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Event production in the games industry

ABSTRACT

The objective of this bachelor's thesis is to explain the different types of games industry events, how they differ from each other, what one can expect to gain from attending them, why the size and scope of the event matters and how one can produce them on their own or by leading a team. For the methods, I have used my own personal experience both as an event producer for the Northern Game Summit in 2015 and the Game Development World Championship in both 2016 and 2017 respectively, in addition to various smaller events. Additionally, I've used knowledge and skills gained from acting as an event attendee, both for casual and professional purposes. Finally, to have some theory in addition to the practical info I've gathered, I present data from various sources relevant to the games industry and business in general.

The thesis will consist of a brief, general introduction as to what are professional and casual events and why one should attend them, followed by an in-depth explanation on the five main kinds of events that exist on the industry. In order of introduction, they will be game conferences, trade shows, industry gatherings, developer competitions and game jams. And lastly, I will present the benefits and drawbacks on how large an event is, from the smallest gatherings from a handful of people all the way to events with thousands, if not tens of thousands of people in attendance.

In conclusion, I've found that many event types bear similarities to each other. Some of these are obvious, some can only be seen by the event attendees whilst some are exclusive to the event producers. Event types can mix together, have elements from each other, or there may be several events held close together to have something for everyone. The size of the event being held can vary greatly, and it should be kept in mind when considering for what purpose an event will be held, and how difficult it will be.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Kirjoittaja(t): Rasila Leevi

Työn nimi: Tapahtumien Tuottaminen Pelialalla

Tutkintonimike: Tradenomi, Tietojenkäsittely

Asiasanat: peli, peliala, tapahtumat

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on selittää pelialalla järjestettävien tapahtumien tyypit, eroavaisuudet erilaisten tapahtumatyyppien välillä, mitä tapahtumiin osallistumisella voi saavuttaa, mitä merkitystä tapahtuman koolla on tavoitteisiin nähden sekä sen, miten tapahtumia voi tuottaa joko itsenäisesti tai johtamalla ryhmää. Metodeina olen käyttänyt omaa henkilökohtaista kokemustani jota olen saanut Northern Game Summit 2015:sta sekä Game Development World Championshipin tapahtumatuottajana toimimisesta vuosina 2016 ja 2017, pienempien tapahtumien lisäksi. Lisäksi olen ottanut huomioon tietoni sekä taitoni jotka olen saanut tapahtumiin osallistumisesta, sekä huvi- että hyötytarkoitukkseen. Viimeiseksi, saadakseni teoriaa käytännön osuuden tueksi ja lisäksi, esitän data erinäisistä lähteistä jotka liittyvät pelialaan, tapahtumiin tai molempiin.

Opinnäytetyö koostuu lyhyestä esittelystä siitä millaisia ovat huvin ja hyödyn vuoksi järjestettävät tapahtumat sekä miksi niihin kannattaa osallistua. Tämän jälkeen esitän syvemmän analyysin viidestä päätyypistä tapahtumia, joita pelialalla järjestetään. Esitysjärjestyksessä ne ovat pelikonferenssit, pelimessut, ammattilaisten tapaamiset, kehittäjien väliset kilpailut sekä pelijamit. Viimeseksi, esittelen hyödyt ja haitat mitä tapahtuman koko aiheuttaa pienimmistä tapahtumista isoimpiin.

Lopputuloksena löysin, että useimmat tapahtumatyypit ovat hyvin samanlaisia toisiinsa nähden. Jotkin näistä yhteyksistä ovat itsestäänselviä, kun taas osan voi nähdä vain tapahtumaan osallistumalla, tai toimimalla tapahtumajärjestäjänä. Tapahtumien tyypit voivat sekoittua, niissä voi olla elementtejä toisistaan tai niitä voi olla useita yhtä aikaa, tarjoten jotain kaikille. Lisäksi, tapahtumien koko voi vaihdella roimasti, mikä kannattaa huomioida tapahtuman tarkoitusta sekä järjestämisen vaikeutta mietittäessä.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The games industry, similar to many others, thrives on the connections, meetings and discussions that are had at different events from conferences or casual meet-ups. Networking is often seen as the lifeblood of business, and the games industry is no expection. However, not all of these events are completely business as some are held for entertainment or recreation, while others skillfully combine business and pleasure. The best example being for example a conference that has business during the day and either recreational activities or an afterparty during the evening. Due to the games industry being a mix of both traditional software development mixed in with the entertainment industry, the events have taken their roots from both of these industries and made its own kinds of events.

These events are all unique and different, though many of them have certain things in common. Even events that have a fairly standardized way of being produced such as conferences, each has it's own organizers, giving them a unique flavor, focus and audience. This means that there are as many different types of events as there are people making them, and even a conference held yearly such as GDC Europe is different every year. In addition, some events are so large that a single person cannot possibly get to enjoy all of it's content.

In this thesis, I will be looking at the different types of events that the games industry has, focusing on the perspective of game developers and not the general public. Additionally, I will explore what are the main benefits for the people involved in these events and how they benefit the industry as a whole. For this sake, I will be using the events I have been a part of myself as case studies, alongside information available from and by other event producers, networkers and organizers on the field.

The most important part of this thesis will be in answering the questions "what the event is, why is it held and how is it done" in terms of various different events, with the hope that my personal experience and the wisdom of others will benefit prospective event producers in the future.

2 BENEFITS OF EVENTS

I will be discussing the events in the games industry as three different kinds of events. Professional, casual, and events that are a mixture between the two. The main types of events I will discuss in this thesis are game jams and industry gatherings on the more casual side, conferences and trade shows on the professional side and competitions as a mixture. I will also try to explain the possibilities for mixing them up with each other.

2.1 The importance of professional events

Professional events are held for the sake of promoting business, whether it be by being able to showcase a new product or one that's still under production, learning about new methods of doing business, getting more connections or landing a job (Sheffield, 2017). All of these can be done at industry conferences and tradeshows, which I will discuss separately further in the thesis.

Showcasing a new product or a product that is still a work-in-progress, in the case of games industry a new game or peripheral, is a good method of generating interest, getting feedback and building a community of interested fans. While a lot of this can nowadays be done over social media and internet downloads, the importance of being able to see how the players react to the game at first to how they play it and the face-to-face feedback they give you can be vital in further development of the game itself. A lot of marketing guides, especially the ones meant for indie developers also claim this to be true (DellaFave, 2014).

Industry conferences are great places for learning new methods and different ways of running business as well. Most conferences invite speakers to give lectures or talk on their way of doing things. For example in image 1, we can see Karoliina Korppoo teaching the people listening to her on the game design methods used in the game Cities: Skylines. These give invaluable glimpses of wisdom that is usually not made available to the general public, can give you new thoughts or ideas

or make you more confident in what you have learned for yourself, if the speaker talks of something you already are aware of.

Within the varied disciples of the industry, these can vary from artists giving out tips and hints on how they perform their trade, programmers discussing the creation of AI all the way into pitching your game idea to investors. Propably all during the same conference, too. In addition, the speakers themselves or other veterans attending the industry find value in seeing the younger generation of game developers. They can hear new viewpoints from students who are not yet accustomed to the typical day-to-day work within the industry, or can learn how game development is taught in universities (Schedule, 2017).
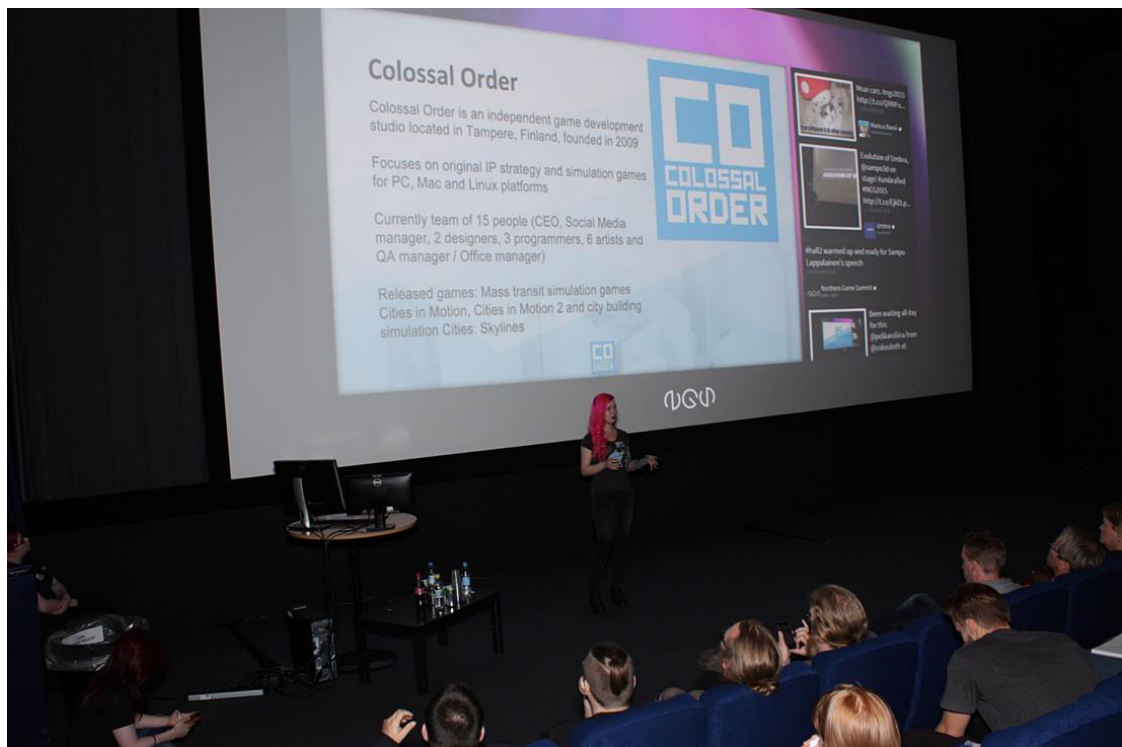
Image 1. Karoliina Korppoo of Colossal order holding a presentation on the game design of Cities: Skylines during Northern Game Summit 2015.

