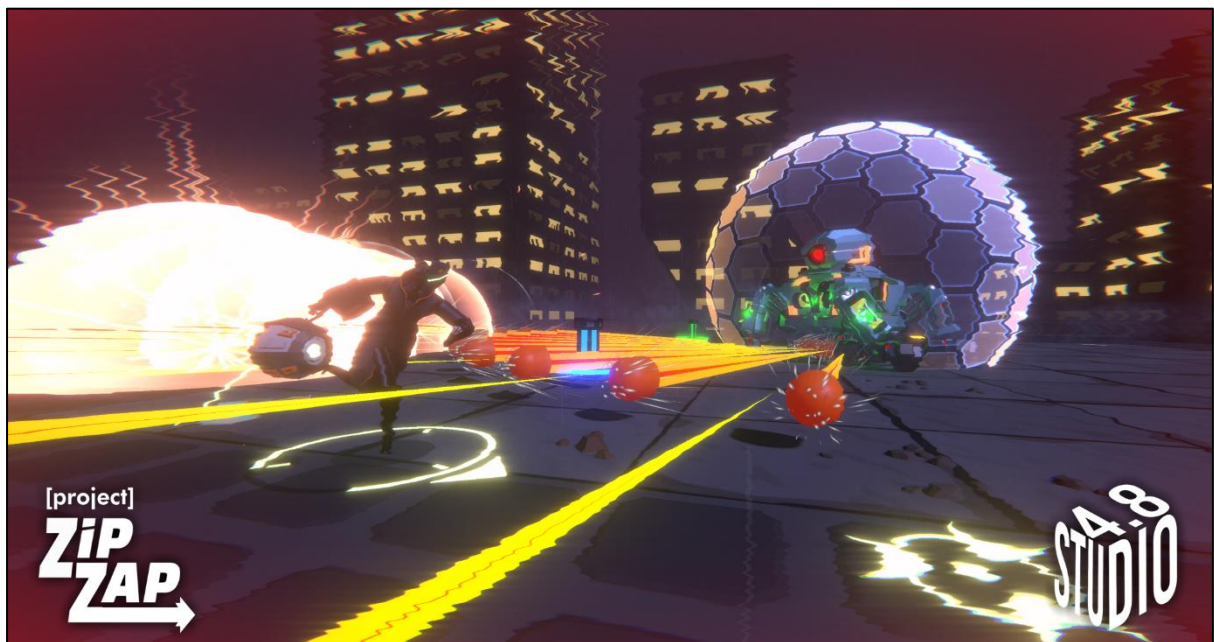# Commercial Game Development – Project Post Mortem

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# Introduction

This post-mortem will cover two topics: releasing to PS5 and business concerns for the video game 'Project Zip Zap' if it were to be produced further by the developers or passed onto others. The project has most of the groundwork laid out, nearly being ready for a PS5 build with a few considerations that hinder it slightly. Meanwhile decisions about who continues the project and if publishers will be involved are strong factors about the game's lifetime in the world of video games.

# PS5 Release

The project is in a state in which the possibility of porting and releasing to PS5 is very possible. The game is complete for a PS5 dev kit except for the save system due to the limited file system access with the given permissions. Another consideration which affects the game but does not halt it completely is not being able to use certain C# code that would fail to run as intended when compiled in run time to C++, such as dynamics.

## PS5 Features

For the release of a PS5 version, a pitch to PlayStation needs to be accomplished to allow for developer kits to add to the game more bespoke systems such as trophies (indicating the achievement the player can get, which is already implemented), social integrations (displaying to friends on PSN about what is occurring in the game, such as "In Level 01"), activities (to load into specific levels from the PS5 menu), challenges (displaying results of game completion times to friends on PS5), and more. With the development build for PS5 that was made, the team was able to change the light bar colour to link to game mechanics and systems, so any more systems with similar approaches would better assist the game as a whole.

## Age Ratings

A consideration that applies not just to PS5 but to any platform is the age rating. As the store is available in multiple regions, both PEGI (shown in figure 1) and ESRB ratings must be considered and perfectly accurate to the intended audience and age requirements. The game has been given a PEGI rating of 12 due to the use of a katana under the possession of a humanoid figure, it can be argued for a rating of 7, but with specific technicalities it is safer to consider it a 12 rating as the definition is as such: *"Video games that show violence of a slightly more graphic nature towards fantasy characters or non-realistic violence towards human-like characters would fall in this age category. Sexual innuendo or sexual posturing can be present, while any bad language in this category must be mild".* ESRB cover North America (United States, Mexico, Canada) and PEGI covers most of Europe (38 countries). There are more ratings for other countries that are not within those two parties but cover a large quantity of players, various regional ratings will need to be obtained for any additional regions.



