

Marketing Platforms

[Sad Pumpkin Games](#)



Jake O'Connor

UAT MS546

Assignment 5.1

Introduction

This document aims to cover the multiple marketing channels that Sad Pumpkin Games aims to use during the different parts of its operation. The two distinct phases of operation for the development of a Sad Pumpkin Games title are bootstrap phase and production phase, and each have separate funding and marketing targets and goals. The bootstrap phase is the prototyping, preproduction, and part-time development phase of a Sad Pumpkin Games title. This phase is estimated at a one-year timeline, at the end of which is a pitch to publishers, investors, and/or crowdfunding platforms. If phase two funding is secured through either a publisher, investor, or crowdfunding campaign, the title will enter the production phase. The production phase sees the completed development of the title, as well as final testing and release, all of which is estimated at another one-year timeline. This two-phase development strategy leaves multiple distinct areas where marketing budgets, strategies, and targets change.

Sad Pumpkin Games

Sad Pumpkin Games is an indie game development startup company founded by two industry veterans that have worked on dozens of titles across most popular genres. The ethos of Sad Pumpkin Games is “games developed for players”. The founders have both worked in startups and on large-budget titles that have failed miserably due to a lack of player interest upon release. Sad Pumpkin Games titles are developed together with their target audiences, gauging player interest and player expectations throughout the entire transparent process, as well as actively engaging players with the developers to guide the development in ways that can be directly tied to player sentiment. Sad Pumpkin Games aims to embody the fail-fast methodology to its core, shelving any project that fails to gain and keep player interest at defined checkpoints.

Marketing Budget

Regardless of phase, the budgets for Sad Pumpkin Games titles are intentionally tight, cutting as much fat as possible from the game development process and removing as many variables as possible in order to either guarantee success or fail as early as possible in the development lifecycle. With this in mind, the overall marketing budget for a Sad Pumpkin Games title is only \$6000, split between the bootstrap phase and production phase. During the first phase of development, the marketing goal is to gather enough interest in the title that there is a suitable audience for early playtests and focus groups. The bootstrap phase's marketing budget also includes the marketing necessary at the one-year mark, when the title is shown to publishers, investors, and/or crowdfunding platforms, to draw enough eyes to the pitch. The budget for the second phase of development is focused on growing the player audience to fill more frequent playtests, generate buzz, and prepare the target audience for the upcoming release.

Marketing Strategy

The overall marketing strategy of Sad Pumpkin Games is to evoke the ethos of the company and appeal to niche audiences on a per-title basis. The marketing strategy is divided among three different channels: company and title websites; content marketing; and Google Ads. Custom, themed websites will be created for each in-progress title and serve as a hub for the latest information on design, development, and upcoming events like playtests and pitches, as well as provide a press-kit with information about the title, key art, and screenshots. Releasing content, such as developer diary blogs, design and mechanic reveal videos, and development Q&A livestreams will be another key marketing channel used by Sad Pumpkin Games. Paid placement ads using the Google Ads platform will be used to drive potential users in the target audience to the appropriate webpage for each title, using the title's

marketing budget. Additionally, if a publisher takes on a Sad Pumpkin Games title at the end of the one-year mark, publisher-led marketing will be relied upon as an extra key channel.

Channel: Website

Sad Pumpkin Games will have a company website which contains all relevant details about the company itself, as well as link to all the per-title websites created throughout development. The company site itself will contain pages introducing the founders, the ethos of the company, and the story of why the company was founded. Additionally, the Sad Pumpkin Games website will host all the business needs for the studio, such as contact information/forms, legal information, and openings for employees or contractors. The company website itself will not be a key driving factor in the marketing of titles themselves, but will be a good anchor point for potential customers to orient themselves towards released or in-progress titles they may be interested in.

For each title that Sad Pumpkin Games begins developing, a new website will be created. Each of these websites will have a consistent layout and structure, to optimize the time spent to create each site as well as make information clearly available to the target audience. A title's website will contain key art and screenshots of the game, as well as relevant design and mechanic information. The Sad Pumpkin Games per-title websites will be living pages, especially for those titles that are in active development. Screenshots and art will be continuously added, updated, or replaced as new assets become available that support the title. The title site will embed progress update videos, dev diaries, and other relevant external content related to the title. As a title approaches its full release, the title's website will begin to feature more gameplay focused articles and material, such as guides and tutorials. The goal of each title's website is to act as an anchor point for an audience's experience with that title, making obtaining information about and developing interest in the title as easy as possible for a perspective customer.