The most important aspect, however, is in crafting connections. For individual developers and students, this can easily be their best chance to land a job as nearly 40 percent of jobs come from employee referrals, making it that much easier to get your foot between the door (Van Nuys, 2012). For this reason, it is important for businesses to send in representatives to see these people and foster these connections and find prospective employees (How to get a job anywhere with no

connections, 2016). According to Kim Baird, networking is also a great way of finding other business opportunities, ranging from partnership deals to sales (Baird, 2016).

In addition, professional relationships and personal relations can both mix together. As quoted by Alpert A. Montapert, "All lasting business is built on friendship", a claim supported by studies which say that friends are more likely to want to help each other out, which extends to business relations as well (Grayson, 2007).

I also interviewed Johan Toresson of Gameport, a professional networker, who agreed to most of these claims. According to him, he visits conferences to educate himself and foster relationships, starting with informal relations which he then expands into business. He admits the importance of meeting industry newcomers and agrees that a network of people is vital for the game development process itself, as well (Toresson, 2016).

2.2 The importance of casual events

Casual events are held for a variety of reasons. They can be meant for networking and building business relations in a similar way as with professional events, but can also be for ways of nurturing workplace culture, celebrating achievement, relaxation or business and making games. These events vary from casual workplace or other social gatherings to game jams and the like, which I will discuss separately further in the thesis.

Like with professional events, casual events are perfect for networking. They are aimed at similar audiences and the relaxed atmosphere of a networking event can help people get into contact with each other and help them break the ice. In addition, events at workplaces can be an important part of the company culture and keep workers satisfied. For example, Colossal Order celebrates achievement by cake, as confirmed by CEO Mariina Hallikainen (Smith, 2015).

Making games for fun, especially in game jams and similar events, are one of the most unique aspects of the game industry, while staying similar to hackathons of other industries. Game jams give seasoned studio workers and newcomers alike a chance to work on games they want with little constraint or limits to what can be performed. This is an excellent outlet for trying out new ideas, learning new disciples of the industry and creating the games you want to make (What is a game jam?, 2016).

In addition, many companies run game jams for the sake of business, such as Amnesia Fortnight by Double Fine. This is a two-week prototyping cycle in which the studio employees are given relatively much creative input. The games created in this time are then used by the studio in choosing what games to make in the future, thus meaning that this game jam drives the company's business forward (Double Fine Productions, 2016).

2.3 The importance of mixed events

Events that mix both casual and professional aspects of the industry are quite common, with the most usual example being game conferences, which usually have some sort of more relaxed event after the main conference is over, or during the afternoons for conferences lasting for several days. These go by many different names such as "afterparties", "networking events" or "get togethers", but are fairly similar in nature.

In addition, events such as game jams and game competitions can be easily be used for professional purposes as well as casual ones. It is not unheard of for game developers to create games during game jams and continue their development later for the purpose of a professional release, with popular games such as Surgeon Simulator and Broforce having started life during game jams (Schaeffer, 2015). In addition, game competitions and jams can help in various ways from personal motivation to getting recognition. A game jam or competition (usually) sets a strict deadline or timeframe for game development, which some people can use to ensure they have their games developed into a working condition by that

time. They can also be a good source of community and networking, if the event is held at a physical place, or gathering audience and fans for yourself. In addition, being recognized by an official competition is often of good use for the purposes of marketing your game, as it shows it has gotten official recognition (Broforce, 2016). In addition, news outlets can use competitions and games that have gained recognition in such for writing their articles, and praising comments from video game journalists and writers are used in marketing as well, as can be seen in image 2.

Image 2. The awards and mentions on the website of the game "Broforce", including mentions from reviewers and critics.

In addition, due to the nature of the games industry being an entertainment business, one can often decide for himself on what he wants to gain from an event, thus mixing its purpose. Within tradeshows and conferences, there will most often be studios presenting their new or work-in-progress games which attendees can play, while conference afterparties can be a perfect stage for discussing business. Another example are game jams, which can be used by game companies for the sake of creating new games, testing out new ideas or creating a prototype to show a publisher.

The benefit of this kind of mixing means that you can, within the larger framework of a same event, have a conference or tradeshow during the day for business and

professional purposes, while an evening afterparty and such can be used for re-laxation and to wind down in a more casual manner. Alternatively, a developer might want to spend the day in the conference discussing videogames from the perspective of a player (as most game developers play or have played video-games at some point in their lives), or to find inspiration or have fun by playing the games other developers are presenting. At some events, for example the Northern Game Summit, in which the venue of the main conference is too small to allow for efficient networking during the day, the afterparty is essential for getting to know each other and discuss what was learned during the day (About The Event, 2015).

3 TYPES OF EVENTS

Here, I will discuss the types of events, providing examples by describing the processes in events which I have been a part of and going over some of the basics that apply for these types of events, based on personal experience with said events and knowledge from other event producers and sources.

3.1 What are game conferences

A game conference is a professional event aimed at people who are interested, work in or influence the gaming industry. For example, the Game Developers Conference (GDC), has this to say about itself: "GDC attracts over 27,000 attendees, and is the primary forum where programmers, artists, producers, game designers, audio professionals, business decision-makers and others involved in the development of interactive games and virtual reality gather to exchange ideas and shape the future of the industry.", and this holds true for most conferences, just with a differing amount of attendees (About GDC, 2016).

Game conferences are held world-wide and range from events of tens of people to tens of thousands of people. Conferences vary from several hours to multiple days, usually during workdays and are attended by professionals, students, media and service providers. Conferences can focus on a single theme,such as Games For Health UK focusing on health games (Games For Health UK Conference 2016, 2016). Conferences can also try to cover the industry as broadly as possible with various themes and speaker tracks during the conference. For example, the Northern Game Summit 2016 had tracks for art, business, VR and tech, for example (About The Event, 2016).

3.1.1 How to hold a game conference

Game conferences, while varying in size, all have some basic requirements for the physical space and equipment needed for them. The conference needs to have some way of having a large amount of people, most likely seated, to listen in to a speaker or speakers discussing the topic at hand. Within large cities, there usually are buildings specifically built for these purposes, such as the Tampere Sports and Exhibition Center in the city of Tampere, which has several conference halls, and can thusly accommodate a conference of around 300 people (TESC Brochure, 2017). In addition to this, buildings such as movie theaters or schools can be used for these purposes. For example the Northern Game Summit has been held at the Biorex Kajaani movie theater for several years. The benefit of using such a place also means that the technology necessary for holding the presentations is usually already tested and in place, while holding a conference at another location may warrant carrying, setting up and testing the necessary audiovisual equipment for the speakers to be able to give their presentations. The audiovisual equipment that is most usually required includes a computer and a projector for a slideshow, video and other supporting materials for the speaker and a microphone and speaker system for audio.

