

Process Document

Personal Portfolio 4

By Rianne Jongerius (479654)

Table of contents:

Learning Outcomes	2
Learning Outcome 1	2
Learning Outcome 2	2
Learning Outcome 3	2
LO1: Releasing a game on steam.	3
Goals	3
Approach	3
The process	5
Basic Info	7
Description	9
Ratings	9
Early Access	9
Graphical Assets	10
Trailers	16
Special Settings	17
Localization	17
Publish	17
LO2: Creating promotional material.	17
Goals	17
Approach	18
Results	21
LO3: Marketing a game.	21
Goals	21
Research	21
Budget	21
Scale	22
Target Audience	22
Positioning	23
Timeline	24
Approach	24

Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome 1

As a CMGT Student interested in the indie game development industry I want to learn the process behind releasing a game on the biggest gaming platform in the world to get a better understanding of all things that go into a game release that you often wouldn't think of when creating games. The deliverable would be a released game on steam with everything it needs alongside it. A properly-setup steam page, any imagery that may be needed and things alike.

Preparing a game for release on steam should take 25 hours which includes the creation of any assets that need to be made for the release of the game.

Hours: 25

Competences: 6, 7, 8, 12

Learning Outcome 2

As a CMGT Student interested in the indie game development industry I want to learn what it takes to create and use promotional materials for a product. The deliverable would be a set of promotional assets usable for marketing and/or the steam store page, including but not limited to: posters, trailers, banners, graphics. This process should take 40 hours, including research and iterating on the product before finalization.

Hours: 40

Competences: 2, 3, 6, 11

Learning Outcome 3

As a CMGT Student interested in the indie game development industry I want to have a basic understanding of how to properly market a game and what marketing approaches are best suited for certain types of games. The deliverable would be a document where I keep track of my process, research and execution of the goal. This process should take 10 hours, including research and periodic marketing of the product.

Hours: 10

Competences: 4, 5, 8

LO1: Releasing a game on steam.

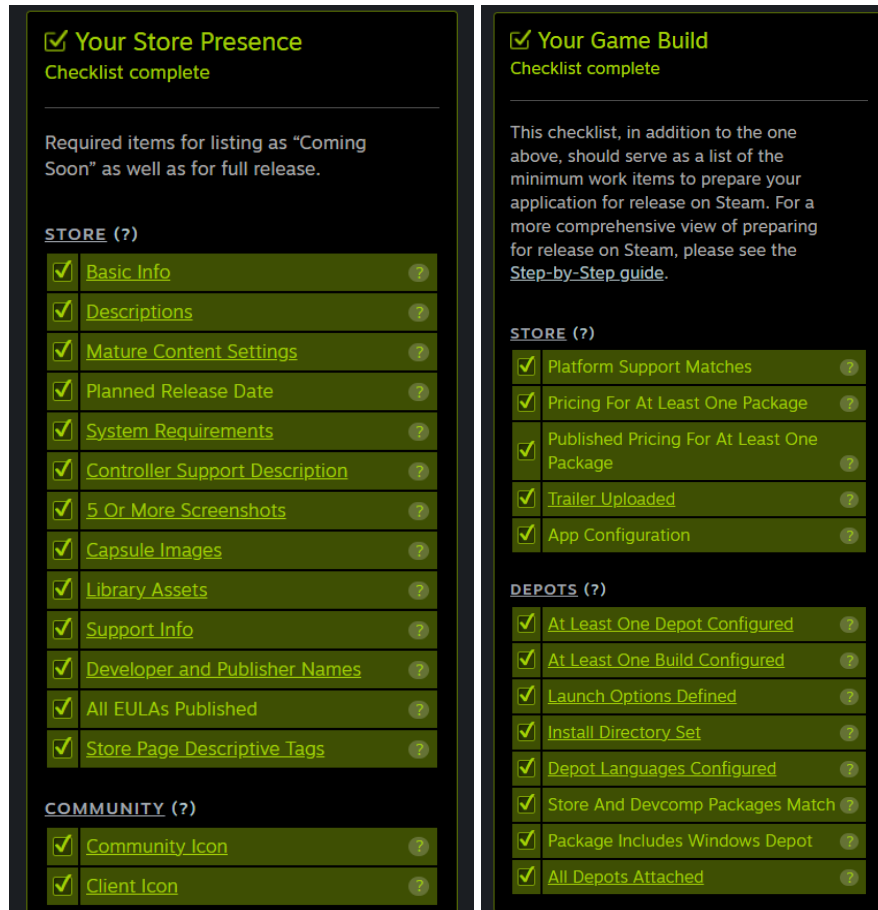
Goals

As written in the above summary, I want to learn what goes into releasing a game on steam. Whilst I have had some experience now in the process of creating a game, be it via projects at school or my own game last quarter, I've never had hands-on experience with the actual release and what goes into it. Expectations going in involve things like setting up a steampage, submitting builds for review and submitting digital graphics for use on the steam page.

Approach

First things first; Releasing a game on steam has a barrier of entry. Before you can do anything you need the following 2 things: A steam account with partnership setup in relation to Steam regarding things like location of residence and taxes, as well as a product slot. Product slots are bought from steam and are what allow you to release a product on their site. The process of obtaining this is fairly simple, mainly requiring a 100\$ investment and a short waiting period.

Once you have obtained the product slot you can start with setting everything up on steam. The process has been made very easy by steam due to having a clear task list of things that need to be done, each part with its own subsection of explanations and (where applicable) examples of how things should be done. Below are 2 screenshots of these checklists.



What I found most pleasant was the clear division of tasks and what should go where.

Store Packages, Pricing, & Release Dates [See Package Documentation](#)

These are the current, active, or future packages that might allow users to purchase or install this application.

PACKAGE TITLE	RELEASE DATE (?)	STATE (?)	PRICE (?)	ACTIVE DISCOUNT
Cypher Override - 1288480		Hidden	\$1.99 USD	 

View Associated Items

 **All Associated Packages, DLC, Demos And Tools.**
Manage store, product key and promotional packages. Add DLC, demos and tools.

Store Presence

 **Edit Store Page**
Edit the description, add screenshots, trailers, art assets, etc.

 **View Store Page** 
View this application as it currently exists on the Steam store. ([View In Beta mode](#))

 **Content Survey**
Fill out a survey describing your product. This is required before release.

Technical Tools

 **Edit Steamworks Settings**
Define Achievements, manage Workshop, upload Trading Card assets, etc.

 **Request Steam Product Keys**
Request keys to distribute your application wherever you like

 **View Errors**
See errors logged via Steam for this application

Marketing Tools & Data

 **Marketing & Visibility**
Track and manage the marketing and visibility for your app.

 **Curator Connect**
Send copies of your Game directly to press, streamers, reviewers, and influencers.

Steamworks > App Admin > Cypher Override

Store Page Admin: Cypher Override (3656780)

[Preview changes](#)

Basic Info

Description

Ratings

Early Access

Graphical Assets

Trailers

Special Settings

Localization

Publish

This area is where you configure the presentation of your product's page in the Steam store. Please complete all the fields marked as *. If you need help, check out the [Store Page Best Practices](#) documentation for a video walkthrough of configuring your store page.

