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Joni Kuusisto

PITCH MATERIALS FOR VIDEO GAMES

- case Hear No Evil



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Joni Kuusisto

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- case Hear No Evil

The purpose of this thesis is to showcase the best practises of making high quality pitch materials for video games. The thesis introduces the basic pitching materials and how to create them effectively. The thesis examines three of the most used pitching materials and analyses and discusses their structure, content and format. The thesis also gives advice on what the game publishers are looking for in a game pitch and how to apply this information to the pitching materials to make them more appealing.

The thesis reviews the one-year long pitching process of Rockodile Games' top-down shooter game Hear No Evil. It shows how the pitching materials evolved during the year and what Rockodile Games learned from the feedback that they received from the publishers. The thesis also reflects on what mistakes were made during the pitching process and how these mistakes affected the games development during the process.

KEYWORDS:

pitch, game development, prototype, business development

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VIDEOPELIEN ESITTELYMATERIAALIT

- case Hear No Evil

Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli kehittää Rockodile Gamesin videopelin Hear No Evilin esittelymateriaaleja vuodelle 2018. Työ toteutettiin tutkimalla Rockodile Gamesin vuoden 2017 esittelymateriaaleja ja johtaa niistä hyväksi todettuja tapoja laadukkaiden esittelymateriaalien tekemiseksi videopeleille.

Työ esittelee videopelien esittelyn perusteet ja, sen miten esittelymateriaaleja luodaan tehokkaasti. Työssä esitellään kolme yleisintä videopelien esittelymateriaalityyppiä ja tarkastellaan niiden rakennetta, sisältöä ja formaattia. Työ kertoo, myös mitä pelijulkaisijat etsivät esiteltävistä peleistä ja miten pelistä saadaan houkuttelevampi julkaisijoille. Työssä käytetään hyväksi pelijulkaisijoiden antamaa palautetta Rockodile Gamesin esittelemälle pelille Hear No Evilille. Rockodile Gamesin vuoden kestänyt esittelyprosessi ja siitä käteen jääneet opit esitellään lukijalle.

Esittelymateriaalien kehittämisen tuloksena Rockodile Games sai vuoden 2017 viimeisissä pelitapahtumissa huomattavasti parempaa palautetta pelijulkaisijoilta ja onnistui löytämään myyvän konseptin omaan peliinsä. Yrityksen peli-esittelymateriaalien laatu ja rakenne paranivat huomattavasti vuoden aikana. Rockodile Games jatkaa Hear No Evil –pelinsä esittelyä vuonna 2018.

Opinnäytetyössä esitelty rakenne pelin esittelymateriaaleille ei välttämättä sovi kaikille peleille, mutta antaa hyvän pohjan oman materiaalin rakentamiseen. Jokainen esiteltävä peli on uniikki kokonaisuus, mikä tulisi ottaa huomioon esittelymateriaaleja suunniteltaessa. Yksi tärkeimmistä konsepteista, minkä Rockodile Games oppi vuoden 2017 aikana on pelin uniikkiuden esittelyn tärkeys sekä visuaalisesti näyttävien esittelymateriaalien luominen.

ASIASANAT:

pitch, pelinkehitys, prototyyppi, liiketoiminnan kehittäminen

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

HUD	Heads up display
2D	two-dimensional
3D	three-dimensional
free-to-play	A monetization strategy from game's that are free but include items that can be bought with real money
premium game	A game that costs money to be played

1 INTRODUCTION

Pitch is a way to communicate a value proposal for example to a game publisher in the most effective way possible. There are many ways to pitch the proposed value that can be offered to the other party. This thesis focuses on the pitch materials of a video game.

Finnish game development company Rockodile Games started pitching a game project called Hear No Evil in late 2016. Hear No Evil is a top-down shooter game for PC and consoles. This thesis analyses and discusses the year-long pitching process of Hear No Evil and showcases best practises for making outstanding pitch materials for video games. The thesis also reveals the feedback that Rockodile Games got from the game publishers and how the pitching materials evolved during the year.

The first topic discusses game pitching in general and introduces the basic principles of pitching. It also talks about the role of the publishers and what the publishers are looking for in a game pitch and what kind of materials are the most commonly used in pitching a game for publishers.

The next three topics discuss deeper the structure and content of the usual pitch materials.

- Pitch deck
- Gameplay video
- Prototype of the game

Final topic showcases the pitching process of the game Hear No Evil and how the pitch materials evolved during the year it was pitched for publishers. Also, the publishers feedback will be discussed and lessons learned related to Rockodile Games during the pitching process will be addressed.

