

CW1A Minimum Viable Product Report

Name:

Kuan-Ting Chin

Student ID:

33430072

Individual Report

The sword master game is a third person battle royal game with emphasis on intuitive and innovative sword play rather than traditional pre-defined attack move sets. The game will be made utilizing C# in Unity and developed for mobile; though porting to other systems is also probable. For this risk analysis, I chose a combination of team, business and personal ones which I felt would impact this project the most.

The risks involved in the sword master game range from a number of things. I feel a major risk is the significant lack of exposure for the project, as the only exposure the project can potentially receive at the moment is from an early demonstration of the sword play on Youtube. I feel that exposure for video games in order to garner interest and feedback from potential players is a major factor to consider, as irrelevancy of components in a game project, whether it being sluggish controls, lack of synergy from various game elements and such could render the project immediate failure and a waste of the project team's resources and time. Another thing to consider is that without exposure, it may put the project at a disadvantage if the project were to be pitched in order to get funds via investors, either angel or corporate. The project has already seen a €500 investment on behalf of the original owner for an asset, thus the risk of failing to interest people in a specific target market could be discouraging.

A potential solution to expose the project is through online distribution and/or exposure, whether it be from online message boards such as Reddit, where we could potentially 'advertise' the MVP for constant feedback from the relevant message boards, or publish through Indiegogo or Kickstarter with crowdfunding in mind. This approach solves both the lack of exposure risk as well as funding issues both stated earlier, and could give the project more freedom in developing alongside with consumers via feedback. Another method for exposure is through livestreaming the development process potentially on Twitch. This was done by the company Vlambeer on the game Nuclear Throne, and has been very well received by many purely from livestreaming the iteration process from its beginning product to the current state via feedbacks and suggestions from the twitch viewers. The final potential method is to have a famous online personality (usually on Youtube) to play through the game and try to promote the game to their respective fan base.

If the approach via crowdfunding was to fail, due to insufficient funds for submitting on either websites, another method is to utilize corporate schemes such as Steam Greenlight. The cost of Steam Greenlight is \$100, and allows developers "to post and update as many ... games as you like within Greenlight" (Steam). This allows the project to essentially garner interest and begin a fan base of customers, whilst providing some solid proof to potential investors that there is a market for this product. To further request funds and win favour with investors, the project could undergo a SEIS or EIS scheme, reducing the risk of the investors whilst providing the necessary funds.

One of the risks I fear for a project like this is the fact that the concept of a sword fighting game has been done previously on mobile (*Infinity Blade* by Epic Games) and currently, a Triple-A backed game (*For Honor* by Ubisoft) is being published next year for PC and consoles. *Infinity Blade* utilizes a simple swipe to attack mechanic with no player movement, as it is done similarly to old point and click adventures where pre-determined paths are made for the player and fights are automatically initiated once an enemy appears in pre-determined locations. *For Honor* utilizes weighty sword play, utilizes player movement to dodge and emphasizes on blocking. Although I say that, I do feel it potentially has its advantages towards *Sword Master*, as this would allow the market to react on whether or not it will be a well-received product, giving sword master potential in 'free' advertisement. What I mean by this, is the game would then be published solely on portable platforms, so user who enjoy the games with the similar concept in mind but are unable to play either due to financial reasons (game too expensive, hardware to run said game too expensive) or lack of free time, will be able to do so on a portable device on the go.

This links to the previously stated problem with exposure, where the project can utilize the advantage of another game being created with more budget and marketing, and allows us to distinguish and better identify the target market and what the best approach towards it will be. On the possibility that the project gets compared to the big title, and receives negative feedback due to the art style, we could remedy this by essentially selling the asset the project currently has on either the Unity store, or gamecarver in order to attempt make back the €500 investment.

Another huge risk I feel is cultural difference could potentially play a big part in causing problems for the project. Cultural difference is not limited to only language barriers between different countries as many would assume, but rather, it also affects language and communication on a technical and business level. What I mean by this is that proposing the project idea of what the team may have in mind to investors, even if the specifications given are specified clearly, each individual's perception of that portrayed idea may not necessarily be what another envisions the final product to be.

Similarly, if the project manager explains a pitch idea and miscommunication happens between the project manager and investor, it could cause friction in communication between the development team and project board and investors. This is not to say that it is limited to only business and pitch scenarios, potential team friction may arise due to a lack of synergy between team members or if an issue arose that members in a team fail to agree with one another.

A way to remedy the perception problem is to either ensure that regular meetings between the investor and project manager is held, so constant feedback and review of the work in progress can be shown to the project board, or to ensure that the project manager is well endowed in terms of technical skill and business knowledge so the communication barrier can be smoothed to be virtually non-existent. In the case of team synergy or team members falling out, the project manager will have authority to

The other potential risk with cultural difference is that different cultures have different means of standards of living. If someone were to work from a different location for a short amount of time due to personal reasons for example, not only would time zone differences be an issue, but the lifestyle of different cultural backgrounds could affect the project and its progress. J. Mariah Brown states that *"just because you schedule a conference call for the middle of the business day does not mean that the time will be favorable for the people you are conducting business with. Many Spanish cultures have longer lunch breaks than Americans are accustomed to, which means there may be a two- to three-hour time period during the day in which the person you would like to meet with is unavailable."* which brings big problems to many games that have developers that are working from various different countries and locations.