A game conference most often requires an organization or group of people to run it, and is most often supported by a large group of volunteers to handle manual labour such as setting up chairs and guarding equipment, helping visitors and other tasks. An example of how such a group is structured can be seen in image 3. Depending on the scope and size of the event, the actual organization handling the day-to-day operations prior to, during and after the conference can vary from a single individual to an entire team. The most important of all is the event producer, who oversees every aspect of the conference and the work leading up to it and after it The producer can also do them himself, if help is not available or the conference is small in scope. This is most often a full-time position and requires a lot of networking.
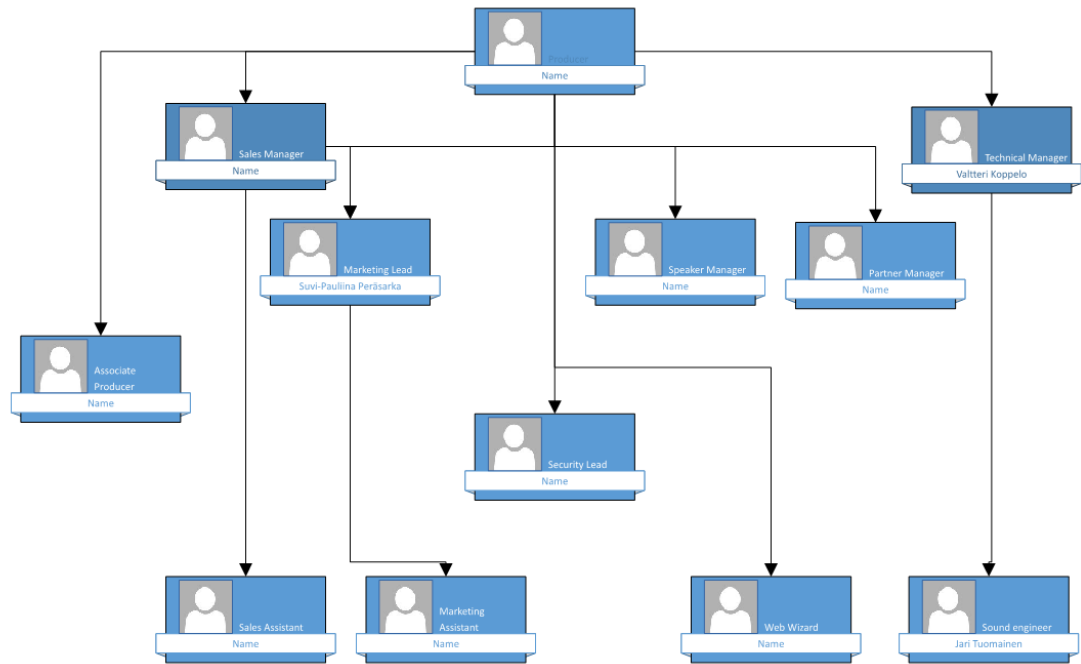
Image 3. Example of an organization necessary for running a game conference, in this case Northern Game Summit 2016

Other duties in creating a game conference include marketing the event, both to possible sponsors, partners and media, prospective speakers and event visitors. This is to ensure that people are aware of the event and will act accordingly. This position is supported by managers who work to acquire partners and speakers, which are necessary for the success of an event. The managerial duties are to seek out potential speakers who would have the possibility of giving a talk or lecture at the conference on a topic that is of interest to the visitors of said conference, and to seek out partners who would like to present their services or products at the conference, give a sponsored lecture or just support the conference with money or services. For example during Northern Game Summit 2016, Supercell gave monetary sponsorship for the event which was used to provide a lunch for event attendees in return of visibility in the event.

During the event and just prior to it, there is necessary to have a technical team to oversee that the audiovisual equipment is working sufficiently, overseeing and fixing any problems as soon as possible to keep things running. There is usually a need to test the technology out before the actual conference, but other than that, the technical team is only needed during the conference itself. However, their role is extremely vital to prevent the "demo effect" or other possible errors there could be (Demo Effect, 2010).

In addition to the team and the facilities, the business aspect of a conference needs to be considered. Even if the event is not meant to be profitable, there will be costs that need to be dealt with. These costs are different for each conference, but in general the largest sources of spending for most conferences are the need to pay rent for the area where the conference is being held, payment for food or refreshments served during the conference or an afterparty, money for the lodging and travel expenses of the speakers and the possible speakers fee and the wage of any full-time employees working to make the conference a reality and the possibility of contracted security and such. In addition, smaller but still important losses of money come getting office supplies, T-shirts or other uniforms to separate the organizers from the visitors, lanyards from which to hang event badges from and the like. The single largest source of revenue for most conferences is within ticket sales, with tickets to Game Developers Conference being around 999$ for early purchasers visitors and almost double that on-site, as seen in image 4. these costs should be enough to cover a lot of the costs of the conference. Additional sources of revenue can be found from partnerships, where an interested party provides money or a service in exchange for getting visibility within the conference, space to promote and show their services or a list of attendees, for whom they can then promote their services and products to.

Passes and Prices

	EARLY Ends Jan.31 at 11:59PM PT	REGULAR Ends Mar.17 at 11:59PM PT	ON-SITE March 18-23
All Access (now including VRDC@GDC)	$1,949	$2,349	$2,449
GDC Conference + Summits	$1,649	$2,049	$2,149
GDC Conference	$999	$1,429	$1,729
GDC Summits	$799	$929	$1,029
Expo Plus	$299	$349	$399
Expo	$149	$249	$299

Option to add VRDC@GDC to a GDC Conference+Summits, GDC Conference, or GDC Summits pass for $400.

Image 4. The different ticket prices and types for GDC 2018.

3.1.2 Conference example: The Northern Game Summit 2015

The Northern Game Summit (NGS) 2015 was a sold-out game conference held in Kajaani in 2015. I was working as an event manager alongside Tommi Krogerus, while Leili Mård held the position of event producer. The event lasted for two days, and had a mixer-type event before the first day titled "Day Zero" and a more casual afterparty on the evening of the first day. In addition, for the sponsors, partners and speakers, a "VIP dinner" hosted by the city of Kajaani was held (About The Event, 2015).

Production of the event begun early in 2015, after the success of Northern Game Summit 2014 dictated that the main organizing body, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KUAS), would be supporting the event monetarily and with Leili Mård, the event producer from 2014 once again taking the lead of the process.

Leili, who was a student at KUAS at the time, realized that for the possibility of NGS to continue after she graduated, went on to ask for volunteer help in organizing the event, ending up with me and Tommi as event managers and Antero

Juutinen as the head of technical department. Antero's duties included organizing a small group of volunteers to help him with the technical issues, providing Leili with a list of technical equipment that would need to be purchased or loaned for the event, overseeing the testing of the technical equipment before the event itself and making sure the technical equipment kept functioning through the conference itself.

The duties of Tommi and me prior to the conference were mostly in contacting various people for various reasons. We contacted student organizations and universities to ask them if they would be interested in coming to visit the event and organizing group discounts and helped with their accomodation. We contacted local companies for support, and were provided with discounts and hotel packages for NGS speakers, coffee and other necessities as sponsorship. In addition, we came up with the theme for the event in co-operation with Leili and arranged for speakers that fit the theme.

For partners and sponsors, we came up with different tiers for the partners, named bronze, silver and gold. To keep the sponsorship valuable and not clutter the available space for marketing materials with sponsors, we decided to limit the number of sponsors to 16, 8 and 4 respectively. The tiers included various bonuses for each sponsor, and individual packages and benefits were agreed on with for sponsors as well. For example, Colossal Order did not provide money directly, but provided two speakers for free, and took care of the speakers travel and accommodation as well.

For NGS 2015, there were two casual events in addition to the actual conference. The day zero mixer and the Bonus Stage Afterparty. The Mixer, held in the Kajaani Generaattori, was an event for which various people from the movies industry were invited to talk of their own industry, and for the people to meet each other and mingle. For official entertainment, the event included games made based on the finnish "Rendel" movie which visitors could play and speeches by finnish movie industry workers. For nourishment, sushi and cranberry juice was ordered from a local company. The event was the first of it's kind held before NGS, and was considered successful and was later decided to make a permanent part of NGS for

later years as well. There were no sponsors and the event was free to attend for NGS visitors.

The Bonus Stage Afterparty was held after the first day of the conference and was open to every attendee of the event on the first day who was 18 or older, as it was held at Club 96 in Kajaani, pictured in image 5. The main sponsor of the event was Fingersoft, which provided an open bar for the event, which has been widely appraised by event visitors. The Bonus Stage is important in the Northern Game Summit as the event place itself has little room and time for networking, meaning the main networking happens in the afterparty. In addition, for partners, sponsors and local game companies there was space provided to showcase their services and products, especially the games made in Kajaani University of Applied Sciences.

