

What is Marketing?

Understanding what marketing actually means. And how to market an indie game.

(It's not spamming posts on bird app)

About me

I'm Richard Zemoire, I have been in the industry since 2010. I helped to run a small studio that sadly shut down at the height of the CV19 pandemic. After a short time freelancing, I was able to scale up to what is now a full service marketing consulting company specifically to help indie devs. 80% of our clients are solo/duo dev teams. I'm not a guru or content creator, just sharing what I've learned from my past and what has worked for the games we have worked on. Feel free to leave comments, feedback, or ideas!

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[My post on Steam Next Fest preparations \(6 month plan\)](#)

[If you want to work together consider our complete marketing audit](#)

(This is a very early rough draft of what will one day be some kind of ebook or pdf document to help indie developers understand core marketing concepts. There will never be a charge or any kind of monetization for this document. I don't run a YT page or blog or anything like that.)

The Foundations

Before we can get to specific actionable items to marketing your game, there are some key fundamental terminology of marketing that you need to understand. Terms like "*Sales Funnel*", "*Market Research*" and "*Competitor analysis*" sound like spooky corporate speak, but are simple to understand and absolutely necessary to properly market your game. The best part is this research can be done before you ever even open the game engine! Below, we will discuss the marketing funnel and why it's important to help your game attract players.

What this article is: An explanation of a marketing funnel and how to better reach your target audience.

What this is not: A specific step-by-step action plan of what to post where or when.

The Common Marketing Mistake

Most indie game developers follow this pattern:

1. Ask for feedback or ask "engagement bait", low effort questions from other developers on platforms like Reddit in r/gamedev or the Indie Game Devs FB group.

2. Wait until the game reaches a certain level of polish or content before ever sharing the game.
 3. Post into the social media void a month before release, and get frustrated that their gif or trailer doesn't go viral and result in 10K wishlists.
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Why This Strategy Doesn't Work For Indie Devs

Small indies are missing a key thing. Trust and credibility. Another principle of marketing is “The Rule of 7” which states that a potential customer needs to be exposed to your brand 7 times before they ever consider a purchase. This is because potential customers need time to build an opinion and familiarity with you. They need to see your game, and this happens over time. Marketing is a marathon. When indie devs focus solely on driving traffic to their Steam page, their marketing can feel impersonal and it scares potential customers away. The above strategy works for established companies like Bethesda or Activision, because they already have decades of trust and credibility from making good gaming experiences. And although social media feels personal to the dev, players see it as just more noise in a saturated market, blending into countless other self-promoting indie devs.

1. **Customers aren't ready to commit immediately (Marketing principle: Rule of 7)**
 - Potential customers need time to form an opinion about your game.
 - They need to build familiarity and trust with your game and your studio.
 - Most people do not make an impulse decision and buy a game the very first time they ever hear of it, unless it's from a major company with an established IP or history of making awesome games.
 2. **It feels impersonal**
 - Pushing players to your Steam page for wishlists or sales before they have trust in you, often feels distant and corporate.
 - Social media, while seemingly personal, has become oversaturated. To players, it's just more noise if every single post a player sees tells them to buy or wishlist.
 3. **Saturation leads to disinterest**
 - So many indie devs are doing the same type of the above marketing strategy that it all just becomes noise to the player, and because promotion itself is now so saturated, to a player it's just another small Indie Game Dev trying to self-promote another game that they have never heard of.
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What is a sales funnel and how does it solve the problem?

A sales funnel is a fundamental marketing concept across all industries that show the process of guiding potential customers from the first time they ever discover your game, all the way to becoming loyal fans. Because most people don't buy indie games the first time they hear about

them, it's important to create a variety of content tailored to people at each stage of the funnel and have a clear pathway for players to move from one tier to the next.



Different types of content work better for people at different stages of the funnel. Bottom-of-the-funnel content won't resonate with someone who's just discovered your game for the first time and vice versa.

1. Discovery (TOFU - Top of Funnel Content)

Goal: Brand awareness

The first time a potential player discovers your game, they don't know anything about it. The goal in the discovery phase is to capture attention and spark curiosity without expecting immediate commitment.

Why the mistake happens here:

- Thinking of marketing as a future problem: This is a HUGE mistake I see indies make nearly daily. They wait way too long and start way too close to their game release. They expect people to see one post on social media, then jump straight to purchase in the funnel.

The better approach:

- **Start small engagements:** Share early development updates without spamming your steam page link on every post. Show behind-the-scenes content, or relatable anecdotes about your journey in a way that contributes to the community you're posting in without asking for anything in return. This introduces your game in a low-pressure way and builds curiosity over time. Potential players can also see how the game develops over time to build confidence that the developer has the knowledge and willpower to see the game through all the way to release. As people recognize your game or become more interested, they will move down the funnel into the next phase.

Examples:

- Gameplay focused game update posts on YT/IndieDB that focus on gameplay elements and not game dev topics. (No dev blogs)
 - Use Steam community hub to post news, patch notes, guides, and forum posts.
 - Social media posts showcasing early progress or challenges.
 - Participating in relevant communities like r/indiegames or Indie Game Devs Facebook Group and offering value without self-promotion.
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2. Interest and Consideration (MOFU Middle of the Funnel)

Goal: Provide information to build trust in you and your product.

Here, potential players start to learn more about your game and your team. The goal is to build familiarity and trust, which will keep them engaged. To truly connect with an audience you need to provide value to them. So you don't want to look at it like how you can get more YouTube views or wishlists. Look at it as how you can improve the trust in your brand and contribute to the community.

Why the mistake happens here:

- Developers often push too aggressively for sales or wishlists, alienating potential customers who aren't ready.
- A focus on corporate style marketing content over a human connection can feel impersonal.

The better approach:

- **Build familiarity over time:** Let potential customers see your game in multiple contexts. Post consistently and show how the game evolves, emphasizing authenticity over perfection.
- **Keep it personal:** Show your human side. People connect with people, not faceless studios.

Examples:

- Asking for players to wishlist your game, subscribe to a newsletter, or sign up on patreon only a few times a year such as an end of year recap, major announcement, or a month or two before a demo launch or game release.
 - Sharing your creative process and asking for feedback in a non-salesy way.
 - Engaging in conversations with players on Discord or forums.
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3. Purchase

Now, players are considering whether to commit by adding your game to their wishlist, downloading the demo, or buying your game. This is where you guide them toward taking that action by removing friction and ensuring that the purchasing process is seamless.

Why the mistake happens here:

- **Poor Store Page Presentation:** A cluttered, unpolished, or incomplete store page (e.g., missing screenshots, confusing descriptions, no trailer).
- **Pricing Issues:** Overpricing or underpricing the game without justifying the value, or not accounting for regional pricing.

The better approach:

- **A professional steam page:** Make sure your store page has a professionally made capsule image, a trailer that shows gameplay, and screenshots that communicate the game's core mechanics. Add GIFs and illustrated title text to the long description to make the content easier to read quickly.
 - **Use direct CTAs:** "Get the Game Today!" or "Buy Now and Start Your Adventure!" prominently on your page, updates, and social media.
 - **Special Offers or Bonuses:** Along with a launch discount, offer a limited-time exclusive in-game item.
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4. Advocacy

Once players commit (e.g., by wishlisting or purchasing your game), the relationship doesn't end. Retention and advocacy ensure they remain engaged and spread the word.

Why the mistake happens here:

Wishlists are a good metric to understand the general interest in your game, and it's important to build wishlists. But it's important to understand why your wishlists are/aren't going up. Many developers tend to focus only on asking for wishlists and in some cases outright begging for them. But Goodhart's law is true to wishlists: "When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure".

Wishlists, are a good indicator of how popular your game is getting. But when you make gaining wishlists your main CTA. You start to gather lots of bad wishlists from people who think wishlisting your game is helping you, but never intend to actually buy the game. It just leads to a false sense of “winning”.

- Many developers focus only on the wishlist or purchase and neglect ongoing engagement with their audience.
- Genuine wishlists are great, but not the end-all be-all
- Chasing only wishlists could result in a high number of bad wishlists that will never convert.

The better approach:

- **Keep nurturing your audience:** Provide post-commitment content, updates, and opportunities for involvement to keep players excited.
- **Turn players into advocates:** Encourage satisfied players to share their experiences, reviews, or gameplay clips with others.

Examples:

- Post-launch updates and patches.
- Play the game with fans on Discord or host special events and fun competitions with prizes.
- Seasonal/holiday events.

The Takeaway

A sales funnel is all about guiding customers through progressive, low-pressure steps. Just as you wouldn't throw a final boss at a new player, you shouldn't push potential customers too hard or too early. Instead:

1. Build awareness through small, authentic engagements.
2. Nurture interest by showcasing your game and your story.
3. Make decisions easy by presenting manageable next steps.
4. Retain and turn committed customers into advocates who amplify your message.