2 WHAT IS A GAME PITCH?

Pitch is a way to communicate a value proposal for example to a game publisher in the most effective way possible (Ismail 2014). It is showcasing something that is of value for example to a game publisher. In a game pitch the idea is to make the publisher see the value that your game has to offer to them. Pitching can be done verbally but usually that is not enough to convince the publisher of the idea. Showing concept art or even screenshots of the prototype can make a huge difference. Most publishers want the materials to their email and might request more materials after the game event. (Strom 2015.)



Picture 1. Overview page from the pitch deck of Medusa's Labyrinth. (Strom 2015.)

A game publisher is a company specializing in publishing games. Publishers use internal and external game development studios for creating the games. Game publishers usually have the means of reaching the consumers better than an individual game development company because of their existing client base and publicity. Game publishers usually also pay for the development of the game. (Everiss 2009.)

The simplest pitch can consist of only a few sentences. This is called the one sentence pitch or elevator pitch and it can vary in length (Grebski 2015). Usually a bit more effort

is needed though. The most common pitching material is the pitch deck, that is basically a PowerPoint presentation that showcases what is unique in the game and how it plays. The pitch deck needs to be visually spectacular and can vary in length depending on the game pitched (Enrico 2014).

Pitching can happen anywhere. For example, in a crowded lobby of a game expo. Game developer should be always ready to pitch his/hers next big game project. That's why it is important to have the material ready for example in a smartphone or tablet. It can be hard for the publisher to hear what you are saying but they can't ignore visually great looking gameplay images. (Ismail 2014.)



Picture 2. One sentence pitch from the pitch deck of Hear No Evil.

2.1 Game publishers

Game publisher is a company specializing partly or completely in publishing games in various game marketplaces. Game marketplaces are digital or physical stores selling video games. Some publishers have internal game development teams making the games, but in addition to that the publisher might also be on the lookout for games developed by external game development companies. Some game publishers focus only on publishing games made by external game development teams. (Everiss 2009.)

Game publisher takes a huge risk when signing an external team's game project for a publishing deal. The usual deal is that the game publisher will pay for the development of the game's production for the development company and the game publisher will have a share of the income that the game generates. If the launch of the game flops the publisher will lose its money. The game publisher usually takes care of the marketing

campaign for the game and administrates licenses that the game may be using. (Campbell 2011.)

The current trend in games publishing is that many publishers are relying on taking known brands to support the marketing of the game (Greenspan, Boyd, & Purewal 2014). These include, for example, games using licenses from Marvel movies or the games related to Lord of The Rings movies and books. This moderates the risk of launching the game because well-known popular intellectual properties and brands already have a strong fan base. Game development companies are using this tactic to sell their game idea to the publishers and it also shortens the development time of the project. (Sinclair 2017.)

So, what are game publishers looking for in a new game pitch? Game publishers are generally focused on certain types of games that will fit their current portfolio and supports them in the future (Morel 2014). If the publisher is interested in the pitch as a supplement to its already existing portfolio, the following phase would be business. According to Rockodile Games experience the most important question and the most difficult to answer is the following: can the game make money and can the development company pitching it produce the game (Upton 2017). First part of the answer is the unique selling point of the game. The developer should define what is unique in the game compared to the competitors and what hooks the future clients want the game to possess (Dring 2017). This is tightly related to the core gameplay and core fun of the game. Of course, it is not a good idea for the game to be completely unique, so the developers should use some sense when working on the vision of the game. A good balance is a mix of unique and familiar so the clients and the publisher are not thrown into a completely new world for them. For example, in Hear No Evil the mix is partly familiar top-down shooter gameplay and the unique part stems from making the weapons shoot music at the enemies.

2.2 Pitch materials

Before starting to develop a pitch for a publisher the game developer should have a tangible vision of the game. It would be better for the pitching process to iterate the vision and pitching materials a few times before contacting the publisher. The first impression is important. Once the selected publisher has seen the pitching material it is hard to get their attention later if they didn't like the pitch of the game in the first place. Also, it is

better to invest some time and money into quality art work for the material because the publisher surely wants to see how does the game look when it is finalised (Upton 2017).

Already when working with the vision of the game the developer should start working on the elevator pitch that is a short 30-second-long pitch that describes the essence of the game. This can be used to pitch inside the development company for example to colleagues and their feedback should be collected already at this point. The elevator pitch will make it easier to work with broader pitch materials. The main content in the elevator pitch should be the unique selling points and hooks of the game. The main question would be what differentiates the game from the competitors and what new there is in it.

Every game should have a proper pitch deck (Short 2017). A proper pitch deck will emphasize novelties and innovations of the game. Pitch deck works best as a support for a video or a prototype of the game because it can include much more information in text than a video can (Dring 2017). A pitch deck can be also fully understood without audio present. Furthermore, a pitch deck works as a standalone without a video or prototype. A pitch deck can be delivered by email to the publisher and they can visit the content with their smartphone.

