Wizard Needs Matches

Canadiengineers - Hans Brown, Paul Dreger, Cara Fisher, Deema AlShoaibi

Deployment plan:

Our deployment plan for “Wizard Needs Matches” exists in a five-stage format. First we will create a representational entity (logo or company) that the game will be produced by. Then we post the game to Steam Greenlight. We start advertising the game through having footprints in Steam, Facebook, Youtube, and Game Developer conventions like GDC. Once we create a large enough interest in the game, we set the pricing, hand Valve the executable and data files, and the game goes up on Steam.

The first step in selling this game is creating a branding logo and/or a company to own the game. First and foremost, we will need one major person or bank account to represent the company for payments. While everyone will be getting an equal share of the profits, we will use one account to handle transaction processing and forwarding of paychecks. In more momentary terms, Steam Greenlight uploading requires some sort of branding icon to represent the developers of the game so we will have come up with a graphic that represents the developers of “Wizard Needs Matches.” For open communication purposes, we will have a single email account that all developers have access to. This makes maintaining connections with community members (see SteamWorks and Facebook below) significantly easier. It also looks more professional to have a company email like “[john@canadiengineers.com](mailto:john@canadiengineers.com)” instead of having “[johnMcGillicutty@gmail.com](mailto:johnMcGillicutty@gmail.com)” as your contact email. From a consumer marketing standpoint, having a branding icon and a company will build our reputation as game developers and show that we are taking game design seriously. This opens the possibility for officially creating a company in the future if our careers find huge success. Our next step is making the game available to customers for purchase.

Once we have finalized our logo and representation, we will submit our game for review on Steam Greenlight. To deploy on Steam Greenlight, we need a Steam account that has spent at least $5 on the Steam Store (Limited User Accounts page) and a $100 upfront fee “to keep spam and joke submissions out of the system” (Greenlight Informational Page). Once the game is submitted, it can be voted on by Steam users to increase the likelihood that it will be chosen for the next release date. This is a community and user involved process, meaning we should market to our users and encourage them to create Steam accounts and upvote our game so it moves through the Greenlight pipeline faster. We will use social media and gaming community forums to solicit support. Once our publicity takes off we need to monitor our company email on a regular basis (daily to half-weekly) for approval by Valve for distribution.

Steam Greenlight has a number of benefits that make it an ideal platform for distributing our game. First of all, Steam only requires an executable file to post to Greenlight. Since Unity builds to .exe files natively, we can easily post our game on Greenlight by uploading the .exe file. Second, Steam Greenlight provides free access to the SteamWorks API for integration. SteamWorks provides many features that console devices would provide to developers while still maintaining PC build support. For example, we can integrate SteamWorks achievement tracking into our game so that, for example, slaying 100 of an enemy will give you the “Slayer” achievement for your Steam account. The second and more important feature is Steam-provided community support. Steam-run community and developer forums mean we can send and receive feedback to and from our players with ease.. This plays more heavily into the marketing and maintenance plan for the future, but it is a great feature to have available for use. Finally, the SteamWorks API supports in-game purchasing of down loadable content (DLC) and other bonus content. If we want to create additional content or provide patches (fixes) , we just add them through a SteamWorks-run in-game store.

Once our game is on its way to being approved, we need to market our game to as wide a community as possible to expedite the approval process. We will already have a small public presence before and after game release because of Greenlight’s display page and the aformentioned SteamWorks forums, but we will need alot more people interested in order to get it through quickly. Our first global marketing strategy will focus on social media outlets.

Facebook marketing will raise significant publicity if done well, as over 1.6 billion people use Facebook. Creating a company Facebook page is free and gives us a public chatroom presence. Through this page we can post news about updates, patch fixes, and additional content in progress, and it allows us to receive feedback from users about our game before it is even officially released. To get the word out about our game, we will also employ Facebook advertising. For approximately $350, you can get lifetime Facebook advertising for your product. (Facebook Ads) Our ad will likely consist of the “Wizard Needs Matches” title screen and some gameplay images or footage. A link embedded in the banner will redirect to our Greenlight page where we will have all the information about our game, which includes a playable demo that we encourage anyone and everyone to try for free.