This gradual, personal touch approach creates long-term success for both your game and your studio.

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Market Research

In progress currently it's just random notes with no formatting.

1. Define the market, analyze demand, and pick a genre

Picking your genre is the most important part of marketing your game. Your genre will dictate how large of a pool your potential target audience will be and what your potential earnings will be. Obviously, there are so many factors at play and there will always be exceptions and outliers. But it's important to understand your genre, and have realistic expectations of the possible sales in that genre. If you are making a 2D puzzle platformer or a match 3 game for steam, it's unlikely that you will make the same revenue as if you were making a more in demand genre such as a strategy game.

Market research isn't just about understanding data. It's about validating your idea before you invest months (or years) into development. By understanding what players want, analyzing competitors, and tracking demand, you can look objectively at your own skills and ideas to see if you can create a game that competes in that genre, and manage your expectations accordingly.

Tools you can use to research different genres

SteamDB - Provides detailed data, including player charts, price histories across all regions, and update histories for the entire Steam catalog.

Steam Charts - Tracks live and historical player data from Steam, including current players, 24-hour peak, and all-time peak.

SteamSpy - Get data on estimated sales and ownership numbers.

PlayTracker.net - Analyze game engagement and player behavior.

Google Trends - Track search interest for game genres or mechanics.

Steam Summarize - Get instant, AI-generated insights from thousands of Steam reviews.

2. Evaluate Competition

Evaluating competition means studying other games in your genre to learn what players like, what frustrates them, what they expect, and where the problems in that genre exist for you to fix. This isn't about copying other games, it's about understanding how games are presented, priced, and received. The more patterns you recognize in successful or failed games, the better you can design and position your own title to stand out while meeting player expectations.

When doing your research, do not only look at the highest performing games. It's very unlikely that you will rank in the top of your genre, especially as a new indie dev. Look at the games in the median range or even the bottom 30% to see what your game would need to compete in that genre. Find out what the difference between a flop, a 1K sales game, a 10K sales game, and a 100K sales game is specifically in your genre.

Make a spreadsheet

1. Find 5-10 similar games to yours
2. Read EVERY NEGATIVE REVIEW

3. Find out the problem in your genre from reading those reviews.
4. Ask: How does/will your game solve that problem?
5. Find subreddits for your genre or other games in the genre and message people there.

Example DM

“Hey, I saw you commented on a post about X game. Could you tell me what you like or don’t like about X game? I ask because I am working on a similar game but am adding [Y mechanic].”

Just be sure not to spam a dozen people every day. Just message a few people where it’s most relevant so you don’t get marked as spam. 2 or 3 people a week should be safe. It’s important that the goal of this convo is not to sell them on an idea or ask people to join discord/wishlists. It’s purely for feedback to help you make a better game. Along the way, some people will be extra interested, so of course indulge those curiosities, but do not expect or push for them. You will be seen as a spammer and blocked.

3. Get Structured Feedback (Reference Finding Playtesters page)

As you build your prototype, have people play it regularly with STRUCTURED feedback loops. Just asking someone “Did you like my game?” or “What do you think?” is not going to get you actionable feedback. You need to make a feedback form or exit survey to give your testers to have them answer specific questions relevant to your genre. You can go back to those people who you previously messaged and ask if they are interested in playing your prototype. Then give them the survey after they play.

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Your Steam Page

A Beginner's Guide to Marketing on Steam

For most indie game developers and small studios just starting out, it's a dream come true to get their game listed on Steam. After all, it's the largest digital distribution platform for video games, boasting over 120 million monthly users. But simply getting onto the platform is not enough to drive sales. You have a *very* small window of visibility and engagement when your game first launches, followed by a quick dropoff as other new games are released.

There's getting on Steam, and then there's *succeeding* on Steam; the difference lies in effective marketing. If you're a beginner (and that's OK!), let's explore some essential marketing strategies and techniques you can use on Steam to help your game gain visibility and attract players.

Creating the Initial Attraction

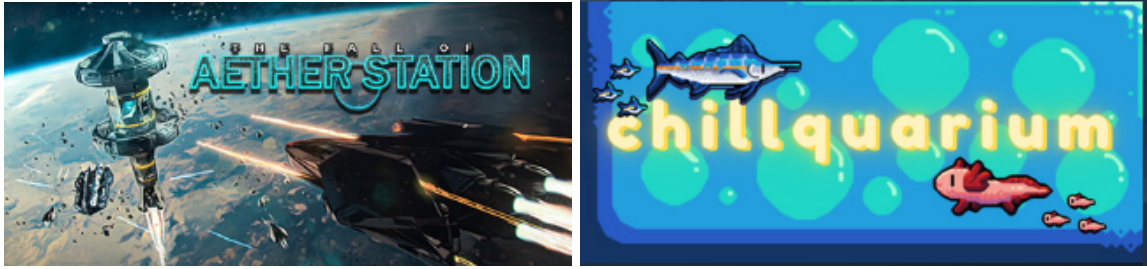
To find success in dating apps, it's essential to have someone first swipe right. That means something about the photo you posted attracted them. Only then will they really start to learn more about you and have a chance at making a connection. This is marketing yourself, and marketing your game is not all that different.

An Eye-Catching Capsule Image

As we just established, first impressions are everything, and the capsule image is its first encounter a potential player has with your game. This is that small, rectangle image representing your game on Steam's store pages and alongside search results. Each view of that image counts as an impression (you want these).

As the name suggests, this little image needs to *encapsulate* your whole game. A great one does this in two ways:

- **Instantly Appealing Design:** Someone on the hunt for a new game, eyes darting across the store page, should stop when they see your image. It should draw them in and keep them longer than the typical few milliseconds most will get. Use high-quality, high-resolution graphics, strategically employ vibrant colors, and focus on a unique design that highlights the essence of your game. **Do not just use a screenshot!** This comes later.
- **Clear and Thoughtful Branding:** Your capsule image needs to convey the core theme of your game. If you've made a horror game, lean into the scares; if you have a family-friendly platformer, use bright colors. Consistency in branding is essential. You also want to instill trust; don't pull a bait and switch on your potential customers that will leave a sour taste and make them less likely to trust your company or your brand.



Capsule images should match the theme of your game!

Gameplay Trailer and Screenshots

Once potential customers have clicked that capsule image (and a memorable game title also helps!), the second most important thing is your trailer. Steam will generally auto-play the trailer loaded into the top slot, meaning a clickthrough to your game page kicks off with immediate engagement possibilities. But don't just take our word for it; this is what Valve themselves have to say about the importance of a potent trailer:

"Ideally you'll want to give players a good look at the gameplay of your game in as short a time as possible. We recommend that your first trailer be one that features primarily gameplay, clearly demonstrating what the player will be doing in the game and how they will be interacting with the world you've built. Save your company logos or narrative storylines for further into your trailer once you've gotten the interest of a player."

<https://steamcommunity.com/groups/steamworks/announcements/detail/5358762517221792489>

▶ You Will Not Survive - Gameplay Trailer: WISHLIST NOW ON STEAM!!!!

In other words, as a small or just-starting developer, don't spend money on a fancy CG trailer. DO, though, invest in a quality trailer with emotive music and smart cuts that showcase quickly what makes your game exciting, enticing, and worth wishlisting or contemplating a buy. Of course, for those not looking to watch a video just yet, include a handful of tantalizing screenshots after the video to show diverse gameplay situations and to highlight the game's visual appeal.

