The Gaming Market: Proposing Spacetime Obstacles / FlappyBird-SpaceClone

A quick analysis of the publisher and distributers of video games in todays market - how the games go from the developers to the players. How to theoretically improve SpacetimeObstacles and FlappyBirdSpaceClone in an attempt to get them published.

A number of well known companies in the gaming industry have the resources and ability to act as their own publishers. Nintendo, Playstation, and Blizzard have all pushed out their own titles through their own stores and portals, handling the movement of their property from development to retails. For some companies and individuals, the means of distributing a game title is an obscure and difficult process that can potentially block months of hard work and development. Fortunately, in the modern day, a layer of abstraction has popped up between game developers and game players, and is beginning to open the doors to many smaller developers for a manageable amount of cost and effort.

Depending on the platform that you're targeting, the services for publishing and distributing your game differ. For example, the Nintendo consoles have services such as the DSi Shop, Wii Shop Channel, and Nintendo Direct. Sony operated using the PS Store. Microsoft's XBox service can sell and host games through the XBox Games Store. If you are marketing a game for PC use, the most ubiquitous way to host your game is on the Steam Store. Steam is a service owned by Valve, with which developers can host their game for purchase and pay a portion of their sales back to Valve (as a sort of finders fee). Additionally, game companies such as Ubisoft and Microsoft have also provided hosting services for both their own products, as well as smaller developers approved to sell.

For the sake of details, let's break down the approach to submitting a game to the Steam Marketplace and getting it hosted for public sale. Steam is leading the forefront in selling indie developer games, through a service called the Steam Greenlight program. In the Greenlight program, the game is advertised to a customer base which has decided to participate in the task of auditing new games. If the response to the game is generally positive, the game moves on to become a part of the Steamworks system, where it is available for all to purchase and play. Steam does not not discuss their pricing cuts publicly, but they provide their experience and systems to the developers of new games in order to help guide pricing and profit share.

Another venue for downloading games is directly from the creator of the game. This is often the case for free to play games that can be found online, such as League of Legends, or Osu!. These games allow the players to navigate to their website and download the game directly, installing it on their machine. Usually the only requirement needed to play is an account secured by a simple email address.

The accessibility of games is a big part of their success. As game sales begin to translate into online sales (as opposed to store sales), players become more willing to spend their money purchasing them. Copies are never out of sale, and games can be utilized immediately. Social media has also helped as an advertising platform for computer games, as people share their experiences and paid ads represent the game online.

In order to market my own games, a large number of steps would need to be taken (all points are in reference to assignment 2 and 3):

Finish Game Design to a More Complete State
The concepts would need to be made far smoother than they are. Currently, while each game acts functionally well as a proof of concept, an element of polish is missing from each one. Additionally, some form of meaningful progression would have to be added - this could include competitive high scores, a level system, a reward system, or some kind of bonuses given to the player as the game goes on (which they can utilize in future playthroughs).

Increase Utilization of Available Tools
As fun as Allegro 4.2 has been to develop in, as engines go it is old. There are newer tools which still implement 2D game technologies, but offer a plethora of integrated tools to work with the internet, new file types, newer hardware, and more. All things equal, a game which relies on ancient technology will struggle in comparison to games made with newer technology.

A Wide Range of Testing Suites / PlayTesters
Currently, I have been an exhaustive source of all things concerning my game - design, creation, implementation, testing, debugging, and playing. Involving fresh eyes and fresh perspectives into my games will only allow them to become better. Testing suites could also be built to guarantee the integrity of the game during the development process, and to test deployment on multiple platforms.

Increased Quality and Fine Tuning of Assets
The assets I have now can be improved upon. Better sprites, better images, and better soundtracks, with fine tuning of all to create a more immersive experience.

Contacting a Publisher / Deploying a Website
The game will need some kind of 'home base' for advertising and information about the game. That website will act as a portal to purchasing or downloading the game. If a publisher is secured, it will point to the publisher's link for the game - if not, it can be controlled directly from the site. Publishers will need to be convinced that the game is worthwhile investment to help advertise and support. If finding a publisher is difficult, it could be helpful to target publishers which specialize in the same genre as my games - short, quick-to-play games.

Contracts, NDA, and Release
Assuming a publisher is found and an NDA signed, a contract will be hammered out. While the publisher will focus on capitalizing their priorities, my focus will be on measuring out the correct amount of profits and workload expected for me as a developer. The release of the game will be managed by the publisher, with both the publisher and the the developer (myself) on call to manage issues as they arise. At that point, my duties will switch to maintenance and patching of the game, solving issues as they are found by the community, while working on my next title.

Meeting with publishers is not an exact science. There is no exactly right way to get your application to go through and receive the support it needs - but if you have a quality product, a history of quality work, and a penchant for interacting with people and up selling your

business, the effort is worthwhile. The benefits of a publisher can really streamline the distribution of a game and its pricing. But, should a publisher be unavailable, it is very possible to distribute a game independently by using the internet.