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HOW TO: PUBLISH A GAME ON STEAM

Written By:
Dimitar Bosnev



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide guidance to any CMGT student interested to publish his/her own game on the Steam platform. The report was made using external research papers and blogs and offers some information specific to the Steam platform, as well as more general information which can be applicable to any platform.

The first chapter covers the creation of a SteamWorks account, which is the starting point prior to publishing any game. It includes information about the onboarding, the Steam App ID and the game's store page.

The second part of the report is all about pricing your game depending on various factors, monetization models and regional pricing as well as tips on how and when to discount or increase a game's price.

The third part of the report covers a general guide on how to properly market a game, so that it can reach maximum visibility. It talks about the different channels, events and PR you need to use to make your game stand out.

The fourth part covers information about the release date, such as when to publish a game, release windows and getting reach via SteamCurators. The last part talks about the post-launch, where topics such as reviews and DLCs are covered.

STEAMWORKS ACCOUNT

For independent developers, uploading a game to the Steam Store can be a difficult undertaking, but with the correct help, it can go very smoothly. From creating an account to starting your game, this step-by-step tutorial will help you through the whole process of publishing your game to the Steam Store. It has been developed by Steam in 2023. For a more detailed overview, consult the website in References.

1. Create a SteamWorks Account

Registering for a Steamworks account is the first step. The suite of resources and services known as Steamworks allows game creators to release their creations on the Steam platform. Go to the Steamworks website and choose the "**Register**" option to start the account creation process.

2. Go Through the Onboarding Process

To make your game ready for Steam distribution, there are a few procedures you must follow:

Put your signature on the electronic documents. It is important to have your **company, tax and payment information** handy.

Use any of the accepted Steam payment methods to **pay the app deposit cost**.

Fill out the documentation with your **bank and tax information as well as your identification verification**.

In addition to the items below, content you publish on Steam must comply with the Steam Distribution Agreement, the Steam Subscriber Agreement, Steam Online Conduct guidelines and the Steam Privacy Policy.

3. Create builds and depots

Once you have completed the onboarding process, you'll need to download the **Steamworks SDK**, which contains all the scripts and templates for building and uploading your product to Steam.

STEAMWORKS ACCOUNT

4. Create a Steam App ID

You must generate a Steam App ID when your game is prepared for upload to Steam. Your game's ID on the Steam platform is unique, and it will be used for tracking sales, patching the game, and other reasons. Go into your Steamworks account and choose the "**Apps**" tab in order to generate **an App ID**.

5. Set Up Your Game's Store Page

Setting up your game's store page is necessary after generating your Steam App ID. Here is the link that prospective buyers will click to purchase and learn more about your game. Click the "**Store Presence**" tab after logging into your Steamworks account to configure your shop page.

PRICING

1. Factors

Your financial model is the primary determinant of the price you should charge for your game. Typically, it consists of the following (Xsolia, 2021):

- **Budget for the game.** This is the whole amount you have invested in development, including payroll, localization, marketing, and other costs.
- **Sales forecasts.** In addition to wanting your money back, you'll also want to turn a profit. Whatever amount you arrive at should give you an idea of how much you need to make in order to reach your objectives.
- **Monetary obligations.** To finish your game, you could have taken out a loan or borrowed money from someone. Your budget may have been widened by this money, but you will eventually need to repay it.
- **Level of quality:** If your game is more unique from the others and provides a greater value for the money, you may think about charging more for it than its competitors. Consider what may be your distinguishing feature and unique selling point before settling on a price (Xsolia, 2021).

Consider these factors when you estimate your costs. Also, multiply that by the amount you want to make in the beginning and then calculate how many copies of the game have to sell in order for you to break even. Investigating various figures is a good idea because real sales could differ from your expectations and you must be prepared for all scenarios (Xsolia, 2021).

2. Monetization

Video game monetization may be done in a variety of ways.

This report covers the monetization models during the preliminary stages of game creation: initial development and release.