Store assets 

Screenshot assets 

Library assets 

Broadcast assets **SUGGESTED**

Overview:

This section is for managing the Images that represent your application In various parts of the Steam store and client. For best results, please upload .png files at the exact dimensions specified for each type. JPEG files are also accepted if necessary.

Templates:

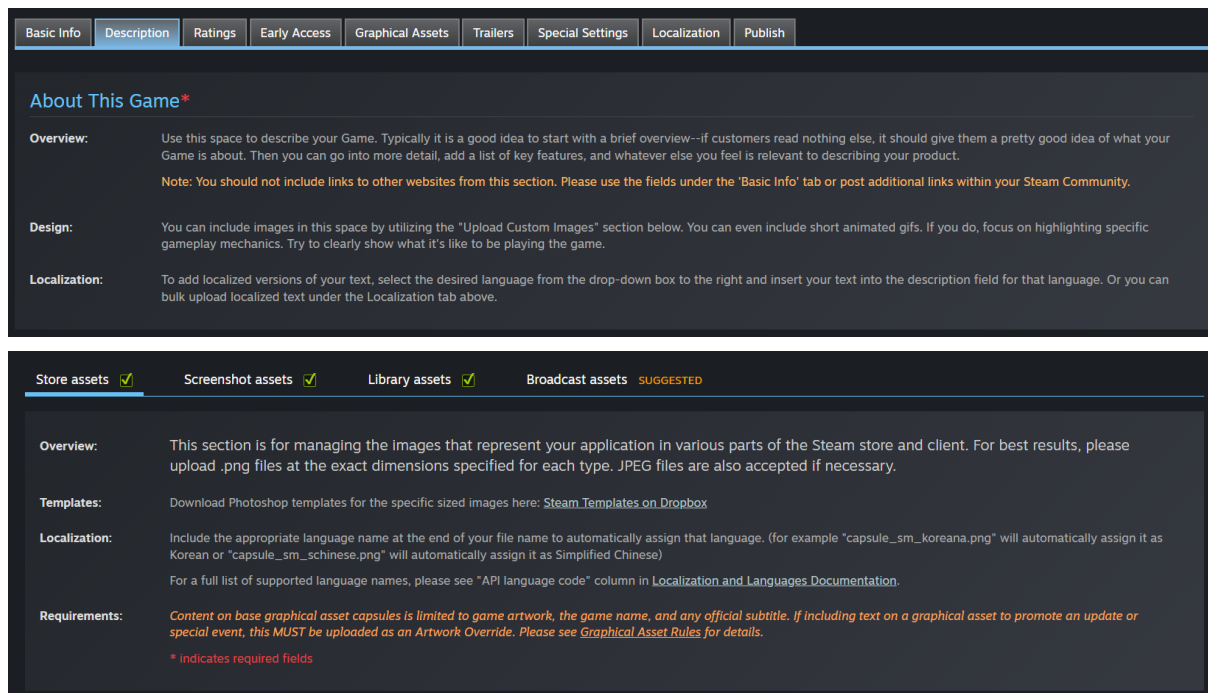
Download Photoshop templates for the specific sized images here: [Steam Templates on Dropbox](#)

Localization:

Include the appropriate language name at the end of your file name to automatically assign that language. (for example "capsule_sm_koreana.png" will automatically assign it as Korean or "capsule_sm_schinese.png" will automatically assign it as Simplified Chinese)
For a full list of supported language names, please see "API language code" column in [Localization and Languages Documentation](#).

Requirements:

Content on base graphical asset capsules is limited to game artwork, the game name, and any official subtitle. If including text on a graphical asset to promote an update or special event, this MUST be uploaded as an Artwork Override. Please see [Graphical Asset Rules](#) for details.
* indicates required fields



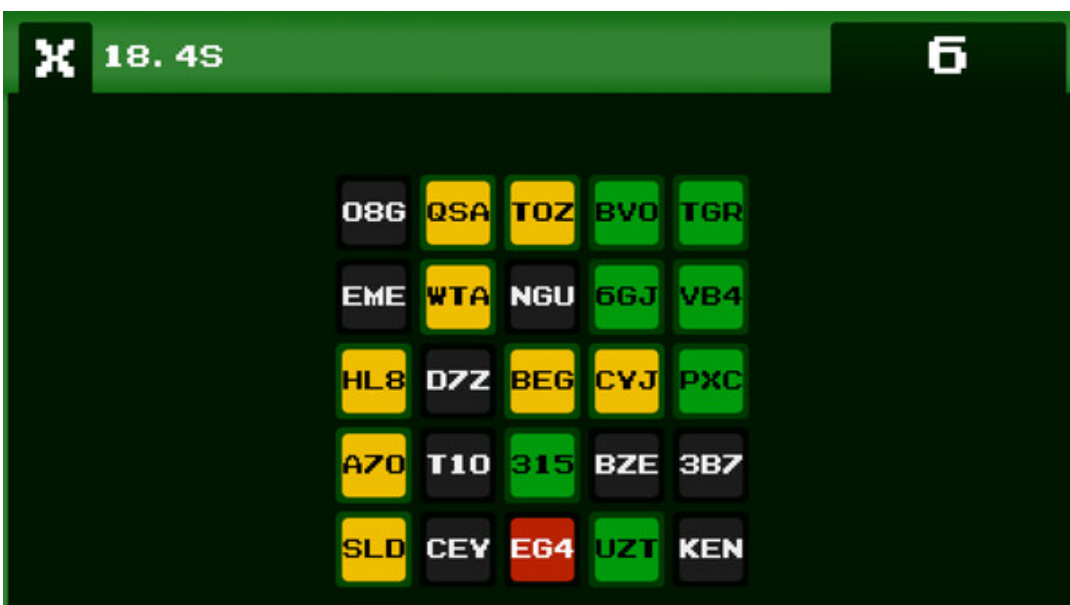
The process

Before setting up the page I wanted to look at what went into having a good steam page. From looking at other store pages such as [Balatro](#), [Shapez](#) and [Schedule I](#) there was a relatively clear view that all games had in common: They all had at least 2 videos, one of gameplay and one as the “attractive cinematic”. They all included screenshots of crucial gameplay parts, and they included a clear “about the game” where in relative depth it was described what you can do in the game; its selling points.

