JOSEPH ABRAHAM, KAWAII KON 2022

MAKING A JRPG

Being and Indie Game Developer in Hawaii

ABOUT ME

- Born and raised in Maui

- Lived in San Diego 15 years

- Background in Web Development

- In my spare time, I like to surf, paddle, lift weights, read manga, watch anime, do nerd things

WHY I DEV

I started making games because I teach middle school part time and I saw the types of games that middle schoolers are playing. I decided I could make a game like that myself.

ACCOLADES

- **Released about a dozen assets or resource packs**

- **Released four games**

- **My main project is called Familia**

- **Familia is also my first release**

- **Familia has been featured by content creators over 100 times**

TODAY WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT THE PROCESS OF CREATING OUR OWN GAME

FAMILIA

- Turned Based RPG
- Based on 90s Style
- Solo Developed Game
- Martial Arts Themed
- The story focuses on a family whom gets wrapped into a roar to retake their homeland.

WHILE THE CONCEPTS OF THIS PRESENTATION ARE RELEVANT FOR A SMALL TEAM, THEY COME FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF CREATING A GAME ALONE

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

1. Indie vs. AAA

2. Solo Game Dev Skillsets

3. Setting Your Expectations Accordingly

4. Marketing Your Game

5. How to Get Started

6. Funding Your Dream Project (Familia Revenue Breakdown)

7. Where to Publish

8. Closing Thoughts

9. Questions?

PART 1:
INDIE VS. AAA

LARGE GAME COMPANIES VS. SMALL ONES

As an indie developer, there are a few things available to you that are not available to AAA developers. Take advantage of whatever you can to get ahead.

ADVANTAGES OF BEING INDIE

- You don't need as much money to get started
- You don't need as much revenue on your titles
- You can move quickly and be more financially efficient in a small space
- You can really push progressive and innovative styles of games

DISADVANTAGES OF BEING INDIE

- You don't have a big budget
- You don't have a reputation

PART 2:
SOLO GAME DEV SKILLSETS

WHAT SKILLS HELP WITH GAME DEV

YOU WILL HAVE TO LEARN SOME STUFF

SKILL #1 - PROGRAMMING

Javascript, C#, C++, Etc.

Programming skills are a must for every game developer. Some may argue that many non-code options exist for game and software development. While workflows like Construct and RPG Maker can be used to make great games, they still require a form of programming. Eventing and block coding are a form of programming, even if the code is less direct.

Learning to code can be extremely intimidating if you don't understand the fundamentals. While you can certainly hire people to help you with programming, I would suggest trying to develop an intermediate level of programming knowledge. That way you can better communicate with whomever you need to collaborate with.

SKILL #2 - ASSET CREATION

Art + Audio

Video games are visual and auditory mediums. While I've seen many great games made entirely using stock art and stock audio, such games don't tend to be commercially successful. There are plenty of great resources to learn how to create or find art for your game.

While it may seem silly to some, Youtube is a viable resource to learn how to draw and/or animate. It's better to create your own original art for your game, even if it's ugly. For the player, it's more important to have a unique experience than a polished one.

SKILL #3 - SOFTWARE

Engine + Code Editor or IDE

Being a developer will require you to master many software platforms. Learn the tools and they will serve you well.

SKILL #3 - SOFTWARE (CONTINUED)

Engine

- **Custom Engine / No Engine**

- **Unity**

- **Godot**

- **Construct**

- **GDevelop**

- **RPG Maker (paid)**

SKILL #3 - SOFTWARE (CONTINUED)

Code Editor / IDE (Integrated Development Environment)

- **Visual Studio**

- **Visual Studio Code**

- **Atom**

- **Sublime**

- **Notepad++**

SKILL # 3 - SOFTWARE (CONTINUED)

Image Editors

- **Krita**

- **Gimp**

- **Photoshop (paid)**

- **Pro Motion (Paid /w free light version)**

- **Aseperite (paid)**

SKILL # 3 - SOFTWARE (CONTINUED)

3D Rendering / Modeling

- Blender

- Maya (paid)

Sound Recording/Editing

- Audacity

- Garage band

- Logic

- Ableton

PART 3:
SETTING YOUR EXPECTATIONS ACCORDINGLY

SET YOUR SALES EXPECTATIONS LOW

... AND BE PREPARED TO SUFFER

EXPECTATIONS

Highs and Lows

Having the required hard skills to be a game developer is only half the battle. Being an indie developer requires drive, but more importantly, the developer must be the type of person who enjoys working constantly for huge stretches of time. Additionally, the work is usually done entirely alone with no pay in sight.