The three primary methods of game revenue during conception are crowdsourcing, selling advertising space, and sponsorship, starting at the "development" stage

If a studio can effectively promote their idea, even a one-person team may collect sufficient external funds to complete a project through the use of sponsorships, which is a well-suited method for creating video game content (Staney, 2020). An example of a sponsorship campaign would be signing with a publisher who can aid in the funding of the game, as well as its initial marketing and development. Retail purchases, which require a single purchase for the whole game, and "early access" are appropriate forms of revenue during the "release" phase of a game.

3. Competitors Analysis

Your competitors are something else you should research. To find out how much other titles in the same category cost, check their website or Steam page. The primary character archetype, gameplay elements, and environment may all be comparable.. Ideally, you should be able to afford anything that the communities of these games anticipate. Too high or too low of a price will probably have an opposite effect. This is something to consider while contrasting all the various types of rivals you could have. It's also important to look at the sales of these products(Xsolia, 2021).

4. Price fluctuations

· Early Access Price

Publishers typically sell their incomplete games at a discounted price or with extra features for early adopters in an attempt to get people to purchase them. The majority of games are developed for 1-2 years before being formally published, Reducing the price to make it appear less risky is the only true method to tip the scales, unless you are certain that your game can outperform or compete with others of a similar genre and/or price (Staney, 2020).

· Discounts

A game's pricing may alter many times throughout development. It occurs somewhat frequently while discussing discounts. For example, you may participate in weekly discounts and holiday events throughout the year, and provide a launch discount, which is often between 10% and 20%. It is advisable to carefully consider your discount strategy and ensure that reductions are increased gradually (Xsolla, 2021).

Lowering the Price

It's also not unusual for a game's pricing to be permanently altered. Developers typically reduce it after a year or two, by which time the game has surpassed its peak in sales and very few people are willing to pay the full amount. A price reduction can encourage new purchases in this way (Xsolla,2021).

•Increasing the price

The price of a game could also gradually increase in relation to demand and additional content. For example, when Dead Cells was still in production, it attracted a sizable community and did well in sales. Motion Twin's developers warned early on that more material will be added, which would raise the game's price over time. And so it did.

5. Regional pricing

With the introduction of regional pricing by Steam, game publishers could now set their prices for their titles in line with national living standards, benefiting both players and game developers. However, the prices have been quite erratic, occasionally going up (Steam,2023).

Also, in recent years, Valve has tried to change the way Steam pricing is handled, regionalizing prices in 25 total countries beginning on November 2023. When shopping on Steam, some regions in the world have benefited from pricing being in their local currency. This can sometimes result in a purchase costing more or less than it would in other parts of the world, which some consumers find unfair. Others take advantage of the difference, swapping regions to score the best Steam price for games (Ferdinand, 2023). When publishing a game, you should be aware of the regional pricing and its effect on your revenue.

6. Steam fee

You must pay \$100 to Steam for each game you submit through Steam Direct. This cost is nonrefundable, however it can be reimbursed once your product earns \$1,000 or more in adjusted gross income from purchases made within the app and the Steam Store. The charge acts as a gatekeeper against subpar games. A revenue-sharing agreement is also a part of your "deal" with Valve Corp. Under this arrangement, the developer receives 70% of the income while Steam receives the remaining 30% (Xsolla,2021).

MARKETING

This chapter focuses on the sorts of reasonably budgeted marketing campaigns that many independent filmmakers have employed successfully, as marketing your game is essential for its visibility and profitability in the long run. Prior to engaging in those campaigns, game developers should be aware of their own target audience and market. These campaigns have been taken from *A Practical Guide to indie Game Marketing* by J. Dreskin.

1.PR

Naturally, game publishers and developers of all sizes frequently want journalists to cover their products. Their experience with some games may be different from that of others. To augment PR, you should thus set up marketing campaigns using a variety of media.