Game video is usually the second to the pitch deck but usually shown first to the publisher because it will gain their attention easier. The pitch deck will deliver answers to the questions that have been raised later. (Dring 2017.) The video could last approximately one to two minutes and should introduce the gameplay of the game. Of course, the unique selling points and hooks should be presented right in the beginning of the video. Video is a great tool in pitching because so much of the unfinished prototype's flaws can be hidden in it. For example, the music and sound as well as game menus and even a hud can be added later into the video. Also, on-screen effects can be added right to the gameplay without coding a single line. (Sohal 2015.)

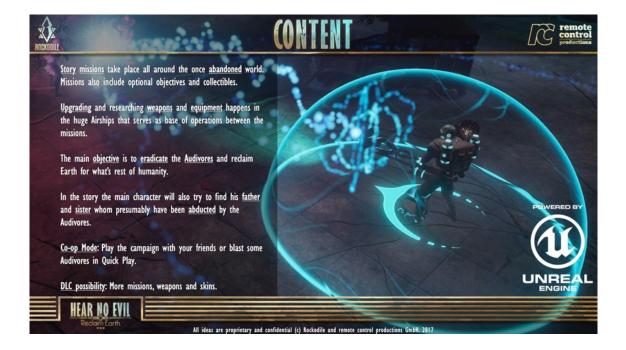
The prototype of the game for pitching purposes is usually the most troublesome and resource driven to make because everything should work live on the device that the prototype is played on. This usually means that the game development team should use a lot of time working on the prototype. The purpose of the prototype is to showcase slice of the final result and to give the publisher chance to experience the gameplay, unique selling points and the fun of the game on a real gaming device (Davis 2010). Especially

for an unexperienced team a prototype is usually mandatory before the publisher will sign the development deal for the game's production (Dring 2017).

3 PITCH DECK

The Pitch deck is a ten to fifteen pages long document presented in a horizontal orientation. It can be composed for example in PowerPoint. (Humphrey 2017.) The purpose of the pitch deck is to showcase what the game is all about, what are the unique selling points, what is the value of the game for the publisher and can the development team execute the production (Strom 2015).

Pitch deck should showcase the visuals and the mood of the game in a proper fashion. In the best case, every page should have images related to the game or at least the theme of the pitch deck should match with the mood of the game (Strom 2015). The pitch deck should represent the game as a finalized and mature product. This means that the art work should be of high quality and specifically made for the pitch deck. Of course, drafts and concept images are good to use but they also should be of high quality. (Jager 2017.) Also, it's better to use only a couple of high quality images rather than filling the document with bad quality concepts if resources do not allow proper results fo every image (Upton 2017). For gameplay screenshots a high-quality prototype of the game is the easiest way to capture images, but for example in 2D games the images can be composed without a playable game. For 3D games compositing the images without a prototype can be much more demanding.



Picture 3. Hear No Evil pitch deck content slide with a mood image in the background.

When contemplating the structure of the pitch deck, storytelling should be kept in mind. Best experience for the reader is if the pitch deck is planned so that every page will carry the story of the game forward. (Jager 2017.) This method works best with a game where the story is part of the unique selling points. Games with a focus on storytelling should have a structure with one story on one page in the pitch deck in order to tell the story of the game in an interesting way. Also, a treatment of the story can be delivered to the publisher separately.

Best way to distribute the pitch deck is to export it as a PDF file for optimal file size and quality. Also, PDF can be opened with almost any device and fonts and layouts will be displayed correctly. PDF files can also use hyperlinks that should be used to direct the reader to the developer's website or a video of the gameplay.

The pitch deck should include the game development company's logo on every page and a confidentiality and copyright notices. If the publisher were to copy ideas from the pitch deck without signing a deal with the game development company at least there is some kind of safety clause existing.

3.1 Cover

The first page of the pitch deck should catch the attention of the reader at the first glance. This means displaying the most interesting art the game has to offer with a high-quality background. For example, this can be the main character in a close-up image. (Strom 2015.) Background should not be too obstructive so the key artwork will emerge easily. However, all the elements should still be in unity with the key art. Picture 4 shows the cover of Hear No Evil's pitch deck as an example.

Name of the game should be presented clearly together with the key art. It can be a text based logo or more styled art based logo or both. The game development studios name and logo should also be present in the cover, but could be positioned in the top or bottom of the page.



Kuva 4. Cover page from the pitch deck of Hear No Evil.