Image 5. Game developers discussing business and pleasure during the NGS 2016 afterparty.

The event itself had three different tracks with three speakers each on both days, providing visitors with different options to choose from with a wide selection of topics from art to business and technology. In addition, at the beginning of the

event was a keynote speaker from Microsoft, which was streamed into all three movie halls, and at the end of the conference there was a panel discussion, again streamed into all of the halls. For each track, a separate movie halls within Biorex Kajaani was given, with two members of the volunteer staff responsible to keep everything running smoothly. In addition, the technical team worked in the projector room to keep things on track, start the presentations on time and play sponsored videos during breaks between the speakers.

The event was non-profit, with KUAS bearing financial responsibility. Revenue was generated from ticket sales and sponsorship deals to lower the cost KUAS would have to pay. The budget of the event was approximately 50,000€ in total, out of which KUAS had to pay less than 10,000€. The staff members were all volunteers, including Leili, myself and Tommi, which was one of the main reasons the costs were so low.

3.2 What are trade shows

A trade show, also known as a trade fair or an expo is an event in which companies and individuals can come showcase and promote their products to the attendees of the event, see what other companies are up to, meet press and get feedback. Often, indie developers combine all of these together by having a place within the event where they show their game to the press and attendees, ask for feedback for those playing or seeing their game, and mingle with other indie developers, as seen in image 6. Some of these events are open to anyone willing to participate, while others might require for attendees to buy a ticket, or not allow the public to attend, instead needing you to be able to prove that you are working within the industry to get a ticket (Trade Fair, 2016).

They can vary wildly in size and organization. The largest one open to public being Gamescom in Germany, with over 350,000 visitors attending in 2017 (Münker, 2017). Due to it's enormous size, however, there is one day during which the event is only open for industry professionals instead of the public, allowing for them to use the expo area at their leisure for that day. The largest and most well-known

trade fair for industry professionals in the gaming industry is the E3, which stands for the Electronic Entertainment Expo. It has been both for professionals or with invitation only, but this will change as the event will be open for public in the first time in 2017 (Hewitt, 2017).

Image 6. Indie developers showcasing their games during Gamescom.

3.2.1 How to hold trade shows

At it's simplest, a solo developer could stay in a location where a lot of people are going to pass through, for example a mall or college campus, and showcase his game to passersby for promotion and feedback. In this case, they would simply need to ensure that they be allowed to do so, and perhaps ask if they can use an electric outlet for power. The cost of a small-scale event such as this can be minimal or zero, considering that the owner's of the place the developer goes to can see this as bringing more business, or being interesting and novel in it's own way.

When trade shows get bigger, they can require an organization like in the case of other events, or can be held in co-operation with a local college, mall or such. It

can also help to band up together with a few game developers who may want to showcase their product. This means each individual has less responsibility, and makes the event more interesting as there are more games for visitors to play. This can work similarly to a small event by just asking to be permitted to stay at a location, but can grow larger by creating an actual plan for marketing, and asking on the support from the hosting organization, officials of the city the event are in or other parties to promote the event and bring in visitors. As this can be seen as a fun activity with minimal costs, business owners may be interested in allowing these kinds of events for free. However, this kind of an event would work best with a focus of bringing people to try out your game and give feedback, but not for business meetings. If an event is interesting or unique enough, it can also gather the attention of local media.

If a trade show grows larger than something you could do in a mall during the day, it becomes fairly similar to other larger events such as game conferences. The main difference being that you need to ensure that you are providing value for the time and money of both the parties attending the event, and the ones showcasing their products. Especially as you will most likely be asking for the attendees to pay for entry, and the developers to pay for booth space and the right to show their products off. You can mix it up with elements of other events that can make it more appealing to either party. For example business mixers and "best-of-show" contests for developers, and celebrities attending the event for marketing reasons. This kind of event is also perfect for letting non-developers mingle with developers and see what kind of people they are, talk with them and learn how they work.

3.2.2 Trade show example: Gamebuzz 2016

The gamebuzz 2016 event was organized by JCI Kajaani with help from students of Kajaani UAS and IGDA Tampere. It lasted for one day with both the main event and the afterparty being held within the Koskikeskus shopping mall in Tampere,

seen in image 7. The purpose of the event was for small independent game developer teams from both the Kajaani and Tampere area to be able to showcase their games to an audience of passersby, instead of the kind of gamers or developers that would usually attend a trade show.

Image 7. The central area of Koskikeskus with game developers showcasing their games to passersby.

The event consisted of the central Koskikeskus area having small tables and booths placed to allow for more than ten game developer teams to showcase their games and projects during the day, with socializing and networking with other developers to follow during the afterparty. Additionally, there were several short talks on the topics of networking within the games industry, game development in general and the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (GameBuzz, 2016).

After the main event, the afterparty was held in a bar within the Koskikeskus area, as negotiated by JCI Kajaani representatives. The bar would otherwise have been closed, so opening up and having one employee within to serve the developers drinks was deemed worth the cost for them, meaning there was no money involved from the organizers. For marketing, both JCI Kajaani and IGDA Tampere made several posts inviting game developers in the area to attend the event and the afterparty, giving IGDA Tampere an excuse to treat the afterparty as an impromptu developer gathering, hosted by them.

3.3 What are Industry gatherings

Industry gatherings are a group of very casual, informal and easygoing events. These can vary simply from business acquaintances meeting up prior to a game conference to local game developers meeting monthly or annually to see what they are up to, exchange ideas and knowledge or just enjoy the company of each other. An example is shown in image 8 where developer Johan Toresson is looking for developers to meet while traveling. They can also be held as celebratory events and can be sponsored by an organization wishing to celebrate an achievement.

Due to the casual nature of the events, they are mostly held by individual people or a small group of volunteers responsible for such events, for example the Independent Game Developers Association or IGDA for short, a non-profit organization which relies heavily on volunteer work encourages it's members to host gatherings and events for the sake of connecting developers with each other (About, 2016).

Image 8. Johan Toresson looking to organize a casual gathering while headed over to Tokyo, Japan

3.3.1 How to hold Industry gatherings

At its simplest, to host an industry gathering one needs to let a group of game developers know of your intention, and invite them to a shared location at the same time. This can be as simple as sending out text messages or calling people and asking if they are able to make it, and confirming a suitable location, such as someone's home or a public location such as a restaurant, and making the reservations needed.

However, if the gathering is meant for more than just a couple of game developers, the amount of organizing necessary starts to become larger, as is true with any other kind of event. One must ensure that there is a large enough venue to hold the event in, and be able to invite enough people there as to not waste the space too much. For this, it usually helps if the organizers are able to ensure sponsorship from a company for food and beverages, an interesting guest visitor/speaker or some other unique reason for game developers to attend. For example in image 9, we can se that in December 2016, IGDA Finland held a gathering, for which they secured the sponsorship of Reforged and Critical Force. Critical Force is a company from Kajaani, which means they are not usually seen in Helsinki.

Many companies are interested in hiring local talent, promoting their product to game developers, or do goodwill work for indie developers. Thus they can be persuaded into footing the bill for the gathering or a part of it, for example by serving drink tickets or even having an open bar for the developers attending. This is usually done in return of receiving visibility, being able to use the event in their own marketing to show their support of the event, to be able to promote a product or service, or hire new talent from the developers present. A company might also want to host a game developer gathering to celebrate an achievent or business deal, and share their success with other developers in the area.

Image 9. A facebook banner for IGDA Finland promoting their gathering, notifying others of the date, and any visitors to it.

An industry gathering is at it's core a casual event, and thus it is not expected that attending by itself costs money. If space is limited or the event is wanted to feel exclusive rather than inclusive, it's possible to either work on a first come, first served basis and stop letting people in after the venue is full, or ask for prior registration and have someone check tickets upon entry.

As there is usually no cost involved for the participants, it is good to keep either the budget extremely low, or to gain sponsorship as mentioned above. To keep costs down, most industry gatherings are organized by volunteer workers, and thus have no cost associated there. A lot of public places such as schools may allow the gathering to be held on their premises for free, if they see that it fits with their brand or curriculum. If a school teaches game development, it only makes sense for them to help build a game developer community. Restaurants and bars on the other hand can make a profit either by taking the sponsorship money to serve food and drink, or just sell food and drink normally. If the event is held at a time when the location wouldn't otherwise be open, it won't eat into the revenue the location would otherwise generate, and is thus mutually beneficial. In a lot of cases, such as the IGDA hubs in Finland, they have negotiated a monthly agreement for either free or cheap on how to host such an event. For example IGDA Helsinki meets at restaurant Maxine, while IGDA Tampere hosts most of their meet-ups at Jack The Rooster.

