Deployment Plan:

To get LaserPi to the market is no simple task, at least not on the surface level. Since this project has a hardware component, software component, and a full web stack there are a lot of bases to cover before our end users would have a complete product. With careful planning and much thought behind the concepts, PySweeper has developed a viable deployment plan that would have LaserPi on shelves and scalable for years to come. I will go over all foreseeable costs needed to put LaserPi to market including all costs, reasons behind the choice of product/service, and options for future scalability if applicable.

The obvious place to start is with the hardware component of LaserPi. While embedded software is necessary to play LaserPi, without hardware there is no LaserPi! The interactive hardware is a defining component that the end user will demand is reliable, ready to use, and fun. A Raspberry Pi Zero W from microcenter currently costs $5 for an individual board, however when purchasing more than 1 the price rises drastically as the Zero model Raspberry Pi’s are intended for individual user applications and not business applications. Assuming Raspberry Pi doesn’t change their Zero model strategy in the future, we would need to change over to the Raspberry Pi Compute Module 3 Lite. These boards are easily available from Newark1 in quantities of over 100 for $23.75 each. This is, of course, assuming we do not convert anything to use cheaper tech. From a business stand point, $23.75 per board for a laser tag application is unreasonable. Thus, if possible from a software standpoint, we would ditch Python in order to go with Lua for use on a much more reasonably priced NodeMCU (Lua board) at $3.55 per board (50 – 199 piece order)2. With the brain of the hardware covered, we move onto the HAT (protoboard), IR sensor (sender and receiver), press buttons, LEDs, capacitors, resistors, and solder. The protoboard will cost $3.50 (over 100) a piece3, the IR sensor and receiver will cost $3.49 for a set of 25 or about $0.14 per set4, for the switch the cost is about $0.23 per piece (over 100)5, LEDs will cost about $0.21 for a red and $0.21 for a green (over 100 each)6,7, capacitors will cost $0.13 per piece (over 100)8, there are 3 different types of resistors needed the 10 kΩ will cost $0.02 per piece (over 100)9 while the 220 Ω will cost $0.04 per piece10 (over 100) and the 330 Ω will cost $0.01 per piece11, and the solder is $30.08 per pound12. Notice that many of these parts are extremely inexpensive and considering how little solder is actually needed for the board, 1 pound may solder well over 1000 boards and thus the price becomes negligible on a per unit basis. The total cost per unit for these components then comes to about $4.49. With the NodeMCU board the total cost then comes to $8.04 per unit to this point. Now the user needs portability, and thus each unit must have a battery pack. To add a battery pack isn’t as simple as going and getting a cheap pack. The battery should be rechargeable, last awhile, and not blow up. Since the hardware is all about user experience as well, we chose to indicate to the user when the battery is running low. Clearly this isn’t cheap but we don’t want a lawsuit and we need reliability, so the battery pack will be a highly rated pack from Miuzei that has a UPS (won’t experience interrupts), an onboard LED battery level indicator, works for 3800mAh (about 9 hours constant use), and is expandable (can add additional battery packs and a fan). The Miuzei Battery Pack expansion board costs $18.99 each13 but with over 100 orders with a deal for future order we would hope to negotiate the price down to below $15.00. The total running cost is now $22.54. Only one more aspect to the hardware must be added, the look and feel. Let’s be honest, everything up until now simply needs to work and the user won’t care otherwise but the outside of the LaserPi gun must be clean and crisp. Which is why we will 3d print guns. The design can be printed for $918.75 for 100 units or about $9.19 per unit14,15. This completes the hardware portion of deploying LaserPi with a total cost of $31.73.

