

= Marketing of Halo 3 =

The first @-@ person shooter video game Halo 3 was the focus of an extensive marketing campaign which began with the game 's developer , Bungie , announcing the game via a trailer at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in May 2006 . Microsoft , the game 's publisher , planned a five @-@ pronged marketing strategy to maximize sales and to appeal to casual and hard @-@ core gamers . Bungie produced trailers and video documentaries to promote the game , partnering with firms such as Digital Domain and Weta Workshop . Licensed products including action figures , toys , and Halo 3 @-@ branded soda were released in anticipation of the game ; the franchise utilized more than forty licensees to promote the game , and the advertising campaign ultimately cost more than \$ 40 million .

While Halo 2 's release had set industry records , the mainstream press was not fully involved in covering the game ; part of Microsoft 's strategy was to fully involve casual readers and the press in the story . The saturation of advertising and promotions led Wired to state : " The release of Halo 3 this week was an event that stretched far beyond our little gaming world . Everyone from The New York Times to Mother Jones wanted to cover it . "

Released on September 25 , 2007 , Halo 3 became the biggest entertainment debut in history , earning more than \$ 170 million in a few days and selling a record 3 @, @ 300 @, @ 000 copies in its first week of sales alone . Halo 3 's marketing won several awards , and was cited as evidence of the increasing mainstream popularity of games .

= = Development = =

Jerret West , a global group product manager from Microsoft , said at a marketing conference that Halo 3 's marketing team had a mandate from Microsoft executive Peter Moore : " Don 't screw up . " Much of the marketing organization was handled by Microsoft 's former corporate vice president of global marketing , Jeff Bell (executive) . A key challenge the team identified early on was that core gamers knew the game was coming out , but there was " a perception problem ... we wanted to invite people into the console and into Xbox 360 and to play Halo 3 as a mass @-@ market entertainment product , " according to product manager Chris Lee . Since Halo 3 was released as an Xbox 360 exclusive , part of the marketing push was to sell more Xbox consoles , which had encountered sluggish sales .

Microsoft planned advertising and promotions to appeal to both casual and hardcore gamers in a five @-@ pronged marketing strategy . The first stage was to kick off marketing via a television commercial . The second stage was a beta test of the game to drive preorders and press attention . The third stage was the start of an alternate reality game . The fourth phase was partner promotions , capped off with a final advertising campaign , titled " Believe " .

Though Microsoft used forms of viral marketing for promotion (including the alternate reality game or ARG) , the main focus of the company 's efforts was traditional media outlets . Because there already was interest in the title among the gaming community , Microsoft did not feel the need to run a social media campaign , instead banking on the gaming community to spread the word itself . The focus on traditional media would help expand the fan base beyond established gamers and convince the public that the game was a cultural milestone . To build public interest , Microsoft made public statements that Halo 3 would surpass media sales records , including the July 2007 record of \$ 166 million set by the launch of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows .

Microsoft 's target was to sell 1 @. @ 5 million copies of the game . Marketing research suggested that the " Halo faithful " could only be counted on to buy 75 % of that amount , meaning that 375 @, @ 000 copies would have to be sold to non @-@ fans . Thus marketing goals were to attract an audience beyond the Halo nation , and to break sales records ; in short , to " make Halo 3 a true cultural phenomenon " . The team upped their goals to not only selling the target number of copies , but making Halo 3 the biggest entertainment launch ever .

= = Promotional videos = =

A significant form of marketing was done by the release of videos . While Bungie often partnered with other companies to create advertisements , they also produced their own video documentaries , or " ViDocs " , detailing the behind @-@ the @-@ scenes development of aspects of Halo 3 , including redesigning enemy Brutes , additions to multiplayer , and other game features . The first ViDoc was released shortly after the game 's announcement and was a " making @-@ of " style video , while the final ViDoc made its debut on September 20 , 2007 .

= = = Trailers and shorts = = =

Halo 3 was officially announced via a cinematic trailer rendered in real @-@ time , shown at Microsoft 's press conference at E3 2006 on May 9 . The trailer is set in the dry plains of Africa , with the ruins of a space elevator and other damage visible . The Master Chief is slowly revealed walking through smoke and dust , occasionally obscured by distorted images of the artificial intelligence Cortana transmitting a message composed of portions of the character 's lines in the Cortana Letters , as well as a line from the poem " The Hollow Men " . The distorted voice of Cortana was a deliberate clue to the character 's predicament in Halo 3 , with a Bungie staff member stating , " We don 't know what has happened to her ... We don 't know it 's Cortana . It could be any sort of bizarre , almost Satanic sort of voice . Something seems wrong . " The trailer featured music by Martin O 'Donnell , with the addition of a piano and brass section to the classic Halo theme .