When considering these things for my own game, I wanted to work in a structured sense to tackle at least these bases. As I have no experience with creating trailers, cinematic or gameplay focused, I felt it was best to start looking at this first, as I believe it could be the thing taking the longest.

After giving it some thought and further deliberation, I felt it was best if I split this work up, focussing on one part only. Whilst I would still want to have both trailers in the store, I felt it was too much of me to expect to create a cinematic trailer within a reasonable time to release my game. Thus I made the decision to outsource this work, where luckily someone from CMGT named [Khalil Aylabouni](#) was willing to create this for me for free. After talking back and forth a bit about the general vision I had, Khalil went to work. Some back and forths here and there were held to collect feedback and review the work, with the end result coming out as [this](#).

Whilst all this was going on, I decided the best thing for me to do in the meantime is tackle the other bases I had outlined earlier. As my game is relatively simple, critical screenshots showing the core gameplay are fairly easy and were taken in little to no time. Below are some of the screenshots I ended up using on the steam page.



The purpose of these screenshots were thought as follows: The gameplay is simple, you click squares to achieve a goal, thus the screenshots should give simple impressions of this. The biggest change to the base game as intended is the ability to make custom fields, thus this had been given extra screenshots to indicate the ability to do this. A screenshot to showcase the customizability and a screenshot to visually represent that customizability in game.

Moving on to the “about this game” part, I had a relatively simple approach, fitting the simplicity of the game: Get the user engaged with a little story, talk about the gameplay, and showcase the things you can do in the game. After some back and forth with friends who’d tested the game and thus knew what the game was, I ended up with the following “about this game” text.

ABOUT THIS GAME

Cypher Override is a fast-paced, retro-inspired clicking game where precision and speed are everything. Step into the shoes of a digital intruder as you exploit vulnerabilities in a shifting mainframe grid — all while covering your tracks to stay one step ahead of detection.

Target highlighted nodes, chain your attacks, and clean up any false moves to build up your score. Whether you're rushing for a high score in a Time Trial, outrunning the clock by testing your endurance in Endless Mode, or crafting your own rules in Custom Play, Cypher Override rewards sharp reflexes and strategic execution.

Choose from three distinct modes:

- **Time Trial:** You're given a strict time limit — make every second count.
- **Endless:** Outlast the system. Clear fields to earn precious extra time.
- **Custom:** Set your own rules and create your ideal challenge.

With a 90s-inspired computer aesthetic and tight, click-based gameplay, Cypher Override is a perfect mental warm-up — and a sneaky good way to tune your aim.

Leaving the gameplay trailer off to the side for later, as I knew it’d take a lot of time and I felt it was okay to first release the page/game before tackling this more challenging topic, I moved on to the checklist as it showed up from top to bottom.

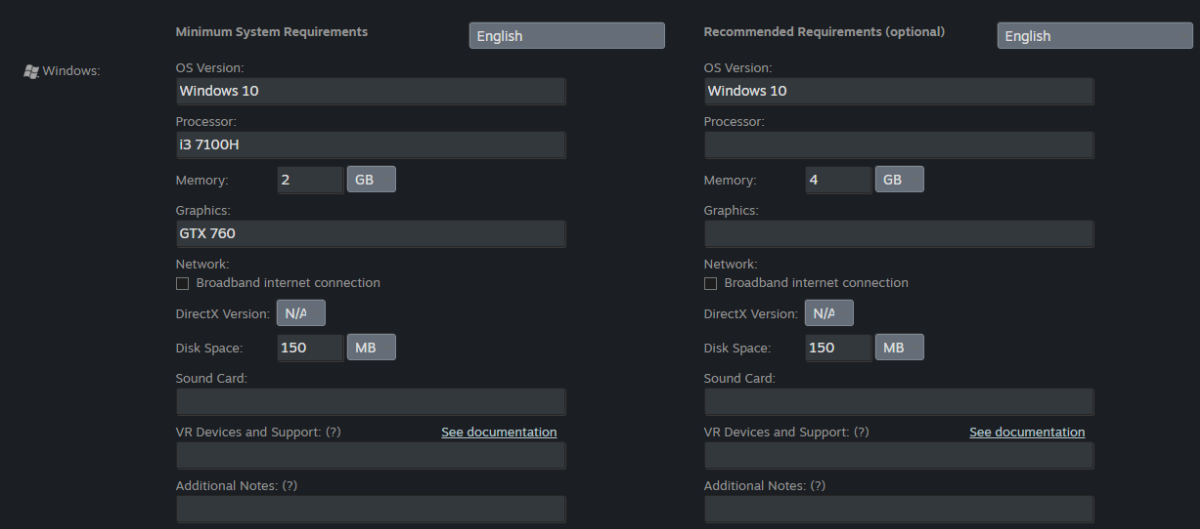
Basic Info

The basic info is, as the name entails, basic. It asks for the type of app, in this case a “game”, the name of the app, in this case “Cypher Override”, the developer(s) being me, publisher(s) being me, and franchise(s), in this case not being applicable. Any external links leading to I.E. a game website, forums, online manual or stats page. In my case these links were not applicable.

Furthermore there was space for Social Media links, where I put up 3 different links, one for [Youtube](#), [Instagram](#) and [Discord](#). The Youtube and Instagram links send you to my accounts where the Discord sends you to my community discord.

It then also asked about Steam Deck compatibility info, for which I was unsure whether my game had it so I chose to leave it empty (I later learned that it is in fact supported), specific keywords I want my game to be found under, in my case being “Aim Trainer, Speed game, Clicker game”. The reason for these choices were that through testing I felt several people explain how they felt their aiming ability was being tested, especially with it being driven by a speed element.

Besides that it also required information about the supported platforms, which in my case were Windows, Linux and SteamOS, and the minimum and recommended system requirements. Below is a screenshot of the system requirements I gave.



The screenshot displays two side-by-side panels for system requirements, both with an 'English' language dropdown. The left panel is titled 'Minimum System Requirements' and the right is 'Recommended Requirements (optional)'. Both panels include a 'Windows' icon and a 'See documentation' link for VR devices. The minimum requirements specify Windows 10, i3 7100H processor, 2 GB memory, GTX 760 graphics, a broadband internet connection, DirectX Version N/A, and 150 MB disk space. The recommended requirements specify Windows 10, 4 GB memory, and 150 MB disk space. Other fields like OS Version, Processor, Memory, Graphics, Network, DirectX Version, Disk Space, Sound Card, VR Devices and Support, and Additional Notes are present but empty or have default values.

Field	Minimum System Requirements	Recommended Requirements (optional)
OS Version:	Windows 10	Windows 10
Processor:	i3 7100H	
Memory:	2 GB	4 GB
Graphics:	GTX 760	
Network:	☐ Broadband internet connection	☐ Broadband internet connection
DirectX Version:	N/A	N/A
Disk Space:	150 MB	150 MB
Sound Card:		
VR Devices and Support: (?)	See documentation	See documentation
Additional Notes: (?)		