Solo game developer lifestyles offer little in the way of encouragement. Don't expect the people around you to support your choices. You may find that your family and friends do not approve. If you have the skills to be a game developer, you can make substantial income elsewhere, and with less effort. Many of the people close to you may encourage you to take a path that is more financially predictable.

EXPECTATIONS

Money and Time

If you don't have money, development will take plenty of time. If you don't have time, the development will require plenty of money. While every person is certainly limited by time, some are not necessarily limited by money. Thus, money will always help you with your project.

It you have extra money, you can always use it to market your game (more on that later).

EXPECTATIONS

Most Games Make Less than 100 Dollars

It's great that you love your game and are passionate about your project. Make sure others have the opportunity to try your game during development. Be prepared to not make heaps of money on your game's release day.

Marketing

The right marketing, will make a game that is considered 'bad' to still be financially successful. Figure out how you are going to market your game.

PART 4:
MARKETING YOUR GAME

MARKETING IS EVERYTHING

MARKETING

Revenue Doesn't Necessarily Reflect a Product's Quality

How many people can make a better hamburger than McDonald's? Most people would think so. Then why does McDonald's make more money than they do? Because McDonald's has mastered a business system, while most people focus on building a better hamburger.

-Robert Kiyosaki, Rich Dad Poor Dad

MARKETING

Paid Media

Advertising / paid promotions are considered paid media. Paid media also includes things like sponsored videos or sponsored streams.

Ads are tricky but it can produce revenue sometimes. It is important to manage your budgets wisely and constantly keep track of the effectiveness of the advertising. If it costs you $100 to get $50 revenue, your ads aren't working.

MARKETING

Owned Media

Many think that if they just make a great game, the audience will come. Nothing could be further from the truth. An indie game developer MUST build their own audience, especially at the beginning of their project. The audience you build will help when you are trying to sell your game, and it will also give more confidence to publishers and collaborators.

Furthermore, much of your early financial support will come from your early audience. If your game isn't available yet, you can sell merchandise or get donations via Twitch, Patreon, or Ko-Fi. Youtube can also help you to produce through ads, memberships, and donations.

MARKETING

Earned Media

This is media that others create about you. This is the best type of media as it requires no additional effort on your part. Make an effort to reach out to content creators.