3.2 Overview

Purpose of the overview page is to present key information of the game on a single page. A one sentence pitch fits well at the top of the page continued with short bullet points of the game's main features and unique selling points. (Enrico 2014.) Hooks or unique selling point can be also laid out in their own section at the overview page. Also, good way to describe the game shortly is to compare the game to at least two other similar type of games. For example, game A meets game B in the wild west.

Essential facts of the game should be presented on the overview page. Fact section includes information about the game's genre, platforms that it's planned to be released on, how many players it supports, main technology used, pricing and development time. The facts give an idea of the scale of the production for the publisher and helps the publishers evaluate the risks of the project.

The overview page should not be cluttered with too much text or art. The objective is to give the reader a clear overview of the project. One key art of the game can be used to emphasize features or unique selling points of the game. A good way to also feature art, images or screenshots from the game is to use one large image in the background of the page. The image can be made darker or lighter to bring out text better on top of the

image. This method can be used on all the pages of the pitch deck. Also, the text can have a custom background and borders to make the text easier to read.

3.3 Gameplay

The main purpose of the gameplay page is to show the reader what the game is going to look like when it will be finished. This can be achieved by showing a full-page image of the game's main gameplay. This can be a screenshot from the prototype or a high-quality mock up made by an artist. (Strom 2015.) The idea is to show the scene where the players will use most of their time in the game, for example in a shooter game it would be the shooting scene.

Preferably the scene would have some action going on or something that the reader would found interesting. Also, the scene would show the portrayed perspective of the game. (Strom 2015.) This means that the camera angle from where the scene is showed would be correct. Also, it's important to show examples of the objectives that the player must complete in the game and, if applicable, how the player can progress in the game.



Picture 5. Gameplay page from pitch deck of Hear No Evil.

To make it as clear as possible for the reader the page should have small text boxes describing what is happening in the gameplay image, in other words, how the process proceeds (Strom 2015). The idea is to tell the unique parts of the gameplay that are not self-explanatory for example in Rockodile Games' game Hear No Evil that would be the music shooting guns. If the gameplay image has a lot of concepts that need explaining or not all of the concepts are visible in one image the gameplay section can be divided to two pages so the one gameplay page would not be so cluttered with text.

The game's gameplay can also have different stages that are important to showcase in the pitch deck. In that case, it can be useful to showcase many pictures. This can be achieved by dividing the gameplay scenes in multiple pages or placing many images in a single page. Anyway, the first gameplay page in the pitch deck should be full screen and only showing one image. The first image should be most important and after that there can be secondary image shown in the next pages.

The easiest way to create the gameplay screenshot or mock-up on the pitch deck is to capture it from the prototype if the developer is making a prototype of the game. If the game developer is not making a prototype or the prototype has low quality artwork a mock up can be a better way. Concept art can be also used in the gameplay image, but it should be made clear to the reader so he/she doesn't take the concept as final quality artwork by mistake. In this situation, it can be better to make the whole scene look like a draft or a concept to emphasize that the image is not final. Even making one asset or object in the gameplay scene look too final and the rest is less finalized, the publisher can get a feeling that the developer is focusing on the wrong thing too early (Upton 2017).

3.4 Metagame

Purpose of the metagame page is to give the publisher an idea how the metagame works in the game. Metagame means the game outside of the main game. This can be for example upgrading your character, selecting the weapons or managing your inventory. Metagame is especially important in mobile free to play games that have a stronger focus in the metagame. The main game might be something simple and casual but the fun of the game might come completely from the metagame. (Jernström 2017.)

The metagame section of the pitch deck is especially important in free to play games on any platforms. It might even come before the gameplay section in some cases. Publishers will want to know about the metagame and the free to play monetization of the game in a free to play game. In a premium game that is where the player must pay for the game before they can start playing, the metagame section is not that important but it is a chance to showcase the game's features even deeper. Especially if the premium game has something unique in its metagame it is worthwhile to showcase this section. The metagame section can be divided to two page if necessary to showcase more of the content.



Picture 6. Loadout page from the pitch deck of Hear No Evil.

The metagame section can for example show a mock up or screenshot of the game's character upgrade or selection scene. This gives a great opportunity to showcase for example the weapons of the game or the abilities of the main character. For example, in Rockodile Games' pitch deck of the game Hear No Evil the metagame section showcases the character selection, loadout and mission selection scenes from the prototype. Various weapons and equipment is shown in this section and additional information about these items are given in little text boxes. The metagame section in this example is divided to two pages so that the mission selection scene from the opperation.

