Video Game Project Management Summary for People Living with Disabilities

Video games should be made accessible to a larger proportion of the population. Specifically, people with physical limitations should also be able to enjoy playing various games.

This summary shall go over the steps Company X needs to take in order to create a viable video game product for those with physical limitations. It shall also touch on the video game industry, history, video game development process, and the risks and rewards that could be experienced along the way. Overall, it should be a good blueprint of a business plan and a promise of what could occur in the future.

The video game industry has a history of rapid technological advance. Numerous companies have found themselves a part of it. Some of these companies still exist. For example, Nintendo, Microsoft and Sony are still around. Even Google, a company better known by the average citizen for its search engine, has dipped its toes in. Others, such as Sega, have not fared as well. Today, Sega no longer produces video game hardware. Obviously, we would like Company X to experience profitability and longevity. We would also like to break into a field dominated by industry titans. Overall, I'd say that Nintendo has the family entertainment area well covered with popular first party titles, and Sony and Microsoft have a different area of the market and their own exclusives (competitive gaming and gaming experiences for the non casual gamer). Both of these companies have their own version of game passes (subscriptions). Ideally, I'd like to see Company X occupy a position somewhere in the middle and provide a hybrid of the next Netflix for games and the Nintendo Eshop, as well as also providing some traditional hardware.

As for why Company X would even want to attempt to enter this industry, the reason is simple: video games are now a part of everyday culture. This particular industry generates about 120 billion dollars a year. This number is expected to increase by 46 billion by 2022. Today, video games are not only a hobby; they are also a big business and a professional sporting activity. Top e-sports athletes can make around $500,000 per year. E-sports in general is expected to bring in 1 billion dollars per year. (Business Insider) As the publisher of various video games, I'd like to think that Cloudflare could make even more than a successful professional gamer. In addition, Company X has an underdeveloped market in the area of accessibility.

Unfortunately, games are not accessible to all people. Currently, according to the Center for Disease Control, 61 million Americans live with a disability. Of this group, 13.7 percent have a physical limitation. (CDC) While some companies have made an effort to make their games accessible to individuals with physical limitations, this does not seem to have occurred across the board. (Venture Beat and Washington Post) This is where I feel that Company X can participate and excel. Another important reason is that for an individual who has a disability, they might be trapped indoors without a way to get out and about. They may also frequently be in pain. As a result, video games could serve as a form of social interaction and a respite from their difficulties.

As a product management intern, I would start with the concept of the product, which would be quality full feature games, indie games (e.g., Untitled Goose Game and Stardew Valley), mobile games and hardware. These games would be accessible to a larger proportion of the population. This would mean Company X would need to consult with disability advocacy groups throughout the entire process.

The next step would be the production stage: here we would have programmers creating the games. Working with the programmers, we would have audio technicians, designers, artists and more. I would also have video game testers working on finding 'bugs' or other issues with the games.

For example, video game development could occur in small teams composed of a couple of designers, a couple of artists, 3-4 programmers using Company X Workers, writers, audio specialists, etc. Testers could serve on more than one team. Full feature games would be outputted at a minimum of 1080p. Indie development would be cheaper to produce. This would allow Company X to keep higher profit margins. Luckily, Company X already has some of the necessary components to build these games. For example, Company X software developers, utilizing Company X Workers, could be lent out to the video game team as needed. This would also help with profit margins. Mobile games could have in-app purchases. This would allow for an ongoing source of revenue. This money could be used for Research and Development, as well as keeping the other part of the business well funded. In 2019, in-app purchases made 71.3 billion dollars.

As for the hardware portion of the business, we could have controllers that could be operated with one hand for customers who have the use of only one hand. Any controller would need to be remappable and be able to be customized. The ability to control games with voice recognition technology and the use of virtual reality headsets are already on the market. Also, the games could feature simple instructions or icons for players with a cognitive handicap. Games could have auditory instructions for players who are visually impaired and closed captions for those with a hearing impairment. In addition, a small game console based on a unix system and powered by quality, but lower cost, computer components, could be created. This console could be 3D printed in an industrial capacity, and assembled by interns twice a year. Games for the console could be downloaded or inserted into the system. Streaming would be enabled by Company X's high performance network and Cloudflare Stream, ability to keep information secure and servers which can handle large amounts of traffic.

Potential risks of failure for the game development aspect of this plan would be not understanding the target audience, underestimating the competition, not paying sufficient attention to consumers' suggestions or complaints and improperly funding the development. In addition, video game lag due to poor internet connections could also prove problematic. This is one of the areas in which Company X Mobile SDK would allow us to find network errors which would or could impact performance. Workers would allow code to run faster and deploy faster. Leaving such issues unresolved could lead to a poor user experience and, thus, a product failure.

Lastly, we have the post production part of the cycle. During this stage, we would receive 'bug' reports. Maintenance of the games would continue. Any 'bugs' would be fixed and updates (patches) would be sent out to any and all affected systems and games. This is one of the areas where Company X Mobile SDK would allow us to find network errors which would or could impact performance. Company X Workers would allow fixes to be implemented faster due to code running faster and being able to deploy quickly to the relevant data centers. Revenue would start coming in if everything went as planned. Higher profit margins and great reviews by video game critics, as well as by organizations which support the differently abled would be key methods of measuring success. While reviews can be subjective, they are still seen as a trusted measure of success.

Overall, I would say that Company X has a good chance of success. I am not saying that it will necessarily be a constant, easy and upward trajectory towards growth. However, Company X already has a cloud infrastructure and software developers; both should prove exceptionally helpful in building the product.

Citations

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