2.Channels

Media channels will provide you direct access to your audience and provide you more authority over the timing, manner, and style of your communications as well as your brand. Creating and expanding these channels will be extremely beneficial to you. This has the potential to be one of your greatest assets, propelling the success of your game, follow-up releases, and studio. These channels may consist of the following:

3.Events

Seek for opportunities to showcase your game and investigate various approaches to make an impression there. Show organizers will frequently provide extra marketing materials in addition to the beneficial human connections and favorable impressions you may make for your game at events. Furthermore, explore opportunities to expand your network of connections at concerts, gatherings, events, and other venues. Over time, these sorts of interpersonal relationships may prove advantageous.

RELEASE DATE

1.Factors

- **Importance of Release Day itself**

If your game is more about consistent sales over a longer period, then your launch window simply isn't that important (Dring, 2020). Consider focusing on marketing campaigns, as explained in the previous chapter. In actuality, a less competitive window may provide a chance to draw in new clients.

- **Avoid launching during Steam Summerwide activities.**

Every now and again, a standard Steam storefront will entirely transform to promote a single, massive event. All of the standard "launch" widgets that increase your exposure are eliminated by these events. For example, New and Trending, Popular Upcoming, and Popular are all entirely gone. The "popular with friends" and other recommendation widgets are no longer available. They truly assist in giving your game the additional exposure it needs during its launch window (How to market a game, 2023).

- **Consider the sales around your release window**

Certain sales occasions, like the Steam Winter Sale or Black Friday, might double as a game's second launch. It's doubtful that you'll give a discount if a game is released too soon before one of these occasions. Should you do so, you run the danger of infuriating individuals who paid full price for the game (Dring, 2023).

- **Launch during a less competitive window**

In general, the busiest times of the year are at the beginning and end of the year, with June and July being the least busy.

Which day of the week should you launch?

In order to avoid having their support personnel unavailable in case something goes wrong, Valve has begun barring titles from scheduling their launch days for Saturday or Sunday. So avoid selecting those days. Tuesdays are usually Steam maintenance days, and occasionally Steam won't function for a few hours, so avoid launching on those days (How to market a game, 2023).

2.Playable Code

A playable version of your product is the best way to showcase it. While you may expose potential players to your game by playing it at local events, releasing prerelease copies of the game online will benefit you severely. Make sure not to include too much in a version that is made available to the public, since this will just increase the player's desire to obtain the full game. Generally speaking, you want to plan your playable public release around a time that is somewhat near to your launch.

3.Advertisements

You can spot the finest locations for sponsored advertisements by doing targeted research and asking the right questions. Make sure the organizations you advertise with are respectable and have a player base that is likely to be interested in your game. Your money will probably be better served by smaller, more targeted channels than by larger, more expensive websites and magazines

4.Steam Curators

Steam Curators provide their opinions about a certain game, which aids users in discovering titles that are shown on the Steam dashboard. Additionally, they let creators use human suggestions to go around Steam's algorithm. Potential customers can view your video game on the store's front page when it is recommended by a well-known curator. Typically, the top 5% of Steam releases are given this area. Therefore, you may reach a sizable gaming audience with the appropriate curators (Steam, 2023)

POST-LAUNCH

This chapter covers some relevant post-launch activities you may consider doing after you launch the game on Steam

1. Reviews

Collaborate with writers, bloggers, Let's Players, and other media to have coverage of your game published in order to generate interest. Following up from the pre-launch phase, post-release outreach should be a part of your strategies(Dreskin, 2016).

2. Awards

Don't forget to submit your games to contests and reward programs. Having your game recognized as a candidate or finalist can help you increase attention and sales even if it doesn't win (Dreskin, 2016).

3. New Content

Both new and returning gamers' interest and affinities can be fostered by fresh material. This frequently takes the shape of in-app purchases (IAP) or downloadable content (DLC), which are paid add-ons. Make sure you take into account strategic free updates as well, with the intention of increasing engagement rather than just quick profits. New characters, stages, weapons, cosmetics, plot extensions—you name it—can all be considered content updates. Some of the new additions' subjects may originate from suitable tie-ins (such as seasonal or current topics), while others may come from excellent works produced by the player base (Dreskin, 2016).

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