3.3.2 Industry gathering example: IGDA Hub Kajaani meets

the IGDA hub in Kajaani is organized by volunteers from both the Kajaani university of applied Sciences and game companies from the Northern Ostrobothnia area. It was originally more informal in the form of "Kajaani Industry Beer", which was a monthly gathering for them, but was turned into an official Kajaani Finland hub in 2015 (Kajaani Industry Beer, now also an IGDA Finland Hub!, 2015).

The IGDA Kajaani Hub has an arrangement with Rock House Kulma, a local bar, allowing for them to host their event as a private party on Tuesdays, after which they open for business as normal. As the developers most often drink and some eat during the gathering, it is beneficial for Kulma to do this. Kulma is spacious enough to have space for over a hundred developers, which is plenty for the game developer circles in Kajaani.

The hub requires between two and four people to help with organizing the event. One person stands at the door and ensures that anyone coming in writes their contact information down, thus allowing for them to know how many people attended in total. There is one person to oversee the gathering in general, and help visitors meet people local to the hub, or with their presentations.

To ensure that developers will find it interesting to attend the event while maintaining a casual atmosphere, the hub usually invites a game developer to give a presentation during the event. This can either be someone from the local area, or someone invited specifically for this purpose from Helsinki, for example Nikolina Zidar from FullXP, which allows the attendees who don't get to meet developers from other areas that often to meet them during that time. Additionally, game developers are allowed to take the stage if they have announcements to make (February gathering with Nikolina Zidar, 2016).

3.4 What are game developer competitions

Game developer competitions are contests in which developer submit one or several games, proof-of-concepts or ideas that fit into the criteria of the contest in

return for the opportunity to gain a prize. These can vary from a game jam site deciding to give the best game a small award up to a corporate sponsored competition with hundreds or even thousands of developers competing.

Reasons for holding game competitions vary. They can be done for marketing and publicity purposes by corporations, such as the Intel Level Up contest seen in image 10, or to allow the company to outsource new ideas, or to seek for new talent to hire. For example in the International Game Concept Challenge 2014 (IGCC) the main sponsor Gumi Asia wanted to find a new RPG game mechanic, and thus sponsored the contest to. The rights of any prototypes and game concepts submitted were given to Gumi Asia, while the winners only received 500 Singaporean dollars in compensation. Thus, this is a very cost-effective, if unreliable, method for prototyping new ideas and finding game concepts (Lee, 2014).

Image 10. Banner ad for the "2016 Intel Level Up Game Developer Contest"

Alternatively, a competition may be held to promote and help the developers themselves. This can mean simply giving out an award or special mention, organizing publishing or partnership deals or giving out money or other resources to help out with development. for example The Finnish game awards are held yearly by Neogames and the Finnish Game Developers Association, two organisations with a goal of promoting the games industry in finland, and are sponsored by several finnish game companies to do this (Finnish Game Awards 2017, 2017).

Game developer competitions vary in length. Some can last a few days or weeks, during which participants are supposed to create their games under a tight schedule. This may often be also require for participants to be at a certain physical location as well. Some contests are more open, allowing for games to be submitted

with more liberal rules, as long as they fit whatever criteria the competition has set for them. These competitions usually do a lot of marketing and their presence online and on social media, while either having no physical event at all, or having them for giving out the prices, or such. For example in the Game Development World Championship, any game that has not been released before the year of the championship can be submitted into the competition, as long as there is a playable prototype ready. The event is held online, but the finalists receive a week-long vacation in Finland, during which the winners are announced as well (Game Development World Championship, 2017).

3.4.1 How to hold game developer competitions

In game competitions, instead of an actual physical event, the main focus should be in the motivation behind the competition and it's organizers. The physical event, depending on the kind of competition, can be held as a game jam, conference, trade show or an industry gathering. Alternatively, they can play a piece in a larger event, such as the Nordic Game Awards given during the Nordic Game Conference. These are important as they have a strong effect on the schedule, rules and marketing of the competition. If a contest is held to showcase a specific game engine, the rules would most likely reflect this by most likely only allowing games made with that game engine (such as Unity) to be submitted, in addition to any other specific rules (Unity Game Developer Contest 2015, 2015).

As games are an artistic medium, it can be difficult to have a contest be completely open for all comers, as it is nearly impossible to objectively compare a turn-based strategy game to a space shooter, for example, as the comparison would be similar to comparing chess to soccer. This means that it is up for the contest organizers and any judges they appoint to try to come up with a series of rules upon which to judge the games by. These can vary from technical excellence, how the game itself is presented or from the novelty and uniqueness of the game concept. For game competitions of larger sizes it becomes especially vital to have a good number of judges to discuss the games and play them to come into a conclusion on

the winning title(s). It is also imperative that these judges be professionals or at-least know of game development as a process, as it allows for them to make decisions based on knowledge and wisdom. Alternatively, a judging panel can consist of professionals from other industries, if that is the aim of the competition. If a game contest was held to create a good game about banking, for example, it would make sense for the judges to have both experts in finance and the games industry.

The next important thing is to ensure the event reaches enough developers to be successful. If the event has a physical requirement, such as expecting the developers to be at a certain location for the duration of the contest, it will be a good idea not to restrict the other rules of the contest to ensure that as many developers as possible can attend. Even if an event is mainly online but the final gathering or final pitching event (or similar) requires for the participants to be there, the event organizers must be ready to pay for their accommodation and travel, or many developers may not attend as they lack the funds for travel.

Last major thing to consider are the prizes. In some cases, it is enough to win an award for the sake of winning it's symbolic value, such as with The Finnish Game Awards. This is common when the rights to the game, idea or prototype stay with the game development team instead of being given to the contest organizers or their partners. In contests in which the developers lose the rights to their product, the prize will often be a substantial sum of money. In some events, the prize can be something else altogether, such as the prize trip to Finland that GDWC offers, or a publishing deal, marketing credit or other such prizes.

3.4.2 Game developer competition example: Game Development World Championship 2016

The Game Development World Championship 2016 was a sequel to the Viope Game Programming Contest 2012 and Game Development World Championship 2013 (Game Development World Championship 2013, 2013). It is organized by Viope with a group of other companies as partners. As a bit of history, the event

was supposed to be held one more time in 2014, but budget and schedule constraints made this impossible. GDWC 2016 was a massive success, more than tripling the number of game developers who attended the competition, as seen in image 11.
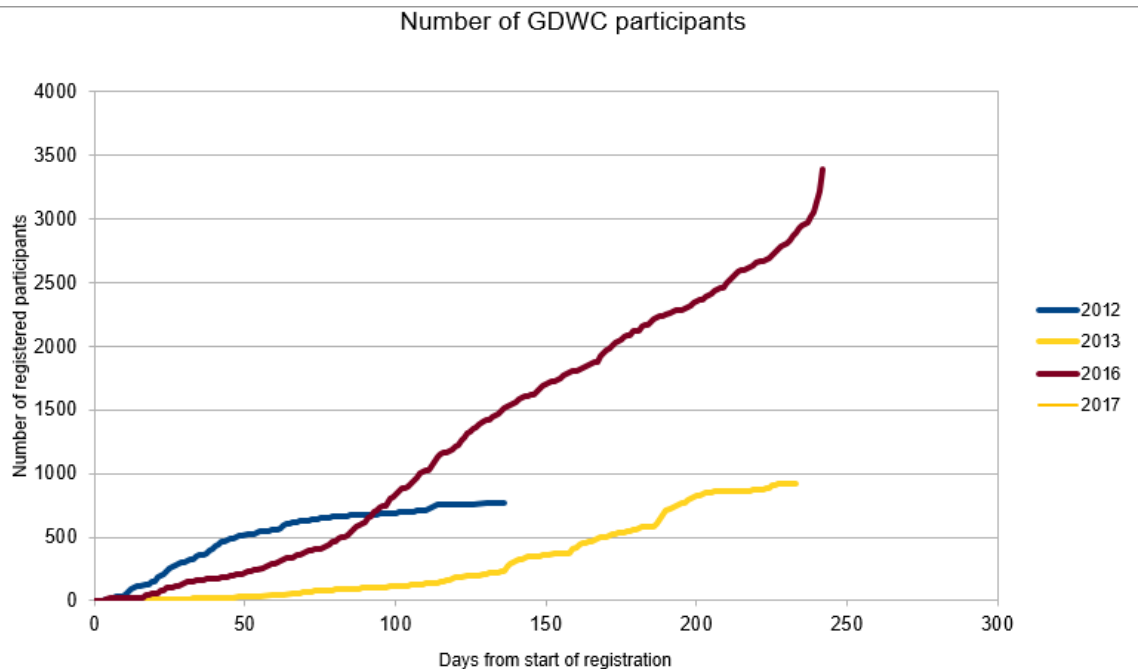

Image 11. The amount of registered contestants for the GDWC over the years.

