

GameDiscoverCo newsletter, Jan. 2026: Subset's answers (Matthew Davis)

Matthew, how did you end up deciding that maybe you could use some help?

As Subset Games, we've struggled with balancing business and development the entire time we've been a studio. Neither Jay Ma nor I are naturally inclined towards running a business, and it's one of the reasons we've stayed very small. Both of us would much rather be making video games than worrying about sales and marketing, or managing additional employees. I'm sure that's not an uncommon sentiment out there for developers. So far, we've just gotten away with haphazardly handling it ourselves when we manage to pull away from development. It wasn't that we thought we were doing a great job, it was just that we didn't see an option out there that would fit our needs for getting help.

On Subset's scale, we don't have enough work that needs to be done that could justify a full-time employee managing our store fronts. Just like how we also can't justify a full-time composer, sound designer, writer, etc. Our development cycle is too slow and our business has low demands! The trouble with the storefront is that its work demands are small across long periods, while our other development needs (like sound design) tend to be high for short periods, which make them better suited to temporary third party contractors. But even with contract work, we appreciate that it's not ideal for a lot of the talented folks we work with. It doesn't provide reliable income and it's hard to constantly be out there trying to find more work.

There's a lot of space out there in small-studio game development for businesses that can maintain a flexible staff of experienced and skilled people in specific fields. That staff can have steady employment, and then smaller studios can hire them to fill the gaps in their own business as needed. Subset Games has routinely gone back to PowerUp Audio (sound design) and Plastic Fern Studios (QA work and more). Rekoup with their storefront expertise fits right alongside those other teams. This lets us work with extremely talented people at the specific scale that we need. It's effectively just the outsourcing model, but most big outsourcing companies manage larger, less reliable staff. We love working with smaller teams, like ourselves, that we can develop personal relationships with and trust to do the work well.

We also appreciate the fact that Rekoup works at a fixed rate, rather than a percentage of sales. And even their publishing model allows for either, to suit a studio's needs. While we have no objection to revenue sharing, it does seem odd that it's the norm in games when it comes to publishing/business. I appreciate that there's regularly a connection to money

invested, but the revenue splits for small studios are often obscene and prevent them from creating a sustainable business. There should be more ways for studios to get business / marketing / publishing help without signing away half of their revenue.

Can you give examples of featuring on Steam that you managed to unlock via this way that you didn't otherwise get around to doing or know about?

I'm embarrassed to say that some of things that have benefited Subset Games via Rekoup have come down to Rekoup's capacity to reach out and talk to the people at the storefronts. They actually spend time maintaining those relationships. Jay and I, again, would rather not be running a business, and most definitely don't have a first instinct to reach out and personally ask storefronts for anything (promotions or otherwise). And usually when I do need to talk someone, my contact information is years (decades!?) out of date. To no one's surprise, it turns out it can be quite helpful to take a more active role in the matter!