My reasoning for these settings were driven by the fact I know my game is very light, thus being able to be run on most systems. I felt a good limit to set would be to look at some of the lower-end hardware that was being released in 2014 and base my minimums off that.

Moving on from that, the next required data were about the release date, which I originally kept as “coming soon” to the public, but internally set at May 15th, later moved to May 21st and eventually settling on May 23rd as the official release date.

The subject of Adult Content also had to be addressed, which in my game’s case was not applicable.

After the above topics were discussed, the questions mainly went on about the type of game Cypher override is and what it supports. First and foremost: languages. As my game has minimal language in the game with no subtitles or anything alike being in the game, this part was relatively easy for me to fill out. Due to not having any localization for the interfaces, the only box I had to tick was “English Interface”.

Next up was the type of game for the player, it being a Single-player game with no support for Multi-player or MMO.

In terms of supported features, the page asks for information on things like Steam Cloud, In-App purchases or a Level Editor, but in my game’s case the only supported feature was Steam Achievements.

As for genre, keeping in mind the previous feedback given by playtesters, I felt the appropriate genres to select were Action, Casual and Indie.

When it came to setting up Tags, steamworks offers a nice little setup wizard for tags. The end result of this wizard gave my game the following tags:

Top-level Genres: Action, Casual

Genres: Arcade, Point & Click

Sub-genres: Clicker

Visuals & Viewpoint: 2D, Pixel Graphics

Themes & Moods: 1980s, Old School

Features: Linear

Players: Singleplayer

Other: Indie

Review: -

Lastly there's Controller Support and Accessibility. As my game doesn't support controller inputs, this was easily handled and the included wizard was not needed for me to fill out.

Accessibility had a similar setup wizard as Tags, filling out the wizard gave the following accessibility features to my game:

Adjustable Difficulty

Color Alternatives

Custom Volume Controls

Stereo Sound

Mouse-only option

Touch-only option

There were also some extra things such as 3rd party DRM, 3rd party account requirements, Anti-Cheat implementation and Legal Lines that may be needed, but in my case none of these were applicable to my game.

Ending off the section, Support Contact Info had to be given, and a support email was added for users to reach out: dotRianne@gmail.com

Description

Alongside the previously discussed topic of a short game description, this tab also includes some other topics: Reviews, Awards and Special Announcements. In my case, however, none of these were applicable as the requirements for Reviews were higher than just the word of some friends.

Ratings

Similarly to the above "Description" tab including things like reviews and Awards, the Ratings page is not applicable to my game as I never got official ratings about my game from sources such as ESRB, PEGI, BBFC or USK.

Early Access

The following tab, Early Access, allows the developer to set their game as early access and communicate with the players and Steam the intentions of the game as it's still in development. This, once again, was not applicable to my game.

Graphical Assets

The following tab, Graphical Assets, is a big one. Divided into 3 sections, Store assets, Screenshot assets and Library assets, this tab was about what images and/or other assets are required for steam for use over its entire platform.

The Store assets list consisted of the following: Header capsule, Small capsule, Main capsule, Vertical capsule, Page background, Game manuals/quick reference guides/read me files.

Below is a list of assets created alongside their purpose on steam.

Header capsule



Design: This image should focus on the branding of your product. For best results, please use the same artwork that you use for any retail box or marketing and make sure the logo is clearly legible.

Usage: It will appear at the top of your page in the store, in the 'recommended for you' section, in 'grid view' in customers libraries in the Steam client, in browse views on Big Picture mode, and for daily deals if applicable.

Sizes: 920px x 430px

Small capsule



Design: These are small, so they should focus on making the logo clearly legible, even at the smallest size.

Usage: These are used for all the lists throughout Steam. Search results, top-sellers, new releases, etc.

Sizes: 462px x 174px

Requirements: Small Capsule should contain a readable logo, even at smallest size. In most cases, this means your logo should nearly fill the small capsule.

Main capsule



Design: These should be designed to market the product. For best results, please use the key art and logo that is being used for any retail boxes or marketing. Do not include quotes, review scores, or awards.

Usage: These appear at the top of the front page in the featured and recommended carousel.

Sizes: 1232px x 706px

Vertical capsule



Design: This is a vertical asset that is designed to market your game. For best results, please use the key art and logo that is being used for any retail boxes or marketing. Do not include quotes, review scores, or awards.

Usage: These can appear at the top of the front page during seasonal sales, and on other new sale pages.

Sizes: 748px x 896px

My game does not have a Page background, thus this image was skipped, but for clarity its purpose was as follows:

Design: This should be ambient so as not to compete with the content on the page, so try to avoid high-contrast images or images with lots of text. A template will automatically be applied to your uploaded file, which will tint it blue and fade out the edges. If you don't upload an image here, we'll automatically take a random screenshot and generate a background image from that.

Usage: This is the image that will be used in the background of your store page.

Size: 1438px x 810px

The screenshot assets were already discussed in an above paragraph, but a recap of the images alongside the description given on the steamworks page will be included below:

Design:

Select screenshots that clearly show off the player perspective and gameplay in action.

Select screenshots that clearly communicate the genre of your game. Showing HUD elements typically help communicate that to players pretty quickly.

Avoid menu screens. See requirements below.

Formatting

Should be high-res, widescreen format (16:9 aspect ratio) and at least 1920px x 1080px.

Localizing

To upload localized versions of a screenshot, drag and drop alternative versions onto the designated area next to the screenshot below. Language name can be used as a suffix to hint to the UI which language this screenshot should be in (For example, foo_japanese.jpg)