***Figure 1:*** *PEGI age ratings and content descriptors.*

## Physical Copies

Due to the rise in digital downloads, the primary concern for release is to put the game onto the PlayStation Store before considering producing physical copies. If physical copies are a planned occurrence, then data formatting can also be considered when putting it onto the disc for more optimal read and write times. The physical release would also need the future knowledge of how successful the game has been with its digital release, if the game had failed with minimal digital purchases, then the idea of physical release should not be considered due to the increased risk of not generating money from the expenditure of creating cases and discs. Of which, the physical releases would have to go through external parties that will take a split of the revenue due to supplying the resources.

# Business Concerns

The game is in a comfortable state in which development can be less focused and business considerations can be a main focal point of the project.

## Distribution and Revenue

A primary aspect is to establish who within the team is agreeing to hand off the project to leave for other developers to choose who would generate the revenue and have rights to the project. If none of the developers wants to continue working on the project but think it can still be made into a fully-fledged game, then it can be passed onto publishers with rights over the project. If that is not the case and developers want to work on or earn money from it, then they would need to establish a company to sell on Steam or other platforms. The revenue situation also takes multiple factors, such as if the distribution is uniform or weighted based on impact on the project, the highest likelihood of being introduced is weighted revenue split, where some developers that produced much more work than others should be commended for their effort and earn more.

To publish the game and get attention from the media then it would benefit to publish through external publishers that have a strong networking and marketing presence. There are no specific publishers that the team would consider at this time but would require further research into the field into appropriate candidates that cater to indie games or new studios. This research would focus on aspects such as the history of success which publishers have had and how reliable they are.

## Frameworks

If the game was introduced into a larger scope due to further development or releases, then certain frameworks will be considered that are compatible with the current team, this is also the case if separate developers were to join in on the project. Multiple development practices may be introduced or be more common, such as scrums, coding styles, test sessions and task costing.

The progress of developers will be shown off during scrums to others within the team, to have more clarity in the project's state at that time. Coding styles would be more prevalent with more strict limitations to coding practises or the clarity of systems. Test sessions were considered during the beginning of the project but did not end up being present due to time constraints. These tests would have provided a constant checkup of every important system to maintain its

functionality and assess for any bugs or unintended features. Task costing would help distribute the work among the team, it would involve having features be allocated certain costs which dictate how long they would take to implement. This would allow for a better management of resources towards certain mechanics or systems. This can be used as a basis to determine how long the stages of development would be and which tasks can be done in succession or focused as a large multi-person job.

If this was passed onto another publisher and/or studio and some developers were transferred over to help them, then their work would need to be completely transparent for higher positions within the project such as lead managers or heads of development and reach a higher expectation in polish and consistency. There would also be a stricter time frame for the project with it being fully functional with no additional systems weeks or months before release.

## Long-Term Support and Content Updates

To improve the longevity and lifetime of the project, it should receive further support after the game is publicly released. This includes bug fixing both large and small, balance changes for abilities, ultimates, enemies, and such if they are too strong or weak comparatively to others, and the possibility of additional content. Additional content could introduce more levels with more bosses, or the online capabilities of showing scores and leaderboards to other players. This is similar to games like ULTRAKILL in which an online leaderboard is shown in menus or after level completion. Any development that might be a large usage of time and resources can be offered as a DLC or expansion pack to allow for justified revenue. However, these factors are heavily reliant on the community's presence and engagement to discover any bugs or areas of interest to improve upon. So, if the game is unsuccessful then the chance of this support or content is less likely.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, this post-mortem highlights important factors for its future development and success. The game has made good progress toward releasing on PS5, but there are some technical challenges, such as making sure it works smoothly with the console's features and getting the right age ratings for different regions. Beyond technical stuff, there are some crucial business decisions to make, such as who owns the project and how revenue will be shared. Collaborating with publishers would help get the game noticed, but it's important to find the right partners. Also, there's consideration about improving how the team works together, with better planning and clearer communication.

Overall, how these technical and business aspects is handled are important for the game's future. The right balance must be made to help 'Project Zip Zap' become successful in the gaming world.

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