3.5 Content and features

The purpose of the content and features pages is give some more information to the reader now that he/she has been introduced the main gameplay and metagame of the game. This can be executed in various way. The content can be explained in a bit lengthier text if necessary. Also, if the game has some special features that are not so tied to the metagame or main gameplay this is the right section to showcase these features. Content and features section can be divided to as many pages as the creator wants as long as the pitch deck doesn't grow too large. This section can also showcase how much gaming content the game has to offer. This can be represented in the number of levels the game is going to have and how many hours of gameplay it takes to finish them.



Picture 7. Enemies page from the pitch deck of Hear No Evil.

Rockodile Games' Hear No Evil's pitch deck has divided the content and features to three different pages. The first one only showcases the unique weapons that the game features. This is because one of the hooks of the game are these weapons. Also, the unique enemy characters of the game are showcased in the second content and features section. The third one called only "content" showcases how the story of the game is progressed and some cool features of the game like "Co-op Mode". Choosing if the developer wants to use this section is completely up to him/her and it depends very much on the game being pitched.

3.6 Market and competitors

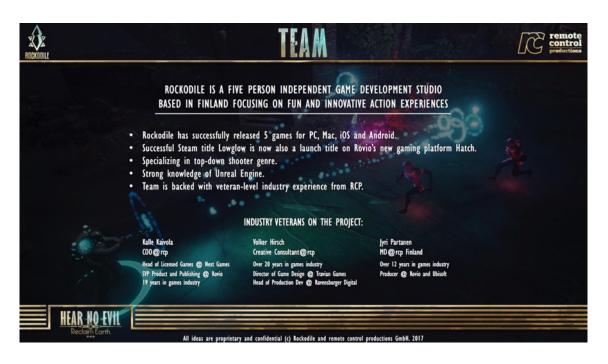
Purpose of the market and competitors section is to give the reader an insight into the value of the game by showing the potential it can have in the current market (Strom 2015). One of the purposes of the pitch deck is for it to be a value proposition for the publisher so by showing data supporting the games potential the publisher might be more convinced. It's also beyond state-of-the-art to show that the developer is aware of the competitors and has studied other similar games.

The page can be structured by showing examples of similar games and cases succeeding in the market. Also, if the game for example has some unique multiplayer features it can be beneficial to show data from similar systems bringing value to a game. Competitors can be showcased with a short list and telling some relevant data from them like genre, popularity and similarities to the game being pitched. Also, small pictures of the competitors can be added if there is enough room for them. The game being pitched should be never compared directly to the most successful competitors because it's unrealistic that the game would perform as well (Upton 2017). Also, the same advice goes to presenting financial projections.

Market and competitors section is especially important for games that have an unusual genre or features. Also, entering new platforms or using new kind of monetization strategies would benefit from the section. Games being pitched for more traditional platforms, genres and monetization strategies might not benefit so much from the market and competitors page and it can be left out in many cases. Many publishers are already familiar with the current market trends and if the game being pitched belongs to one of the more popular genres it will be better to use this space in the document for something else. Competitors can be showcased for example in the overview page or a page called similar games.

3.7 Team, track record and contact information

The pitch deck should end in a team showcase page where the purpose is to introduce the development team to the reader and show that the development company has enough skills to succeed in the production of the game (Upton 2014). The team and their previous work and achievements should be showcased in a personal way. The team can be described in a few sentences and followed by a list of successes and achievements. (Strom 2015.) An image of the team can be also shown to the reader. Signing a deal with a publisher comes easier with experience. A young team should use their imagination to give the best possible image of themselves to the publisher. Also, if possible the team page should show the team's excitement for the project as much as possible.



Picture 8. Team page from the pitch deck of Hear No Evil.

The track record part of this section can be placed on its own page. It's is basically a miniature portfolio of the development company showcasing previous projects and games that are relevant to pitching the current game. Focus on the pitch deck should be anyway on the new game being pitched so the track record shouldn't be too long and shouldn't go into too much detail.

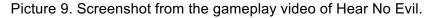
Contact information should be last piece of information in the pitch deck. Name and email is sufficient. If the team page comes too full of information it can be a good idea to move the contact information to its own page.

4 VIDEO

A gameplay video of the game being pitched is one of the most important materials needed for pitching (Jager 2017). Purpose of the video is to give the publisher an understanding on how the core gameplay of the game plays, what is the game's theme, how do the visual look and what is fun in the game. (Davis 2010.) The developer should aim high on the quality of the video in every detail. Basically, the optimal situation is when the game on the video looks like it could be from a finished game. Of course, this is not possible always. If incomplete artwork is used in the video it should be made clear to the viewer that it is an unfinished asset. If the game being pitched represents a new kind of gameplay and features it can be justified to present less high quality art. In this case the video's purpose would be to prove that this type of game can be fun and that it will have value for the publisher.