Mature Content

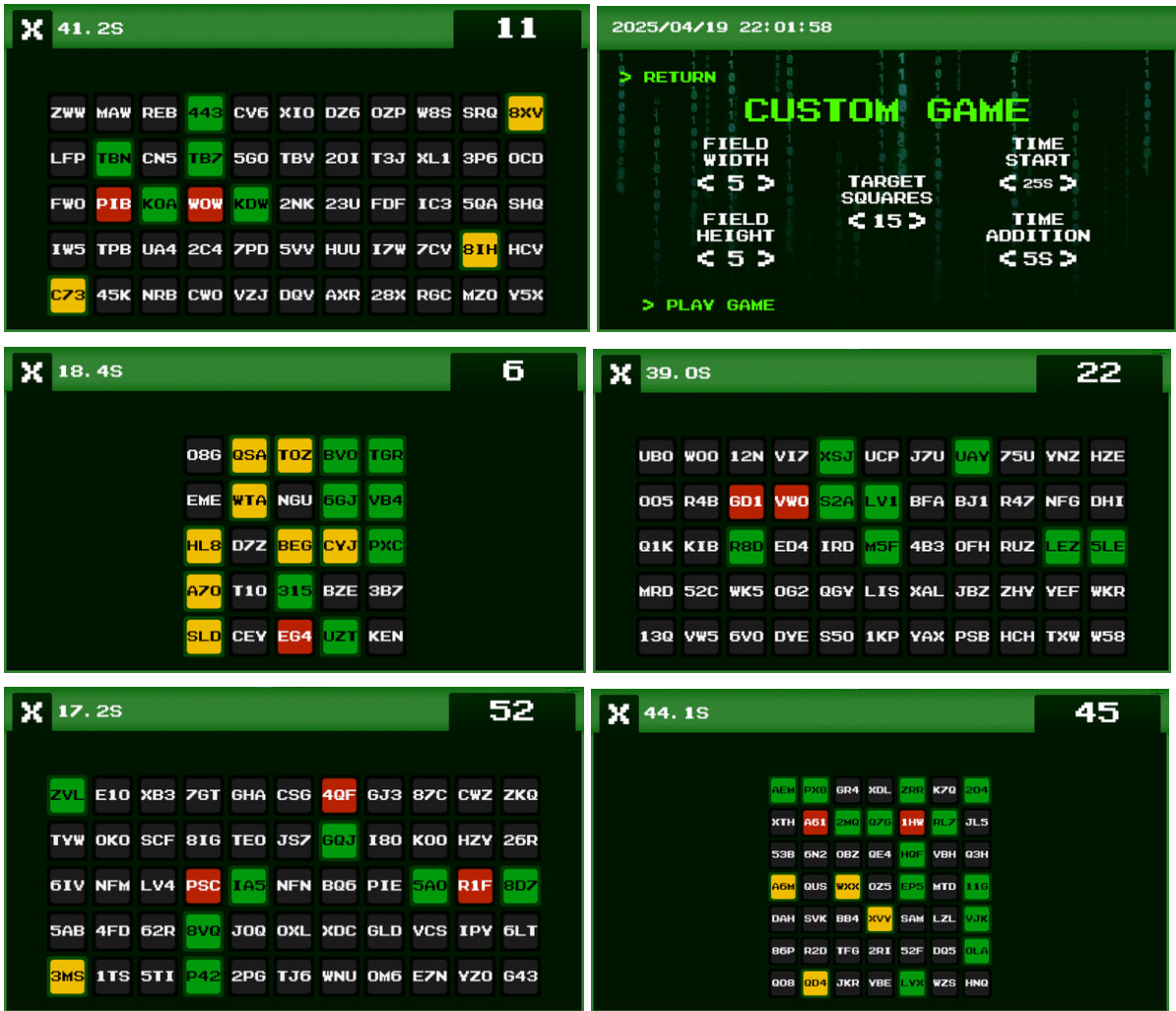
If your game has mature content, you should upload and mark at least four screenshots as being suitable for all ages. Suitable screenshots should not contain gore, violence, or suggestive themes. These screenshots may be shown outside of your store page, such as on the front page. If you do not have enough screenshots provided and properly flagged, your game may not appear in these places, even if it otherwise qualifies.

¹ For non-mature products, checking the 'suitable for all ages' option also works to specify a screenshot that Steam should prefer when choosing an image to show in places on Steam outside your store product page.

Requirements:

Screenshots should exclusively show the gameplay of your game. This means avoiding using concept art, pre-rendered cinematic stills, or images showing awards, marketing copy, written descriptions, and so on. Please show customers what your game is actually like to play. Menu screens should only be included if they are a unique component of your game.

The 6 screenshots used on the store page are as follows:



The Library assets page is also divided into subsections, in this case these were: Library capsule, Library header, Library hero, Library logo, Placement tool. Similarly to above, below are the created assets alongside the description of what the asset is used for.

Library capsule



Design: This should be graphically-centric and give the user some sense of the experience. Please use the key art that is being used for any retail boxes or marketing as well as the name of your game, ideally using the same logo / title as printed on any retail or marketing. Do not include quotes, marketing copy, or other strings of text beyond the title of your application. The art should depict something important about your product. The logo should be easily legible against the background.

Usage: This image is primarily used in the library overview and collection views

Size: 600px x 900px (an additional half-size 300px x 450px PNG will be auto-generated from larger file)

Library header



Design: This image should focus on the branding of your product. For best results, please use similar artwork to the Library Capsule and make sure the logo is clearly legible.

Usage: Appears in various places in the Steam Client Library, including Recent Games. If not set, then the Header Capsule is used.

Size: 920px x 430px

Library hero



Design: This should be a visually rich image that is easily recognizable. For best results, please use the key art that is used for any retail boxes or marketing. Do not include quotes or other strings of text.

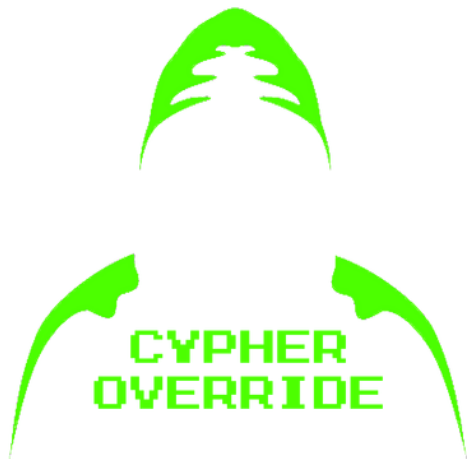
At the center of the template is a "safe area" of 860px x 380px. This area will remain uncropped across scaling and resizing of the Steam client window. Artwork should extend across the entire template, but critical content should be within the safe area. For ex: a main character's face should be entirely in the safe area or risk being cropped.

Library Hero image should not contain any text or logos. Your logo to display at the top of your library detail page should be uploaded separately in the Library Logo file (details below).

Usage: Appears at the top of a user's library details page for this product.

Size: 3840px x 1240px (an additional half-size 1920px x 620px PNG will be auto-generated from larger file)

Library logo



Design: For best results, use the logo that is being used for any retail boxes or marketing. You'll want to ensure the logo is both visible and legible against the hero graphic background, sometimes a drop shadow can help. The PNG image should have a transparent background. You should use the best aspect ratio for your art, however the logo must be either 1280px wide and/or 720px tall.

Usage: Appears at the top of a user's library details page for this product, placed on top of the hero graphic.

Size: Either 1280px wide and/or 720px tall (an additional half-size PNG will be auto-generated based on your logo's aspect ratio).

The placement tool serves as a tool to help you place your game's logo

Placement Tool *

The four green anchor points relate to the four possible positions your logo can be pinned. Bottom-left, top center, mid-center, and bottom-center.

In most cases, the bottom-left position should be used.

You may want a centered logo if...