In the beginning, work with GDWC 2016 consisted on beginning the marketing, creating a simple roadmap from beginning to end, and starting to recruit interns for marketing tasks. At first, marketing consisted on approaching indie game developer hubs and press outlets, such as IGDA hubs worldwide. As the budget for the competition was extremely low, the internship was unpaid, but there were still several applications, letting the team size grow to four people at most.

The roadmap changed drastically over the year, as plans had to be remade as different partners came along, or promised partnerships failed to produce results or funding for the competition. For example in the original plan I was not supposed to attend Nordic Game Conference, but managed to secure a ticket via our partnership with Kajaani University of Applied Sciences.

Most of the work however was directed at marketing. It was soon thought and tested that contacting indie developers directly was the most effective way of getting them to register for the competition. The test was successful, and marketing was therefore focused on contacting individual developers. This was highly effective in gaining registrations, but sadly did not bring much attention from press, gamers or other parties who might be interested if they'd hear of the event. Also, it meant that if work wasn't done on getting these registrations, no new registrations would come "organically".

The method of working was simple. On Monday, the team gathered at the Viope office to discuss how many visitors the website www.thegdwc.com had gotten, how many new registrations there were and what were the tasks that had been done, which hadn't been done, and which would be done next week. This meant that the interns could work from home when able, and at hours they felt comfortable with. The rest of the week was spent on doing the tasks that had been agreed upon.

There were two physical events that had been organized. These were the judging and the prize trip for the finalists. For the judging, the first part was contacting game companies in Finland to build a respectable group of judges for the competition who would have time to go through the submissions. The next part was to actually organize the judging. The number of games was expected to be around 200-300, but was close to 800. Originally, it was thought that there would be two stages to the judging: The judges going through all the games separately to choose the semi-finalists, and then choosing the finalists afterwards. However, due to the number of games the GDWC team first went through all the games during one month, whittling the number of games down to around 300. Each judge was assigned between 30-40 games to individually go through and select the few best, after which the judges gathered together in the Viope Office to choose the finalist out of these games. Based on the judges decision, there was also a voting, letting the audience to decide which were their favourites out of the games selected by the judges to be the semi-finalists (Contest Voting, 2016).

After the judging was finished,the finalist trip was organized. Contacting the developers and arranging for their flights and accommodation was somewhat straightforward, but providing with the itinerary was more compex. It was deemed important for the developers to meet Finnish game developers, and thus several game developer companies were contacted. Rovio agreed to take the developers in for a introduction to the company, lunch and to meet the developers. Additionally, as it was thought that Finnish developers might not find it worthwhile to win the main prize of a trip to Finland, it was decided to also go on a cruise to Sweden during the trip, which is shown in image 12. This included visiting the King offices in Stockholm, and Avalanche Studios as well. The feedback received was great, as these companies don't allow for visitors every day, and thus it was decided to make this a part of GDWC 2017 as well. During the latter part of the trip, the finalists got to present their games to a global audience in Slush 2016 and attend the event as well. During this time the winners were announced, and GDWC 2016 was officially over.

Image 12: GDWC Finalists and event producer enjoying their prize trip.

The final and best part of the trip was during Friday, when the finalists came to Tampere to enjoy a home-cooked dinner. Additionally, there was an IGDA gathering for them to meet indie developers. The weather was extreme snowfall, which

was great for showing Finland at it's best. Additionally, the Finnish videogame museum had it's opening today, for which we managed to sneak the finalists into. It was a great way to showcase the more "Finnish" part of Finland while still maintaining a theme of game development.

3.5 What are game jams

Finnish Game Jam ry, an organization arranging game jams in Finland, most notably the Finnish Game Jam, defines game jams thusly: "A game jam brings together all types of game developers, amateurs, professional and students to innovate new games in a single weekend or similar short time span. Typically participants work in small teams, racing to produce as complete a game as possible with limited time and resources, but unlimited creativity." Though most game jams usually do have a theme around which participants are suggested to use, such as to somehow use the theme of "merging" within a game, they are not necessarily required to be used or followed to the letter. Game jams are often favoured by hobbyist game developers and students who do not care as much for financial gain or professionally developing games.

Alternatively, game jams can be perfect for professional developers who want to try out a new idea, a new technique or a disciple they do not usually get to try without risking financial failure. Game jams either happen online, at a single location or multiple locations simultaneously, depending on the scale of the game jam. For example, the Global Game Jam is held around the world during the same weekend at official locations, while Ludum Dare does not require a specific physical location, being open to everyone around the world to attend (About Ludum Dare, 2016). Thousands of games are produced in game jams yearly, which shows how popular events of the sort are. For example within the worlds largest single game jam, the Global Game Jam 2017, over 7000 games were produced (Waving Goodbye to #ggj2017, 2017).

3.5.1 How to hold game jams

When hosting a game jam, there are a few key differences in execution. At it's simplest, a game jam is nothing but a specific timeframe in which attendees are expected to build a game. This can easily be done with nothing more than a simple Facebook event or other such declaration of intent over the internet, and an IM software or email for communication.

However, if there is a physical place for the game jam to be held in, usually called a jam site, things become more complicated. At it's simplest, assuming the game jammers will take care of themselves, all that is needed is a place where a participant can set up his equipment and usually access to the internet. It is then assumed the jammer will either sleep at the desk or go home for the night and that he will buy and take care of his own food and drink. In most cases, it helps if the location has a microwave oven to prepare food and a fridge to store it in. If possible, there can be a separate room or area that will be reserved for sleeping, either on the floor or on couches and the like. If the game jam has funding or a sponsor/entry fee, it can also be a good idea to get food and drink delivered onto the jam site. A coffee machine, coffee, milk and sugar can be one example of what to bring, as is juice, soda and light snacks. Ordering pizza is also a good practice if the organizers want to ensure the game jammers are fed.

Game jams most often are not a competition but a way for people to express themselves via the game medium. As such, they are mostly free events to participate in, but depending on the jam site, there may be a fee for the sake of paying the costs of such. Of course, game jams can be organized for profit as well, or have a friendly competition. For example, after the game jam is over, the games may be presented to the other jammers and a winner can be selected on any criteria applicable, such as most fun game, most technically excellent game etc., or the game jam could have a corporate sponsor who acquires the rights to the games created after the jam is over. For example in the International Game Concept Challenge 2014, a mix between a game development competition and a game jam, the main sponsor, Gumi Asia had set the theme for the game development and acquired the rights of the contest winning game, while the rest of the rights of the games

belonged to the university in which the competition took place, Nanyang Polytechnic (Lee, 2014).

3.5.2 Game jam example: Global Game Jam 2014 Kajaani

The Global Game Jam is the worlds biggest, yearly game jam. It is organized world-wide and has smaller sub-sets, such as the Finnish Game Jam. The game jams have local sites, usually based around school campuses and start-up hubs which are empty during the weekend, but have the infrastructure set in place for working on games. In Kajaani, there has traditionally been a jam site for the Finnish Game Jam in the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences campus area.

As a student, I was chosen as a volunteer to help with the organizing of the game jam. The entire group of organizers were volunteer students from the school, meaning there was no cost involved. As the school features a degree in game development, the school was very cooperative (Will you be the Next Game Innovator?, 2016). This meant that the computers and access to the school were provided at no cost by the school for students wishing to attend the game jam, while outsiders had to bring their own computers but were otherwise given the same rights as students. Several classrooms were allowed for use for game jamming, and the school auditorium was set aside for a sleeping area. The faculty was cooperative in marketing the event for the students as well. Finnish game jam ry sponsored the game jam with event T-shirts for registered game jammers and event badges with lanyards. As we wished to be able to help the participants with food and drink, we contacted several finnish gaming companies for support, with Supercell sponsoring the event in return for visibility for approximately one thousand euros, allowing for a pizza dinner to be ordered for every game jammer on Saturday, and provide coffee, soda and other refreshments throughout the game jam.

