

# Marketing Position

[Sad Pumpkin Games](#)



Jake O'Connor

UAT MS546

Assignment 6.1

## Introduction

This document will discuss the potential market positioning and business identity of indie game development startup Sad Pumpkin Games in detail. Market positioning is important, especially for a small startup focusing on delivering digital content worldwide. Where a small local business can focus their marketing efforts on a fixed local area, an online game studio must compete globally with other developers from small to large. Throughout this document, we will discuss the possible marketing strategy for Sad Pumpkin Games and how that strategy ultimately aims to position Sad Pumpkin Games in the greater ecosystem of indie game developers active in the global market.

## Sad Pumpkin Games

Sad Pumpkin Games is an indie game development studio founded by two industry veterans with experience across dozens of game genres and various sizes of game studio. Sad Pumpkin Games aims to democratize game development and bring unique games to audiences who have been traditionally underserved by the mainstream options available, including those who would not consider themselves to be “gamers.” The startup plans to use lean development practices and bare bones bootstrapping in order to maximize likelihood of success for each title and involve players in the process from step one to gauge interest, iterate on feedback, and determine necessary features.

The budget of Sad Pumpkin Games, as well as the budget of each individual title, are severely limited compared to larger or more well-funded studios, so the effectiveness of any potential marketing strategy needs to be inversely proportional to that difference. Sad Pumpkin Games aims to maximize the limited budget available through a multitude of techniques. First, treating individual titles with a fail-fast pass/fail methodology throughout the development process in order to minimize the loss of fully developing titles which have little-to-no market potential. Second, optimizing marketing by being an

active member of the community and using as much word-of-mouth and boots on the ground advertising as possible before resorting to paid advertising channels.

## Logo and Slogan



The Sad Pumpkin Games WIP logo (pictured above) displays the company's name and mascot, the depressed jack-o-lantern. The Sad Pumpkin Games name and logo/mascot were originally conceived of while driving through farmland in the early winter. Seeing the pumpkins slowly beginning to wither and sag in on themselves after not being picked out for Halloween, destined to rot away or become pig food. A lot of the games industry treats potential-players this same way; people feel underserved and underappreciated. Most modern games are made specifically for entrenched gamers, assuming the player already has years of experience in a particular genre or format and bowling right over would-be players with less experience. Sad Pumpkin Games titles are made for those, and with the help of those, that feel like "gaming" is out of their reach.

The tentative slogan for Sad Pumpkin Games is "games with players," which is intentionally generic. Obviously as a game studio, "games" is the primary word of the slogan. "Games" is intentionally unqualified, as Sad Pumpkin Games doesn't specialize in any specific genre or style of games. The second word "with" was originally "for," but was changed to better extend the ethos of Sad Pumpkin

Games's player-focused and player-driven development into the slogan. Not only are Sad Pumpkin Games titles developed literally with the players, using their feedback as a primary input into the development process, but Sad Pumpkin Games's fail-fast development methodology also takes the "with" literally: games *without* players don't make it to release at SPG. Finally, "players" was specifically chosen instead of "gamers" because Sad Pumpkin Games doesn't want to make games specifically for gamers. Sad Pumpkin Games intends to develop games for underserved players of all types, including those that would not self-identify as "gamers."

## Brand Strategy

The overall brand strategy of Sad Pumpkin Games is to appeal to underserved consumers and be as transparent, fair, and equitable as possible. The "games with players" ethos it meant to include would-be players in the development process, and that feeds into both the brand strategy and the business model. Sad Pumpkin Games wants customers to know at any given moment how and what the company is doing and how the development of upcoming titles is going. The antithesis of Sad Pumpkin Games's brand strategy is the all-too-common indie game strategy of having a massively successful crowdfunding campaign and then going dark for 1-2 years and finally releasing a product that bears little resemblance to what was promised.

## Threats and Competition

The biggest threat to Sad Pumpkin Games is the inability to locate suitable underserved audiences. If the Sad Pumpkin Games team can't find audiences of players that are looking for something they aren't currently seeing in the gaming market, the studio will have to fall back onto the standard indie game development process of coming up with random ideas and hoping to later find an audience for them. This threat would put Sad Pumpkin Games in the position that every other indie

game developer is in, and history shows that the large majority of indie game developers close their doors without ever making a profit.

Sad Pumpkin Games has an immense amount of competition. There are dozens of massive game developers and hundreds more of indie game developers, all producing thousands of games per year in sum. Since games rarely have a location-specific component, that also means every game is competing with every other game on a worldwide scale, limited only by localization and local law. Taking all these potential competitors into account, Sad Pumpkin Games will have to position itself strategically in the minds of the consumers in order to stand out from the huge pack of competitors.

## Positioning Goal

Sad Pumpkin Games's goal is to position itself as a boutique indie game development studio that caters to niche audiences underserved by existing gaming options. SPG aims to distance itself from the likes of the 'dreamer' and 'visionary' game developers that spend all their time talking about what might be someday, and rarely fulfilling these promises, and instead become identified by the consumer as the game developer that listens to and prioritizes the voices of their target audience above all else. Sad Pumpkin Games wants each title in its catalog, as well as each mechanic in every title it produces, to be traceable back to the desires of the audience, not genre norms or iron-fisted executives.

To phrase Sad Pumpkin Games's positioning goal using the old framework for an internal positioning statement: *For would-be players who are underserved or ignored by the current gaming ecosystem, Sad Pumpkin Games is a developer that focuses on the player. Unlike big game studios, Sad Pumpkin Games is willing to listen to audience feedback and allow the players to decide what games they want to play.*

## Position Reinforcement

The market position of Sad Pumpkin Games will be reinforced in a variety of ways. Firstly, through the actions of the studio itself. Developer diaries, progress videos, and development livestreams will be a mandatory part of the development process for a Sad Pumpkin Games title, forcing the studio to be transparent about how and when audience input is being considered and how development process is coming along. Additionally, Sad Pumpkin Games will be active on social media posting progress updates, calls for testers, and calls for player input on new ideas or mechanics, all trying to build a rapport with would-be customers and developing an identity of transparency. Finally, to truly reinforce the position of Sad Pumpkin Games as the “games with players” studio that focuses on player input the studio will prominently display the names of community members who spearhead audience support for specific games and features both in each games’ credits and on the Sad Pumpkin Games website, if we’re the studio of “games with players” then the players deserve credit too.