- Your logo is symmetrical or close to symmetrical or a logo that's contained in a circle.
- Your background header image has more of the interesting parts on the outside edges and the center has areas of rest.
- Your background header image is symmetrically balanced and positioning the logo in the bottom-left throws the balance off.

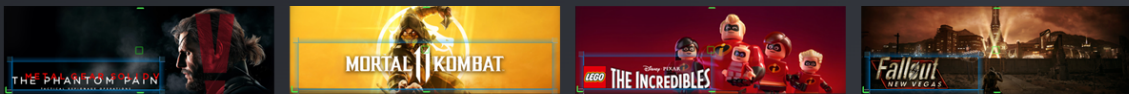
Once you have determined your logo position, use the blue logo box to size your logo appropriately. The blue box acts as a bounding box for the logo, it will not scale outside this box. The right edge of the blue box determines the maximum proportion the logo will scale to compared to the background hero graphic (this is useful if there is background art you don't want the logo to overlap.) The top edge of the blue box determines the maximum size the logo will scale to (this is useful if you are finding the logo is too big when the window has been scaled up.)

Typically you can take the top edge and leave it higher than the bounds of the logo. Play around with it and try scaling your window to get a sense for how your logo will adjust as the window scale changes.

Once you are happy with your logo position, proportion, and scale, hit the save button to commit your changes.

[Open Placement Tool](#)

Examples:



Trailers

Whilst I already shortly touched on trailers above, the Trailers tab goes about trailers and the requirements for the trailers.

A below screenshot showcases the guidelines and tips given by steam.

Trailer Guideline and Tips [View Trailer Documentation](#)

Uploading Trailers: The trailer should be the highest resolution that you have, up to 1920 x 1080 resolution, 30/29.97 or 60/59.94 fps, high bit rate (5,000+ Kbps) and in .mov, .wmv, or .mp4 container files. H.264 video and AAC audio is preferred, but we can transcode from many formats. 16:9 aspect ratio is preferred since the Steam client is optimized for widescreen, but 4:3 aspect ratio is accepted. Please note that audio will be filtered down to regular stereo when we transcode the videos.

Advanced Settings:

- Base Video & Language** - The "Base Video" setting groups multiple trailer videos together, enabling the store to choose only one of the videos depending on the user's configured language. For example, if you have an English, Spanish & German version of the same trailer, set the "Base Video" for the English trailer to nothing (empty) and the other two language's "Base Video" setting to the name of your English trailer.
- Countries** - only needs to be set if you desire to restrict visibility of your trailer to only some countries. This may be desirable if you have PEGI and ESRB rated videos that should each only appear in certain countries. Use [official ISO listings](#). (Example: "DE,FR,US,CA,MX")

Tips:

- Your first video should get to gameplay or action as quickly as possible. Slow, dramatic introductions might be appropriate for a cinematic trailer on YouTube, but for someone that is in shopping mode, it's much more useful to quickly see what the game is like to play.
- The store will display trailers in the order below. You can drag & drop to reorder as desired.

When adding a trailer some information is asked of you to fill out.

Display name: The name of the trailer, in my case "Cypher Override | Cinematic Trailer

Category:

Category:

General / Cinematic - General game trailer or pre-rendered video

Select a category...

General / Cinematic - General game trailer or pre-rendered video

Teaser - Shorter, often pre-game-release, doesn't show much of the game

Gameplay - Mostly shows what it's like to play the game

Interview / Dev Diary - Non-fiction interview or documentary video

Whether this trailer should be visible on the store, whether the trailer should show up before or after the screenshots on the store page and whether the trailer is suitable for all ages. In

my case for the cinematic trailer all 3 were checked as yes. Then finally it asked for a Base, the Language and whether it should be restricted in certain countries.

Special Settings

The next tab goes about Special Settings, things like Pinned Bundles, Downloadable Content, Associated Demos or Steam Playtests. As my game was not applicable for any of the following, only a short description will be given per subsection.

Pinned bundles allow you to showcase bundles on your store page. By default the 3 top-selling bundles are showcased, but you are able to pin bundles to the top of the list.

Downloadable content can include things such as Soundtracks and/or DLCs.

Associated Demos are applicable if you have a demo application you want the user to be able to test before they decide whether they want to buy the game.

The Steam Playtest allows you to offer limited access to a pool of testers that want to help you test your game.

Localization

If you want to have your page localized you can do so via this tab by downloading the english JSON file, editing it as required and uploading the JSON.

My game does not support localization, both in game or on the store page, so this tab was not used by me.

Publish

Finally the publishing tab. Any changes made to the tabs before this will not show up on the store page until you publish the changes on this side. The tab offers you a publishing history alongside the option to check for differences between the current live page and changes you made. It also gives the option to revert changes if you believe you made a mistake.

LO2: Creating promotional material.

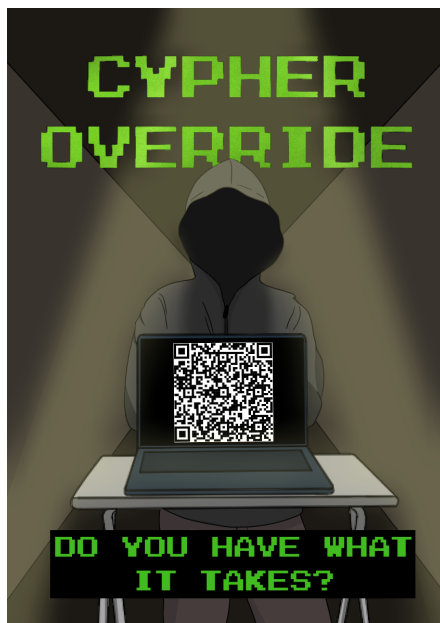
Goals

As someone that is interested in working in the indie development field, with a possibility to work by herself in the future, I believe an important skill to have when it comes to marketing and selling games is the promotional material surrounding it. Whilst I do not consider myself an artist I do believe it's important to at least be able to bring my ideas to life, whether that is for my own creation or to outsource the work to someone else, but be able to share the

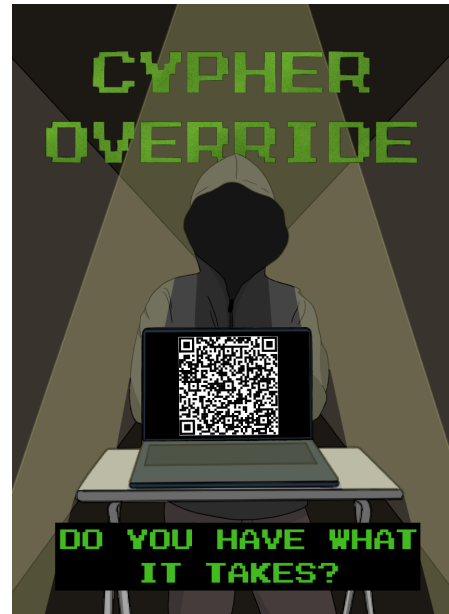
vision. This is why I want to learn to come up with ideas for promotional materials, whether the idea comes across well to other people, and possibly even create the promotional materials myself. The goal is to create at least 1 poster and a trailer supported by storyboarding.

