Creating Great VR: From Ideation to Monetization

Aaron Davies
Week 1 (April 4): The Emergence of VR: Past to Present
Goal: Orient students with historical inflection points leading to the emergence of consumer VR including technology advancements/successes/failures. Outline present day state of the industry.

Week 2 (April 11): Imminent Advancements and Futurecasting
Goal: Identify current focal points for research and advancement (both SW, HW). Identify/predict near-term technology advances with reasonable level of confidence. Review thematic and/or conceptual areas of advancement 5+ years out.

Week 3 (April 18): Identifying Technology Strengths and Opportunities
Goal: Discuss the role of content in advancing new mediums. Review practical case studies drawn from various technology platforms. Identify new technology value propositions, expectation variables, and adoption factors at industry and consumer levels.

Week 4 (April 25): Project Commitment Strategy
Goal: Learn how to identify the right opportunities, perform competitive analysis, and ultimately make the best project commitment. Assessment of market strategies including first to market vs. fast follower. Navigate potential pitfalls of overlapping core platform value propositions. Factor for evolving marketplaces and anticipate unexpected factors/competitors.

Week 5 (May 2): Guest Speaker – Glen Egan/Sanzaru: A Real World Vignette: Developing success full VR content
Goal: In this guest lecture, hear directly from an early VR developer about their ventures into being a first mover on a new technology platform. Historical background on the DNA and inclination of the studio towards new technology experimentation, explanation of success factors and how they evolve as VR matures, hindsight assessment with best practices for new entrants into the developer ecosystem.

Week 6 (May 9): Guest Speaker – Chris Prueitt/Oculus: Technical Deep Dive: VR First Steps
Goal: In this guest lecture, Oculus’ Head or Partner Engineering outlines best practices and common pitfalls to avoid when spinning up a new VR project. From basic design principles to performance optimization, students will leave with a sound understanding of the basics to consider when creating new VR projects.

Week 7 (May 16): Off To The Races: Pitching & Funding
Goal: Learn how to identify and disseminate core value propositions and product differentiation. Review of typical business models for VR applications. Understand typical funding variables in VR space. Balancing team makeup for success. Learn how to identify, consider and adopt/stockpile innovations which surface through the development process. Adapting product development and features to illustrate core value propositions.

Week 8 (May 23): Launching product
Goal: Discuss product lifecycle planning. Review breadth of options for delivering product to consumers including pricing models, promotional programs, and distribution.

Week 9 (May 30): Product evolution & sustaining growth
Goal: Products are not “done” once they’re launched. This unit will focus on behaviors and tools to sustain success (or recover from sub-par release). Learn how to weigh cost/benefits of iterative product releases vs. product updates. Evaluate and react to consumer feedback.

Week 10 (June 6): Student Assignment highlights and review
Goal: Review a selection of assignments submitted by students. Assess how standout assignments addressed topics outlined in course of study.
Goal: Learn how to identify and disseminate core value propositions and product differentiation. Review of typical business models for VR applications. Understand typical funding variables in VR space. Balancing team makeup for success. Learn how to identify, consider and adopt/stockpile innovations which surface through the development process. Adapting product development and features to illustrate core value propositions.
Foundation: The Elevator Pitch
10 reasons your game studio will never get funding

DEAN TAKAHASHI  @DEANTAK  FEBRUARY 8, 2017 11:00 AM
#1: You are making crap

• Gut check

• Fundamental evaluation/competitive analysis (Robot Ninja Game)
  • SteamSpy
  • AppAnnie
  • Top 100+ on app stores
  • Proprietary dashboards/reports

• In Addition:
  • Peer reviews
  • Greenlight/Early Access/Gallery
  • Kickstarter/Indiegogo
Example: Pixel Toys
#2: Pitching a problem instead of an opportunity

- “I didn’t realize this XYZ would cost $123”
- “If we don’t XYZ then this project will fail”
- ”If we don’t get an investor onboard then our XYZ funding will fall through”
- “We will spend through our own money by XYZ time”
"You don’t want to risk your own resources," Della Rocca said. “So let’s get a sucker to take on the risk. Developers may not see it that way, but to an investor, that is how it is perceived. You will never get funding if you are offloading all the risk.”
#4: You don’t know what you are raising funds for

Raising funds for company vs. Raising funds for project
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Raising funds for company vs. Raising funds for project

VC
Private Equity Incubator

Publisher

Most common give: Equity
Most common give: rev share
#5: Asking for too much or too little

- **Too much**
  - Not aligned with scope of project
  - High IP/licensing/talent costs
  - Everything lines up but it’s just too expensive

