

Chapter 1: Design Marketing

Marketing from Day One

One Sentence Summary: Every decision you make should enhance your product's appeal to the mass market or your defined target market; sometimes both but never neither!

If you purchased this book because your game is about to be released and you'd like to know how to market it, you are in a lot more trouble than you think! But never fear. It's not too late to create a marketing plan.

The most important thing to do is always keep marketing on your mind from the moment you set out to create your game. If your plan is to sell a product, then you need to keep that as a priority, even if it interferes with your divine artistic vision! The only thing that could be considered more important than your profits is your integrity, and they should not be mutually exclusive.

Did You Know?
Your reputation is your most important asset.
Guard it carefully!

This book is designed to give you insight into the marketing mind. While the marketing mind isn't quite as scary as "Being John Malkovitch," you will have to keep an open mind about what this book is and what it is not. Some parts of the book will be a text book crash course in marketing, others will be valuable industry experience, and still others theoretical conjecture from the marketing standpoint. The strange reality about marketing is that few things are concrete. There's an exception to every rule. I mean EVERY rule! If you want to pass a college marketing class, just disagree with everything the professor says, and think of some instance where the rule he is discussing simply isn't true. But there are proven guidelines for success, and by following the guidelines in this book, you are guaranteed to give your game the best run for its money.

The key to it all is ensuring you are viewing your actions from two standpoints: How will the market view this change, and how will the end user view it? These may seem very similar, and in fact they may occasionally even be similar, but understand that they are radically different. The end user is who will buy your game; they are your targeted audience. They will perceive things differently from the market as a whole. Enhancing your game's appeal to the market gives you access to a broader audience, while focusing on the end user means that an audience that is already receptive to the game to will be more likely to purchase it.

If this is confusing, think of it another way: Every decision you make to change your product should either make the game more appealing to the current audience *or* make the game more appealing to an audience that has not yet been reached. Ask yourself aloud, “How will the market and the end user respond to this change?” Sometimes a decision can do both, but avoid decisions that do neither!

Keep marketing in mind from day one of your development process. The success of your game will be determined by two things: How good the game is and how well you put the marketing pieces together. It is up to your development skills to create a good game, but this book will help you fit all the marketing pieces snugly.

Tip:

A great way to answer the hard questions is to play devil’s advocate and try to argue against your instinct. Try it!

Target Market

The One Sentence Summary: The best way to judge your target market is by hobbies and interests!

Before the physical development of your game begins, you need to identify your target market. This is a very important step! However, as an indie developer it is even *more* important that you not waste an extreme amount of time on this. Understanding your target market and taking a fair guess at its size is one thing, but attempting to calculate the total market size and your anticipated market share in hopes of estimating profit is far beyond the scope of your operation. All it will do is build a pipe-dream. Focus on determining your market and ensuring that it is at least somewhat viable. Leave the specifics for another day.

If you do not have a game in mind, it is possible to select a target market that is an unfulfilled niche. This means you look around the market until you see a segment, such as a genre, an activity or hobby, that hasn’t been filled. For instance, I am unaware of a game that is a soapbox racing derby. This is an unfulfilled product niche (though not necessarily a very large one). If we believed there was enough interest in this target market it would make for a good game!

Tip:

Don’t waste time worrying about how BIG your market is! Instead worry about if you can REACH that market.

So what is a target market? This is a group of people that are most likely to purchase your game. Target markets can be many factors or combinations of factors. Typically this is some kind of demographic; however, the common demographics (age, sex, race, etc.) *are the worst way to judge a target market.* The best way to judge a target market is by interest or hobby, followed by educational level. Only after that do you resort to general demographics as an attempt to identify a target. They are NOT mutually exclusive, so be sure to mark down as much as possible on each.

- **Selecting by Interest and Hobby:** A soap-box car racing game targets people interested in soap-box racing specifically and very likely other race fans as well. Depending on the design, it may also interest people who enjoy mechanical engineering.
- **Selecting by Education:** If it is just a racing game, then it would appeal to those with a middle school to high school education. If it is a game that uses more advanced physics and design, it could appeal to those with high school education and even gamers with mechanical engineering degrees.
- **Selecting by Demographic:** Soap-Box Racer appeals to males age 16-34 with an income level of \$10,000 or more per year, and with a disposable income of at least \$100 per month.

You can see how selecting by interest and hobby creates a much more focused target group. More importantly, it is easier to find people who are interested in soap-box racing than it is to find people who fit a particular age, race, and sex demographic.

This information will be very valuable in both design and later marketing of your game! Always remember the group, education, and demographics of your target. If your target markets is middle-school and higher, ensure that the text and learning curve on the game is scaled accordingly. Subsequent target markets will give you an outlet for forming partnerships. Perhaps there is an international society for soap-box racers out there who would be more than happy to sell your game!

There's more to know about target markets, though. Now that you have an idea of what a target market is and how to define it, we can get into the more pertinent ideas on how it will affect your marketing.