Approach

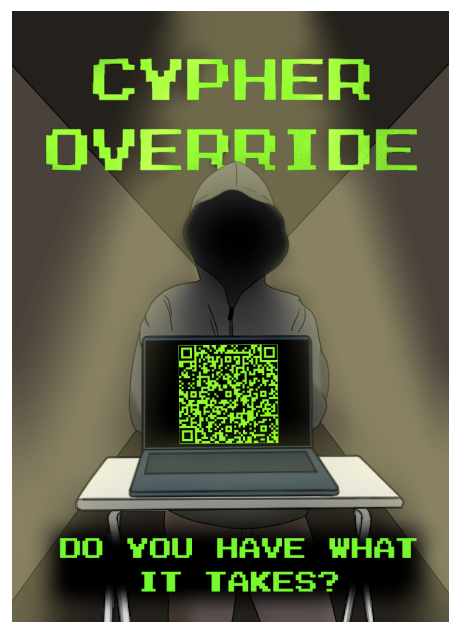
Firstly I wanted to start with the creation of a poster. I had a couple ideas for what I'd want to do, and after some back and forths with some people I ended up coming up with the idea of a laptop with a mysterious man behind it. The mysterious man would be recognizable in shape to the logo of the game with some text on the poster to support interest of people. The first draft came out as seen on the right:



Gathering feedback from artists with experience in creating posters left me with a very clear thing to fix before anything else: The edges were too rough. Shadows didn't blend well at all. After adjusting the poster a bit the second iteration was as seen on the left:



The second piece of glaring feedback was the color of the text. It didn't stand out enough and didn't catch the attention it should. After adjusting levels a bit on the text the third iteration went as seen on the right:



The last piece of feedback was about the contrast in the light and dark areas. After some playing with lighting and darkness of the background, the final poster's result came out as seen below:



When approaching the trailer and storyboard I originally had no idea how to start or approach the idea. When carefully considering a few options, I liked the idea of the trailer mimicking the feeling of the poster. So I got to work on a storyboard that would catch the essence of mystery and the specific setup of a laptop in front of you with a mysterious man standing over it. The storyboard ended up coming out as follows:



The general idea for the story would be as follows:

You walk through a dark hallway as you see a table with a laptop. You approach the laptop and are challenged to play "Cypher Override". After playing the game for a bit and getting a highscore, the laptop suddenly gets closed by a mysterious man standing over it as he tells you "Welcome to the program.", after this the screen fades to promotional material encouraging the user to play the game on steam.

The final result came out as seen in the video link below:

<https://youtu.be/GKu6TonMFgk>

Results

I am happy with the products delivered. As I had a complete lack in both creating posters, storyboarding and editing I feel I created products I can be proud of. Even if the quality is not equal to that of industry standards, I believe I have enough skills to clearly get my vision across in the event I need to outsource my work to someone else. Even if the skills to create myself are not up to standard, I believe I did learn a lot from the process and the way to translate my ideas to visual concepts.

LO3: Marketing a game.

Goals

An often overlooked aspect of game development and releasing a game is the marketing that goes into it. You can make an amazing game, but without a solid form of marketing it may never take off. With this in mind I want to get a good idea for different types of marketing strategies and which strategies would be effective for which type of game. After analysis on this I would apply the gained knowledge to my own game and form a strategy that would work for a game of my size and scope.

Research

When looking into games and their appropriate marketing there's several things to keep in mind: Budget, scale, target audience, positioning and timeline.

Whilst there are certainly more things that could make this list, for the sake of keeping within scope I decided to research these 5 core pillars of marketing strategy. For each pillar I want to find a game's marketing fitting of the size.

Budget

"How much money (or time) can I realistically invest in marketing?"

Your budget is a big determining factor in marketing a game. Do you have money for ads? Are you able to hire freelancers/artists for promotional material? Is there reasonable funding available to sponsor people?

But a game's budget is more than just money. It's also a question of time investment and opportunity cost. Depending on the size of the game and possibly the amount of people working on a project, time spent on marketing may take away from development time.

A Short Hike - A small indie game developed by Adam Robinson-Yu. The game had a very limited budget which relied mostly on word of mouth, social media posts and praise from small youtubers. The game did not have paid marketing.

Slay the Spire - A game created by a small studio with a modest budget. Through the use of focused press outreach, community building and influencer sponsors the game built a steady base. The game had minimal but strategic spending to promote their game.

Hades - A game created by Supergiant Games, Although still considered a small studio, Hades had a clear budget. The ability to create high-quality trailers, run paid ads, create big platform visibility and partner with many several creators allowed Hades to build a very strong base for their game's release. The game had a relatively big spending budget which it used to its full potential, e.g. by also having physical marketing at conventions.

Scale

"How big is this game, really? And how big should our marketing be?"

A game's marketing scale should fit the size of its work. Underwhelming marketing may sell a game short, whereas overpromised marketing will end up hurting both your connection to consumers, but also your own bottom line. Smaller games should keep the scale of their marketing on the smaller end, taking a more grass-roots approach, where as larger games may want to opt for a bigger scale by having pre-launch buildup, trailers, PR and a driven community.

Celeste Classic - Whilst now a big hit, when first being created Celeste was not much more than a free browser mini-platformer created for a gamejam. The marketing followed similar suit by never having any major marketing activities. The tiny scope justified the small reach.

Hyper Light Drifter - A game with a more promising scope from the get go, HLD was a mid-sized game with a premium feel. The marketing took a similar approach by focusing on important aspects and doing those well, whilst still keeping things like spending low. Via shared partnerships (through E.G. Humble) the scale of the marketing was aimed to reach enough people with as little time input as required. Use of things like trailers and press kits further kept to this approach of using existing reach to broaden the view without much additional time investment.

Cyberpunk 2077 - One of the biggest game releases of the past 10 years, Cyberpunk 2077, an AAA game with full global marketing. The game's scale is far bigger than most other games that existed at the time of release, and the marketing strategy followed suit accordingly. Billboards, celebrity involvement and endorsements, platform reach through some of the biggest showcase platforms in the world and the vastly deep reach of the marketing team and its resources allowed cyberpunk to be one of the most anticipated game releases ever.

Target Audience

"Who is this game actually for, and where do they hang out?"

One of, if not the most important factor when deciding on a marketing strategy is the target audience. Who are the people you are trying to reach? What platforms or forms of communication do they use? What type of language resonates with the audience? Does the audience have preferences for style or approach?

