, Beta, then shippable
3. Distribution – physical or digital distribution of your game
4. Marketing – simply about customer acquisition – in console/PC it’s about web ads, trailers and a variety of marketing techniques; in mobile it’s about running tons and tons of ads in other apps and games
5. Support – all kinds – if this live ops using servers and services to run a Games-as-a-Service business; perhaps free to play games; could be for DLC; MTX and in-game purchases; analytics; multiplayer; but could also just include Customer Support; so this could cost a lot more than a single ‘buck’

Number of red & green bucks are not proportional to each other, they’re illustrative (small/medium/big budget, etc)
Need $ for every stage - everything costs money
Stages 1 & 2 especially
Can introduce money anywhere into the flow, except maybe at or before #1
What feels troubling about this picture? You spend a lot of money before you make any. Games are just like any business. You need some sort of financial influx.

You can’t get funding without **some** costs however.

Need $ for every stage - everything costs money
Can introduce money anywhere into the flow, except maybe at or before #1
Figuring out these elements will help you figure out where you want to go fishing for funds; who you want to pitch to; and when...

By “aesthetics” I mean that it is about pleasing the eyes, ears, brain, heart
Video Game Business ‘Kite’ Model

GAME: Casual ‘match three’ game
• Platform: Mobile
• Market: Global mass audience (original target: female, ages 25-45)
• Business Model: free + MTX + ads

GAME: Shooter
• Platform: PC, console
• Market: Global mass audience (originally US, W&E Europe)
• Business Model: premium or free + MTX

GAME: Racing
• Platform: PC, console
• Market: Western markets, esp. Europe
• Business Model: premium

GAME: Role Playing Games
• Platform: PC, console, mobile
• Market: strong in Asia, depends on design & art style
• Business Model: premium, subscription, or free + MTX

GAME: Fighting Game
• Platform: console
• Market: strong in Latin America, eSports
• Business Model: premium or free + MTX

See also:
Before we talk about platforms, an important message

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warning: EVERYTHING is being democratized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• One of the best &amp; worst times to be a gamer (and ‘maybe’ a game developer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making the games business accessible to everyone is great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lowers the barrier to entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• But raises competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thank you, TECHNOLOGY!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Video game development technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Video game distribution technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning / finding answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choices &amp; channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More gaming devices &amp; more gamers!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Damn you, TECHNOLOGY!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Products need to be MORE unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discovery is harder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Customer acquisition is harder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Getting money out of customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Competing with other micro-consumable media &amp; for ‘share of day’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Global Opportunity

Number of Video Gamers World Wide

Over 2.3 billion gamers today
Growing at 5% - 6% per year
Compared to Global Population Growth
1% - 1.2% per year
No longer a pastime out of reach except to high-income countries

Worldwide, there are over 2 billion gamers, half of whom come from the Asia-Pacific region alone

See also
• http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/
Platforms
## Choosing a Platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mobile</th>
<th>Console</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>VR &amp; AR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barrier to Entry</strong></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Med / High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Med / High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunity</strong></td>
<td>Biggest market; many free dev tools &amp; engines; smaller games, so less time and $</td>
<td>Software sells for higher price points; not as crowded; similar architecture to PCs</td>
<td>PC &amp; web best supported by game engines; best graphics on high end</td>
<td>New emerging form of entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges</strong></td>
<td>A few guidelines for submission; wide range of hardware &amp; O/S specs</td>
<td>Application process; dev kits; strict tech requirements; age ratings requirements</td>
<td>Many different PC types &amp; specs; some guidelines esp. with publishers</td>
<td>Performance is critical; expensive to own; awkward to use; early adopter market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genres</strong></td>
<td>Many casual (hyper-casual); fewer hardcore</td>
<td>All types; fewer casual than other platforms</td>
<td>All types, from casual to hardcore, multiplayer</td>
<td>Specifically immersive &amp; 3D (mix of genres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Models</strong></td>
<td>Free to play, ad-driven; low pricing; focus on KPIs</td>
<td>Less free-to-play; more premium &amp; DLC</td>
<td>All types, incl. subscriptions</td>
<td>Premium mostly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market Reach</strong></td>
<td>2.5b smartphones; VERY crowded app stores</td>
<td>650m console gamers worldwide</td>
<td>1.3b PC gamers worldwide; over 2b PCs generally; crowded app stores</td>
<td>4m units on PSVR &amp; PC; 12m units all VR &amp; AR; 30m with cardboard &amp; GearVR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mobile**

**PC**
- [http://www.worldometers.info/computers/](http://www.worldometers.info/computers/)
- [https://www.reference.com/technology/many-computers-world-e2e980daa5e128d0](https://www.reference.com/technology/many-computers-world-e2e980daa5e128d0)

**Consoles**

**VR**

See also:
- [https://www.bigfishgames.com/blog/stats/](https://www.bigfishgames.com/blog/stats/)
For Which Platforms Are Developers Making Games?