Advertising company McCann Erickson created a second trailer that was aired only once on December 4 , 2006 . The video used a mix of computer @-@ created graphics and live action ; computer graphics were produced by Digital Domain and directed by Joseph Kosinski . The spot , dubbed " Starry Night " , was seen by 7 @. @ 9 million viewers in its broadcast and watched more than 3 @. @ 5 million times on YouTube by September 2007 . The final trailer , shown during E3 2007 on July 11 , consisted of actual campaign cinematics and gameplay .

The video teasers for Halo 3 included a series of videos directed by Neill Blomkamp , the proposed director of a possible Halo film produced by Peter Jackson . Unlike previous trailers and videos , the shorts were the first to depict the Halo universe in a live @-@ action setting . The production was a collaboration between Weta Workshop , Neill Blomkamp and Bungie . When asked about the shorts , Neill said that he hoped that it would help to interest movie studios in his currently inactive movie project , since it lost its studio support in October 2006 . GameTrailers released a compilation of the three videos edited together , titling it Landfall .

The first live action video , titled Arms Race , was originally shown at Electronic Entertainment Expo 2007 . It was followed up by another short , Combat , which featured Covenant and human vehicles and weapons . The final video in the series aired on October 4 , 2007 and was used by Discovery Channel to promote their reality show Last One Standing . The short ties the events depicted to the beginning of Halo 3 , which begins as the Master Chief plummets to Earth .

= = = " Believe " campaign = = =

The last major advertising campaign before and during Halo 3 's release was a series of videos marketed with the tagline " Believe " , beginning September 11 , 2007 . These videos , with an estimated cost of \$ 10 million , were directed by Rupert Sanders (known for video game advertisements) and made to depict a generic representation of a single battle in Halo 3 . Live @-@ action videos featured elderly war veterans at the " Museum of Humanity " reminiscing about the Human @-@ Covenant war and the role the Master Chief played . The Believe website allowed visitors to pan the length of a massive diorama over 1 @, @ 200 square feet (110 m2) in size and over twelve feet tall , with handcrafted human and Covenant figures represented at one @-@ twelfth scale . According to Microsoft , the unusual presentation of a model rather than computer graphics was chosen to look at " the themes that lie at the heart of the Halo trilogy ? war , duty , sacrifice , and most importantly the heroism of Master Chief . "

The diorama was built through a collaboration between Los Angeles , California @-@ based New

Deal Studios and Stan Winston Studios . Director Rupert Sanders had actors stand in for the marines , capturing their facial expressions and using them as the basis of the miniatures . Character assets from Bungie , including alien models and armor , were recreated and rebuilt for reuse . The twisted city ruins the diorama is set in were inspired by bombed @-@ out Afghanistan suburbs . Special attention was paid to creating a photo @-@ realistic setting which was recognizably Halo .

= = Public beta testing = =

On April 10 , 2007 , Bungie announced that a beta test of the multiplayer component of Halo 3 would run from May 16 to June 6 , open to select members of the public . Players could enter the beta in several ways . Testers were selected from those who signed up on the Halo3.com website following the " Starry Night " commercial , or from the first 13 @,@ 333 players to register after playing three hours of Halo 2 on Xbox Live . Players could also buy a specially @-@ marked copy of the Xbox 360 title Crackdown , which allowed players to download the beta upon its release .

The public portion of the beta consists of matchmaking play on three multiplayer maps : Valhalla , High Ground and Snowbound . The public beta also contained a limited version of the " saved films " feature , which allows players to save and watch their played games . The day the public beta began , problems were reported from owners of Crackdown that they could not download the beta . Bungie announced that the Microsoft team found a solution and that the issue would be resolved shortly ; a patch was distributed for Crackdown that fixed the problem . Bungie also extended the beta until June 10 to compensate for the issue . According to Jerret West , global group product manager , allowing users into the beta created " a psychological investment " in the game . " The idea was basically to make the beta launch huge and let the tastemakers make the launch for you ... to really drive it beyond the gaming press . " The beta caused a spike in preorders for the retail version of the game .