One way to mitigate the problem is to provide in advance a suitable time for various team members to be able to contact one another or and provide checks on source control platforms such as Github with comments on any potential changes or issue the member runs into. This will allow flexibility in managing the project ensuring that the project is still on course and time management is unaffected by any mishaps or accidents. Online programs such as Slack are also potential options, as this application focuses more on team communication, whilst having the flexibility of dragging and dropping files directly into the online application, all free of charge. The only downside to utilizing it is there is no auto-update function to update any sort of code a person is working on, thus Slack would be more suited for minor data (such as assets, concept art).

If I were to attempt this project, the biggest risk I feel about myself is my lack of advanced technical skills and experience compared to my fellow team members, specifically my ability in understanding the complexity of integrating code and the logical decision behind why certain code works a certain way. This would cause unnecessary delays and potentially hold the team back in terms of efficient performance. The only way this can be remedied is if I improve my technical skills by studying advanced programming, attempt to replicate and understand more complex codes whilst improving on my 3D maths skills. On the absolute level, I would

request aid from a fellow member granted once he/she is not currently busy with their own individual tasks, and grasp a better understanding not only for my own benefit, but for the teams benefit as well.

For something as simple as a MVP, market research is essentially important as well as the funding, but with the lack of exposure to the general public, it can lead to potentially wasted efforts and resources once the product is finalized and pitched. There are many products which have failed prominently due to bad exposure or lack of marketing for player feedbacks, a primary example is Tony Hawks Pro Skater 5. The game studio, Robomodo, had "Consulted [previous Neversoft employees] during the design to help ensure it maintains that fun formula that made fans flock to the series over years." (Paluteia, M.) Indicating that advice from former developers may not essentially be what the market wants. That is primarily the reason why I think the exposure of a game is the most important risk to focus on before delving into any sort of production.

References

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Group Report

SWORD MASTER - Group MVP Risk Report

SIMILARITY WITH COMPETITION

“Sword Master” is a combat game with a gameplay heavily focused on sword control, offering great freedom for the player in this aspect. This is truly an innovative concept that has not been exploited successfully yet in this way

SHADOW FIGHT 2

‘Shadow Fight 2’ is a 1 versus 1 combat based game in a two dimensional world. The game has had over 80 million downloads, making it very successful in itself but also showing that there is a market for this type of game.

The unique selling points that we will demonstrate with our MVP and that will set our game apart from the competition is that it will allow for 1 vs 1 combat between mobile devices, in a fully 3D environment, with a focus on highly developed analogue swordplay with multi-angle slashing attacks and full 360 degree defence/parrying.

RISK OF FAILURE IN IMPLEMENTING MULTIPLAYER MODE

Another essential feature for the game is the multiplayer mode. Currently it has only been tested on controlled environments with relatively low latency and good connectivity (WiFi at close range). However tests over the internet have not been performed exhaustively yet.

Potential impact:

By nature, our game is relatively fast paced compared to other games and requires real time interaction and fluid responsiveness.

Mitigation:

For the MVP, run tests simulating bad network conditions and checking which is the minimum connection quality that allows a proper gameplay experience. If after these tests we find that the requirements are too high we would have to adjust our gameplay (for example making the animations slower) or apply some network programming techniques (such as input prediction or interpolation) which currently are not part of the MVP.

INEXPERIENCE AND LACK OF SKILLS

The development team would run into problems due to inexperience if the project manager lacks the leadership and organisational skills with the management of the team, or team members err due to inexperience.

As a mitigation strategy we could set a rule for the team in the development period:

- The team will have weekly meetings, where all the members will present their current work
- Team building exercises to establish a working dynamic and to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses

- Elect a project manager who demonstrates the necessary leadership skills and diplomacy to keep our team working to the same goal

RISK OF INVISIBILITY IN BLOATED MOBILE GAMES MARKET

Making a viable business out of the game, within the oversaturated market of the mobile platform is a big risk. Whilst the top 10 mobile games derive 50% of a \$21 billion revenue for the global mobile market (2014 - SuperDataResearch) the average mobile game is estimated to only bring in an average yearly revenue of \$2,847.

The strategies we will employ to deal with this risk are as follows:

- Effort to engage a niche interest/existing community in order to generate a fanbase that will help boost the visibility of our project - for example we could use black and white graphics and visual style of classic Japanese samurai movies like Yojimbo, 7 Samurai etc.
- Use a combination of website/active presence on social media/development blog to engage early adopters and potential customers
- Use LEAN model - engage early adopters with demos to gain critical initial feedback, that will help us optimise the gameplay, and to generate interest while the project is in production

Bibliography:

Quora - <https://www.quora.com/How-much-money-does-the-average-mobile-game-make>

SuperDataResearch - <https://www.superdataresearch.com/market-data/mobile-games-market/>