Bachelor's thesis

GRAFIT.GAMES - COMMERCIALIZATION OF STUDENT GAME PROJECTS

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April 20, 2025

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

I. OSOBNÍ A STUDIJNÍ ÚDAJE

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Fakulta/ústav: **Fakulta informačních technologií**

Zadávající katedra/ústav: **Katedra softwarového inženýrství**

Studijní program: **Informatika**

Specializace: **Manažerská informatika**

II. ÚDAJE K BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCI

Název bakalářské práce:

Grafit.games - Komercializace projektů studentských her

Název bakalářské práce anglicky:

Grafit.games - Commercialization of Student Game Projects

Jméno a pracoviště vedoucí(ho) bakalářské práce:

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Jméno a pracoviště druhé(ho) vedoucí(ho) nebo konzultanta(ky) bakalářské práce:

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **21.02.2025** Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **16.05.2025**

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III. PŘEVZETÍ ZADÁNÍ

Student bere na vědomí, že je povinen vypracovat bakalářskou práci samostatně, bez cizí pomoci, s výjimkou poskytnutých konzultací. Seznam použité literatury, jiných pramenů a jmen konzultantů je třeba uvést v bakalářské práci.

Datum převzetí zadání

Černák Samuel

Podpis studenta

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Pokyny pro vypracování:

Goal:
To design and test a mechanism of advancing student projects from semester or final project phase to commercial distribution with profit shared among team members.
Instructions:
1. Analyze needs of student videogame projects from potential commercialization point of view
2. Analyze faculty environment regarding advancing student projects to the business sphere. Additionally research similar mechanisms on other faculties/universities both in Czech Republic and abroad.
3. Identify exemplary project candidates for a pilot run.
4. Design mechanism of student videogame projects commercialization that will be financially sustainable without faculty's resources.
5. Choose a pilot game project and test designed mechanisms on it.
6. Document steps to make a methodology so it can be replicable.

Seznam doporučené literatury:

Czech Technical University in Prague
Faculty of Information Technology

Citation of this thesis: Černák Samuel. *Grafit.games - Commercialization of Student Game Projects*. Bachelor's thesis. Czech Technical University in Prague, Faculty of Information Technology, 2025.

Declaration

In Prague on April 20, 2025

Abstract

In the thesis we explore why student-created games at our faculty are often abandoned after completion. We design a support system that encourages further development and potential commercialization of these projects. Although private investment is rising in Prague, student entrepreneurship remains low. Our faculty lacks a mechanism to support game commercialization. We examine the game development process, existing institutional support elsewhere, and possible commercialization models, ultimately proposing a lightweight cooperative-based system tailored to students' needs. As part of the thesis, we launched a recruitment website, collected over a dozen contacts from interested participants, developed association rules, and prepared a testing mechanism. While no legal entity was established, this thesis lays the groundwork for a sustainable support structure that can empower students to pursue the entrepreneurial potential of their creative projects.

Keywords game, game development, game launch, student support, studend-led, start-up, intellectual property, university incubator

Abstrakt

V této práci zkoumáme, proč jsou studentské herní projekty na naší fakultě po dokončení často opuštěny a navrhujeme podpůrný systém, který podporuje jejich další rozvoj a možnou komercializaci. Přestože v Praze roste soukromé investování, studentské podnikání zůstává na nízké úrovni. Na naší fakultě chybí mechanismus, který by komercializaci her systematicky podporoval. Zaměřujeme se na proces vývoje her, existující podporu v jiných prostředích a možné modely komercializace. Na základě této analýzy jsme navrhli systém s družstvem, přizpůsobený potřebám studentů. V rámci práce jsme spustili náborový web, získali více než tucet kontaktů od zájemců o zapojení, vytvořili

stanovy družstva a připravili testovací mechanismus. Přestože nebyla založena žádná právnická osoba, práce pokládá základy pro udržitelnou podpůrnou strukturu, která může studenty motivovat a podpořit při využití podnikatelského potenciálu jejich kreativních projektů.