The Most Important Gaming Platforms in 2018
% of game developers most interested in/currently developing for the following platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Most interested in</th>
<th>Currently developing for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS4/Pro</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nintendo Switch</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VR Headsets</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartphones/Tablets</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xbox One/X</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR Headsets</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mac</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on a survey of ~4,000 game developers ahead of GDC 2018; multiple answers allowed.
Source: Game Developers Conference

https://www.statista.com/chart/4527/game-developers-platform-preferences/

PC still a vibrant, thriving market because there are so many of them... has taken the spot that mobile used to have, there are still more smartphones though PlayStation is very strong as you will see; lots of enthusiasm for the Switch
Everything is growing, mobile will continue to rise; still strong opportunities in PC and console

Also see
https://www.statista.com/chart/4527/game-developers-platform-preferences/
For Which Console Would You Develop Games?
How About Now?

Global Home Console Sales, by year, Since Launch

[Graph showing global home console sales over time, with data from VGChartz.com]
Analysts were predicting Nintendo Switch would sell 200 million units
• https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Japan-Update/Smash-hit-Switch-revives-Nintendo-and-supplier-stocks
• Credit Suisse: https://gamerant.com/nintendo-switch-130-million-sold-2022/

See also:
• http://www.vgchartz.com/
It’s Not Just Hardware, It’s Software Too

Interestingly, attach rates are low for Switch... about 30% less than where Wii was at this point, more like WiiU

Source: Industry analyst, E. Kress

See also:
• https://gamingbolt.com/nintendo-switch-has-three-times-more-games-than-wii-u-did-at-this-point-in-its-life
• https://nintendosoup.com/npd-70-of-switch-owners-also-own-a-ps4-or-xbox-one/
• http://vgsales.wikia.com/wiki/Software_tie_ratio
Physical vs. Digital Distribution

$60 RETAIL Video Game
- Retailer Margin (25%)
- Returns (11%)
- Distribution, Costs of Goods (7%)
- Platform Royalty (12%)
- Publisher & Developer (45%)

$27

$4

$7

$15

$60 DIGITAL Video Game
- Platform Holder (30%)
- Publisher & Developer (70%)

$42

$18

See also
Where did other games that you compare to favorably launch? Did they start on one, and migrate to another?

Which platforms require a specific tech – HTML5, Java, WebGL, Unity?

See also:
- http://www.businessofapps.com/guide/app-stores-list
- https://itch.io/updates/introducing-open-revenue-sharing

### Distribution Platforms

- STEAM
- gog.com
- itch.io
- Game Jolt
- GamersGate
- Humble Bundle
- Jump
- Kongregate

- LOTS of options for indie game devs, ranging from ‘free’ to the usual 30%
- When in doubt, use several
- Topics to research
  - Usage fees & royalty fees
  - Tech requirements? (HTML5, Java, WebGL, Unity, Flash, etc.)
  - What other games do (how many platforms, in what order)?
## Distribution Platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEAM</th>
<th>gamehouse.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| gog.com | ROBOTCACHE | ... and many others ...
| itch.io |  |
| GAME JOLT |  |
| GAMERSGATE |  |
| Humble Bundle |  |
| Jump |  |
| KONGREGATE |  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOBILE APP STORES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>App Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amazon appstore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ... and many others ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSOLE APP STORES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XBOX LIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PlayStation Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nintendo eShop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of newly developed applications/games submitted for release to the iTunes App Store from 2012 to 2018 << damage is done

- July 2008 – app store opens
  - 250 games per month submitted

- Summer 2016
  - Mobile app-ocalypse
  - Change in app review policies
  - 2,000 games per day submitted

- October 2018
  - 100 games per day submitted

- Today on US iOS App Store
  - Over 3.2 million apps & games
  - Over 800,000 games

See also:
- https://www.pocketgamer.biz/metrics/app-store/
- https://www.pocketgamer.biz/metrics/app-store/categories/
Mobile – iOS App Store