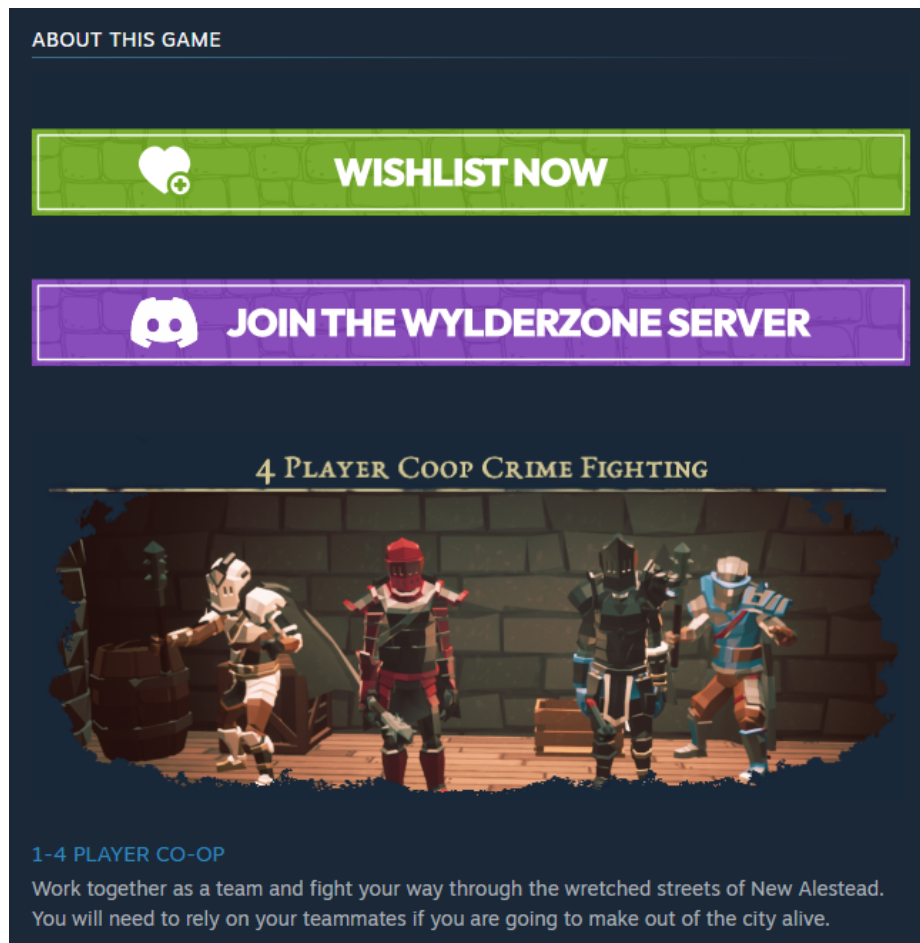
Getting to Know the Game

It looks like you've made that great first impression! If potential players are sticking around your page, that means you've got them on the hook. Now is your chance to reel them in.

A Captivating Title Image

Your title image is the first thing future customers see when they scroll below the initial media carousel. You need to create a high-quality banner-like image at the top of your page, one that

complements your capsule image (think of it as an extension of it) and that provides additional visual information. This is your primary call to action to ask players to join your Discord server, wishlist the game, and/or highlight your key selling point.



The “*GUARDS!*” Steam page is a great example that blends gameplay images, a call to action, and more detailed information than the trailer can reasonably cover.

An Enticing Game Description

Looks are only surface deep. We’ve all been burned by an amazing trailer that was followed by a stale or disappointing game. Your game description in the store is your chance to (succinctly!) highlight the exciting facets of your game, including:

- An overview of your game’s concept
- Key points about its unique and compelling story or narrative
- Innovative features or gameplay hooks

Don’t overload with text, though! Yes, you’ve got a trailer and screenshots up top, but the game description in the store is a broad canvas for you to paint and make exciting. Pepper in some of

these:

- Additional images and gifs. People want to see your game!
- Positive reviews (or buzz from previews) and past or recent awards. Establish trust with your potential customers!
- Title image art instead of plain text. Keep those headings exciting!

Meeting the Family

Whether your sales funnel is focused on long-term leads or short-term sales, you have a reason to support the community that backs your game. This is where Steam's Community Hub feature comes into play.

What is a Community Hub?

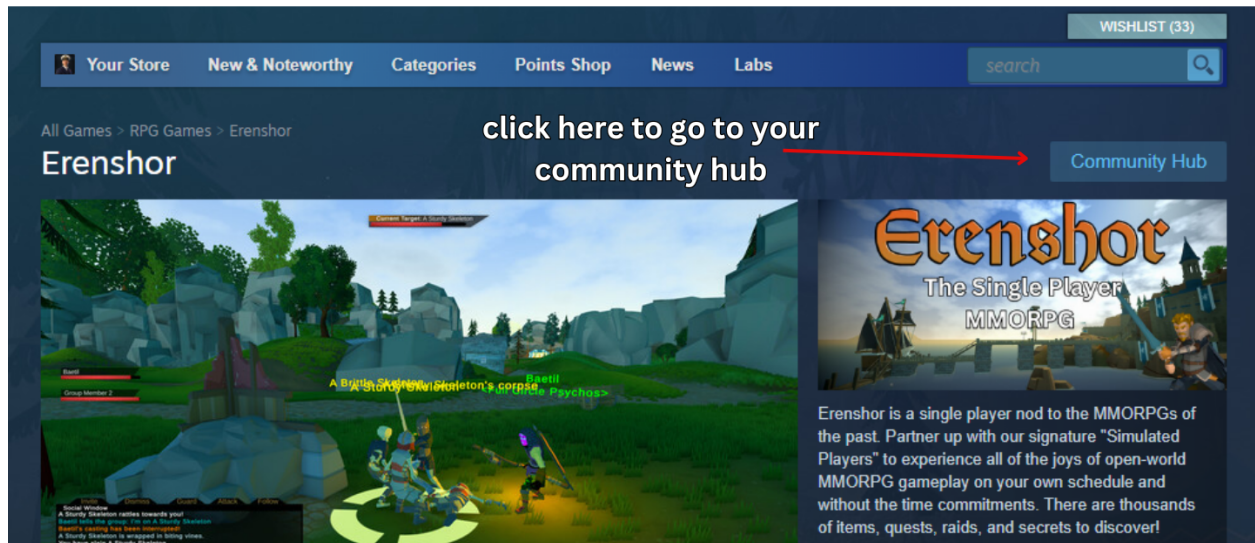
These hubs are excellent places to start building a community around your games without extra monetary expenses to you or your team. Here you can post FAQs, share news about upcoming events, and get valuable feedback and bug reports from players. Players want to know their voices are heard (even when what they have to say is not very nice or overly critical of your hard work). Being present for them and giving them a platform for this is a great way to both show transparency (build trust) and start to build a communal relationship with your followers.

Perhaps more importantly, though, they can interact with other players. A thriving community means continued interest and increases the chances of organic, word-of-mouth promotion of your products. Encourage it, and be present to your players or future customers. Facilitate discussions about the game and the sharing of user-generated content, such as artwork, live broadcasts, screenshots, videos, and guides. Those who feel supported by the developers and their fellow community are more likely to generate new content on other platforms and thus continue to increase engagement.

How to Create a Community Hub

New to all of this? No problem. Here's how to set up and effectively use these forums. As soon as the store page for your game is labeled as "Coming soon" (or given a specific release date, if you already know that), a Community Hub for your game is automatically created.

It doesn't get much easier than that! Once you've reached this stage, just go to your Steam page and click the "Community Hub" button above your capsule image.



Discussion Forums

The backbone of your game's hub will be the forums; this is where discussion and interaction happens. Try and take advantage of all its features, especially pinned posts. These are posts that stay at the top of the forum to share whatever is most vital to people at the moment. Don't be afraid to change these out over time so players don't learn to skip past them

You should also create subforums for specific topics to keep your hub organized. Good starting points would be forums related to beta tests, bug reporting, or specific events. Here are some other helpful pointers to keep your forums lively and engaging for everyone:

- **Engage Regularly:** As developers, you're the gatekeepers for your game, and you should actively participate in the community discussions. Respond to player questions, share updates, and comment on posts. This shows your commitment to your game and builds trust among players. Just don't let it get in the way of proper dev time!
- **Feedback and Suggestions:** Use the forums as a platform for players to provide feedback and suggestions. Respond to your players input, and keep players informed about planned changes or outages.
- **Promote User-Generated Content:** Encourage players to share their creations, such as fan art, mods, or guides. Highlighting user-generated content fosters a sense of community and shows appreciation for your players.
- **Announcements and Events:** Use discussions to make announcements about upcoming events, sales, or new game content. Engage players with special community-focused events and contests.

Moderation Is Key

Obviously you want to encourage positive discussions and discourage inappropriate behaviors. Don't be afraid to ban anyone who is toxic or abusive. That being said, have a steady hand in

regards to those who are simply airing legitimate grievances. Honest feedback, even when it's painful, is still good feedback.

Think you still need more guidance? You can find it on the Steamworks community info page here: <https://partner.steamgames.com/doc/features/community>

Building a Long-Lasting Relationship

How Steam Increases Your Game's Visibility

So you have a scroll-stopping capsule image, a captivating gameplay trailer, and a description packed with GIFs. What's next? Let's talk about Steam's algorithms and how it helps to promote your game.