Klíčová slova hra, vývoj her, uvedení hry na trh, podpora studentů, vedené studenty, start-up, duševní vlastnictví, univerzitní inkubátor

Contents

List of abbreviations

CCPA	California Consumer Privacy Act
CZK	Czech koruna (Crown)
Dev	Development
EULA	End-User License Agreement
FIT CTU	Faculty of Information Technology at the Czech Technical University (in Prague)
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IP	Intellectual Property
USA	United States of America
UI	User Interface

Introduction

Each year, students pour creativity, effort, and technical skill into developing original games as part of their studies. Yet once these projects are handed in and graded, they are often left unused—despite their potential to grow into successful products. This thesis explores why that happens and what can be done to change it.

Our focus is on student-created games at FIT CTU in Prague, Czechia. While the local environment shows promising signs—especially through strong private sector investment—many student projects fail to progress beyond the classroom. We believe this is largely due to a lack of entrepreneurial confidence and know-how among students, as well as the complexity and effort involved in commercializing a game. This thesis aims to investigate how a simple, accessible support system could help bridge that gap.

This thesis examines the support currently available for game developers at different stages of the creative process. Our goal is to consider the possible mechanisms for commercialization, evaluate and propose a system tailored to our students' needs. To validate our approach, we will conduct user sentiment testing and then describe a test run, including how we will evaluate its success or failure and plan subsequent steps.

Rather than going deep into the technical development of games, the selection and financing required to sustainably run an incubator, or creating a functioning university spin-out company, this thesis will instead focus on preparing the conceptual foundation for future implementation. Our goal is to design a system—its processes, rules, and intended outcomes—to prepare the project for implementation. This approach allows us to test interest, gather feedback, and refine the model before any formal or financial commitments are made.

The thesis is divided into sections—each made up of several multiple chapters. The research part explores the game development process, academic entrepreneurship, and commercialization models—both locally at FIT CTU and internationally. In the design part we compare options and select a model

suited for our needs. Then we move to practical steps: we prepare association rules, launch a recruitment website, collect interest and prepare a validation mechanism. The thesis concludes by reviewing the results, assessing whether the goals were met, and outlining future steps. We invite you to explore with us how student creativity can be supported and transformed into real-world success.

Chapter 1

Game Development Processes

The game development process is a series of interconnected stages taking creatives from an idea to a commercial product. Understanding of the process allows a developer to make informed decisions, a supportive body to provide targeted assistance and an investor to assess the state and outlook of a project. The chapter breaks down each component of the process—from planning, pre-production and production to testing, launch and post-launch activities. It especially focuses on the launch phase—requiring a distinct set of competencies from marketing and distribution to niche legal and financial expertise, often underrepresented in the technically and creatively oriented developer teams.

Game development is not a single, linear task but a series of interconnected stages, each with its own distinct goals and requirements. A thorough understanding of the entire process is essential for any student team aiming to successfully bring their game to the release stage—allowing them to anticipate challenges, allocate resources effectively, and make informed decisions at every step, from concept to completion.

1.1 Game Development Stages

Game development is the process of designing, creating, and releasing video games. It includes writing, sound design, project management, programming and more. The process can be divided into distinct stages that focus on different aspects of the final product. [1, 2]

Planning Stage In the initial stage, game developers choose the genre that fits their vision the best, select viable art styles and gameplay mechanics, plan

the game's structure, content, and more. Changing, cutting or replacing later on can be straightforward in some aspects of the game and very challenging in others. Such aspects must be decided early on. [1, 2]

Pre-Production Stage The pre-production stage of game development requires artists, writers and designers to finalise important decisions. Feasibility, practicality and the worth of different design aspects is considered. Will the game be fun to play and appealing to look at? Will it work properly, or do some technical limitations need to be taken into account? [1, 2]

Production Stage After the decision-making, production of the game can start. It is at this stage when most of the code is written, levels are designed, game mechanics are tested, models, textures and visual elements start to appear. [1, 2]

Testing Stages Some form of internal testing is done throughout the entire process. Before the game is finalised however, developers tend to release test versions. This practice can be roughly divided into alpha and beta.

