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Video Game Publishers

Today’s video game market is volatile: from obscure indie games to well-known, blockbuster sagas, gamers are constantly on the hunt for new games to grind. Video games, no matter the genre, require a hardworking team, in-depth knowledge of programming and software, and lots of dedicated time. All of these things require a large financial backing, and in such a hit-or-miss, or high-risk-high-reward industry, many video game developers rely on the skills (and wallets) of gaming publishers to get their game out to market.

Due to the range of processes the creation of a game requires, video game publishing is usually divided into various, delegated roles.

The **product manager** is one of the first roles that comes to mind with the publishing aspect of the gaming industry. The product manager is the one who cracks the whip on the development team - keeping them on schedule and keeping their priorities straight. Directly connecting the development studio with the legal department of the publisher, the product manager goes over and sets milestones and doles out money to the developers when appropriate, along with working on licensing and acquiring the ESRB rating. There is some controversy on product management due to its power in choosing the game’s content, but some product managers are less invasive. (Rogers)

The **creative manager** is less schedule-oriented than the product manager and is more involved with the design of the game itself. This can include seeing how well the game plays and if the game stays stylistically and thematically consistent. If the game has playability issues or doesn’t flow smoothly in terms of aesthetic or story, the creative manager is responsible for redirecting the development team, either by suggesting edits to better the game or by scrapping old ideas and working with something new. During the making of the game, the creative manager can also provide bits and pieces of the game to marketing teams and public relations to generate positive buzz. (Rogers)

The **art director** is a specialized creative director. The art director, as the name implies, hones in on the game’s graphics and art. The art director can review and suggest changes to achieve a cohesive visual style for the game. Packaging designs are also included in the art director’s list of responsibilities. (Rogers)

The **technical** **director** is responsible for the technological/software aspect of the videogame. With his or her programming knowledge, the technical director can provide programming tools, aid, and advice to the programmers of the development team. The technical director also determines if the programming team is capable of making the game of interest. (Rogers)

The **marketing** team’s main goal is to get gamers to want to buy and to play the game. Thus, it is essential that the marketing team works with the other publishing departments to get potentially promotional material for the game so it can display and advertise the game in its best light. Unfortunately, marketing is not always truthful or accurate. (Rogers)

Some other video game publisher departments include business development, brand management, public relations management, and quality assurance management. **Business** **development** organizes the interactions between publishers and developers, and will attempt to acquire more development studios. **Brand** **management** is very similar to marketing in that its focus is getting the game out into public awareness, but more specifically through setting strategies for advertisements. The **public** **relations** **manager** sets up press events and talks with gaming magazines and sites. The **quality** **assurance** **manager** is supposed to ensure that the game is functional and playable, with some degree of high standards. (Rogers)

Video game publishing is more compartmentalized due to video games’ complex nature. Publishing encompasses not only marketing, but also quality checks on technical and artistic elements of the games, along with keeping development studios on time and on task. The difficulty and controversy lies in the trend of publishers controlling the content and types of games studios can produce, with many publishers choosing to push their acquired studios to complete more sequels of successful games rather to than experiment with original games (Video Game Publisher). At the same time, developers can have difficulty fighting back due to their need for funding. Only time will tell if publishers will have their powers checked, or if balance between productivity and freedom can be achieved in the video game industry.

Sources:

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