GAME PROMOTION & MARKETING COURSE 11 – THE PRESS

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The triangle of power

In the indie scene, I've noticed **3 actors that hold power**.

An **indie developer** has power when he is making a **good game**.

A **customer** (gamer) has power when he has **money**.

And a **game journalist** has power when his publication has **reach**.

The game journalist

Game journalist's work

A game journalist **writes about topics related to gaming**.

When writing about games, the journalist will often write articles that are:

- Game **preview**
- Game **review**
- A **story** that is linked to your game (new platform announced, award won, controversy, etc.)

Game journalist ethics

Game journalists like all journalists are strongly urged to follow the journalist code of ethic. Some elements include:

Accuracy of the facts

Do not report something as fact unless it has been proven from multiple sources.

Defamation

Do not publish harmful unproven statements that could harm the reputation of a party involve.

Harm Limitation

Do not publish information unrelated to the subject of the article that could harm a party involve.

Contacting the Press

Why contacting the press?

Since **the journalist's article will reach many followers of the publication**, we, indie developers, see those articles has a mean to get **coverage** and get more **potential customers**.

Think of a journalist has **a very sensitive gamer with a really big megaphone** that can choose to say good things or bad things about your game.
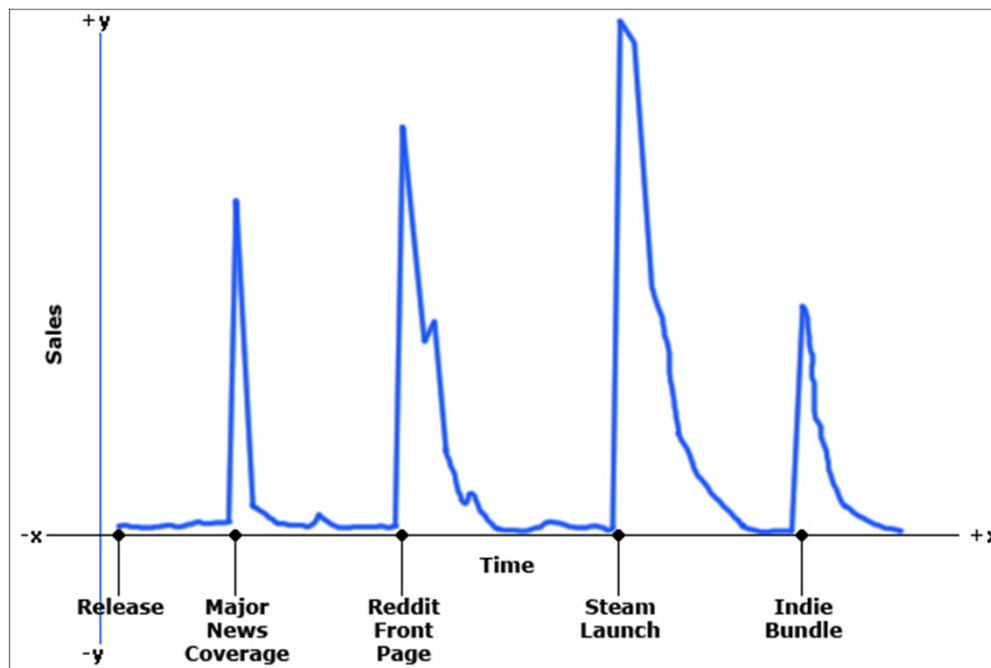
Why contacting the press? (cont.)

When you get press coverage, you get an increase in **awareness** which can be translated into **sales**.

The most effective way to use the press is to **contact them at key moments** such as the start of a Kickstarter campaign or a the release of your game.

To get a good sales momentum, timing is everything!

Who to contact?

Members of the gaming **press** can be:

- **Gaming site writers**

- **Magazine writers**

- **YouTubers** (Let's Players)

- Gaming **Podcaster**

- **TV Shows**

- **Non-gaming site writers** (that can still cover one aspect of your game)

Go look for them and get their contact info!

Who to contact?

If a journalist already know you, this will increase your chances of getting coverage when you send them an email.