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>815,660</td>
<td>24.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>320,850</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>279,486</td>
<td>8.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>273,282</td>
<td>8.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>197,788</td>
<td>6.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>166,916</td>
<td>5.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>128,172</td>
<td>3.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Fitness</td>
<td>99,231</td>
<td>3.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink</td>
<td>95,259</td>
<td>2.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>95,831</td>
<td>2.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>87,083</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>82,029</td>
<td>2.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>74,547</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo &amp; Video</td>
<td>72,186</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>71,221</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>71,170</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>69,489</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Info grabbed on October 29, 2018

- https://www.pocketgamer.biz/metrics/app-store/
Steam

• Rapidly becoming like the mobile app stores
  • ~40 games per day Feb. 2018 (850 games)
  • About 30% of all Steam games have come out in 2018
  • About 90% of all Steam games have come out in last 5 years

• LOTS of noise / junk / asset flips

• Without the junk, games sell between avg. 2k-10k units, make $12k-$100k
  • Majority of games on Steam will sell less and will not recoup

See also:
  • https://twitter.com/Steam_Spy/status/951086588573995008
  • http://steamspy.com/year/1999 (and other years, fyi Steam launched in 2003)
  • Let's Be Realistic: A Deep Dive into How Games Are Selling on Steam (No More Robots, Mike Rose) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WycVOCbeKqQ
  • https://www.pcgamer.com/steam-direct-is-better-than-greenlight-but-the-size-of-the-fee-will-make-or-break-it/
See also:
Markets
Markets

• **THOUGHT**: You want to create a product for market, not find a market for a product you already created

• **ON SECOND THOUGHT**: Most data won’t show what will be successful in a year, it might only show what would be successful if you started a year ago

• What (a publisher/investor expects you) to know about your market / customers
  • Age range(s)
  • Geography
  • Preferred gaming device(s)
  • Other games preferred
  • Spending habits
  • Genre performance
  • Demographics of competitor games
  • Trends: gaps vs. crowds
    • Battle royale, tower defense, idle games, 2048, flappy bird

Do this throughout your project... not just in the beginning and definitely not at the end; it will evolve

See also:
https://medium.com/@Tavrox/three-ways-to-do-market-research-for-your-video-game-a31597e79d3
Pop Dash

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlyGiejPMnw
Global Platform Preferences by Age & Gender

Source: Nielsen 360° Gaming Report

You may be surprised to see how much opportunity there is outside of your home markets

If you are deciding which territories to move into, consider where your genre is strongest. But most importantly watch where the most of your sales is happening – those countries may do even better if you localize the game for their language, extracting even more sales – seen this happen over and over.

Also see:
• https://www.cabletv.com/blog/popular-video-games-world-map/
• https://www.bigfishgames.com/blog/stats/game-genres-across-the-world/

Video Game Demographics
## Markets - Mobile

### Mobile Game Genres Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position &amp; Subject</th>
<th>Monthly Unique Users [Net] [M]</th>
<th>Net Reach [%]</th>
<th>Stickiness [%]</th>
<th>Time Spent per Month per User [Hours]</th>
<th>Active Days per Month [#]</th>
<th>Sessions per Month per User [#]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Brain Puzzle</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>06:11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Matching Puzzle</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>07:38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Alternate Reality (AR)</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>04:32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Action/Strategy</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>06:09</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Casino - Slots</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>06:12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Building Simulation</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>05:56</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. RPG Card</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>04:33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Casino - Poker</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>18:51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Race</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>01:12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Verto App Watch™, U.S. adults ages 18+, August 2016

See also
Business Model
General trend for a few years now has been away from sales of individual units (i.e. selling a game in its entirety for a single purchase price) into a business built around recurring users, increasing engagement, and in-game purchasing.

Further, some types of games have evolved into a service... something you can subscribe to like your mobile phone service and cable TV. MMO’s have been doing this for years. Services like PlayStation Now, Origin Access, Xbox Game Pass offer multiple games for a monthly fee.

Games are evolving also in how they entertain. Games are a thing to be watched, not just played. This opens business model to even more consumers.
## Premium is Not Dead, But…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stardew Valley</td>
<td>$14.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monument</td>
<td>$9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSIDE</td>
<td>$19.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMBO</td>
<td>$9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTL</td>
<td>$9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thomas was alone</td>
<td>$9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiness</td>
<td>$14.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donut County</td>
<td>$10.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy 3</td>
<td>$24.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minecraft</td>
<td>$26.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minecraft Story Mode</td>
<td>$6.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Premium is Not Dead, But…

- Hard to compete with FREE
- Cross platform pricing is difficult & weird (inconsistent)
- Price for PC first
- Make sure PC has something that mobile doesn’t have
- Break out content differently for mobile
- Do go on every platform you can ... depending on the game, mobile can be 40% of revenues
Free to Play

See also:
- https://instabug.com/blog/cpi-networks/

”Your margin is my opportunity”
– Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon
Funding
If you fund it yourself, downstream you keep more / all of your revenues
But is expensive – consider the costs of rent/food/etc.