The **alpha** version of the game already has the key mechanics and allows developers to assess playability. It might have placeholders for characters, surroundings or lack music. It is used for internal[1] testing between staff members but can in some cases be available[2] to selected, passionate fans willing to help developers with playtesting.

The **beta** version follows alpha. The game still requires a lot of work at this point but elements such as the environment and characters are approaching their final form. There still might be bugs present, glitches and exploits that need fixing, performance optimization required, and details missing. The game mechanics may still need to be balanced and server stability tested.[3] [1, 2, 3]

Launch Stage During the launch stage the game is made available for the public to play. This stage requires understanding the target market, audience, selecting a distribution channel, creating a strategy, and advertising. Additional support for players might be provided and feedback gathered. [1, 2, 3]

Post-Launch Stage After the initial publication, developers might want to release updates, patch bugs or even add new content, either as a free update

[1] refered to as closed
[2] refered to as open
[3] Betas can be open or closed too.

or in the form of a purchasable extension. Continuation of a successful product allows it to extend its lifespan and provides a long-term fanbase. [1, 2]

1.2 Launch Process In Detail

While the students at the Faculty of Information Technology at the Czech Technical University (FIT CTU) often excel at designing and programming games, the launch phase is where many projects struggle. Unlike development, which follows a structured technical process, launching a game involves a complex and often unfamiliar set of tasks, from marketing and distribution to niche legal and financial specialties, budget planning, fundraising, assessing copyright protection, trademarks, creating contracts and more. A successful launch requires careful planning, strategic timing, and an understanding of distribution platforms and promoting. Many of these steps are not immediately obvious but can determine whether a game finds an audience or gets lost in an oversaturated market.

1.2.1 Structural Requirements

Ensuring a smooth and successful launch requires meeting critical structural requirements that impact a game's performance, security, and compliance. Overlooking these factors can lead to negative user experiences, security vulnerabilities, and even regulatory consequences.

Before being released to the public, games need to be assessed and extensively tested to ensure stability and playability. The first thing a player interacts with is the UI—a launch screen or app—which therefore needs to be optimized. Settings such as the resolution, window size, language, subtitles, and key bindings need to work properly. Accessibility and support options need to be tested and credits/end game screens polished.[4]

For games with online components, a reliable server infrastructure is crucial. Poor server performance can lead to lag or disconnects during traffic surges. Optimizing configuration, considering scalability and running stress tests before launch helps identify potential bottlenecks.[5]

Major gaming platforms, from Steam to PlayStation, Xbox and mobile app stores, have specific technical requirements. Failing to meet performance specifications or file size limitations can lead to rejection, or post-launch repercussions.[6]

Collecting and storing personal player data is best avoided in the case of small student-led projects. If collecting data is necessary, developers must comply with regional regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)[7] in Europe and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA)[8]

in the USA. These regulations require data to be anonymized, encrypted, safely stored and access to it minimized. Non-compliance can lead to severe penalties.[4]

1.2.2 Operational Requirements

A successful game launch relies on careful coordination of tasks and resources. While technical readiness is crucial, the operational aspects of the launch determine how smoothly the transition from development to release unfolds.

Best practices include creating a detailed timeline for launch-related activities and setting a realistic launch date. Mapping critical milestones helps teams avoid last-minute chaos.[9]

Effective launch coordination requires collaboration between developers, marketers, community managers, and support staff. Clearly defining individual responsibilities and establishing a contingency plan can help prevent miscommunication or overlooking tasks. A pre-launch meeting can align all teammembers and prepare them for launch day chaos.[10, 9]

Preparing announcements for player communication channels (e.g., Discord, Reddit) to address potential issues or provide updates can promptly address player inquiries and provide updates.[10, 9]

1.2.3 Legal Requirements

From a legal standpoint, publishing a game entails compliance with intellectual property laws, consumer rights regulations, and distribution agreements. Intellectual Property (IP) protection, including copy rights, trademarks, and patents, safeguards creators' work. IP applies to a finished game, but might also restrict use of assets such as code, art, music, and branding.[11]