To build a network of press connection:

- Introduce yourself at **gaming events** (GDC, Pax, etc.)
- Trade **business cards**
- **Join conversations** on social medias

Be careful to keep a professional relationship and avoid **conflicts of interest**.

Video: Greg Libsy Interview done during the #Gamergate controversy

Contact Spreadsheet

To keep track of all your press contacts, I recommend keeping an Excel spreadsheet for that.

The person of contact should often be the journalist with an interest for indie games for that publication.

Website Name	Address	POC Name	POC Email	Twitter	Language
Botaku	Botaku.com	Barck Obame	Oba@btaku.com	@bladude	English
JoySticker	JoySticker.com	Jessa Conduite	Jess@JoyS.com	@Jcond	French
…					

How to contact the press

Email

Email will probably be your primary way to contact the press.

An email is more personal than a press release and less aggressive than a phone call.

Press Release

A press release is a written press statement directed to members of the press.

Journalist usually prefer emails than press releases since they are more personal. Use it as a secondary option.

You can write a game press release at http://www.gamespress.com/.

How to contact the press (cont.)

Mailing List

A mailing list can be used to **email news to many journalists at the same time**. Journalist should be able to subscribe to your mailing from your website. One famous mailing list service is <u>Mailchimp</u>.

Important : **never** add the email of a journalist to your mailing list without their consent, let them subscribe by themselves if they want to!

Third party PR company

You might want to work with a PR company that handles all your press relations. While it may take some work off your hand, it can also have bad effects since **journalists often prefer to be contacted by the developers directly because it's more personal and the information from the source**.

Things to consider when contacting the press

When you contact the press, you should know:

Journalist get dozen of emails a day from developers just like you.

So you have to make sure that your email is **easy to read**, **polite** and **stands out from the others**!

Important: A small mistake could cost you coverage from a gaming site.

The most important thing in your email…

The hook!

The hook can be a the **unique feature** in your game:

- Cool **gameplay** mechanic
- **Art** direction

An interesting **story about your team/studio**:

- Origins of **your studio** (what's the human side?)
- **Controversy**

The hook is extremely important because journalists are looking for **stories** more than anything else! **Make sure that you mention the hook in the very first paragraph of your email!**

Note: do you have some example?

What should be in your email

Your email should have:

- Proper **greetings** (Hello, I hope you are well, Kind regards)

- **The hook** (imagine a game where you can stop time and s**t)

- State your **purpose** (Kickstarter launch, release, revealing a new mechanic)

- The **game description** (gameplay, art, story)

- Proof of **credibility** (past games, past reviews, award won)

- **Key information**: release date, price and platforms

- Link to **trailer**

- Link to **press kit**

- **Download code** of your latest build (don't ask if they want one)

- **Availability** (Contact me anytime, open to interviews)

Email structure

Subject Line

Make your subject line interesting without looking like spam.

"The Girl and the Robot - a new game that focuses on friendship"

Greetings

Be professional and friendly for god's sake, you're not emailing your little sister!

"Hello Obama,

I hope that you are all doing well. First I want to say thank you for writing that fine article about our Steam release last summer."

Email structure

First Paragraph: introduction (about 4 lines)

The 1st paragraph should clearly state the hook and a general description of the game.

"My name is Salim, a game designer from Montreal now working along with 5 other people on the 3rd person action/adventure game The Girl and the Robot; a unique game where both the story and gameplay focus on the concept of friendship."

Email structure

Second Paragraph: More details (about 5 lines)

In the second paragraph, you can give more details about the gameplay or the story behind your team/studio.

"Here are some interesting interesting facts about us:

- This game is based on fairy tales and real life experiences… bla bla bla.

-Our team is scattered all over the world with members from Canada, England and Japan.

-Some of us are ex-employees of Gameloft and EA."

Email structure

Third Paragraph: Key Information (about 4 lines)

In the third paragraph you can tell them about key information such as release window, platforms and links to press kit and download code.

"We are planning to release our game next summer on the Sory PS6.

Also you can take a look at our press kit (Dropbox link) and game page (link).