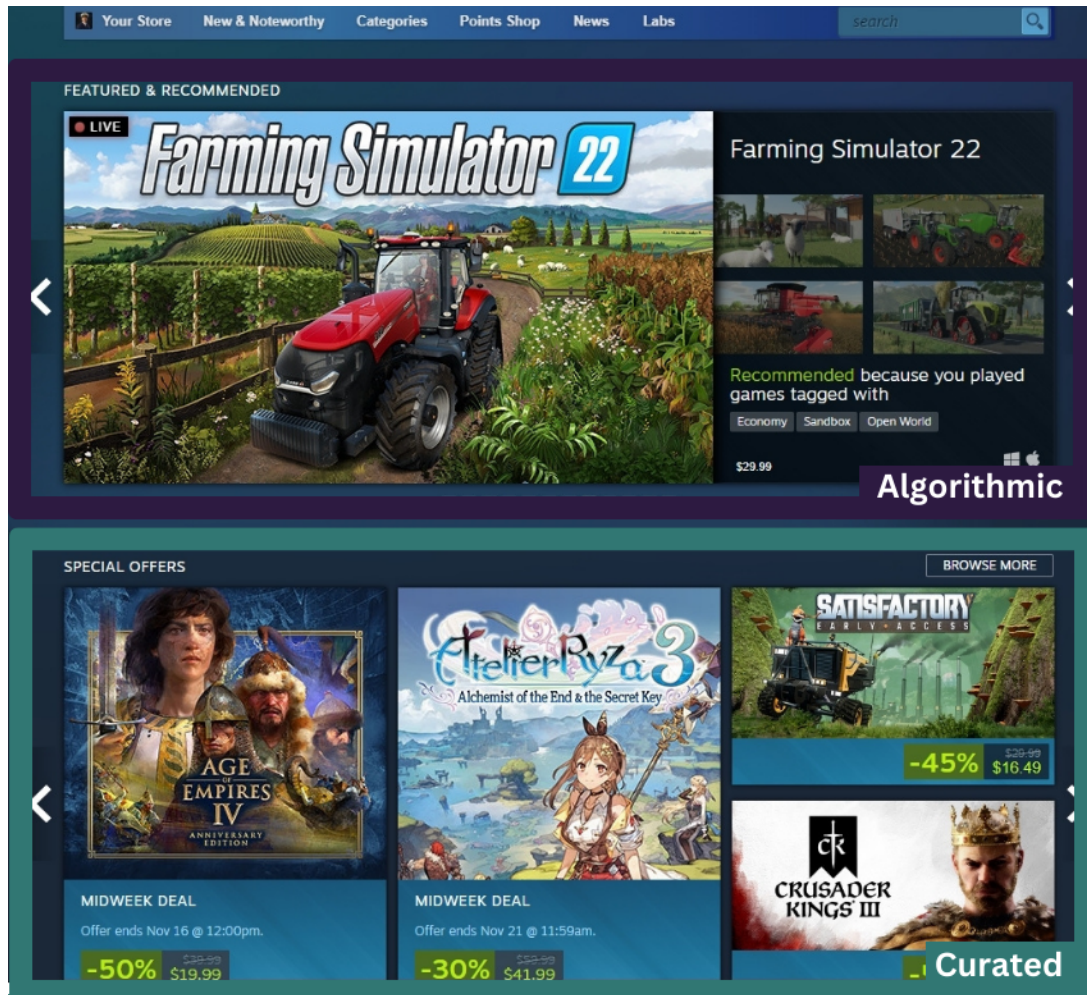
Let's get the obvious out of the way: There is no one magical algorithm to pin all your hopes on. What we're given is a complex system that is personalized to each end user. While that can make it hard to gain the system in your favor at a macro level, it *does* afford you the opportunity to find traction with your niche audience, whatever they may be.

Steam's approach to game visibility is to follow player interest rather than trying to predict which games will be successful, allowing hit games to emerge organically. Using accurate **tags** is one of the most important considerations you should have for the visibility of your game. Give each tag careful consideration so that when Steam recommends you to a potential customer, they are more likely to want to engage with it.



"It's important to us that players trust that the games they're seeing are relevant and interesting to them." - Valve

So how do Steam's store sections work in conjunction with their algorithms? Valve released a PDF and [accompanying video](#) in Oct of 2023 that outlined their process and thinking. In short, there are two main categories used on these pages: **algorithmic content** and **curated content**.



Algorithmic Content: Personalized
Curated Content: Shown to everyone

New and Trending: This algorithmically devised regional list of newly released games based on popularity gets posted at the top. Games get pushed down as newer games meeting that criteria are released. Early access games are initially excluded (so keep this in mind!) but can be featured here after a 1.0 launch.

Top Sellers: This is a second algorithmically devised regional list based on total revenue (including DLC sales, in-game transactions, soundtracks, and the like) in the trailing 24 hours. The better you're doing, the more often you'll be featured here.

Popular Upcoming: This is a list of the most wishlisted upcoming games—one of the few places on Steam where wishlists are factored in. The games are sorted by release date and based on wishlist activity from the past 2 weeks. As such, this can be a self-sustaining draw to your game (you get people wishlisting your game through organic channels, which drives you up the popular upcoming list, which leads to more wishlisting, and the cycle continues).

Going the Distance

Marketing your game properly on Steam is a crucial step toward achieving success on the platform. Start by crafting an eye-catching capsule image that draws users in, and then create an engaging and visually varied game description that tells your game's story and features using GIFs or videos and title images to complement your branding. Even consider crafting seasonal variations to keep your game page fresh!

And of course, set up your Steam Community Hub as soon as you are able, to build a vibrant and sustainable community around your game; interact with old, new, and future players; and gather and process valuable feedback.

With the right mix of marketing strategies, your game can find its audience and thrive on Steam. Good luck!

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Finding Playtesters

How to Find Playtesters

If you're an indie developer, finding reliable and constructive playtesters can feel like chasing unicorns. But don't worry, it's not as hard as you think. This guide is here to help you cut through the noise and get your game in front of the right people.

Whether you're looking for brutal honesty, casual impressions, or structured feedback, there's a platform for every need. Let's break it down.

If you prefer spreadsheets, we got you: [📊 Playtester Strategy Spreadsheet](#)

Reddit: Still the Underrated MVP if you know what to do

Reddit remains one of the best organic ways to get your game tested. It's fast, free, and has a niche for every genre. The key is to engage genuinely, and not spam.

Karma is Key

To prevent your posts from being taken down the moment you press post, especially in subreddits with stricter karma rules, you have to build up your karma. The best way to do this is to become an active, genuine member in the relevant subreddits you're hoping to post on by commenting on posts that you find interesting.

You shouldn't be the one asking for feedback all the time; sometimes you have to be the one to provide it for others.

Best Subreddits to Post On:

r/playmygame

This subreddit has over 100K members and is a great place to post a trailer or playable build and gather feedback from casual players and other developers. Great for early impressions.

Tips:

- Sort by "Top" then weekly or monthly to study what kinds of posts perform well.
- Make your post clear, visual, and engaging.

r/DestroyMyGame

Known for its unfiltered and often harsh critiques, this is the place to go if you want brutal but honest, actionable feedback.

Tips:

- Be specific about the kind of feedback you're looking for.
- Don't take criticism personally. It's all about improvement.
- If your game has no wow factor, expect it to be ignored which in itself is feedback.

r/INAT (I Need A Team)

Originally created for team-building, but now also serves as a collaboration hub. It's a good spot for finding testers and for finding long term team members and getting feedback from other devs. Create a detailed post about your game and what specifically you're looking to have tested.

r/playtesters

This smaller, focused community exists specifically to help you find testers. Be clear about what your game is, what you're offering, and what kind of feedback you need. They have two options: paid playtesting which is self-explanatory, and unpaid playtesting, with which you'll have to reward playtesters through other means.

Bonus Tip: Use prewritten templates and experiment with post timing. Reddit rewards consistency, clarity, and good formatting.

Now that you know where to post, what do you post?

Tips:

Reddit users have short attention spans. If they have to jump through hoops, you've already lost them. Here's how to reduce friction:

- Link directly to a playable version (Itch.io, browser build, Steam key).
- Avoid Google Drive as the "test my game scam" is one of the most popular scams in game dev
- Do not use personal website download links.
- Don't gate the game behind forms or mailing lists just to get access. The only form should be the feedback form at the end.

Lead with Visuals

Reddit is a visual platform. Posts with exciting images and “scroll-stopper” GIFs get more attention.

[WORK IN PROGRESS MORE WILL COME. Add zebrakiller on Discord if you want to yell at me to hurry up or if you want more info that isn't here.]

Direct outreach:

Huge shout out to Darius for this method.

Reddit is not all about just making posts and waiting for people to message you. For every post made on Reddit, there are dozens, sometimes thousands of comments of people who could be potential lovers of your game!