= = Alternate reality game = =

A component of Halo 3 's marketing was an alternate reality game or ARG called " Iris " . Alternate reality games , which involve cross @-@ media gameplay and player participation , had been previously used for the promotion of Halo 2 in the form of the influential and award @-@ winning I Love Bees . Soon after the Halo 3 public beta ended , a user named " AdjutantReflex " appeared in the official Halo 3 forums on Bungie.net and began posting . A Circuit City advertisement was leaked onto the web days earlier , revealing the web address of an interactive comic which could be manipulated to reveal the IP addresses of another series of sites . One website was the home of the " Society of the Ancients " a group supposedly interested in evidence of Forerunner artifacts left on Earth . Another featured a Forerunner object which gradually revealed text logs and video clips .

= = Merchandise and promotions = =

The launch of Halo 3 coincided with the release of various games , action figures , and collectible toys . WizKids developed a Clix collectible miniatures game entitled Halo ActionClix which was released on September 18 , 2007 . The tabletop game features miniature figures from the Halo universe , including characters and vehicles . Halo ActionClix figures were occasionally bundled with the game in promotional packs , and Gamestation stores in the United Kingdom offered a Master Chief figurine to the first 1000 pre @-@ orders of the Halo 3 Legendary Edition .

While previous Halo action figure series were produced by Joyride Studios , Todd McFarlane produced several sets of Halo 3 @-@ related action figures . In addition to articulated figures released throughout 2008 , McFarlane also released 12 " inarticulate and more detailed figurines in November . Other companies which produced Halo 3 figures and statues include Kotobukiya , a Japanese company specializing in high @-@ end statues and replicas , and Weta Collectibles , a division spawned from the famed physical effects company Weta Workshop . Weta Collectibles

auctioned four of the statues in their lineup , specially cast in solid sterling silver , for auction on eBay during August .

Microsoft collaborated with other companies to produce Halo @-@ themed merchandise and promotions at retailers and vendors . PepsiCo created a variant of Mountain Dew called Game Fuel . 7 @-@ Eleven sold a Slurpee version of the drink . Burger King announced a special promotion starting September 24 , 2007 featuring Halo designs and characters on food wrappings . Microsoft sponsored the # 40 car driven by David Stremme for Chip Ganassi Racing in the Dover 400 Nextel Cup Series . The racecar featured a Halo 3 inspired paintjob featuring the title for the game printed prominently on the hood and rear bumper , as well as large pictures of Master Chief on each of the rear fenders .

= = Launch and impact = =

More than 10 @, @ 000 retail stores in the United States held midnight launch parties for Halo 's release , in addition to other locations around the globe . Microsoft coordinated its own multiple @-@ city launch parties , and Bungie staff members travelled around the world to host parties , in addition to a launch party held at Bungie 's workplace ; Larry Hryb attended the New York City launch party . Sponsored launches featured prize giveaways and chances for fans to play Halo against celebrities and Bungie team members . The BFI IMAX Theater in London was devoted to Halo 3 , while some areas in the United Kingdom cancelled midnight launches fearing unruliness from the large crowds .

Halo 3 was phenomenally successful upon release . The game made \$ 170 million in US sales on the first day of release , generating more money in 24 hours than any other American entertainment property up to that point . Halo would make an additional \$ 130 million by week 's end and sell 3 @. @ 3 million units by the end of the month . By 2008 , Halo 3 had sold 4 @. @ 8 million units in the United States for a total of 8 @. @ 1 million units worldwide , making it the best @-@ selling game of 2007 in the United States .

Critics and publications pointed to the massive marketing and launch of Halo 3 as evidence that video games had " finally hit the mainstream " . Video game critic Steve West of CinemaBlend.com pointed out the Halo 3 phenomenon as evidence of the mainstreaming of video games , stating that " ... Like movies , radio , and television before , games are becoming more and more accepted in the popular culture . " To capitalize on the mainstream attention , Joystiq sister site Xbox360Fanboy noted , " Microsoft contends that such a [marketing] push is necessary to maintain the appearance of ' a big budget , mass media event ' . "

At the PRWeek awards Microsoft won the " Technology Campaign of the Year " along with Edelman for Halo 3 's launch . At the 2008 ANDY Awards , the " Believe " campaign won the " GRANDY " , the grand prize . Halo 3 's advertising also won five " gold cubes " , one " silver cube " and two distinctive merit certificates at the Art Directors Club Annual Awards Ceremony , most of the awards relating to the Believe campaign .