I've also prepared a Humble Store Code just for you if want to try the current alpha version (please keep in mind that the game is still at an early stage):

[Humble Store Code Here]"

Email structure

Final paragraph: short greetings

In the final paragraph mention your availability and say your final greeting.

"If you have any questions, please fell contact me anytime.
Best regards,

Salim de la Rochelle The VII"

A bad email

Subject: URGENT!! PLEASE HELP US; LAST DAY OF OUR KICKSTARTER!

Hello Kotakru,

Super exited, we are about to reach our Kickstarter goal and we could really use your help. Please write something about us; we would really appreciate it and we'll make sure to repay the favor somehow.

Our game is a really cool retro metroivania game, but here's the twist:

It's in space! Here's the Kickstarter link [link].

Let me know if you want a download code and I'll see if we can spare one.

Thank you soooo much! ☺

PS: Love you're site (even if I don't agree with your Gamergate position, lol)

Best practices when contacting the press

Be personal

Since you are indie and not a big corporation, you have the advantage to **build less formal relationship with the press**. Since you are the one making the game, the journalist will feel like that they are getting information right from the source.

Personalize each email by keeping track of the relationship.

For example, thank them for the last article or tell them that you enjoyed their talk at an event.

When emailing someone from the US, **use first names** even on the first email.

Note: But **don't fake it and don't suck up!**

Best practices when contacting the press (cont.)

Also:

- Keep it as **short** as possible (3-4 short paragraphs)
- Focus on the interesting part of your game (story around the project, unique mechanics and art); find your **hook**!
- Talk about the **Kickstarter last** and recommend a date
- **Email** specific **people and not companies** if you can
- **Don't beg** or act as if the journalist is doing you a favour.
- The subject line **should not read like spam**
- Double **check your email for typos and mistakes** and ask someone else to read it before sending.
- Show and describe the potential of your game **without bragging** or trying to aggressively sell something.

Best practices when contacting the press

Also:

- When sending a game build, make sure it has **quality over quantity**
- **Give a clear warning** if the playable version in not complete (no review, preview instead)
- **Be persistent, but don't spam**; contact someone again only if you have something new to show
- **Send all the email in the same time period**, the same day if possible so that no one is left in the dark

Article: How to talk to the video game press in 2013

Using Controversy

No Russian

"No Russian" is the fourth mission of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2. The mission takes place in Zakhaev International Airport. The mission sees the player take part in a massacre of hundreds of civilians, and made Modern Warfare 2 one of the most controversial games to date.

Videos: <u>No Russian</u> , <u>MW2 get coverage on FOX</u>

Hatred

Polygon wrote 4 articles on Hatred in 2 days.

Video: <u>Hatred</u>

Note: Should you use controversy to sell your game?

Press Kit

What is a Press Kit?

A press kit is **a collection of items and information about your game that can help game journalist write an article**.

Usually, you can make a press kit:

- As a Dropbox folder
- Or using <u>PressKit()</u> from Rami Ismail

What's in a Press Kit?

- **Information sheet** on your game and company
  – Game Description
  – Key Features in bullet point form
  – Release Date, Platforms, Price
  – Contact Info (Name, Mail, Twitter, Facebook…)
  – Company Bio
  – Other press quotes and reviews
- **Promotional art**
- Game and company **logos**
- Your best **trailers**
- Your best **screenshots**
- Your best **pictures of you and your team**(?)

Note: Flying Carpets Press Kit

Assignment #3 – Role Playing with the Press

We are going to play a role playing game where you are the indie dev and I'm a game journalist for the major gaming site Krotaku.

You are about to release your game on Steam Early access and you want to be covered by me to increase awareness and sales.

1) Send me an email before next class.

2) I will reply to you as a journalist and give you my critic of your email.

3) Links in your emails can be fake, I will grade you on the email alone.

4) -10% per late week days

Thank you and good luck!

Bibliographies

Video:

Getting personal with the press, and getting coverage for your game

Dropbox link to course presentations:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3zhrwn6nxrr5ywh/AACKUZSxAv30yzCH9qopVmlia