Genuine outreach, not spam

Find relevant subreddits. If your game is a RPG game then go on r/RPG_Gamers and look for popular posts where people are talking about similar games to yours, then look at the comments. One, for research of what people are saying about similar games. And Two, you can click on their username and send them a DM. It's spooky I know, but don't worry, most gamers love to discover new games in genres they love. The trick is to be genuine and not a spammer. You're not messaging them to sell them your game, to beg for wishlists, or ask them to join your discord. You're just trying to get feedback on your idea.

It's also very important not to mass DM dozens of people. Your account will get flagged as a DM spammer and will be deleted. Just message a few people like 5 or so a day.

Going back to the conversations from the Market Research page, you should already have some contacts that you can go back and message them. They will not remember you, but they will see your previous message and remember you were working on a cool game in a genre they like, and will be excited about an update.

This is an EXAMPLE post. Do not just copy paste the same thing every time Your account will get flagged as a DM spammer and will be deleted.:

"Hey, I saw your comment in [SUBREDDIT]. could I get your opinion on [GENRE] games? What frustrates you the most and what do you love the most?

The reason I'm asking is because I'm working on a [GENRE] game where you [UNIQUE THING ABOUT YOUR GAME IN YOUR GENRE OR WHAT YOU DO DIFFERENT]. Your opinion will help a lot to see if this feature is good or not. Thanks for your time. "

Playtesting Platforms Worth Checking Out

If you're looking for more structure, these platforms are designed to connect developers with players and collect useful feedback. Your mileage will vary and we have had mixed results with all of these sites.

Playcocola

<https://playcocola.com>

An easy-to-use platform ideal for running campaigns over time. It's great for collecting feedback from casual testers. Of all the websites, this is the easiest to list your game on, but they have the lowest traffic. Our most popular games only achieved maybe a dozen testers. But the website allows testers to directly upload their demographics and gameplay video sessions which is very useful. It's good to host your game here, and share the campaign around for automated testing.

How to Use:

- Sign up and create a campaign
- Set your goals and testing timeline
- Launch and monitor feedback

Playtester.io

<https://playtester.io>

Offers targeted demographic filters and more curated feedback. Perfect if you want detailed insights from serious players.

Note: Some features may require approval or come with a cost. Getting your game on the platform itself requires approval by the platform's admins.

Itch.io

<https://itch.io>

One of the most well-known indie platforms. While not designed specifically for testing, it works well if you promote your game and collect feedback via comments or forms.

Tip: Think of Itch.io as a “second store page” of sorts. Make it appealing to look at, have all relevant information listed, and most importantly have some awesome visuals for potential players to look at.

Alpha Beta Gamer

<https://www.alphabetagamer.com>

Submit your game to be featured on the site by sending a message to their contact email. If approved, your title will reach a large audience of beta testers and indie fans.

Note: Alpha Beta Gamer has specific guidelines for game submissions, so make sure you read through those and follow them when you submit your game for approval!

G.Round

<https://gameround.co>

Apply to have your game tested by their curated, incentivized community. They only accept polished and complete experiences. Great for gathering in-depth feedback from dedicated players. This website is the most expensive costing anywhere from \$2,000-\$10,000.

Additional Tips That Actually Work

You don't have to stop at Reddit and official platforms. Here are a few other methods that consistently work for indie devs:

- **Use Discord or Slack:** Share builds in indie dev communities.
- **Leverage social media:** Post clips and demos on platforms like Twitter/X and invite feedback.
- **Try Steam Playtest:** If your game is on Steam, their playtest feature allows private beta access.
- **Collaborate with small streamers:** Reach out to content creators for real-time playthroughs and audience reactions.
- **Use feedback forms:** Google Forms or Typeform can help structure the kind of responses you're looking for.

Final Thoughts

The best playtesting strategy combines wide reach with relevant targeting. Use Reddit to cast a wide net, and supplement that with structured platforms like G.Round or playtester.io for deeper insights.

Always be clear about what kind of feedback you're asking for, and respect the time of the people giving it. Playtesting isn't just about fixing bugs—it's about shaping the best possible version of your game.

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Helping indie developers thrive with strategy, support, and results.

How to use social media

What Social Media to focus on

(Currently under construction)

In today's digital landscape, social media isn't just for memes and cat videos, it's one of the most powerful tools indie game developers have to grow an audience, connect with players, and build a community around their games. With so many platforms to choose from, it can be overwhelming to know where to focus your time and energy. Should you be on TikTok? Is X (formerly Twitter) still worth it? What about YouTube, Discord, BlueSky...?

Here's a breakdown of the major social media platforms, what they're best for, and how indie game devs can use each one effectively. Note that I will not be covering anything about mega viral posts, how to go viral, or talking about games/posts that went viral. Having a post go viral is like winning the lotto. It's interesting to reflect on the success but I don't think there's really much to learn from it.

X (formerly Twitter): Central Command for Networking

What is it best for? Developer visibility, networking, and short-form updates.

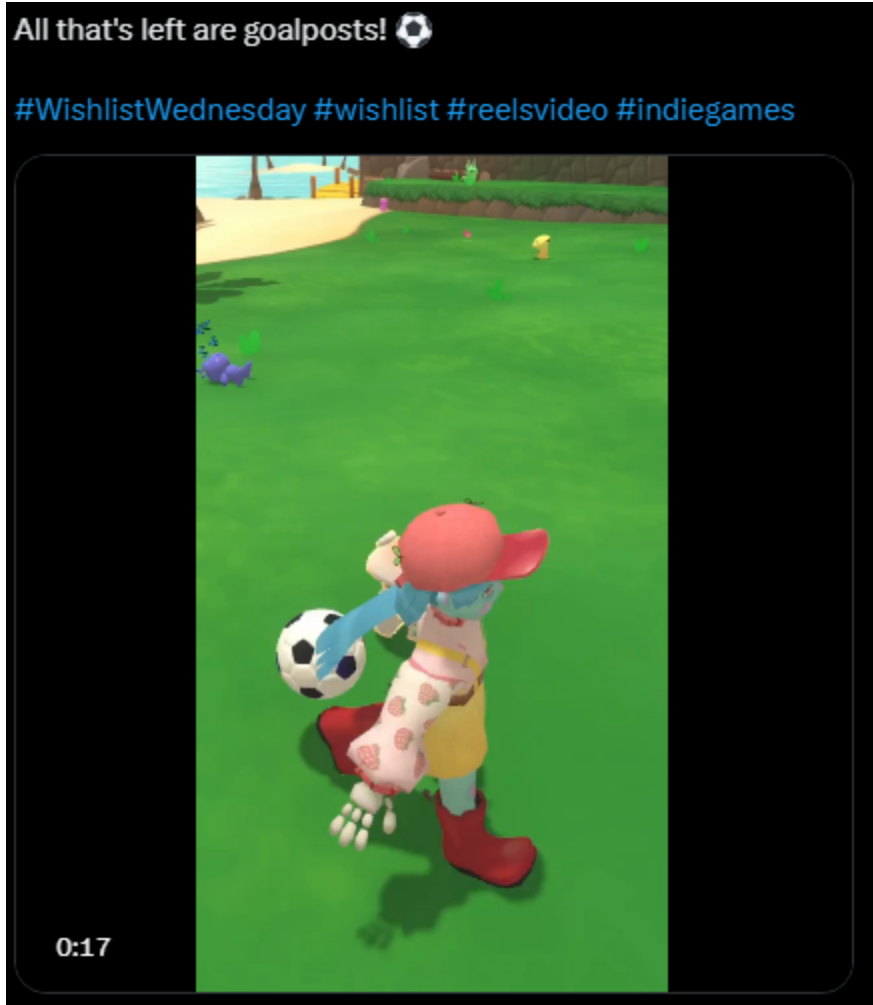


Despite the many changes, X remains a central hub for the indie dev community. It's where developers, journalists, and gamers can interact with each other directly. The platform thrives on quick updates, devlogs, and community hashtags like #IndieDev, #ScreenshotSaturday, or #PitchYaGame.

How to use it:

- Post short, catchy updates and/or GIFs of gameplay.
- Engage with other devs and share behind-the-scenes development progress.
- Build relationships with press, publishers, and content creators.
- Join trending hashtags or threads to increase visibility.

Pro tip: Authentic engagement matters most here. Comment on others' posts, share progress openly, and avoid sounding too corporate or market-y.



TikTok: The Viral Hub

What is it best for? Reaching younger audiences and showcasing gameplay in a fun, visual way.

TikTok's algorithm favors creative, authentic content that grabs attention quickly. Many indie games have gone viral here through simple gameplay clips, dev reactions, or quirky skits.



How to use it:

- Post short gameplay clips with engaging hooks.
- Use trending sounds and memes creatively.
- Show your development journey. People love seeing progress.
- Keep it casual, real, and fun.