- **Too little**
  - Strategic default: “better something than nothing”
  - Missing costs
    - Marketing, events, non-development costs, scope changes, payroll > launch
#6: Asking the wrong people at the wrong time

- Family/friends: $10k’s
- Investors: $10k’s - $100k’s - $1M+
#7: Your corporate structure is broken

Personal Bank Account vs. Incorporated Company Account
#7: Your corporate structure is broken

Flawed Equity Division
#7: Your corporate structure is broken

Growing too fast, too early
#8: Your rev share economics are flawed
#9: Potential Entanglements
#10: Sovereign Obstacles
Live Pitching: 7 reasons your game pitch fails

Pitching to perfection: 7 reasons why your game pitch fails
#1: Time is money (or not)

“[The setup] process, on occasion, has cost the presenter more than half of their allocated time.”
#2: Who’s Who?

“Anyone who is part of the pitch should have a clearly defined role.”
#3: Does your product have its own legs?

“Here’s my brutally honest advice. Nobody cares about you unless your game piques their interest....Just show me the game.”
#4: Video First

“Handing out multiple devices for ‘everyone to have a go’ is also a sure fire way to divide that attention.”
#5: No Plan B?

“[Those] pitching were never going to refer to [printed backup material], but a subsequent IT failure prompted them to produce it and continue with their pitch. That level of preparation gives confidence to potential investors.”
#6: Numbers aren’t adding up...

“Investment panels will always want to know figures: company turnover, projections, downloads – practically anything that has a number attached to it will be discussed.”
#7: Investment into people

“If an investor feels the team behind the project can bring out the best in it, then they might be prepared to overlook some of the minor issues they might have otherwise prevented investment.”
After The Pitch....

• Q&A (Improv skills)
• Leave materials behind
• Follow-up planning
Pitch Docs
Bioshock (Irrational Games)

BioShock will:

- Redefine the first person shooter on console and PC by immersing the player in a reactive and modifiable world.
- Be the most visually stunning Unreal game ever created.
- Unparalleled physics support via the Karma physics engine.
- Establish a new franchise that has strong potential as a film and television property (Irrational's most recent game, The Lost, has just been sold as a feature film to BBC films).
- Provide an accessible and transparent interface.
- Tell a mature, terrifying story.
- Scare the hell out of people.

Concise, detailed summary
Bioshock (Irrational Games)
Diablo (Blizzard)

GAME DESIGN

OVERVIEW:

Diablo is a role playing game wherein a player creates a single character and guides him through a dungeon in an attempt to find and destroy 'Diablo', the devil himself. All the action takes place in an isometric, three-quarter perspective, with diamond-shaped, 'square' floor spaces (see diagram). The entire game operates on a turn-based system. Using a mouse, the player moves his character from space to space, exploring corridors and rooms and engaging in combat. The character faces challenges in the form of hostile monsters and traps in his quest to descend deeper into the dungeon. Many beneficial weapons and magical items can be acquired and used to help on this quest.

A player will have the choice of many races and classes for his character. The player's character will develop as he defeats monsters and descends to deeper dungeon levels. A character will acquire new skills, improve fighting and magic abilities, and wield more powerful equipment.

Forays into the dungeon will be broken up by trips to the town located above. In the town, a general store will provide standard equipment and repairs, and will also purchase extra equipment from the player. A temple will provide healing for injured and sick characters. Training and other facilities may also be available.

The heart of Diablo is the randomly created dungeon. A new dungeon level is generated each time a level is entered, using our Dynamic Random Level Generation (DRLG) System. Rooms, corridors, traps, treasures, monsters and stairways will be randomly placed, providing a new gaming experience every time Diablo is played. In addition to random halls and rooms, larger 'set piece' areas, like a maze or a crypt complex, will be pre-designed and appear intact in the levels. This system facilitates the inclusion of puzzles and traps, and helps the addition of thematic elements. Deeper levels will contain progressively more difficult creatures and hazards. A character's quest ends with the defeat of Diablo, located deep in the dungeon.
Diablo (Blizzard)
Fyre Festival

The actual experience exceeds all expectations and is something that’s hard to put to words. It will ignite that type of energy, that type of power in our guests.

Concise, ambiguous summary
That's right folks for just $10k, you too can have the "refugee fleeing war torn region" treatment at fyrefestival
8:07 PM · 27 Apr 2017
2,410 Retweets 3,984 Likes
Pitch Videos
3 Elements of a great pitch video

• Hook
• Humanity
• Hunger
WASTELAND 2

THE GODFATHER OF POST-APOCALYPPTIC RPGS
IS BACK!
End