The company and per-title websites for Sad Pumpkin Games should have little to no impact on the overall marketing budget, but still provide an appreciable benefit to the overall marketing strategy. Websites are simple to build, and any assets necessary to create the website can either be reused from a title's development (screenshots, mockups, art, etc.) or gathered from royalty free sources as necessary (icons, buttons, etc.). In addition to providing the hub for a title's audience, per-title sites can also provide cross-promotional benefits and analytics tracking services.

Channel: Content Marketing

Many users want to know that the people making their games are people, and many indie developers have built massive communities through constant communication with their audience. Sad Pumpkin Games aims to follow in these creators' footsteps and engage the community directly and frequently. Not only is this an excellent marketing tool, but it fits within the Sad Pumpkin Games ethos of games for players. These forms of content marketing are mostly free, taking only some small amount of time from the founders and developers, but can provide a large boost in engagement from the target audience. For Sad Pumpkin Games there will be two rough categories of content marketing, and each title will naturally have a different balance of the three based on its own development.

The first avenue of content marketing are developer diaries. These diaries will be published weekly for each title and include highlights from development and production, including roadblocks, difficulties, and achievements. Not only do developer diaries serve as an important informational tool for the audience, but they also humanize the developers and let the audience better understand the ongoing difficulties of the project and hopefully develop a confidence that the studio will overcome them. Developer diaries also serve the purpose of acting as progress updates and development roadmaps. These developer diaries, progress updates, and other text-based correspondence will be published to each title's website and pushed out to an RSS feed and opt-in email list.

The second avenue of content marketing for Sad Pumpkin Games on a per-title basis will be behind-the-scenes, character reveal, Q&A, and other videos. These videos will of course depend on the title in development but will be designed to follow a similar format based on the type of video being produced. Each video will be cross posted to social media platforms, video steaming services, and the individual title website to maximize views and marketing impact. Depending on the specific content of these videos the individual cost may vary, but the overall cost of producing these videos should be exclusively time, while still providing a marketing benefit.

Channel: Google Ads

Since the total marketing budget for each Sad Pumpkin Games title is capped at \$6,000, all the previous marketing channels have focused on optimizing what marketing can be done for as close to free as possible. That affords the opportunity to spend nearly the entire marketing budget on targeted Google Ads to draw traffic to the Sad Pumpkin Games company site, per-title sites, or crowdfunding campaigns as necessary. Depending on the phase of development for each title, the marketing budget will be allocated slightly differently, but in either case the latest Google Ads estimated rate of return is 1,000-3,000 clicks per \$30 spent daily. Of course, these values are only estimates, as demand for ads and user behavior vary wildly from day to day.

During the bootstrap phase of development for each title, the bulk of the marketing budget will likely be reserved for the final marketing push at the end of the year-one mark when the game is about to be pitched to investors, publishers, and/or crowdfunding platforms. Year one's \$3,000 half of the budget will likely be allocated in a back-loaded split with nearly \$1,000 reserved for the final month's marketing push and the remainder spread across the preceding months. Assuming the first few months of development on a title have little polished, presentable assets that would be appealing to potential

customers, the marketing budget would likely be spread out as \$250 across eight months, and then \$1,000 spent in the final month.

Since the production phase of development is beyond the major pass-fail point of the title's development, proper funding, the marketing budget allocated to the title's second half can be managed more freely than in the first half. If a title is funded solely through crowdfunding, the marketing budget will likely be backloaded towards the release, with the \$3,000 spread across the three months preceding the release date, as the successful crowdfunding page will act as an additional free marketing channel (especially if the project is overfunded). If a title is funded by an investor or publisher, the year-two marketing budget will be best spent divided evenly across the year to generate consistent traffic to the title's website and maximize the benefits of both the website and content marketing being done.