As a side note, don't be afraid of negative reviews. You can always update your game to implement new ideas you get from criticism. Then you can reach out to past reviewers.
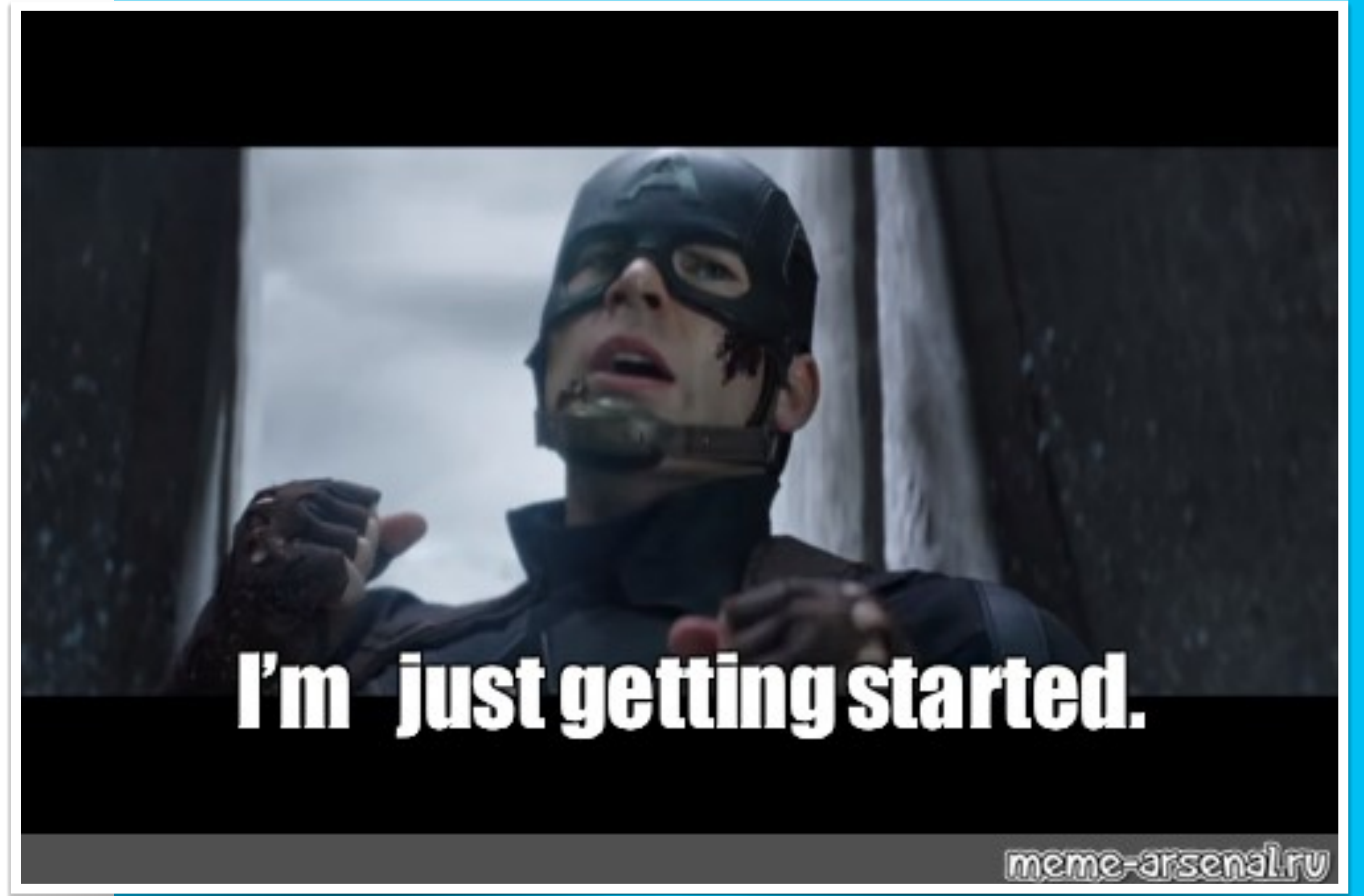
MARKETING

Visibility from Your Sales Platform

Many sales platforms, like Steam, offer many options in the way of marketing. Here are some examples.

- **Wishlists**

- **Pre-purchases**

- **Putting a game on sale**

- **Community pages**

PART 5:
HOW TO GET STARTED

LETS GET IT STARTED

GETTING STARTED

Make a Small Game First

New developers tend to over-scope their first game. AAA games have thousands of people on staff. You will not be able to create a game of that magnitude by yourself.

Fortunately, there is plenty of space in the market for indies.

GETTING STARTED

Work Your Way Up to Your Dream Game

Make a small game, over the course of a week or a weekend and release it. Get used to the process of releasing something. Players might think your game is trash but that's okay, it's your first game. Just be grateful that people are playing your game and learn from the process.

For the next game, make something slightly larger. Maybe it will take longer, but that's no worry. Release it! Continue this cycle for a year and you'll eventually have a candidate for a game that you can start selling!

