

Pitching ideas



Getting your game published

As a designer, your work is always going to come under a critical eye. Everyone has an opinion and people are unlikely to trust your judgement until you've proved your worth. However, your team are much more friendly than the potential publishers, and rightly so. Publishers are the people controlling the money to make your game. They have different concerns to you. For example: does your game stand a chance of standing out in a crowded marketplace? Can the team get it finished on time and within budget? How will it be marketed? Throughout the project's lifespan your judgement is going to be questioned by your publisher—but first you have to get a publisher. To get a publisher you have to pitch.

▼ Conventions

Pitch meetings may happen at conferences or conventions, such as the Tokyo Game Show.

When you're pitching your project you have to remember that the publisher will need to be convinced that they actually want your game. They are much more likely than you to see the multi-million dollar risks involved in taking on your project.

Initial meetings

The pitching process starts with a simple 'getting to know you' meeting. Initial meetings often happen at conventions such as the Tokyo Game Show. During these conventions the publisher is going to be pitched lots of ideas and presented with new business propositions. Key to these early meetings is to be punctual and polite. Of course it helps to have an idea or demo ready to give purpose to the meeting, but it's more than likely you'll be forgotten by the end of the day.

Following up on initial meetings is essential. They won't call you. Once you're back in touch you'll have some idea of how the meeting actually went. If your calls are returned, the pitching process can begin in earnest. Often this will mean visiting the publisher's headquarters for what is really the first meeting.



The pitching experience

Pitching can be terrifying, but as long as you stick to some essential principles, you'll get through it.

1 Have conviction in your project

If you don't think your project is going to work, a publisher will notice this quicker than you can imagine, and your hard-won opportunity will be lost.

2 Defend your project to the hilt

Publishers ask hard questions. After giving a detailed project presentation, you may simply be asked: 'Why?' This is possibly the most difficult question you will ever be asked – make sure you have an answer ready for it.

3 Don't be too precious with your idea

When you pitch you have to remember that your publisher has a different agenda to you. They are thinking about how your game is going to fit into their development line-up. If you're planning a soccer game and your publisher throws you a wild idea like 'How about if we put Tom Cruise in it?' it means that they have an exclusive deal with Tom Cruise to do a

game and have no idea how to use it. Your immediate reaction may be 'no', but bear in mind that the suggestion of Tom Cruise is positive. It means they are seriously considering your project for their line-up. Be diplomatic – say something like 'Tom Cruise! Wow! We'd have to think how best to use him in the game. Is he a soccer fan?'

It's more than likely this Tom Cruise connection will never happen and they will go with your original plan, but don't dismiss the idea. It shows the publisher that you are flexible and willing to listen to their suggestions.

4 Think big; know your publisher

If you're simply meeting with a new publisher to throw around new ideas then it pays to think big. If you're going to see Eidos, for example, pitch your take on Tomb Raider. Do your research – know everything that's worked in Tomb Raider, everything that hasn't, give it your own unique spin, and pitch it enthusiastically. You're highly unlikely to end up doing a Tomb Raider game but your sheer ambition will give the publisher confidence.

5 Practise pitching before the meeting

You're going to be nervous – everyone is. The only way to gain confidence in pitching is to practise. Practise on your team and on anyone who will listen. Get used to talking about your project. The more you do it the better you will become.

Some people are naturally better at pitching than others. If there's someone on your team who oozes confidence

and fully understands the project, let them lead the pitch. You can always jump in when there's an area you can help communicate better—but never talk over each other.

6 Have fun!

Pitching can be fun once you get over the fear factor. Remember, a great idea, meticulous preparation, and a healthy dose of luck can bring great rewards.

Engineering your pitch opportunity

Increasingly, computer game shows are becoming industry-only, such as the E3 show

(pictured here). However, pitching need not be restricted to these events; many meetings happen as a result of contacting specific companies.