# How to Pay for Development

- **Yourself(ves) / Bootstrap**
- **Investors**
  - Friends & Family
  - Angel
  - Venture Capital
- **Publishers**
- **Audience**
  - Crowd Funding
  - Early Access
- **Grants**
  - Government
  - Education
  - Arts/Endowment

With each option, consider...

- How much $ will you put in?
- How much $ do you get out?
- How much/long does everyone recoup?
- Who has control of the IP?
- Who has control of the project?
- Who has control of the business?
Successful campaigns
- Star Citizen: $2.2m in Kickstarter, another $180m+ raised after that via website
- Psychonauts 2: $3.8mm
- Ouya: $8.5mm highest video game KS, 2nd highest overall

See also

http://icopartners.com/category/crowdfunding/

A ‘break,’ courtesy of Kickstarter

“Omno” by Jonas Manke on Kickstarter

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vchpz50luKk
Grants

• Small grants (few $1k to few $10k)
• ‘No strings attached’
• May entail
  • using a specific technologies
  • developing for a specific audience (educational, healthcare, social awareness, disabilities)
  • being a specific type of game developer (minorities, gender)

Sources:
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4ojcJL9swc

See also:
• https://www.unrealengine.com/en-US/unrealdevgrants
• https://www.cryengine.com/developer-fund
• https://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works/media-arts
• https://ies.ed.gov/sbir/
• http://the-witness.net/news/
# Publishers vs. Investors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Publishers</th>
<th>Investors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Project financing</td>
<td>Company / multi-project financing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services</strong></td>
<td>Value-added services</td>
<td>Advisory &amp; management roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
<td>Near-/Medium-term</td>
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<td><strong>Want to See</strong></td>
<td>project with revenue potential</td>
<td>scalability and repeatability</td>
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</table>
Why Publishers?

- Scale / Reach – to geography, consumers
- Customer Acquisition – getting customers to look at and try your game
- Things that you don’t WANT to do, or CAN’T do as well as pubs
  - They’ve done this numerous times – they have experience, resources, people, and time
- Publishers have different strengths, services, expectations, and ‘styles’
  - Look at their body of work to get an idea of the types of games & developers they like
  - Take time to study / interview them
  - Talk to developers that have used them
  - Find out about their terms: financial, termination, IP ownership

See also
- https://www.reddit.com/r/gamedev/comments/2f9fyl/the_list_of_indiefriendly_publishers/
- http://blog.chucklefish.org/funding/
- http://indie-fund.com/about/
- https://docs.kongregate.com/docs
Why Publishers?

**Production**
- Project & production team support
- Game & design evaluation
- User experience testing
- Quality assurance testing
- Localization & culturalization
- First party certification
- External development & outsourcing (music, art, animations, VO)

**Sales & Distribution**
- Sales & distribution planning
- First party accounts
- Digital sales & distribution
- Retail sales & distribution
- Global distribution strategy & execution
- Customer support
- Forecasting & P&Ls
- Merchandising
Why Publishers?

Product Management
- Product strategy
- Business intelligence & analytics
- Key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Data informed decision-making
- Optimize engagement, retention, virality, monetization

Marketing & PR
- Market, product, and consumer research
- Branding strategy
- Product marketing
- PR & Media management
- Events
- Advertising (web, mobile, print, OOH)
- Influencers (YouTubers, Streamers, etc.)
- Social media & community management
- User acquisition
- Brand & sponsor partnerships
- Cross promotions
- App Store Optimization
Why Publishers?

Financing & Revenue management
- Funding / Co-Funding
- Advertising revenue
- Branding & sponsor partnership revenue
- Ancillary & merchandising revenue
- Royalty accounting

Technology Platforms
- Third party SDK account management & integration
- Online solutions management (e.g., account handling, multiplayer features, monetization solutions, leaderboards, achievements, etc.)
- Game service hosting
- Data storage hosting
- Telemetry & analytics management
Publisher Business Development

Pitches & Presentations (email, phone, in-person)

Reviews & Follow-Ups (2x - 5x)

Due Diligence / P&Ls

Term Sheets & Contracts

Publishers see a lot of pitches. Many of them similar. If you think there are a way too many games out there, imagine how many game IDEAS get pitched and never get made.
Pitching
How do you KNOW your audience sees what you see?
All about execution risk. If a team cannot pull off a good idea, it’s not worth it no matter how good the idea.
### What a Pitch Needs to Do:
Reduce Risk

- **To EXECUTION** - are you a team that can do what you are proposing?
- **To QUALITY** - do / can we align on ‘what good looks like?’
- **To REVENUES** - can the game make money?
- **To MARKET** - does it have appeal, will people like it?
- **Of COMPETITION** - is the space too crowded? Too sparse?