Possibly the most important marketing strategy is getting people to play our game. Unlike with big budget AAA companies, we will rely heavily on word of mouth and customer reviews to communicate the quality of our work. In addition to distributing a free version on our Greenlight page, we will look for Youtube gamers like Markiplier to play our game. As suggested by Gamasutra in their “How to get your game covered by Youtubers” article, we will be giving away free full versions of our game to any “Let’s Play”ers out there willing to give us feedback on the game design. Also, we will ask those that give positive feedback to serve as spokespeople for the Youtube market. We plan on giving away one hundred copies to anyone with an interest in showing Rogue-likes or Role Playing Games (RPGs). The good news is that due to the tendency of Youtubers to follow popular trends, if we can get someone to show positive interest, more are sure to follow. We just need that foot in the door. Once we have a good footing in two of the most powerful marketing tools in the world, Facebook and Youtube, then we will market the game at game developer conventions for the last push to Steam Store release.

To get our other foot in the door, we turn to game developer conventions like GDC (Game Developers Convention). Conventions like GDC are a great place to get the word out about our game, make connections, and learn more about the game development industry. Convention tickets are $199 a person for a GDC Expo pass, which gives access to the entire Expo along with a Game Career Seminar, GDC Connect “business matchmaking”, and the IGF and Game Developer’s Choice Awards Ceremony. By going to the expo and letting everyone know about our game, we get more gamers and development supporters interested in our game. Additionally, all of the other parts of GDC (the Career Seminar, business matchmaking, etc.) are opportunities to learn about game design marketing and launching from professionals. But most importantly, we make connections with other developers, which will help us in the long run, building a name for our company.

Once we have built up enough consumer approval for our game, we will receive an email from Valve to begin price negotiations. When we finish the game and it is a polished product, we can expect a price of $5-$15. Valves does not openly discuss marketing, but we can generalize that thirty percent of profits will be deducted as compensation (Quora on Steam’s Cut). This brings game profit to between $3.50 and $10.50. We, the developers, will each get paid twenty four percent of the remainder from profits rounded down and the remaining four percent will be put into a company account for future business expenses. After price negotiations and final builds, we release the game onto the Steam Store and wait for people to buy and play it. After three days to a week, we look at feedback and enter into the post-development maintenance stage fixing bugs, but at this point our game is officially on the market.

Overall costs / profits:

$100 entry fee for Steam Greenlight

$5 cost to create a non-limited Steam account

$350 in Facebook ads

Possible travel costs for a trip to San Francisco

$199 \* 4 for four Expo passes to GDC (one per developer)

Estimating $300 for printables for marketing (posters, business cards, fliers)

Total expenditures between $1551 and $1566.

Given our game will make a profit of between $3.50 and $10.50 per copy, we expect to make this money back with 148 to 448 copies sold. Given the number of people in the US, and the reasonably low price of the game, 200 - 300 copies seems reasonable but so it is possible we could lose or gain money with this game.

References:

How to get Your Game covered by YouTubers <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/222408/How_to_get_your_game_covered_by_YouTubers.php> for recommendations on getting YouTubers to cover your game

Is Youtube killing the traditional games press <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/219122/Is_YouTube_killing_the_traditional_games_press.php> for how YouTubers are changing the landscape of game publicizing.

Greenlight Informational Page <https://steamcommunity.com/workshop/about/?appid=765&section=faq> for info on what Steam Greenlight is

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/> for investigation of Facebook Page creation

Facebook Business <https://www.facebook.com/business/> for investigation of Business Facebook Pages

Facebook Ads <http://www.postplanner.com/beginners-guide-how-to-advertise-your-business-on-facebook/> for information about creating Ads on Facebook

Quora on Steam’s Cut <https://www.quora.com/Valve-company-What-percentage-does-Steam-keep-from-sales> indicates that most companies take 30% of game profits.

<http://www.pcgamer.com/notch-on-why-minecraft-still-isnt-on-steam/> seems to support the Quora statement that Valve takes 30% of game profits.

<https://support.steampowered.com/kb_article.php?ref=3330-IAGK-7663> to indicate the amount of money required to upgrade a Steam Limited User account.

Unused References:

<https://www.reddit.com/r/gamedev/comments/3kefgi/asked_to_pay_22000_by_popular_youtuber_for_our/> Reddit on paying to be part of a Let’s Play

<https://www.sokanu.com/careers/video-game-designer/salary/> for ballpark estimates on developer salaries

<http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/221533/Game_Developer_Salary_Survey_2014_The_results_are_in.php> for detailed estimates on developer salaries