During the event, the main responsibilities for the jam organizers was to ensure everything was proceeding smoothly. Atleast one organizer was present at all hours and was responsible for the security of the jam site, as well as allowing game

jammers inside as the doors were locked during the weekend. Additionally, the jam organizers organized the pizza dinner and the starting and closing ceremonies of the game jam. The starting ceremony consisted of giving basic information about the structure of the game jam, safety information and hints on how to survive game jams, such as remembering to stay hydrated. Additionally, a video was presented by the Global Game Jam organizers, followed by giving the theme of the game jam itself. Every game jammer was present for this, as shown in image 13.

Image 13. GGJ Kajaani 2014 was successfully followed by GGJ Kajaani 2015, with many developers attending.

4 THE SIZE OF AN EVENT

I have explained within this thesis for the most part the reasoning why most events are held, examples on how to hold them and the benefits that can be gained by attending such events, but there are also clear advantages and disadvantages in what the size of the event venue is and how many attendees are present. In this chapter, I would like to explain my idea behind four different event sizes from the smallest to largest, and why they matter.

4.1 The smallest events

A very small event, oftentimes less than ten developers in size, can be organized in a very cheap way, in addition to being generally easy to put together. At its simplest, it can only need someone to ask for other developers to be at the same location at the same time, for example meeting up at a bar or other social venue. A more complex example would be for example the Train Jam. A gamejam with the timespan of several days where a select crowd of game developers developed a game while riding a train (About Train Jam, 2016).

They are most often not thought of as "events" when compared to conferences or trade shows, but are commonly held during or around the time of larger events. The reasoning for this is to allow for game developers from around the world to have some time and a space to physically meet up with each other as they have all traveled to the same place for the conference. Alternatively, it allows for game developers who are in the area but cannot afford a ticket into the main conference to meet up with other developers. Some larger game conferences such as Respawn in Cologne, Germany have started in this way and many IGDA gatherings fall under this kind of small event. These events can be a great way to be introduced into a group of game developers by someone within said group as well, or to present yourself, your game or a talk you want to give to a very select crowd.

The benefits of this kind of an event is that they are very easy to put together even on a small budget or rapid schedule due to the amount of people involved, which means that any price of admission will be cheap, with most events being free. They allow for a very personal touch to be applied into each attendees experience, and lets all the event attendees to mingle together, letting for all of them to get to know each other in person. A game developer can also oftentimes present something for the first time to alleviate nervousness and stage fright. Giving a talk to an audience of just a few members can give them valuable experience in public speaking, while allowing for the few attendees present to give feedback (What You Can Accomplish with Public Speaking, 2016). Additionally, for the sake of marketing or publicity, an unique event can be a great way of reaching press and interested individuals about the event, the attendees or the organizers behind it, even if the event itself is not something that a large amount of people can attend. The train jam was one such example of this.

The drawbacks for this kind of event is that they are most often very obscure, meaning that unless a developer is directly invited or knows someone who is, it is very unlikely that they will know of the existence of the gathering. Even if the event is being marketed and attendees are asked to join, it may be unlikely for the invitation to reach many people as the small size of the gathering can turn people away from attending and asking their friends and coworkers to attend, while potential partners or sponsors can see no benefit from helping with a small event, which in turn keeps the event from growing larger. However, a small event held monthly or yearly will grow in time, as long as it is properly organized. The opposite can also be true, with a large group of people wanting to attend the event but the organizers and the venue not being prepared for such a large crowd which leads to a negative experience.

Additionally, unless a small event has something unique or very interesting about it, it will likely fly under the radar of most media. This combined with the small amount of people attending the event means that if you are looking for customers, marketing visibility or to spread general knowledge of your brand or game, events such as this are unlikely to bring many benefits.

4.2 Small events

A small event would consist of tens of developers, but not hundreds of developers. They usually require some work to put together, and may start out small but grow with time, but are still generally very doable with a limited or nonexistent budget. A typical small event would be a conference held at a school, or a IGDA gathering.

A game conference at a school might be organized by the faculty or the students, such was the case with the first Northern Game Summit. It requires little marketing as the students will be the participants, and thus focus is in getting interesting speakers for the event, while for an IGDA gathering, it is important to communicate and directly invite developers to attend for the event to gain traction and grow. The reason for these events to be small is that they are often aimed at people on the specific region, thus limiting how many people know of the event, or are able to participate. The small size also results in developers who know of the event to reason that the event is too small for it to be important or interesting to attend. The expection to this is if they happen to be in the area already, which is why it's important to ensure that marketing reaches them as well so that they can attend. Some developers may also reason that they already know these developers, and see no benefit in attending, which explains why a lot of smaller events try to have guest speakers or visitors attend.

As mentioned in the example in Gamebuzz and IGDA Kajaani hub gatherings, the venue can be secured for cheap or free for a reasonable amount of people as the location expects to make money from the people visiting, and thus not ask of the organizers to pay. If the event has a speaker from a large company, it can be sponsored by that company as well, which is the practice of the IGDA Finland hub, for example. They hold one monthly meeting at the same time each month, which allows people to know far in advance that it's going to happen. They secure a sponsor for each event, and have the sponsor hold an interesting presentation as well. This amount of people is enough for a sponsor to be interested, especially if they are seeking to recruit from the local area, but not too much for the event to -require- sponsorship to work.

The main drawback to this kind of event is keeping it both consistent and interesting. Keeping an event consistent helps with marketing, as it means developers will know to mark the event in their calendar ahead of time, while keeping it interesting makes developers want to attend. An event of this size is still too small to be held annually, and requires it most likely to be held monthly (such as most IGDA meetings), bi-monthly or quarterly. This, in turn, combined with the (often) small budget means there is a need for volunteers to work the event, manage the speakers/sponsors and work with marketing the event. Some volunteers may see value in doing event production at this scale, or see it as a way of breaking into the industry.

4.3 Large events

Large events range from a few hundred developers to a thousand. The Northern Game Summit is a good example of a large game conference. At this size, they require work and resources to be managed well, and can't be held monthly or even bi-monthly as this would be counter-productive and a big drain on resources. A way around this is to be part of a brand, with each event held at different locations, such as the Penny Arcade Expo (PAX), held five times a year at different locations, shown in image 14. However, not all of these events may prove to be successful, for example Game Developers Conference Europe will no longer be held, as it was deemed by it's organizers to be more effective to focus ther resources on the main event, GDC in San Fransisco (Caballero, 2016).
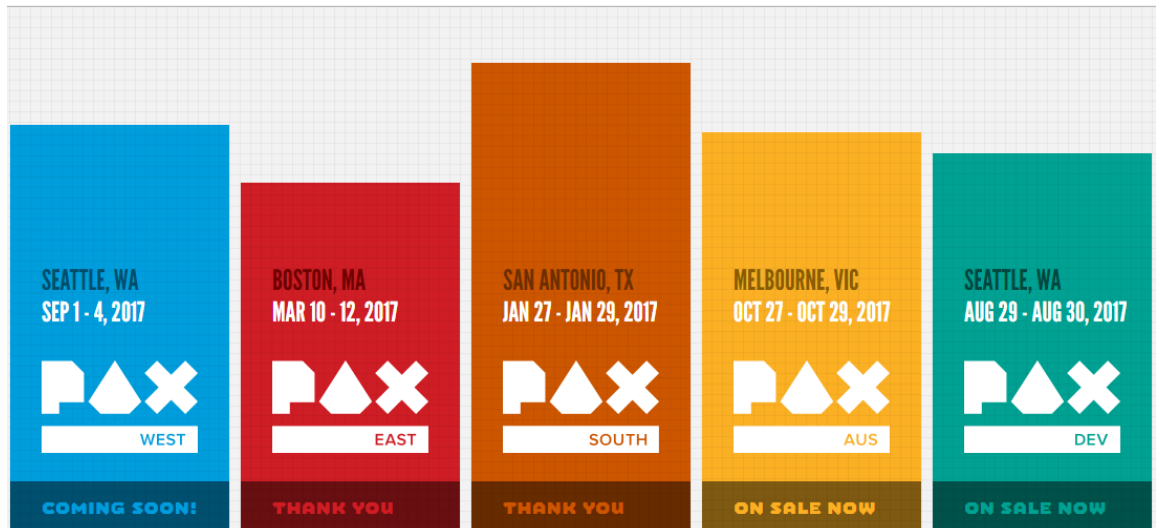
Image 14. The schedule for PAX events for 2017.