One of the best ways to approach the topic of a target audience is by creating Personas, a fictional example of the typical person in your target audience. Important characteristics include their age, interests and hobbies and media consumption and usage.

Baba is You - Whilst a big hit in the puzzle community, Baba is You has a relatively niche target audience often consisting of mostly puzzle game players. That which pushed Baba is You towards a wider audience ended up being the reach it gained from first focussing on their niche and then spreading further via word of mouth and youtube.

Dead Cells - With a slightly more wide but still definable core audience in the roguelike genre, Dead Cells took the approach on focussing heavily on this audience. With it being a more wide audience though, dead cells narrowed down their specific target audience a bit more to ensure further success. Targeting interests that would catch the attention of youtubers, streamers and alike.

Genshin Impact - With a general appeal about as big as it can get, genshin impact set its target on fans of the anime genre, gacha players and RPG enjoyers. Localized campaigns targeting these groups within their own country allowed Genshin Impact to build its big following from the start.

Positioning

“What makes your game stand out?”

When defining a marketing strategy the type of game you are making matters. What also matters is if there's any Unique Selling Points (USPs). Playing into your USP with your marketing can give you an excellent way to stand out among the crowd. If you are able to have 1 or 2 things that are different from the usual, unique to your game's mechanics, story or overall feel, it gives a big leg up to work from.

Don't Shit Your Pants - Whilst the premise of the game was simple to its core, being a funny survival text adventure, the game set itself up with a marketing approach focussing on the humor and curiosity it wakes in people. By focussing on these core parts of the game, it caught wind online and quickly went viral for being just that. Quirky, weird and funny.

Stardew Valley - For anyone that was a fan of Harvest Moon, Stardew valley came as a godsend. Positioned to be the spiritual successor with an indie soul, stardew set itself up for big success by focussing on farming sim fans.

The Legend of Zelda: BOTW - What sets BOTW apart from the above mentioned is the leg up it had over the others from the start. Zelda games have had big success before, and leveraging this alongside focus on an USP, being a reimagination of it, allowed it to soar to new heights in success. Unlike the above, the uniqueness of BOTW was its ability to be something people already knew and love, but refreshing and new.

Timeline

When do you start hyping, launching, or updating?

When you decide to start talking about your game matters. If you start building hype too long it may end up backfiring and killing any interest for the game before it comes to release. If you start talking too late, you won't have anyone who knows about your game's existence when it comes out. Whilst there's big differences in the ability to market for many games of different scale, I feel this one is one of the most important ones. A simple game that you want to position as "oh this seems fun i'll buy it" probably doesn't benefit from having hype built up before launch. Equally a big game like GTA VI wouldn't want to suddenly drop without a buildup.

Vampire Survivor - A game made by a solo dev with a tiny budget that took an approach to stealth launch the game. Vampire survivor got early wind getting people to talk about the game. Whilst ads can get many eyes on your product, the creator of this game realized the value in hearing about a game from friends. Word of mouth quickly spread existence of this game and the constant updates to snowball did the rest.

Cult of the Lamb - Setting itself apart from the smaller studios, CotL was able to take an aggressive pre-launch cycle by showing an announcement trailer months in advance, share regular devlog updates, post memes and sneak peeks on social media, demo drops and a coordinated launch with Twitch. Taking the few months before the game's launch to build hype and momentum, followed by a constant planned roadmap post-release allowed it to gain the success it has today.

Elden Ring - Backed by a AAA Studio, FromSoftware, Elden Ring teased its first content 2 years prior to the release of the game. A semi-regular cycle of cinematic trailers, lore drops and more kept the attention going. Building up to a release got users excited and made sure hype didn't die down. Syncing major reveals with big press events such as the Game Awards or E3 allowed the game to further pull eyes towards it and build hype. Closed beta tests, waves of trailers and a global release countdown got people talking about the game more than anything. Coupled with a strong post-release cycle of patches and DLCs Elden Ring set itself up for a strong release and continuation of the game.

Approach

Now, looking at my own game, how would I apply the above research to the release of my own game if I had been given the chance to do so. First, let's define where my game would fall on each of the pillars. In terms of budget, we have no budget. The 100\$ I spent putting the game on steam was unfortunately also all the money I was able to put into this project. As for scope, my game is aimed to be a simple game you may start up once in a while to have some fun with. It's not meant to be a mainstay that people play every day. As for the target audience, I first wanted to pull it more towards general simplified puzzle solving, but after testing with people general feeling gave me the result it was much more like an aim trainer. Whilst the game doesn't really have any unique selling points, the target audience does allow me to place myself in a very specific spot and hope to gain traction with that. Finally for the timeline of the game, I feel a similar approach to that of Vampire Survivor would be more fitting to my own. From initial tests and feedback received it came across to

me as if this is one of those games you may buy on a whim because it seems fun. The game doesn't really feel special enough to add to your list of "must buy" games, therefore the marketing timeline is quite short.

Now, going more in depth per pillar, I want to discuss how I believe I could best handle the marketing for my game.

Budget

As mentioned above, realistically I do not have a budget for marketing or streamer sponsorships. Admittedly this limits my possibilities, but I do believe with the combination of some strengths in other pillars I am able to work a decent word-of-mouth spread by focussing on the strengths. Posting on social media, having posters available in fitting spaces and similar activities would allow me to gain a steady base and hopefully word-of-mouth would do the rest.

Scale

The game isn't big. Making a big fuss with marketing would overhype the game and underdeliver the result. I believe a grass-roots approach sets the tone for my game and playing off that is better to avoid negative connotations via underdelivery.

Target Audience

From early playtesting it was clear to me most people compared the game to some sort of aim trainer. Rather than adjusting the gameplay to pull away from this, I could instead lean into it and make aim trainer users the target goal. One thing prevalent in a lot of aim training communities is the sense of pride to be better. With my game supporting high scores already I feel it's also an easy way to leverage continued interest and conversation.

Positioning

Cutting back to the target audience I am aiming for, something to look for that's different with my game to the typical aim trainer gives me a good idea what to look for. Personally I still believe there's a sense of thinking involved in my game more than any other aim training game. I believe leveraging this would allow me to stand out vs the competition. A lot of games need you to think, just aim won't get you there. Marketing towards a combination of quick thinking and accuracy would benefit me greatly I believe.

Timeline

As I said above, I feel the timeline of which a game starts marketing is one of the most important decisions you can make. With my game being smaller in scale and having no budget for ads or anything alike, I believe only building hype for the game up to a week before release is a good window. The type of game I have is admittedly not the type of game someone would be waiting for it's release for. Either they see it and decide to buy it on the spot to give it a try, or they see it hasn't released yet and will forget about the game possibly forever.