Deployment Plan

bits please

Flat Earth Space Program

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Introduction

The BitsPlease team, founded by Zackary Atkins, Jacob Marshall, Gage Phillips, and Thomas Gartman, has made incredible progress in creating a pre-alpha version of their Flat Earth Space Program (FESP, software, or simulation). In only two months, the team managed to turn a fuzzy idea into a playable simulation that allows for the exploration of space in a more intuitive 2D layout. With the pre-alpha version of the game created and successfully demoed to the EECS 448 technical conference, the team needs to consider how it plans to deploy the game to the market. In this report, we consider several key challenges, including business, development, and market considerations, that are required to launch FESP to the open market.

Business Considerations

The creators of the software are already referring to their group as BitsPlease. To avoid issues regarding intellectual property, taxes, and payouts, a corporation should be formed that holds the intellectual property of the software. Due to the small nature of the group and the laws in the state of Kansas, it is recommended that the group found the Limited Liability Company BitsPlease, LLC with each member receiving twenty-five percent equity in the newly formed Limited Liability Company. In return, all four members will relinquish all intellectual property claims of the software to BitsPlease, LLC.

At this point, it is recommended that the corporation contacts a business lawyer in order to ensure all state requirements and best practices are met. The cost of registering a Limited Liability Company in the state of Kansas is 165 dollars, but the cost of a competent business lawyer could range from three hundred to eight hundred dollars an hour [1][2]. It is estimated that the total cost of correctly incorporating could be up to several thousand dollars and is a large cost center for deployment. However, the protection and tax benefits that an Limited Liability Company provides will more than balance out these costs.

The members of BitsPlease, LLC will need to appoint one of its members to CEO, who will be responsible for setting the vision, delegating responsibility, and dealing with the non-technical

problems of the Limited Liability Company. This role should be chosen after discussions between the members, but it should be noted that a member with strong interpersonal skills and strong work ethic must be chosen to maximize the chances of success.

Part of the incorporating costs will be to buy a URL website to sell the game and serve and a point of contact between the market and BitsPlease, LLC. To save money and have a responsive website, Squarespace or a similar service should be contracted. One year of a business website will cost around two hundred sixteen dollars a year [3].

Development

The software is not ready for launch, as several key features remain either incomplete or not started, including:

- Celestial Body Orbital Mechanics
- Map Editor
- Rocket Staging
- Rocket Parts
- Art Assets
- Sound Assets
- Installation and Executables

These deficiencies must be addressed by BitsPlease, LLC before launching FESP.

The art and sound assets should be created by an artist and sound editor hired by BitsPlease, LLC. The standard payrate for a temporary in-house artist is around fifteen to twenty dollars an hour full-time [4]. Similarly, the cost of an audio engineer is twenty dollars an hour full-time [5]. It is estimated that if the corporation hires one person for each position and offers 20 hours of work a week, the art and sound assets could be completed after five or six weeks. This implies that the total cost for art and sound assets will cost forty-eight hundred dollars. These assets would likely be able to be reused for future space projects.

Basing on the progress made on FESP thus far, if the programming is performed by a team of three and a half full time developers, major features could be added into the game within a month of development. It is recommended that, to lower costs, the stockholders of BitsPlease, LLC and original developers of FESP continue working on the project and input sweat equity into the software. This should cheaply and effectively fix major issues with the pre-alpha build of FESP and bring the simulation into an alpha stage. The development team would need to meet and decide how long the remaining project should take to complete and what expectations the team should place upon itself in order to determine development time.

Marketing and Alpha Development

At this point, BitsPlease, LLC will need to start the process with Steam, a popular multiplatform distributor for video games and simulations, in order to get the game on the marketplace. The costs for this is deceptive, since Steam advertises the costs of launching on their platform to be one-hundred dollars though Steam Direct [6]. However, Steam requires access to tax documentation and banking information in order to process payments. This means that the incorporation aspects of the deployment should be finished by this point.

Once the process with Steam has started, it requires no more than five days to check the software and thirty days to validate the information provided to it. Development should continue at this point, but the focus for the non-technical staff should be to get the game website and steam store page to appear professional and eye-catching to potential customers. The artist and sound engineer should focus on creating a strong trailer that will engage the audience and generate excitement about our launch.

Additionally, Squarespace provides credit for one hundred dollars in Google Ads. These ads plus additional advertising should be considered. If available, several hundred dollars should be brought to bear on advertising through banner ads, video pre-rolls, and personality sponsorships.

For the development team, design details need to be finalized and the game needs to start undergoing some polishing. The goal of the development for the next thirty-five days is to get FESP into a playable beta state for Steam Early Access. This means that the art, sound, and features desired at launch should mostly be finished. If the developmental goals stated in the previous section are complete, then the team should attempt to add additional features as laid out by the appointed CEO and the shareholders of BitsPlease, LLC.

Steam Early Access and Beta Development

Once the game development is mostly complete, the game can be released to Steam under their Early Access program [7]. BitsPlease, LLC should use this opportunity to hear from the player base on features they want and issues they run into before a full launch. This will allow the development team to focus on additions that the players themselves wish were in the simulation and allow for tweaking of FESP before launch.

Once the CEO decides to move forward, Flat Earth Space Program can finally be launched as a full game.

Cost Breakdown

Item	Estimated Cost
Incorporation and Business Costs	$3300.00
Art and Sound Assets	$4800.00
Advertising	$800.00
Steam Costs	$100.00
Grand Total	**$9000.00**

Conclusions

The Flat Earth Space Program and its development team have an amazing opportunity to launch a very successful product to the market. The reception to the product in its *pre-alpha stage* was incredibly encouraging, and the ideas that were generated by the audience at the EECS 448 technical conference show a major interest in the product.

With an estimated cost of nine thousand dollars and around three months of time to complete, BitsPlease can bring its game to market. If each member contributes equally into the costs, each member will invest two thousand, two hundred fifty dollars into BitsPlease, LLC. It is imperative, however, that additional sources of funding are secured. The amount of revenue that likely could be generated with BitsPlease, LLC may not interest an investor, but a bank may be able to provide a loan if the proper paperwork and structures are generated. This is another reason why it is imperative that BitsPlease, LLC is set up with proper legal guidance.

If BitsPlease follows the recommendations made in this development report, the product has a decent chance of seeing a launch to the Steam marketplace and its use by many consumers hungry for the knowledge of space in 2 dimensions.

References

[1] https://www.kssos.org/business/business.html

[2] https://www.themuse.com/advice/what-startups-should-know-about-hiring-a-lawyer

[3] https://www.squarespace.com/pricing/#websites

[4] https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Video_Game_Artist/Salary

[5] https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Audio_Engineer/Salary

[6] https://partner.steamgames.com/steamdirect

[7] https://partner.steamgames.com/doc/store/earlyaccess