With the hardware component of LaserPi planned for deployment, attention can shift to getting the web interface up and running. This is the next main component of the user interaction with LaserPi. A user will have the ability to keep track of all records in a global database but in order to start a game that will store their records they must have a database for their individual system. The web interface can easily be the same across all these servers and a single domain can be split into subdomains for each set of LaserPi’s purchased. Subdomains can be automated to save man power and a single MySQL server can be separated into separate databases for each LaserPi. Let’s start with the MySQL server. After much research on costs and efficiency, the best options for commercial MySQL databases are all on Amazon Web Services (AWS). AWS offers a pay by the hour plan based on the size or users can pay upfront for a lower rate. We can change the plan on AWS and thus our model is flexible and scalable to serve our needs. LaserPi settled on the t3.small MySQL database plan that has a cost of $5.73 per month (3 year upfront payment, operating 24/7) making the total yearly cost $68.7616,17. Based on our calculations, this would provide us with enough for 209,715 LaserPi databases. This is based upon our own database using less than 10 kb of storage and the t3.small MySQL database providing us 2 gigs of memory. Again, this is AWS database plan is changeable but if more databases are needed we would, of course, have to pay more. This price is very low compared to the prices Microsoft, Oracle, and even the often considered inexpensive MySQL.com databases (which costs minimum of $2000 per year18). AWS offers affordable scaling that should fit LaserPi’s database needs for the foreseeable future. Again, at $68.76 a year this is affordable but not negligible in cost. Luckily, web hosting for our domain is very inexpensive in comparison. AWS offers hosting through their service called Lightsail, however this option is more costly than others explored. Preferably, we would keep all web stack applications to AWS but cost is always an issue thus LaserPi will be hosted by HostGator. The Hatchling Plan offers a single domain with unmetered bandwidth and unlimited email addresses. Of course, this supports unlimited subdomains, MySQL database interaction, PHP, HTML5, Javascript, and of course 24/7/365 support. With these services we can ensure a very high reliability for our end users with no fuss. The total cost of web hosting is $2.75 per month or $33.00 per year19. This hosting plan offers affordability and reliability but also very much scalability. This concludes the web portion of LaserPi with a total yearly cost of $101.76 per year.

Finally, the last deployment cost will be purely promotional. LaserPi will host our own Raspberry Jam here in Lawrence at the University. A Raspberry Jam is an independently organized event such as a workshop, show-and-tell, speech, symposium, etc based around the Raspberry Pi. Anyone can host an event for free and have that event be put on the official Raspberry Pi community page. LaserPi will host a Jam to not just promote LaserPi but to share ideas around all Pi based projects. After all, a large audience for this product will be the Raspberry Pi community! Now, I said hosting the event is free and this is true but there are still costs for a venue, costs to set up that venue with tables/chairs, and of course extras such as food and beverage. While exploring options for hosting the Raspberry Jam, it didn’t take long to come to the conclusion that KU is the perfect location. Amazingly, students can rent any room, outdoor space, or café available for free. That’s right, I could actually rent the entire Debruce Center (this includes the courtside café, mezzanine, and rest of the center along with the plaza) right now and host an air guitar competition for $0.00. While this is absolutely mind blowing, we will assume that for deployment we are no longer students but are alumni and thus associated with the University. The Jayhawk room in the student union is 2453 Square Feet and can hold 40 tables conference style. This is a very large venue and only costs $130 to rent20,21, we will add in $100 to get tables/media rentals for everyone involved, and $500 for food/beverage and advertising in the form of small snacks, water, soda, as well as email, internet, and poster promotions. We can do a lot of the setup ourselves and have volunteer’s handle what we cannot, this brings a total cost to $730 for the event. With this event to promote LaserPi and the Raspberry Pi community on a whole, we will be well on our way to a full scale deployment.

With this deployment plan, we have covered enough bases to get off the ground and get a product into user’s hands for several years. The yearly cost for web services and event hosting is a combined $831.76. Assuming we produce 400 LaserPi’s for launch hardware will cost $12,692.00 to be produced and shipped. Thus, our total costs would come to $13,523.76. For a small business, under $15,000.00 to deploy a product is very reasonable. In fact most tech based products on KickStarter get funded while asking for $20,000 to $99,99922. So in total, we are keeping costs low and making deployment very viable.

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