The video should be around one minute to two minutes long and should feature the core gameplay of the game as in the pitch deck the gameplay page showcases (Sohal 2015). A short intro can be added to the beginning of the video to introduce the viewer to the theme and setting of the game. After that various core gameplay features of the game should be presented in a clear but exciting and forward moving way. The video shouldn't be dull or slow at any point. Rockodile Games found out while making their video for Hear No Evil that the video should be cut to show as much as possible the action parts of the game and for example running from objective to another was not something that is very interesting to the viewer.





4.1 Faking parts of the video

Video is very forgiving because developer can choose what to show for the publisher and focus on the right features when building the prototype from where the video is recorded. For example, the level that is played in the video can be incomplete because the person recording the video can choose to show only the completed parts. Effects, sound and art can be added later to the video in editing. If the game only uses 2D art, the video can be even made without making a prototype. A 3D game might be a bit harder to record without a prototype but for example the two-dimensional parts can be added in the editing software. This means for example the in game hud and other text information. Also, menus, player selection and the metagame can be added without programming the features to the prototype if needed.

The video should be made so that it can be easily watched from a mobile device and isn't too large in size. At the end of the video the name of the game and the development studio should be displayed. The developer can also display the contact information here.

5 PROTOTYPE

Purpose of the prototype of the game is to give the publisher a chance to try out how the game feels to play and to show the unique selling points and hooks of the game. Unique selling points and hooks should be in the spotlight in the prototype. They can be even exaggerated a bit. The prototype should represent the final quality of the game if possible. This will give the publisher the best impression of the game and also of the development team (Smith 2015). In short the prototype shows the publisher the most important features and hooks of the game in a package imitating the final product.

5.1 User experience

Not everything has to work in the prototype. Many features that the final game would have can be left out (Preparing a game demo 2017). Menus should be good quality and working but many features can be left out by showing them in the menus but making the buttons look like these features are disabled or locked. This gives the player an understanding of what features the final game will have. Mock up menus can give the player a good insight into the game's metagame without the need to implement these features.

The prototype should be as clear as possible for the player to use. Some time should be used to make sure that the user experience of the prototype is good (Preparing a game demo 2017). For example, if the game can be tested with keyboard and mouse and also with a controller the changing of these input devices should be made easy for the player. Also, a short tutorial in the beginning of the gameplay, ensures that even the most inexperienced player can try out the game. The gameplay itself should be relatively easy so that every tester has even a chance to get a feeling of the game. The difficulty of the game can get harder towards the end so that the more experienced players can also feel challenged. This also helps to showcase the variety of the gameplay and how difficult the gameplay can get in the final product.



Picture 10. Movement tutorial from the prototype of Hear No Evil.

5.2 Gameplay and delivery

The developers should aim for gameplay that shows the unique features of the game within five minutes of the gameplay. The gameplay can be divided to different stages where the difficulty and objectives of the gameplay changes. For example, in the beginning of the gameplay the player is given a chance to practice the movement of the character and interacting with the level.

The prototype should be delivered to the publisher in a way that the publisher can't fail to start the game. This means that the installation process and starting up should be made very clear and instructions should be included in the prototype. System requirements should be informed to the publisher. The game can be showcased in a game event to the publishers. Here the feedback from the publisher can be collected instantly and the developer can be sure that the publisher can play the prototype of the game.

6 CASE HEAR NO EVIL

Hear No Evil is a game concept made by Rockodile Games in 2017. The game is a topdown shooter game for PC and consoles telling the story of the remnants of the humanity fighting for their future in a dystopian Earth. The unique selling point of the game is that aliens consisting only of sound had invaded Earth and the survivors had to flee to the skies in airships while the aliens too over the surface. The sound aliens were completely invisible to the naked eye and they could be only heard. Sixty years later humanity decided to take Earth back by attacking the sound aliens with their modified guns that could defeat the enemy and synesthesia induced soldiers that could see sounds. Rockodile Games started working on the pitch for the game already in December 2016 and a pitch deck and a video was first showcased to publishers in GDC 2017. The game received positive feedback from the event and the pitching continued in five gaming events in total during 2017.

6.1 The first version

Rockodile Games started preparing for the pitching by making a clear vision for the game and defining the concept tightly. In December 2016, the team was ready to start the production of the prototype for the game. The prototype and pitch deck of the game was made concurrently so that one of the team members focused only on creating the pitch deck and the rest of the team worked on the prototype. The prototype was used for capturing images for the pitch deck and a video was made from it. The team also used the characters from the prototype to create high quality images as key art for the pitch deck.



Picture 11. First character iteration versus the latest character from Hear No Evil.

