The Black Debt

Marketing Document

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# Project Summary

This section is concerned with the purpose behind the project, and why it is being developed

## Project Rationale

“Accounting Quest” seeks to provide high school educators and students in Year 11 with an option that may be used to enhance their knowledge with regards to Accounting and finance, in method that is more palatable to the average adolescent than the current alternatives. It seeks to provide an environment in which the Student might feel engaged to study and retain information beyond what was capable with traditional pen and paper methods.

As educators and students have a vested interest in achieving a passing grade during high school ATAR examinations, “Accounting Quest” will succeed in providing the ideal environment in which the Year 11 Student will retain he maximum amount of information in the shortest span of time. Morris, Lummis & Lock (2014) identify that the adolescent brain has a great amount of neuroplasticity, however it lacks the ability to focus on tedium; a trait that prohibits the wrote-learning methods employed in more classical teaching methods. My alternative is to provide students with an experience that is as engaging as it is educational, in order to maximize their potential.

This software draws inspiration from some of the most successful strategy games on the market, and seeks to marry that wholly with intuitive mechanics that adhere strictly to the learning outcomes of the “Year 11 Accounting and Finance” syllabus compiled by the “School Curriculum and Standards Authority” of the “Government of Western Australia”. The result of is that the major mechanic of the game will meet the demands of the stakeholders by providing an interactive cycle that teaches and assesses the key learning outcomes of this course.

## Product Details

“Accounting Quest” is a video game designed to be played on most school systems, both for PC and Mac computers. It is an educational strategy game, presented in the traditional top-down view, with mechanics that replace traditional stats and figures with accounting knowledge. The game features a bright and colorful, yet mature aesthetic, with a good amount of intractable features to ensure the students always have something to do.

The look and feel of the game will be one that highlights engagement and immersion, while providing a mix of simple challenges in amongst the more difficult course material. Players should feel relaxed yet focused, with the colorful aesthetics and simple narrative giving way to a mechanically deep sandbox experience.

The final product will be available for purchase for digital download from my personal website, as well as physical copies being mailed on request. In addition, classroom licenses will be available when provided with a staff email, allowing the instructor to install the game on multiple computers with a single license. The game will be as optimized as possible, meaning most school provided desktops and laptops will be able to run the game without issue.

## Product Distinguishing Features:

Currently there is no game on the market that is attempting to meld these two genres together; with the colorful aesthetic and seamless integration of mechanics working to create a truly unique experience. The closest competitors to this product are the Quiz game “Bank On It” (2014) and the simulation software “GoVenture”(2010). Unlike both competitors, this game aims to be more than a list of questions dressed up to appear like a game, but intends to approach the issue from a direction that relies on player immersion to motivate their learning. Therefore this game will serve not as another educational tool, but for a way to motivate students to learn without constant motivation from their instructor.

# Target Audience Rationale

This section will analyses the target market, and show why they would want this product.

## Target Audience Identification

The target audience is Year 11 high school students. High school students are typically in their late teens, and exist in a state where they are required to complete education that corresponds with the wishes of their guardian, often in spite of their own interests. They are more likely than other age brackets to desire instant gratification, due to the hyper-response of dopamine experienced during this stage of development (Reyna, 2013). This leads to the conclusion that adolescent student motivations are geared more toward recreation instead of education.

## Target audience wants/needs

High school students wants are best shown by the research on student psychographics by Morris, et al. (2012) concluding that they have little personal stake in academic success outside influences put on them by others. This means that students are likely to want to spend as little time as possible studying, in favor of more “fun” and “social” activities. The need however is for students to achieve a passing grade, however most desire to do this by expending as little effort as possible.

The value of this product is that it gives students an alternative to traditional study, and it will be marketed as a product that melds the content they are required to know, with a game they may seek as a form of recreation. This should satisfying their demand for a convenient tool that reduces the need for pen and paper study, with the perceived value depending on two critical factors:

* How much the student desires to meet the demands of their course
* Whether or not the student uses games as recreation

## Supporting Research

The video shown by IGEA “Games Based Learning, Games in the Classroom” based on the 2016 survey, shows that educators are willing to employ educational methods involving game-based learning, as they have a desire first and foremost in making sure their students are given the best education possible. Likewise the same statistical analysis published shows that 35% of students already employ some form of game-based learning in their curriculum. This goes to show there exists a market that is willing to use a product like this. This research has been compiled by the Interactive Games & Entertainment Association, and used quantitative and qualitative research through the use of surveys and interviews.

# Marketing Strategies

This section has to do with the analysis of the market opportunities.

## Advertising Vectors & Market Reach

Advertising will be done often in person, with a sales-pitch to high-schools that may be interested in this offer. This may be done in person but also more effectively by email containing: a link to the free web version of the game, a short summary of the game and how utilizing it will benefit the user, as well as my contact details and information regarding the paid version. In addition, a letter may be sent to the School Curriculum and Standards Authority informing them of this product, possibly allowing it to be added to the curriculum. A significant amount of bureaucracy is expected to impede the use of this software in schools, and as such there will be a section on the website that allows teachers to submit feedback as to the effectiveness of the software, which will be used in future marketing attempts.

As the project is designed primarily around satisfying the learning outcomes for students in the general accounting course, the marketing will be limited to schools within WA, as those outside the state will possibly have different course requirements, and thus the game will not be guaranteed to meet their needs. Should there be national or worldwide interest in the product, I will have the opportunity to expand the content to reflect the demands of each region.

## S.W.O.T. Analysis

* Strengths: The game in its current state does not have any direct competitors, as nothing yet exists that is attempting to create an accounting game that melds accounting mechanics with a traditional strategy game world. The game follows published research in on the effectiveness of games-assisted learning, and will communicate the content far better than other resources such as textbooks. The aesthetics are colorful and engaging, but not soft, which heightens the appeal for mature adolescent viewers.
* Weakness: This product relies on teachers, students and parents not having a bias against video games in education, and relies on the user (teacher or students) having the means to operate the software. It also is single-player, reducing the social aspect of the game to indirect competition/cooperation, this is a problem as social interaction is a popular selling point to students. The game is also quite dense in terms of mechanics, and thus will require the user to have enough patience to learn how to play. The marketing also relies on the schools not having policy against the use of this type of software in schools.
* Opportunities: As no comparable software exists, there is a market gap that this product can exploit. Its success can make feasible the development of similar games for other topics, and potentially increase the reception of games-assisted learning amongst schools. The game can also be marketed to individuals outside education who wish to learn the content, for their own personal gain.
* Threats: There is the chance that competitors will develop if the product is successful, they may be better established and able to produce content faster than this company is able. If cheaper or free software is developed, or with better marketing, this will severely hamper sales. In addition, students and teachers may prefer using the existing methods of teaching in spite of the new tool.

## Product Delivery Vector

The paid product will be available for digital download on the store page of my company website, with hosting of a downgraded free version available as a link on my website. The cost for the paid version will change depending on the amount and complexity of content available, and visitors will be able to purchase additional content packs as they require them. If requested, a physical copy of the game will be available, which will be mailed by courier when possible. Should the demand justify it, a port to IOS or Android may be developed.

The game will continue to be updated as required, with software fixes being the standard focus, but more importantly the content will be updated yearly as the course requirements change, ensuring that the game is always relevant to the user. In addition, the game supports the teaching of a wide variety of content, and thus more content packs will be produced and available for purchase. Should anyone experience any issue, I will be contactable on my website as well as by email.

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