After a few years of selling your games, it might be time to start thinking about that huge dream game that you wanted to make. You may, however, decide to keep making small games. It's really up to you. That's the freedom afforded to indie game developers.
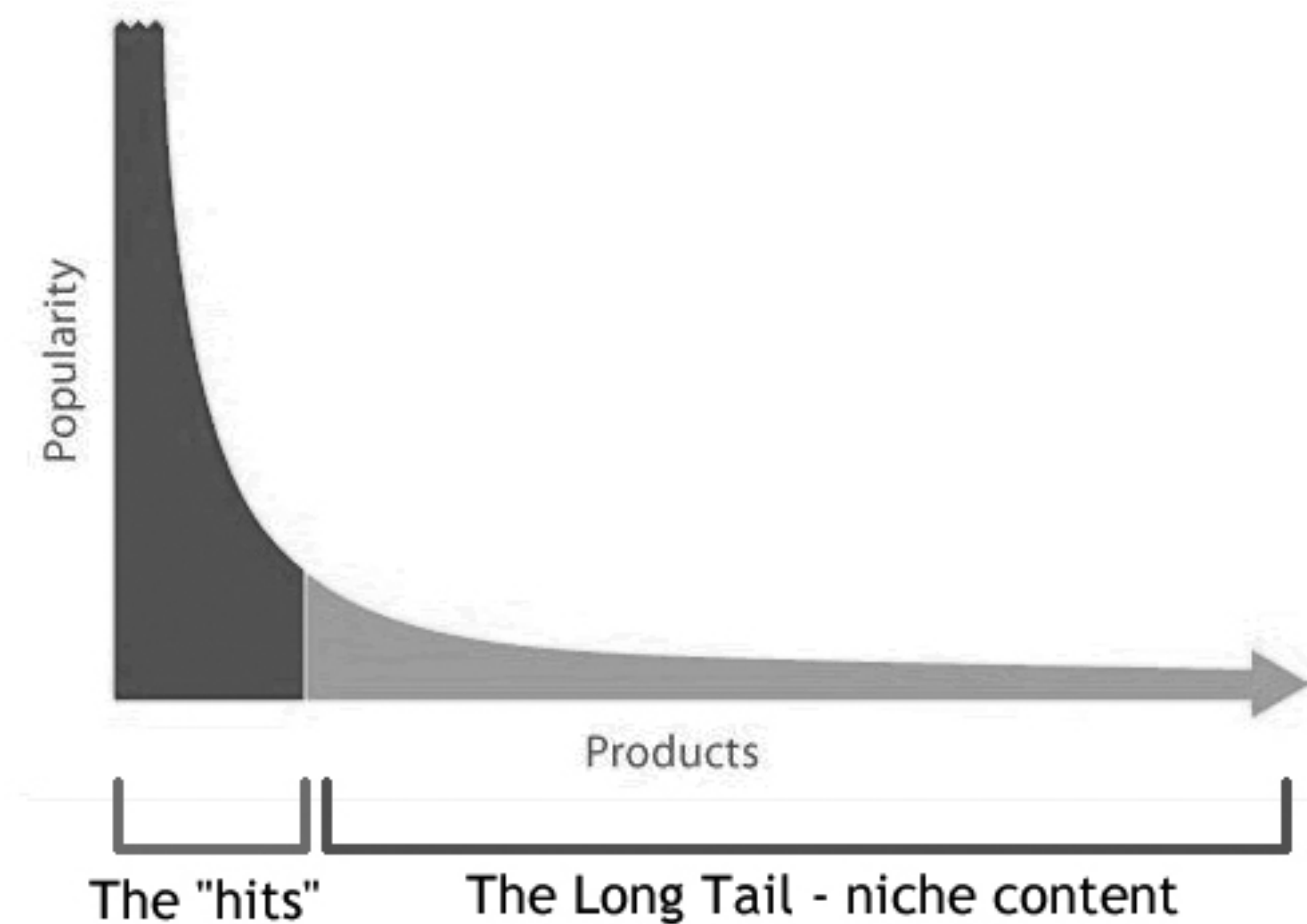
PART 6:
FUNDING YOUR DREAM PROJECT

MONEY MATTERS

FUNDING YOUR DREAM PROJECT

Long-tail Sales

Most indie titles tend to have greater long-tail sales than AAA games.

FUNDING YOUR DREAM PROJECT

The Diversity of Funding Options

In the past revenue came primarily through the initial sales period, and now the modern game developer has a lot more options for monetization.

Familia produced the majority of revenue after its initial release. Current monthly sales surpass the game's first month sales.