Feedback from GDC 2017 was very positive and many publishers were interested in seeing more of the game. Especially the sound driven gameplay was seen as an unique approach to a top-down shooter game. Unfortunately, the prototype for Hear No Evil was not completely ready to be sent out to publishers at the time of GDC 2017, but the team finished a first version of it during Spring 2017. The prototype featured one level of gameplay with a character that used regular weaponry against the sound based aliens and the character had skills that were focused on revealing and distracting the invisible sound aliens. The prototype and the pitch was critiqued for lacking on the core- and metagame side. The sound hook was not strong enough.



Picture 12. Metagame page from the first pitch deck of Hear No Evil.

6.2 The second version

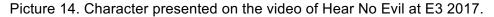
The next gaming event Hear No Evil was showcased at was the Nordic Game conference and E3 in the Spring and Summer of 2017. According to the feedback from the last event the team decided to chance the game's enemy behavior and visual look. An unique glowing look was created for the enemies to emphasize the fact that they are invisible sound. This also made the game look even better. The enemies were added with glowing markers when they were invisible so the player could spot them easier, but they had to be revealed before they could be shot. A completely new level was created for the prototype with more objectives and varying environment. The pitch deck for the game was almost completely reworked. All the existing images and art was replaced with new ones from the new prototype. Also, more information about the metagame and progression in the game was added. The original vision of the game changed drastically during the second iteration of the game and this meant that team was rewriting the design pillars during pitching. This can bring serious problems in the later stages of production.



Picture 13. Enemy page from the pitch deck of Hear No Evil presented at Nordic Game 2017.

For E3 event the main character of the prototype was changed to a more sci fi styled character compared to the older version. But this new character never made it to the pitch deck. Also, new version of the video was recorded and edited for E3, but not much time was used for the materials in this event. This time the feedback for Hear No Evil was more positive and numerous publishers were interested. Many publishers asked the team to provide more details concerning the gameplay and uniqueness of the game. Also, the game got its first initial offer from a publisher and things started to move forward.

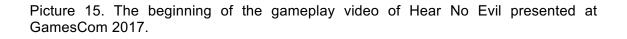




6.3 The third version

In August 2017 Hear No Evil was pitched at GamesCom and the team decided to rework the video of the game. The team was so busy at the time that the pitch deck for the game was not updated at all and conflicted with the videos graphics and art. At this point the lack of updated pitch deck didn't matter so much as the team was pitching with the video and prototype first and the pitch deck was only used to give additional information to publishers that were interested. This time the video was drastically improved from the previous by removing the story parts completely and focusing on only quality gameplay. Loadout and mission selection were showcased for the first time in the video and the alien enemies were described briefly. The first version of the video used cuts to jump from action scene to the next action scene which made video hectic and hard to follow. The new video for GamesCom was recorded in one long take and was not cut at all for the gameplay part. This made it much easier to focus on the gameplay.





The team worked hard for the prototype changes and a new video for GamesCom, but the feedback was a letdown. According to the feedback the game was still missing a clear unique selling point and the sound mechanics were not well developed. Publishers were asking us to develop the prototype further before they would be interested in signing a deal with us. At this point the team was at crossroads. To continue the development or to drop it and move to another game pitch. The team had a big problem with the sound mechanics and were feeling that they couldn't develop it the direction the publishers were requesting. The team decided that the unique selling point of the game had to be reinvented and iterated more in order to advance to the next stage with the publishers. The current one would not carry itself to a finished product.

6.4 The final version

Luckily the next event was at the beginning of November so the team had some time to work on the game. A revised vision for the game was created and a new gameplay mechanic was tested properly as a prototype before starting to make the rest of the new pitching materials. The story of the game would stay basically the same but the bigger changes were made to the enemies, weapons and core gameplay of the game. New enemies would not be invisible although they would be still sound based aliens. Weapons would not represent familiar weapons but they were completely reworked to look like weapons that shoot sound energy. Core gameplay was reworked so that the character wouldn't have any special skills but he would use grenades and shields to fight the enemies in addition to the new weapons. Also, the main character and the level of the game were completely reworked. Same happened to the graphical outlook of the game when it was changed to a more simpler style and had less art deco elements.



Picture 16. Weapons of Hear No Evil were presented in its own page on the pitch deck made for Games Connection Europe 2017.

The next and final event of 2017 where Hear No Evil was pitched was Games Connection Europe. The team created a new revised pitch deck and a video for the event. The prototype was revised to the point that it could be used to record new gameplay video and images for materials but the prototype was not taken to the event to be tested. Because of tight schedule it was decided that the prototype would be finished after the event.