Pro tip: Focus on storytelling. Even a 15-second clip can tell a story. Show a problem, a surprise, or a win.

Instagram: A Visual Portfolio

What is it best for? Beautiful visuals, branding, and community building.

Instagram is ideal for sharing artwork, concept designs, and storyboards. It's less about news and more about aesthetics and what inspires you.

How to use it:

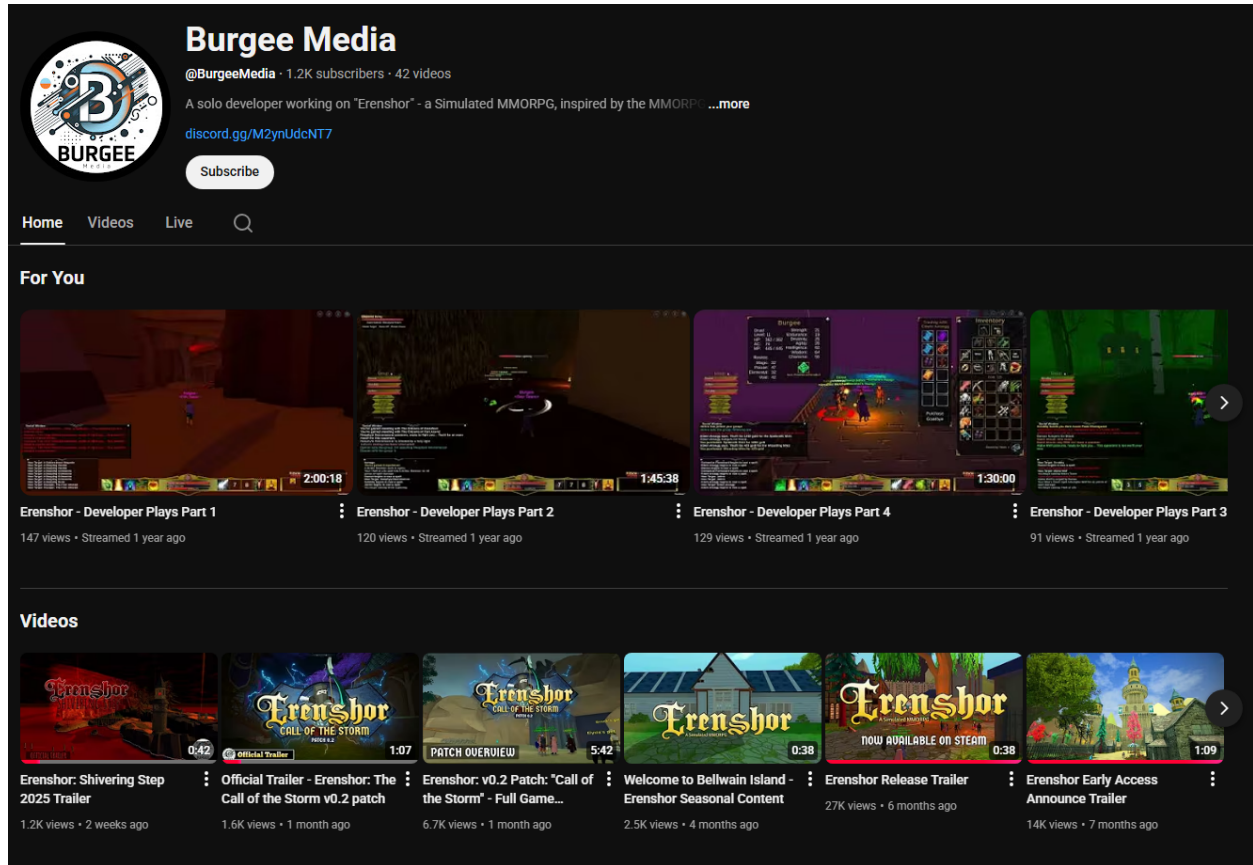
- Post high quality images, reels, and stories.
- Highlight concept art, animations, and environmental designs.
- Use reels for short gameplay teasers.
- Share development milestones.

Pro tip: A consistent visual theme, such as color palette, filters, or layout, helps establish your game's brand or identity.

YouTube: The Powerhouse for Content

What is it best for? Long-form and short-form content, player focused gameplay videos, and trailers.

Youtube has two sides to it. The long form videos, and youtube shorts. Both are important and compliment each other, but should be appreciated completely differently.



How to use it:

- Long form: Longer videos such as, patch notes and update videos, official trailers, and updates, and videos that show how the game is fun to play. Collaborating with content creators and streamers is a great and oftentimes they will send you the raw video for you to host on your official channel in addition to them posting it to their community.
- Short form: vertical format YT shorts are condensed content meant to be viewed in one minute or less. The best kinds of content are clips from content creators enjoying your game, fun gameplay clips, and teaser trailers that show off gameplay.

Pro tip: Optimize your titles, thumbnails, and descriptions for SEO. Searchability can bring in a steady flow of new viewers and subscribers.

Common mistakes: Creating “devblogs” that talk about programming, show in engine stuff, or talk about how you made the game. The truth is that game developers are NOT your target audience, and game players don’t care about that stuff. They just care about “is this game fun”.

7mo ago

Lead Game Designer Top 1% Commenter

Mostly the people who read dev blogs are the people interested in the process of development. Which is to say: other developers. Regular players read dev blogs when they already care about the game/series/studio. If you're making Civ 7 you can get people to read your blogs and updates because they care deeply about what they'll get to complain about you adding or removing. If no one has ever played any of your games before, why would they be interested in you talking about making something?

20 9mo ago

Commercial (Other) Top 1% Commenter

A devblog is mostly for other developers today, because there's almost too much sharing going on from half-baked indies. So for marketing purposes I don't think it's "worth it."

But as with everything, it's more about what you have and who may want it. If you can show something unique and in an entertaining way, then why not?

153 7mo ago

Developers are the only ones who read blog posts. I have a blog, I love reading blog posts, and also writing them, and they have virtually no effect on the growth of my fanbase. Completely and utterly useless. But they are really great for your portfolio, and for other developers, to do networking, and even to find work! But please, don't write them thinking it will grow your audience, because it absolutely won't.

104

1d ago

I'm not a gamedev, but I'm a purchaser and wishlister of games.

I literally don't know what a devlog is (I can guess) or where to look for them. I've never heard it in conversation with any of my friends who are also purchasers and wishlisters of games. The only people who talk about devlogs in my experience are game devs, and the conversation about them is always just whether or not you should have them.

Zero of my game purchases have come from following a developer on social media. I don't care who you are unless maybe you made a game that blew my mind - but in that case I have already bought your game and won't be putting it on my wishlist.

Games get on my wishlist in these ways:

Demos - especially demos that don't expire after NextFest or whatever the event is called. Sometimes I'll download a bunch of games that I'm interested in, but by the time I can get to some of them they're already done.

Discovery queue

The search feature - I'll put in all the tags that I want and open all the games that match in new tabs. If a game looks good, I'll wishlist it, if it doesn't then the tab is closed.

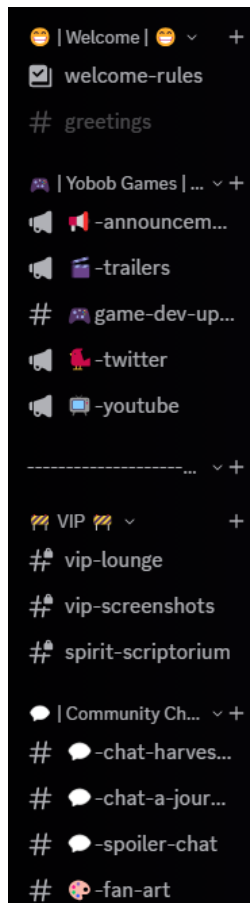
Occasionally social media (but not *your* social media), curators, or word of mouth.

9

Discord: The Community Hangout

What is it best for? A main hub for your community. Discord helps to build a loyal player base and offers a direct line of communication between you and your fans. A lot of people think discord is just another chat app like Skype or Teamspeak, but it's not true. Discord is a HUGE platform for gamers. With 200M+ active users, over 50% of all gamers use discord monthly with 36% of all gamers using it daily. ([Source](#)) It's where your biggest fans and potential players will come to look for more info, give feedback, announcements, bug reports, and nurturing a passionate player community.

Potential players will join a server seeking more info about your game and by providing that info through links and chatting, it will help to convert them into loyal players! In addition to people seeking more info, it's also where current players can report their feedback, bugs, and be updated about future updates. A well managed server can create a strong community and loyal customers for years across several game releases.



How to use Discord:

- Create channels for announcements, important links, feedback, and a general chat.
- Host playtesting sessions or community events.
- Download a bot to give people levels and roles for server activity.