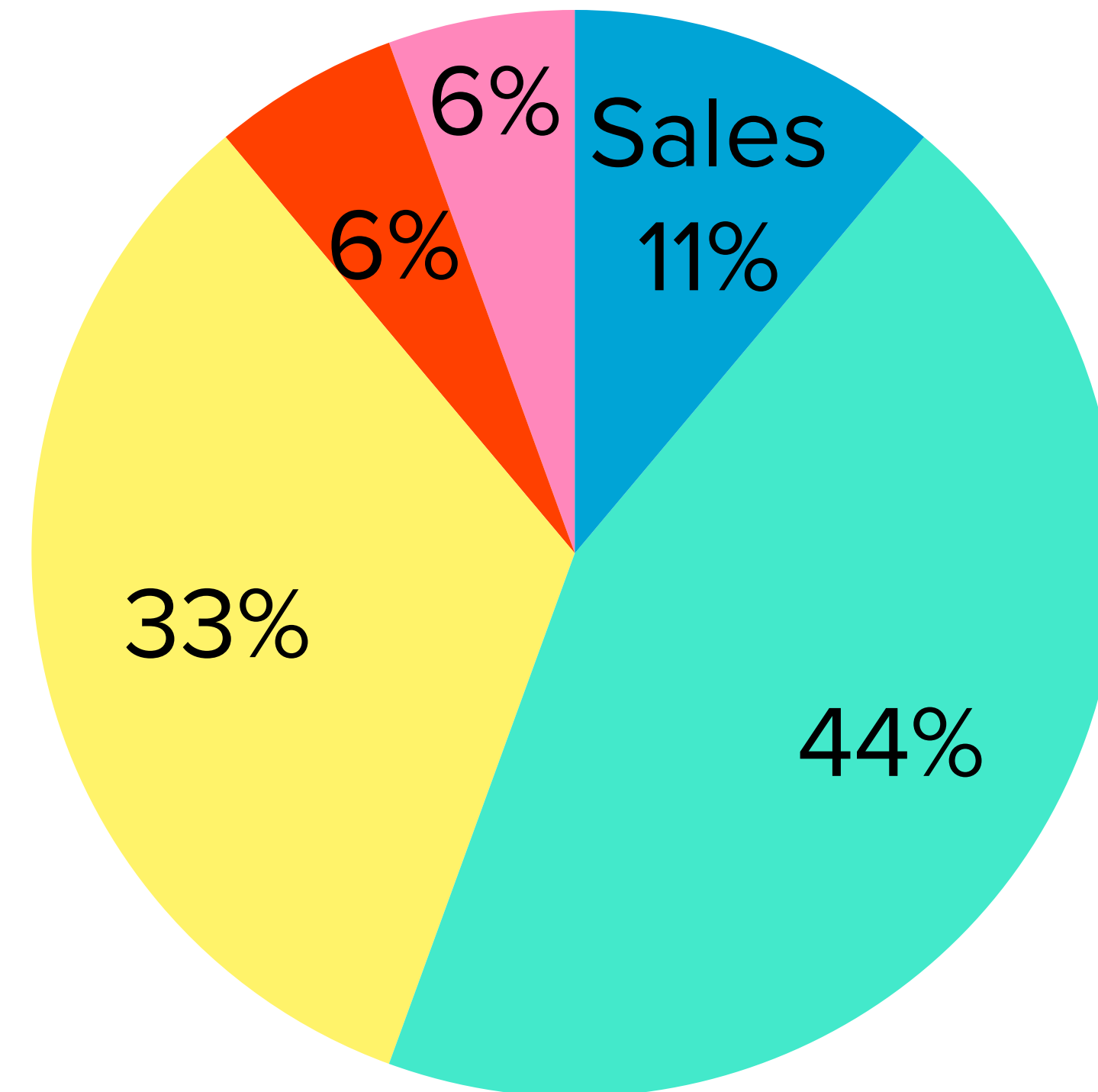# FUNDING YOUR DREAM PROJECT

Funding Sources

- **Direct Contributions**

- **Social Media Revenue**

- **Crowd Funding**

- **Merch Sales**

- **Events**

- **Presale**

- **Publishers**

- **Sales**

FUNDING YOUR DREAM PROJECT

Familia Revenue Breakdown

All sales info should be considered an estimate as your presenter is unsure if I am legally allowed to share this information.

- Steam Sales: 1000

- Twitch Revenue: 4000

- Donations: 3000

- Merch: 500

- Work I got from the game's visibility: 500

Pie chart labels: 6%, 6%, Sales 11%, 44%, 33%

FUNDING YOUR DREAM PROJECT

The Star Wars Revenue Phenomena

According to Nielsen analysts, while The Force Awakens earned **$2 billion in ticket sales,** Star Wars merchandising neared the **$5 billion-$6 billion.**

Sales for a Specific Game / Movie Only Accounts for a Portion of the Revenue

Familia as a game, has produced the vast majority (8/9ths) of its revenue at this point for sources other than its sales.

PART 7:
WHERE TO PUBLISH

FUNDING YOUR DREAM PROJECT

Distribution Platforms

There are many platforms to publish a game in 2022. With Computers, games have a greater selection of distribution platforms. With mobile devices and consoles, most games are distributed from a singular source.

FUNDING YOUR DREAM PROJECT

Windows / Mac

- **Gamejolt**

- **Itch.io**

- **Newgrounds**

- **Steam**

- **Epic**

- **DLSite**

Playstore for Android

Appstore for iPhone

Console Stores

PART 8:
CLOSING THOUGHTS

I DON'T REALLY HAVE CLOSING THOUGHTS.

PART 9: QUESTIONS

Join Discord ——>

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SCAN ME