The newest pitch deck for Hear No Evil got a completely new graphical outlook with new gameplay images as background for the pages and new fonts and logo for the game. Texts were iterated and updated according to the new gameplay vision changes and the

structure was reworked to showcase the new weapons and enemies better. For the video of the game the team decided to change the sounds and music in editing. The team had an idea for the weapons that they would shoot real music tracks to the enemies. The new sounds were implemented in post to the video and it worked great. Because of such a tight schedule the team had no time to implement the complex sound system to the prototype. It was not easy for the team to get the music shooting guns to sound great on the game engine, but in video editing the sounds could be implemented much faster. This was a bold move for the team to try out something so unique but at least it was something that publishers wouldn't have seen before.



Picture 17. New graphical outlook of the pitch deck for Hear No Evil.

Feedback from Games Connection Europe was outstanding. Reshaping the weapon system paid off for the team and the publishers loved it. Especially the got excited for the new sound the weapons were making and it was thought as a unique game idea. The team decided to emphasize even more the uniqueness of the new weapons in the new prototype that will be showcased to the publishers at the end of 2017.



Picture 18. Compilation of all the covers for the pitch deck of Hear No Evil during the year 2017. Order from top to bottom and left to right.

Pages	Iteration 1	Iteration 2	Iteration 3
1	Cover	Cover	Cover
2	Overview	Overview	Story
3	Story	Story	Story
4	Story	Story	Story
5	Story	Story	Overview
6	Metagame	Metagame	Character
7	Metagame	Metagame	Missions
8	Gameplay	Metagame	Gameplay
9	Gameplay	Character	Gameplay
10	Core loop	Gameplay	Weapons
11	Content	Enemies	Enemies
12	Team	Screenshots	Screenshots
13		Core loop	Content
14		Content	Team
15		Team	Contact

Table 1. Structure on the different iterations of Hear No Evil's pitch decks.

7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to showcase the best practises of making high quality pitch materials for video games and review the one-year long pitching process of Rockodile Games' top-down shooter game Hear No Evil. Every game development company has their own way of pitching a game and the best practises showcased in this thesis might not work for every game. Every game is a unique product and the pitch should reflect the uniqueness of the game but this work can be used as framework especially for action games on the PC and console platforms.

Overall this thesis was successful in gathering information about the structure and content of game pitching materials. Game publishers point of view was analyzed and the thesis gave advice on how to create a pitch that gets the publisher interested. Most of the topics analyzed in the thesis are rarely discussed in the public and gathering information was difficult. On many parts of the thesis experiences and feedback got from publishers from pitching Hear No Evil were used as reference.

Pitching of Hear No Evil will continue in the future but with a lower intensity. Rockodile Games didn't sign a deal with any publishers during 2017, but the team has good leads for the next year. Learnings from the pitching of Hear No Evil will be used in the future games the team will showcase. It is still early to say how much the performance of the team has risen as a result of the learnings made during 2017.

Iterating the pitch deck of Hear No Evil during the year 2017 resulted in a completely new pitching format for Rockodile Games that can improve the overall quality of the company's pitches in the future. The team learned the importance of the quality in the prototyping and this will result in the rise of the quality in the future prototypes the company is set to pitch in the future. The company will separate prototypes to game mechanic testing prototypes and showcase prototypes to save time in the process.

The team learned many things during the pitching process. One of the biggest learnings was the importance of the unique selling points and the fact that they must be well defined in the pitch materials. This could be seen from the first feedbacks asking the team what is unique in the game compare to other titles. Second learning was the importance of vision keeping. This means that one of the team members should be appointed to be the vision keeper and his/her task would be to safeguard the vision of

the game and inform the team if the vision was starting to change too much from the original. Third learning is related to prototyping. The team did the mistake of rushing the game into pitching phase without properly testing out the game mechanics with a separate prototype. The team basically prototyped the mechanics as the game was being pitched and this led to changes in the mechanics, vision and gameplay of the game during the pitching process. Extra work could have been minimized by this way because the team delivered a high-quality prototype at every iteration which meant many hours were wasted on new graphics and coding. Prototyping the mechanics could have been done with a lot lighter workload. At the last iteration, the team had learned this important piece of information and was able to prototype before making the pitch materials.

Analyzing the year-long pitching process of Hear No Evil helped Rockodile Games to improve their pitching and prototyping strategy. This information can save work time on future games and pitches. By pitching efficiently, the value proposition to a publisher or a client, the development team can save time in their work and improve their chances of getting a deal. Pitching an own game to game publishers is a huge risk for a game development company and all companies should strive for better performance to save time in the process. Every game development company should aim to improve their pitches on every iteration and time should be used to research the mistakes made on old pitches. Pitching effectively is important because of the competition in the game industry. Countless game development companies are pitching for the publishers and they can almost go cherry picking for the most promising projects.

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