Probot is the most popular.

- Exclusive VIP category can be a strong reward to reward your most dedicated fans, or to use as a patreon reward.

Pro tip:

- Make your Discord an extension of your game world. Give it personality and reward participation with giveaways or events.
- Put your discord invite links into a spreadsheet and use different links in different places to track where people join from!

Common Mistakes:

- Going overboard and creating too many channels. Add new ones only when your community naturally needs them. A smaller, focused server feels active and easier to manage as it grows.
- Discord invite links expire!!! When you create an invite link, you need to change the default to never expire.

Reddit: The Discussion Platform

What is it best for? Honest feedback and reaching niche communities.

Reddit communities can be invaluable for exposure, if approached realistically. Subreddits such as r/IndieDev, r/gamedev, or r/IndieGaming are full of players and developers eager to discover new games.

 **r/IndieGame** • 4mo ago
TetrarchyStudios

Updated the lighting of my WIP game titled Mandated Fate — hope you enjoy the atmosphere!



WORK IN PROGRESS!
Thibaut Bilewicz | Tetrarchy Studios | Build: Technical Prototype V1.2 - 05-05-2025

Mandated Fate is a dark, dystopian and retro-futuristic story-driven game where you play as a weary inspector—a man out of place in a newly established authoritarian regime.

In 1985, a rising technological empire has seized power, driven by a single ambition: to discover the anti-gravity particle and surpass its global rivals by conquering space. The regime demands absolute unity, framing this race as a matter of national destiny.

But one old district continues to resist—no one knows quite how, or why.

Assigned to investigate a strange murder there, you quickly find yourself entangled in a deeper web of political intrigue and ideological tension.

Through multiple narrative paths, your choices will shape your loyalties—and determine who you truly trust. Explore a highly detailed open world where the stark contrast between modern authoritarian architecture and decaying remnants of the past reveals a society caught between control and collapse.

How to use it:

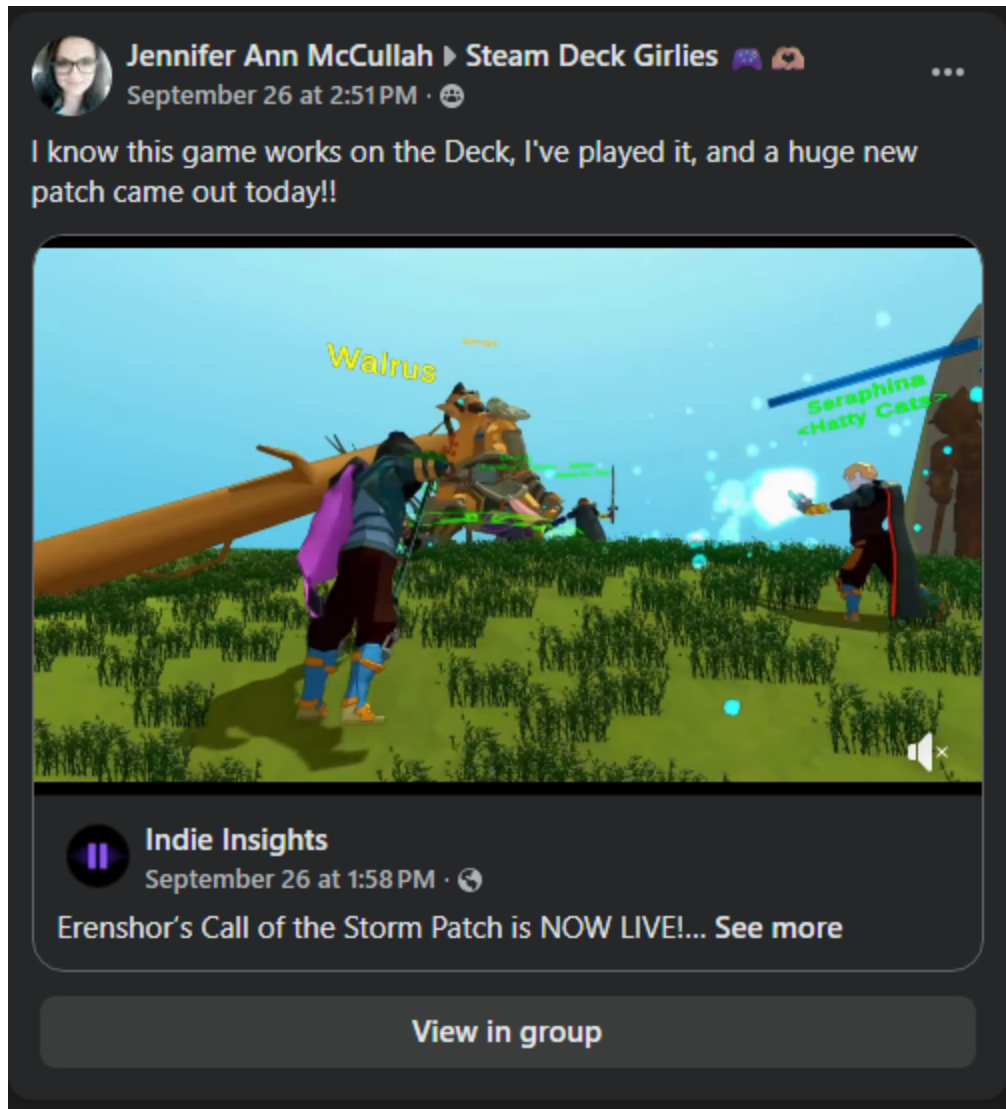
- Share progress updates, trailers, or devlogs (but avoid pure self-promotion)
- Ask for feedback from subreddits such as r/destroymygame or share lessons learned.
- Participate honestly in discussions outside of your own posts.

Pro tip: Transparency is key on Reddit. People want honest, detailed posts about the development journey more than polished marketing that is spammy self promotion.

Facebook: The Group Hub

What is it best for? Older gamers and community groups.

Facebook is no longer the primary platform for younger gamers, but it still has active indie game communities and is useful for hosting events, beta test signups, and cross posting content.



How to use it:

- Share updates to groups like “Steam Deck Girlies”, “Cozy Gamers”, or “PC Gamers [Steam]”
- Use a Facebook page for official announcements.
- Host events for demos, launches, or livestreams.

Pro tip: Keep posts short, to the point, and visual. Facebook users scroll fast, so you need a hook immediately.

BlueSky: The Emerging Trend

What is it best for? New opportunities and early community building.

BlueSky is emerging as a more relaxed space for conversations and creativity, especially among ex-X users. It's still early, but jumping on this band wagon early can give your studio visibility in a smaller space.



Tory Games and 4 others liked your post · 11d

Enemies can be aggressive and defensive . Defensive will usually use sheildwall formation and try to cancel your attack - aggressive ones, on the other hand will run towards you and charge when on the right distance

#battlecharge #gamedev #videogames #medieval



Latest Gaming Buzz reposted your post · 12d

Enemies can be aggressive and defensive . Defensive will usually use sheildwall formation and try to cancel your attack - aggressive ones, on the other hand will run towards you and charge when on the right distance

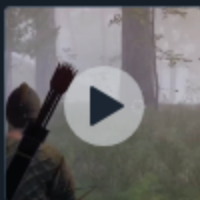
#battlecharge #gamedev #videogames #medieval



Andregamingyt3k liked your post · 17d

Alone in the woods. Outnumbered 20 to 1.
No backup. Just arrows.
Welcome to Battle Charge.