Ownership of IP varies depending on how a creation has been produced. If, for example, a developer creates a game independently, they generally retain full rights. In collaborative projects, or when work is commissioned, ownership can become complicated and must be defined in written contracts.[4, 11]

When incorporating third-party source material such as characters, settings, or themes from movies, TV shows, or other media, licensing agreements must be secured. Even small references to copyrighted works can lead to legal action if not authorized.[4, 11]

Beyond copyright, trademark protection can apply to titles, logos, and other branding elements. A trademark prevents competitors from using similar names or logos hence firstly ensuring that a game title and branding do not infringe on existing trademarks is crucial.[12]

To legally include music in a game, two types of licenses can be obtained. A synchronization license grants the right to use the underlying composition whereas a master license grants the right to use a particular recording.[13]

After the use of all assets has been approved an End-User License Agreement (EULA) needs to be drafted.[4] It is used to set clear expectations and legally protects the interests of both the game developer and the player. It ensures that the creator retains ownership of its software, provides a framework for handling disagreements, limits the creator's liability, and ensures compliance with data privacy laws (like GDPR and CCPA). The agreement also allows users to understand what they're legally allowed to do with the software and provides specifications such as features and the functionality. Publishing platforms such as Steam provide a general EULA that usually covers the needs of a small game.[14, 15]

Developers must also ensure compliance with data privacy laws in the targeted market—the GDPR[7] in Europe and the CCPA[8] in the U.S. Data can generally only be collected if there is a lawful basis for it, a necessity for gameplay or user management and a clear explanation why and how it will be processed—usually in the EULA.[16, 17]

Traditionally, publishers required creators to obtain appropriate age ratings (e.g., PEGI, ESRB) based on the game's content. On distribution platforms like Steam however, filling out a content survey suffices.[15]

1.2.4 Marketing Requirements

Marketing is the process of bringing a product to market. Successfully launching a game requires a strong marketing strategy to generate interest, attract customers, and maximize visibility.

During audience research, developers identify and attempt to understand the target audience. Different genres appeal to different player demographics, and marketing strategies should be tailored accordingly. Analyzing similar games, engaging with gaming communities or conducting surveys helps determine what resonates most.[18]

Creating a well-organized press kit is crucial for both media outreach and promotions. It should include high-quality trailers, screenshots, game descriptions, developer quotes, and release details.[19]

Building an online presence is a common strategy indie developers employ to stand out, generate excitement and cultivate a dedicated community before launch. It is usually done through active participation—posting behind-the-scenes content, development updates, and engaging with fans—on social media platforms such as Reddit, Twitter, Instagram or TikTok. A website can serve

as a central hub to direct an audience to. Its landing page should showcase press kit assets, include a newsletter signup option and other essential info.[20]

Influencer Partnerships—particularly with streamers and content creators aligned with the game's genre—can significantly boost visibility.[21]

Finally, choosing the right distribution channel is key to a game's launch and long-term success. Different platforms cater to different audiences, offer unique visibility opportunities, and have varying revenue-sharing models. Developers must evaluate their goals and pick the best fit:

- Steam[4] is the largest digital distribution platform for PC games, accounting for 50-70% of global PC game downloads.[22] It offers powerful tools for developers, including community forums, game analytics, and built-in marketing features such as Steam Wishlists. Listing a game on Steam involves submitting it through Steamworks, paying a $100 fee (refundable after $1000 in sales), and adhering to the platform's content guidelines. Steam has a fixed 30% revenue split. The Steam Discovery Queue and algorithm-driven recommendations can boost sales provided the game gains enough initial traction through wishlists, reviews, and engagement.[23, 24, 25]

- Itch.io[5] is a flexible, developer-friendly platform known for its supportive indie community and experimental games. Unlike Steam, Itch.io allows the developer full control over the revenue split, offering a pay-what-you-want pricing model. Itch.io however lacks the built-in discovery mechanisms and massive audience of Steam, requiring developers to rely on external marketing.[26]

- Game Jolt[6] emphasizes community-driven engagement with social-media-like features. Developers can post updates, interact with followers, and grow an audience over time. Game Jolt offers flexible monetization options, such as one-time purchases, donations, or ad-supported releases. While good for building a player base, Game Jolt too lacks the commercial reach of Steam.[27]

For many indie developers, the best approach is releasing on multiple platforms—launch a free demo on Itch.io or Game Jolt before transitioning to a release on Steam.

