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<center>No Man's Folly</center>

1. Explain the history of this ethical issue if it's in the past, or explain the situation if the ethical issue is a present day concern.

During 2013's VGX awards, Hello Games revealed for the first time their new game *No Man's Sky*. Formally revealed in Sony's E3 2014 conference, it received a sizable amount of interest and praise from the viewers and fans. For being an indie title, *No Man's Sky* promised to do many things that were unheard of, even for a AAA game. As presentations and conferences came, the game's promises piled higher and higher.

Unfortunately, those promises were largely empty. Behind the scenes, Hello Games was coming up short on basically every promise they had made, yet they kept making more promises that would also be unfulfilled. Everything from procedurally-generated yet realistic-looking environments to multiplayer action across the entire galaxy was promised, packaged in a polished and engaging experience. Indeed, such a game was being shown to the public across a number of presentations, but to those that looked closely, the cracks were showing. One example is an infamous presentation where the controller allegedly moving the character in-game did not actually match the movements seen on-screen.

At no point did Hello Games ever reveal or even hint that their product would be anything less than what they promised. Up until release, people still believed that *No Man's Sky* would be the greatest hit of the decade, and Hello Games utilized this hype to boost opening sales. When their ruse was up, they vanished from social media platforms, choosing to not respond to any complaints or allegations against them, never acknowledging their mistakes.

2. Share the consequences of this ethical problem on the public and what the consequences were or will be for the unethical company.

Throughout *No Man's Sky*'s development, the lead director Sean Murray had effectively over-pitched and under-delivered. Had the game been pitched and priced accurately, it could have given Hello Games additional profit. Plus, Hello Games would've gained more trust from its consumers. Instead, the lackluster product led to consumers building distrust with not only the lead director, but the entire studio. Moving forward, Hello Games is fighting an uphill battle to win back consumer trust. In addition to consumer trust, the reputation of *No Man Sky*'s controversy will have a negative effect on profit for future endeavours. A possible positive consequence of the controversy is the publicity that was gained. With that publicity, Hello

Game's next endeavours will quickly gain public attraction, albeit with a very skeptical and inquisitive mindset.

Apart from consequences stemming from consumer reactions, there are consequences that stem from within the company. The majority of *No Man Sky*'s controversy stems from Sean Murray's overpromising to the media regarding the state of the game. This certainly created a lot of pressure on the other team members. The pressure of delivering on over ambitious goals would have led to negative experiences in the office. This in turn had a negative effect on an employee's willingness to work in the company for future endeavours, along with the company's ability to attract new talent.

3. What is the motivation behind this unethical behavior? To save money, to save time, to reduce competition, to increase power and control of a market or of a specific group, to improve an image?

So why risk their image? Well, *No Man's Sky* needed to build up its following, so overpromising made it look like a deep, ambitious game to said followers. Plus they ironically wanted to save their image as an ambitious and competent company. They were ambitious for sure: with a small team of a dozen people they wanted to create the largest open-world video game people have ever seen. Competent? Hardly. Even if every one of their employees were doing perfect work on overtime, there were too many promises to fulfill. Rather than breaking the bad news and scaling down the scope of the project, doubling-down on their promises looked much better for them in the short-run.

A recent example: Mojang, the developers of *Minecraft*, advertised a big new update for their game. Like *No Man's Sky*, it received lots of great publicity. However, even with Mojang's bigger development team, and the backing of their parent Microsoft (though in their contract Microsoft doesn't really intervene in the development anyway), they realized they couldn't pull it off. But unlike Hello Games, they announced that the big update would be split into two, and the latter half would be pushed back a few months. Many people were understandably angry at the new decision, but overall the backlash withered away and allowed Mojang to pace itself and eventually release all of its promised content. They saw that in the long-run, it's better to take a small reputation hit now than a devastating hit later. This is easier said than done, as *Minecraft* was already an established title, while *No Man's Sky* needed to build a following, but the rules still apply.

4. What should have been done in the past to prevent the unethical situation, or what could be done now to prevent this current ethical challenge?

Hello Games could have prevented this situation in multiple ways. One way would be to have had greater transparency concerning setbacks and complications during development. Instead of presenting a facade to the public, Hello Games could have kept the target audience

accurately informed of their progress. This would have served as a buffer between the initial promises made by Hello Games and the ultimate failure to meet those promises, allowing them to either extend the release date or change their promises.

Another way would have been to focus on advertising the minimum viable product, rather than the finalized product. This would establish a lower but more realistic expectation of what the product would include upon release, and it would open the door to future updates with additional features, as well as additional waves of popularity as newer features are released. Additionally, the company could have included their planned features later on, which would make the product look more impressive than advertised, even though the features were on the roadmap anyway.

"[We] have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in completing this work, nor have [we] presented someone else's work as [our] own."