The other areas of risk are secondary to execution risk, but still very important. The publisher (or investor) will be thinking about these topics and how the risk feels in each one.
1. Game summary - high concept / quick pitch / hook
   • Game genre
   • Target platforms
   • Audience
   • Key Features
   • Engine / tools to be used
   • Business model (free to play, premium, price?)

Example:
“League of Riots” is a free-to-play cartoon MOBA game, for mobile tablets, shipping in October 2019

2. Pedigree of the team
   • What have you achieved as a team OR individually

3. Visual aids
   • concepts; gameplay illustrations; art ‘target’
A picture is worth...
4. Design summary
   - Features (killer features, key features)
   - Core Game Loop - what gets players hooked? Why & how do players invest their time?
   - Retention - how will you get players to come back
   - Virality - how can players entice & invite friends?
   - Monetization - what are the different ways the game will make money?

5. What do you need?
   - Development timeline - to get to MVP, post-MVP features
   - Development budget - know how much you cost! Have back-up on line items, by month
PENALTY points for this

• All text (like this presentation)
• Not well rehearsed - don’t ramble
• Too many details - DO organize pitch as a pyramid (add an appendix if necessary)
• Starting with the details - upside-down pyramid
• The wrong details
  • “Once upon a time...” - unless story central to the game / IP, skip it
• Too informal
• Not knowing your audience - what games / tech / hooks does publisher favor
• Not knowing what you need or what to ask for
• Answering ALL their questions - a thoughtful answer is better than a quick one; it’s ok to get back to them

Details – for example, publisher doesn’t need to hear about your production technique, all of your software tools
Thoughtful competitive landscape analysis - how are you different & better than competition

‘One Sheet’ / Executive Summary - it’s good to practice the elevator pitch too, in case you have no time

Revenue forecast - shows you have really thought through the business of your game. All forecasts are incorrect, but it’s a start to a conversation.

Passion & enthusiasm

Be flexible - if publisher offers alternative ideas, brainstorm them & explore; you don’t have to accept a publisher’s ideas; but it communicates professionalism

Know your limits - prove that you CAN do this

Prototype

Competition - you know your genre, done your homework; but it must be a thoughtful deconstruction, don’t trash the competition

Flexible - publisher is not trying to design your game; trying to control costs
Do I Make a Playable Prototype?

Paper Pitch → Concept Art → Animatic → Video → Prototype → ‘Keyhole’ Demo → Vertical Slice

**Short answer:** Yes, IF you can do it. It really helps the discussion. And it will help you prove to yourself that this can be done, and the idea is good.
Do I Make a Playable Prototype?

- Paper Pitch → Concept Art → Animatic → Video → Prototype → ‘Keyhole’ Demo → Vertical Slice

- "It sounds fun!" → Expectation → "It IS fun!"
- "Good ideas" → Quality → "Good game"
- "Good at ideas" → Execution → "Good at execution"
- "Soft Estimates" → Time & Money → "Solid Estimates"
They said... ‘No’???

- A “No” (or no answer) is not the end of the world
- It is not always a reflection on the quality of the idea or commentary on the team
- This is like romance, it has to be a good match (right game at the right time, with the right publisher), so go to multiple publishers
- Besides, a relationship is still possible, so have other things to pitch (back-up ideas)
- Or put a “different coat of paint” on it - if feedback is lukewarm, find out what their issues are and fix it; then re-pitch it
The Never-Before-Seen
(except for you lucky folks)

Greenlight Deck
(template)
### Game Overview

- **Overview**
  - Genre:
  - Platforms:
  - Business Model:
  - Ship Date(s):

- **Opportunity:**
  - [summary of opportunity]

- **Game Features:**
  - [feature 1]
  - [feature 2]
Developer Profile

- [developer history, founders]
- [strengths, accomplishments]
- [location, studio size]

Previous Titles

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Questions?

Hans ten Cate
10k&games@gmail.com
LinkedIn

See also:
• http://www.sloperama.com/advice.html