1.2.5 Financial Requirements

Understanding the financial requirements and strategies of game development determines the feasibility and success of a project. From budget planning, securing initial funding to monetization strategies, developers must navigate several financial challenges.

[4] accessible through https://store.steampowered.com/
[5] accessible through https://itch.io/
[6] accessible through https://gamejolt.com/

Budget-Planning A well-structured budget—commonly created through a task breakdown[28]—allocates funds across three primary areas:

- **Development** includes salaries, outsourcing (e.g., music, voice acting), and tools (software/hardware).[29]
- **Marketing** covers promotional campaigns, ads, influencer partnerships, and events.[29]
- **Post-Launch Support** includes updates, fixes, server maintenance, and customer support.[29]

Monetization Strategy Choosing the right monetization strategy ensures sustainable business operations, allows investment into high-quality contributors and assets and incentivises innovation:

- **Freemium** offers free access to the base game with revenue generated through ads or in-app purchases (e.g., skins).[30]
- **Premium** involves an upfront fee for the game and is sometimes supplemented by paid expansions.[30]
- **Subscription** provides access to the product throughout recurring payments (less common for indie games).[30]

Fundraising Larger projects often require funding, which may come from several sources:

- **Self-Funding** is commonly used by indie game developers until external funding is secured.[31]
- **Publishers** traditionally provide financial support and marketing expertise but may require revenue-sharing agreements.[31]
- **External investors** can financially back a project in exchange for equity, or profit-sharing.[31]
- **Crowdfunding platforms** such as Gamefound[7] or Kickstarter[8] allow developers to raise funds directly from potential players but rely on strong promotional efforts.[31]
- **Organizations** in the gaming (eg. Unreal Engine) or education space may offer competitive grants to support prospective indie developers.[31, 32]

Lastly, when monetizing a game, the benefits of operating as a company should be considered. Starting a company is not strictly required and might entail upfront fees but provides legal protection, simplifies tax compliance, and can improve credibility when negotiating contracts with investors or publishers.[33]

[7] accessible through https://gamefound.com/en
[8] accessible through https://www.kickstarter.com/

Results

This thesis set out to address a common but—at our faculty—underexplored issue: the abandonment of student-created games after their academic purpose has been fulfilled. Our goal was to design a practical and accessible support system that could help students further develop and potentially commercialize their creative projects.

We successfully launched a recruitment website and collected over a dozen contacts from students interested in the initiative. Association rules were created, and a testing mechanism was prepared to validate the model. While no legal entity was established due to time constraints, we consider this stage of the project a success in laying the conceptual and operational groundwork for future implementation.

Our goals were largely met. We researched the necessary background, analyzed comparable support structures, described a relatively concrete mechanism, and tested user sentiment. Along the way, we also gained new insight into how timing within the academic cycle and peer collaboration influence entrepreneurial outcomes and learned a surprising amount about the commercial effectiveness and usefulness of cooperatives.

However, several open questions remain. Can the initiative be sustained long-term? How should it be funded during times of financial instability? Will we be able to achieve continuity across academic years? Will the executive mechanisms work? These are important challenges that this project must address.

For further development, we recommend refining the internal processes based on feedback, gradually introducing more formal structure and responsibility and altering the rules of association if necessary. Collaboration with faculty leadership and external partners could strengthen the model and broaden its impact.

This thesis does not offer a final solution but rather a starting point—a work-

ing concept that, with continued effort and iteration, can empower students to transform their academic projects into meaningful, real-world ventures. We wish our successors the best of luck.

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