Large events aren't often free, though exceptions exist, such as GamesFirst! Helsinki, organized by Supercell. However, the event is not open for everyone, and Supercell decides who will get to attend the event. In most cases, there are tickets that need to be bought to attend the event, with the revenue generated going to the costs of the event and salary of the organizers. There are often incentives for buying tickets, such as early bird discounts or tickets that are sold at a cheaper prize for indie developers or students. This is to ensure at an early stage that there is a source of revenue early on as well.

Another source of revenue for a large event is from it's partners and sponsors. Most often there are several tiers of sponsorship and partnership. For example with the Northern Game Summit, a sponsorship could be obtained by a speaker by taking care of their own travel and accommodation costs. Other alternatives were providing the event with lanyards for the event badges, sponsoring drinks for the after party, or just giving out cash to the organizers. Depending on the size of the event, sponsors may be mandatory for the event to be succesful or even able to be held, while some have a ticket cost that is high enough to warrant the event to be able to bring profit even with a lower amount of partners and sponsors.

4.4 The largest events

There are only a couple of extremely large events in the games industry, such as Gamescom. These events consist of tens of thousands of visitors with hundreds of companies either holding presentations, showcasing their products or sponsoring the event. They are often well-established and have been hold for many times before reaching their current size. Some of these such as the GDC in San Fransisco are often seen as the most important event for a company to attend each year, which is often reflected on the price of the event. As with large events, the main sources of revenue are ticket sales and partners.

Organizing an event on this scale requires a team working full-time on it, securing partnerships and sponsorships, inviting speakers or partners and ensuring everything goes smoothly, as each event is slightly different from the last. Especially sponsors are subject to change, with many companies wanting to sponsor a specific part of an event such as a party, some piece of event merchandise or even the WI-FI during the event.

Additionally, these events have a lot of companies that offer the exhibitors or partners their services. For example as I have registered for Gamescom in the past, I am receiving numerous emails and phone calls weekly about the event, asking if I need a concierge, a constructed booth, electronic appliances or such. An example of such is provided in image 15.
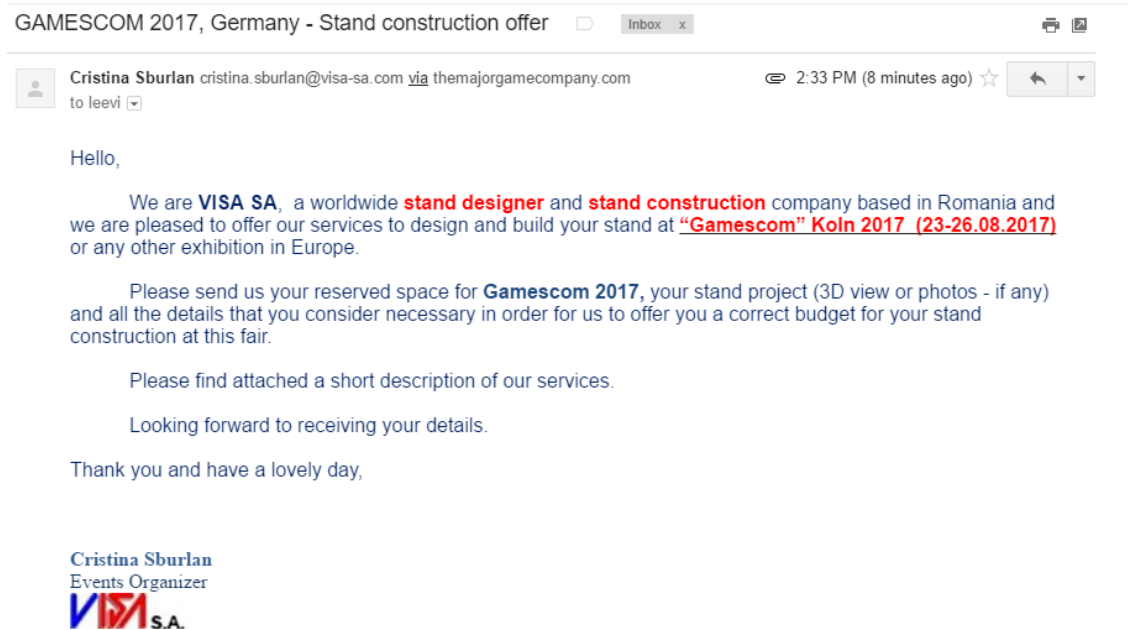
Image 15. Example of a company offering their services for Gamescom

The best part in an event such as this is that there is an enormous amount of people to see your product and for you to meet. People from around the world attend these events, allowing for a developer to meet people they usually wouldn't and to keep in contact with old friends. Often, there is a matchmaking system for companies to make it easier for them to discuss business together as well. This is usually the reason why exhibiting at these events is costly as well.

The downside, however, also lies with the amount of people in the event. It's can be hard or very impossible to meet everyone you would like to meet efficiently, and these kinds of events are hardly relaxing environments for anyone to be in. It is a challenging environment to make meaningful connections and build friendships in. However, for this reason a number of side events. Either with individual developers asking to meet their friends who are in the area for dinner or a social gathering, or a group of developers creating a gathering prior, or during to the actual event. For example the Respawn gathering begun as a small alternative to GDC Europe, but has grown to have over 1500 visitors during 2016 (Respawn, 2016).

5 SUMMARY

To sum everything up, There are events in the games industry that are both for game development, business and pleasure. They may be mixed together, and can vary in size from a couple of part-time developers going together for drinks up to massive professional gatherings where hundreds of companies showcase their games and services. Usually the larger the event is, the more geared towards business it is, but often has parties, side-events or unofficial events in the same area during the same time.

Attending events is extremely important for developers for various reasons. Some events can be used for rest and relaxation between hectic development cycles, while others may serve as important deadlines and milestones for development, for example if the developers are supposed to pitch their game demo at an event. They can be good places to exchange information between developers, learn new knowledge from the speakers present, or exchange rumours. Additionally, they are the best places to meet new people, who may become future colleagues, friends or co-workers.

While organizing events, the three most important things are giving someone a reason to attend, knowledge that there is an event to attend to and to ensure everything goes smoothly. This can be done by offering the developers a chance to do or receive something, whether it be drinks and food at a gathering, the chance to listen to a good speaker, or to have a weekend of developing games in a friendly atmosphere. Next, developers must know of the event, as it allows them to make the decision whether to attend or not. Constant marketing on social media and word of mouth help, as does being consistent. If an event is held during the same month every year for five years, the event will reach more developers easier as developers start to remember that it's a "thing". Lastly, the event must go smoothly. If there are issues during, before or after the event, they must be dealt with promptly and honestly. People may remember a problem that happens with an event, however minor, which may lead to a bad reputation for years to come.

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LIITTEET

Gmail

Leevizer . <leevizeri@gmail.com>

Thesis interview
2 messages

Leevizer . <leevizeri@gmail.com>   Wed, Nov 16, 2016 at 11:49 AM
To: Johan@gameport.se

Short background first: My thesis is called "Event Production in the games industry" and is about answering "what, why, how" about game jams, conferences, trade shows, competitions and the like.

So I will use this interview as padding and confirmation of some claims I wish to make, or alternative viewpoints, should you disagree.

If you have any articles/links that give good answers too, I would love those as they make for good sources as well.

So, questions.

1) Why do you attend game conferences?

2) What professional/business benefits are gained at game conferences?

3) What can older professionals gain from meeting students and newcomers to the industry?

4) Is networking important, and why?

I think those cover that. If I have further questions, I hope I can contact you again. And will buy you a beer at the next NGS or something, wherever we happen to meet.

 Best wishes from Finland,

Leevi Rasila

Johan Toresson <johan@gameport.se>   Wed, Nov 16, 2016 at 12:22 PM
To: "Leevizer ." <leevizeri@gmail.com>

1) Why do you attend game conferences?
- I attend conferences to expand on my network, find out what's going to trend and educate myself further within both development and business.

2) What professional/business benefits are gained at game conferences?
- To build informal relationships with companies you'd like to do business with in the future is almost impossible without meeting IRL. So I spend a lot of time just meeting, greeting and eating with a host of pre-researched high impact "targets". Business comes later.

3) What can older professionals gain from meeting students and newcomers to the industry?
- Knew understandings of old thoughts, scouting talent and inspiration from people who have yet been set in their ways. Less knowledgeable people also means less likely to go down the same thought patterns.

4) Is networking important, and why?
- Yes. Without a network you will have a hard time to to reach the right publishers, press and other developers that can help you along the way during your development up until your release.
[Quoted text hidden]
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Johan Toresson
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