#indiegame #gamedev #archer #battlecharge #indiegamedev #unity3d
#gamingreels #arrowstorm #gamefootage #epicmoment #battleinthewild
#realtimecombat #medievalgames



DFF123 followed you · 19d

How to use it:

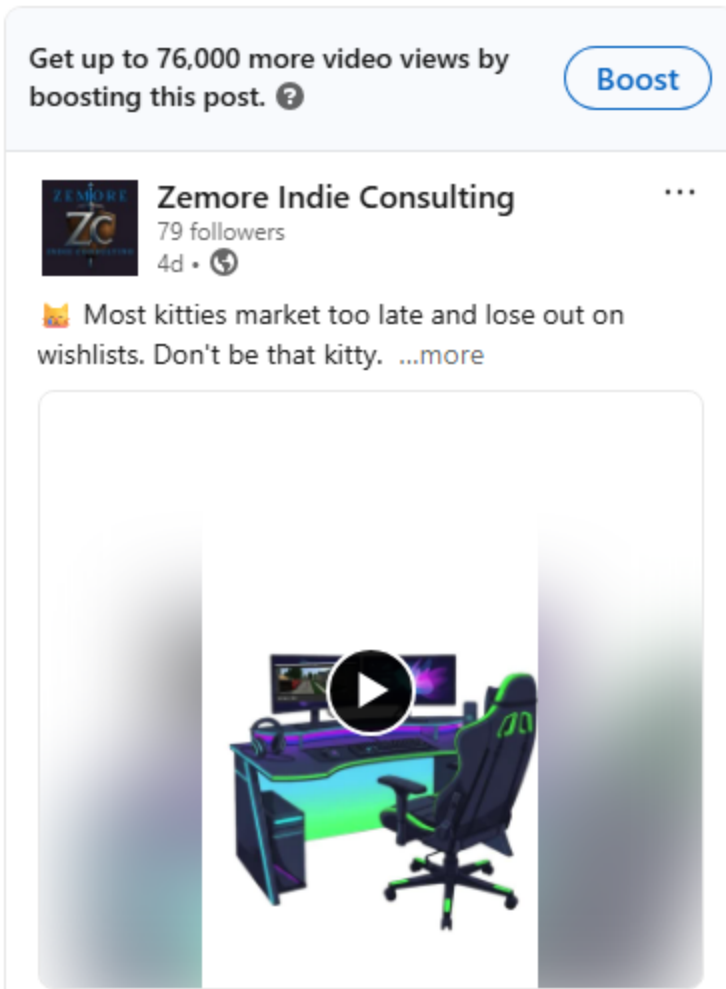
- Cross post developer thoughts or concept art.
- Engage with other early transitioners.
- Experiment and see where your audience follows.

Pro tip: Treat this similar to X, but keep in mind that the community on BlueSky is extremely friendly, welcoming, and passionate.

LinkedIn: The Professional Site

What is it best for? Networking with publishers, press, and industry peers.

It's not flashy, but LinkedIn is underrated for indie game marketing. It's where professionals gather, and sharing dev stories can attract collaborators, publishers, or even job opportunities.



How to use it:

- Share your studio's journey and milestones.
- Connect with press, publishers, and other devs.
- Announce launches, awards, or team updates.

Pro tip: Keep posts professional but personal. Your passion for your game is a great marketing asset.

Not every platform will fit every indie game, and that's okay. The key is to pick a few that align with your game's tone, target audience, and your own comfort level.

A moody, atmospheric, narrative game such as *Mandated Fate* might thrive on Instagram or YouTube, while goofy physics games like *Zombiology* might explode on TikTok and X.

Social Media isn't just about selling your game, it's about storytelling, connection, and engaging with your community.

Preparing for Next Fest

Hey y'all. I have been seeing a ton of posts about Next Fest, and I have replied to a bunch of them with some advice. but I figured I would just go ahead and take my comment that I have been copy pasting and create an official post. I work at a small consulting company and one of my main jobs is as a marketing consultant specifically for indie game devs. More than half of which are solo devs or a 2 person team. We've participated in multiple Steam Next Fests. Note that Steam is always mixing things up and changing things so who knows what could change. I don't claim to be an expert and everyone should do this for 50 bazillion wishlists, but it's just what we do and what has helped us and our clients based on my own experience.

Our most recent campaign was for Erenshor. [You can see the results here](#). Most of this post is based on what we did for Erenshor, it might not be what's best for your specific situation or genre.

4-6 Months Before Next Fest

- We begin planning **at least** 4-6 months ahead. You only want to even consider a Next Fest until you have a well polished demo that has already been tested, released, and people like it.
- Create a fresh trailer, new screenshots, GIFs, and promo content specifically for Next Fest.
- Plan for a demo content update. something new to the demo—a **new area, character, boss, or feature**. **Make it** so returning players have a reason to check it out again.
- Your demo should already be **polished and released!** Do not release your demo for the first time on day 1 of Next Fest. things will break, bugs will be found, and people will exploit stuff and make your life a living hell (More than it already will be). Get all this stress out of the way WAY before Next Fest. Next Fest is about showing your product in the best light possible just before you release. NOT TO TEST A PROTOTYPE.
 - Make sure:
 - Controls feel smooth and intuitive.
 - No game-breaking bugs or crashes.
 - There's a clear tutorial or onboarding experience.
 - Demo has been tested by dozens of people who are fans of your genre through structured feedback rounds where you exit survey them and/or they record gameplay while talking their thoughts
 - Have analytics in place to catch pain points where new players drop off
- Start letting press and content creators know your game will be participating in Next Fest with **new content and a new trailer**. Your update doesn't need to be ready at this point, just start planning it. This is just planting the seed for later contacts. This outreach campaign will give press a reason to check out your current well polished demo and could cause them to remember you in the future when you reach out again with more info.
- Make sure you have a presskit: [Impress.games's Press Kitty is a great site to host it on](#)

2 Months Before Next Fest

- By this point, your trailer, screenshots, and social media content should be ready. It should all be focused 100% on Next Fest branding, play the demo CTA, and focused around the new content update.
- Have daily social media posts with the gifs and screenshots you made for each day of Next Fest. Put them on the calendar and pre-schedule them so you don't have to worry about this at the last minute.
- Offer exclusive content to a large media outlet that regularly covers similar games to yours. This could be an exclusive trailer release (They get to release it 24 hours before anyone else), Q&A interview with you, or a gameplay preview. Tell the press they will have exclusive rights to release this content before anyone else.
- Give **extra game access** to content creators past the demo. Not quite the full build, but just a little bit extra past the demo. Your demo is for players—influencers should have access to a little more so they can create content and encourage people to play the demo. For youtubers who make guides and tutorials, suggest they make a new player guide for the demo and ask them to release it on day 1 of Next Fest. For those who do reviews, ask them to make a review of the demo. Make sure you are sending emails to specific content creators who play games similar to yours and ask them to make their type of content for your game. Encourage streamers to play the full game during Next Fest.
- Try to get into every "Next Fest Games to Watch" or "Top games to check out during Next Fest" videos.

1 Month Before Next Fest

- Officially announce your participation. Do a press release and include a **gameplay-focused video** of your upcoming update. You could do a video showcasing the new update where you just talk with gameplay playing in the background. You could do a Q&A with the community and turn that into a video. Basically just make a 5-10 min video showing off the GAMEPLAY with additional info about the game. Not a trailer.
- Release your announcement **everywhere**. Steam discussions and Steam news announcement, Discord, IndieDB, all social medias, FB groups of relative games, Subreddits of similar games, r/playmygame r/games, r/indiegames, Discord servers of gaming communities that play similar games (No game dev servers it's a waste of time). Also, don't join to post and ghost in these communities. You should already be genuine members of the communities. Also, talk to the mods of the communities you are in. You can open a lot of doors for cool collaborations just by being nice and active VS only spamming.
- Make sure your demo build has Discord links on main menu, ESC menu, and the end screen of your demo.
- All your social medias should have branding in bio or title image saying Demo Content update coming to Next Fest XX date.

- Your Next Fest content update should be ready at this point. Make sure it's tested and send the update to press/influencers so they can prepare demo update content.
- Do full **ASO** (App Store Optimization) - this includes your Steam page. Your page should be in top shape months before Next Fest
 - Professional capsule art that has genre specific tropes
 - A short description clearly explains what your game is and makes it unique in 2-3 sentences.
 - Long description should be cool gifs and banner image title text that describes your game. Keep text to minimum (Unless 4x, RPG, or MMO). If you have artist have taper effects or nice borders around your gifs to enhance the beautification

1 Week Before Next Fest

- Release your Next Fest trailer (if no press exclusives were secured).
- Send out a final press release with fresh screenshots and Steam Next Fest-branded GIFs.
- In the press release talk about the new content update, plans for final release, and the gifs/screenshots from the new content update.
- Make sure all press & creators know your game will be in Next Fest.

Launch Day

- At this point, **it's in Valve's hands**. Hopefully, you've driven enough external traffic to your demo to **trigger the algorithm and maximize visibility**.

Back out if you're not ready

If you are not ready, demo isn't polished or released, just back out. There is no harm in it and you can just sign up for the next Next fest, or even the next next Next Fest. Many campaigns we have run were from devs who have backed out of many previous Next Fests and all of them were glad they waited. One of which backed out of 4 previous Next Fests.

TL:DL

1. Have polished complete and released demo months before Next Fest.
2. Make demo update to release Day 1 of Next Fest.
3. Tell everyone, email 100s of press and content creators, and hype TF out of the update.
4. ???
5. Profit (Hopefully)
- 1.

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Educational database

Have not made this section yet, but here is a curated list of all the material I have learned from. It's a variety of sources from blogs, YT videos, GDC talks, and anything else game marketing related.

 Internal Educational Material

Other topics?

What other topics should I write about here? Leave a comment and tell me.