PROFESSOR: And [INAUDIBLE] them for next week. So for Monday just to really settle expectations for what we're doing on Mondays, we are doing rehearsals of presentations. You do not need to do the demo of your game part of the rehearsal. You do need to do the actual talk.

That means we're asking for the visual slides, any visuals you're going to use. Go through the full talk as if you're going to do it. Don't try to speed through it. If it's in outline mode, then maybe you're testing the actual material that you're going to be going through.

Please pay attention to all the talks that you're listing to. Give them feedback. Give the other teams feedback about what they're saying. We will be here basically kind of like *The Voice* but without the cool chairs, letting you know what we think about your stuff. Yes. A great way to get a good grade for the presentation is to listen to all the feedback and make changes, so keep that in mind.

AUDIENCE: Just as a suggestion, even though you don't have to demo your stuff, it might be a good idea just to bring the computer [INAUDIBLE].

PROFESSOR: Absolutely.

AUDIENCE: And test the hardware just to make sure that the screen resolution works out, you can go full screen, you don't have that Google Chrome has taking over your entire screen. Hit Escape.

PROFESSOR: Yeah. So make sure the game works, but you don't need to actually play it. Works in a period of time.

Time length for these presentations-- each team is given 20 minutes. You will be timed. We will flag you once you hit 20 minutes. That's total for the entire presentation including the demo.

Limit the game-playing part of your presentation to no more than 10 minutes. Anything more than 10 minutes, we're going to make a note of that, but please keep it under 10 minutes. It

can be as short as you like.

You could have someone play the entire game. You can have someone play just one part of the game. You will have somebody who has not played your game before playing the game live on stage, so that's also a test of ours.

Time for the actual slides part of your talk has to be at least 10 minutes, so 10 is a good suggestion. Five minutes of demo, 15 minutes of talk is also fine, as well.

After you're finished with that talk, we're going to open it to Q&A from people in the group in the room, and that will include us. So rehearsal is give your presentation. We won't do the Q&A. We'll just do feedback. Final presentations are the real deal.

It is being recorded, of course. We are still figuring out if we're going to live stream it. Please invite your friends on Wednesday the 10th to come. We're sending out invites to a bunch of people, to get some of our local developer friends to come in and talk, and also some folks from our department and from some of the other game design classes to come and watch.

Attendance for those two days-- so attendance for Monday is going to be normal like we've just been doing it. Attendance for Wednesday-- come in at 1:00, please. Let us know if you're going to be late, like email the video game bosses list if you are going to be late on Wednesday for the final presentations. We'll keep the sheet in the back of the room so you can sign in as you come into the room.

Anything I'm missing from any of that? And then at the end of all the presentations, we'll probably going to end up with about 30 minutes left of class, so you can open up your computers and have people play your games if you like. Totally not required, but it tends to be fun when we do that.

Cool. So if there's no questions about any of that, we are going to do our last lecture. We've invited Sean Baptiste from Fire Hose Games to talk to us about community management, marketing, and all sorts of stuff, and basically how do you get people to play your games. And after he's done, attendance will be back open.

SEAN BAPTISTE: Cool. Thank you very much. Thanks for having me here. This is great. My name is Sean Baptiste. I'm a 10-year veteran of the video game industry.

My first job was at Harmonix, which was a huge AAA sort of deal. And now I'm at a small indie

game studio right here in Cambridge that was started by some former game lab alumni, Ethan Fenn and Sharat Chat and Eitan Glinert.

I think I should probably start how I got into the industry in the first place. I don't have a tech background whatsoever. I came up through theater. I was a theater major, and one thing I've realized in my years is that there are a lot of theater majors in video games.

I've been thinking about it a lot. I think a lot of it is that video games and theater both have an interactive element where there's interplay between the audience and the creator that film doesn't have necessarily. And I think a lot of theater people drift towards there when they realize there's no money to be made whatsoever in theater. That's how I made it.

So I was working in film and I was working in theater and stuff and I got sick, and just the only game I could play was Amplitude, which was an early Harmonix title. And as I was playing it I was like, oh, I think people make these. Like, I don't think games just happen. I think somebody makes them. And I realized that was-- I lived up on the North Shore, so it was close, and I just started pestering Harmonix to hire me since I was close.

And they kept telling me no until eventually I just got a friend there who sort of said nice things about me, which was lovely of him, and that sort of got me in in QA. QA, I'm hesitant to say that that's a good way to start in the industry anymore because I don't know if it's quite as valid. QA teams have gotten smaller and the turnover is a little bit difficult, so it's not necessarily the entryway into the industry that it used to be, which I do think is a bit unfortunate.

I worked as a QA person on the Karaoke Revolution series early on and then on the Guitar Hero series before I end up becoming a technical artist, which meant that I wasn't a programmer or an artist but I helped make them have less fights with each other, which is probably something you guys are used to at this point. So I did a lot of that and learned how to animate and hook things up.

But then they realized-- one of the things I was doing was-- so Harmonix, I don't know how familiar you guys are with Harmonix's [INAUDIBLE], but this was before Harmonix got bought by MTV. And Guitar Hero had come out, but that handled by RedOctane and Activision-- RedOctane, then Activision-- and we had an outside PR place handle a lot of the PR.

And mostly we just made games and put them out there and there wasn't as much of a

consideration for us doing PR from inside. But we realized as we wanted to make Rock Band and we're moving away from Guitar Hero and kind of owning our own destiny that we were the ones who were going to have to talk up our own games and kind of create something about it.

So I wasn't the best technical artist, I'll be honest. So they moved me over to running the community. From Frequency and Amplitude, there was a very small community of I'm going to say about 50 or 60 people on the Harmonixfreak.com forums and I was only one willing to talk to them pretty much in the whole company.

So as part of my job is technical artist, for an hour each day I would sit and talk with people on the forums and try to manage that community, which was very, very small and very angry that there wasn't a sequel to Frequency or Amplitude, that that was kind of a dead series. So a lot of my time was spent apologizing, I guess is how I would-- that my big start to community management was apologies.

So I did that for a while. And when it came up that we were going to have to start doing our own stuff, I got promoted up to create the community development team at Harmonix. And I put that together, and that's when there's a big change because then we're owned by MTV and they have a lot of money-- like, a lot of money. And they put a lot of money into advertising for the game and sending us around to, like, every event and stuff. I went to the Grammys and was giving out Rock Band to Morris Day and the Time and weird stuff like that.

And it started moving a little bit away from just general apologizing, daily dealing with problems, and more with kind of creating, or at least sustaining, a cult of personality around the persona of Harmonix, which was sort of punk rock and kind of outside of-- it wasn't as much like traditional game development. Everybody there was a musician and there was actually kind of this identity that we could point to and kind of play that up and make that sort of the character of the company. And we definitely did that.

We played that up and because one of the things-- and we'll get into that more when I talk a little bit more about the difference between marketing for AAA verses marketing for indie-- is a lot of games in AAA, you're selling the games. As far as marketing goes, you're selling the games.

For indie, what you're doing is you're selling the people who make the games, and Harmonix was in this interesting place where even though it was owned by MTV, it worked a lot more like an indie company. So once we were able to promote ourselves, we promoted the company as

a group of people. Like, don't just buy Rock Band by Harmonix. Buy the whole company. Buy what we do. Stick with us because we're going to keep making cool stuff.

And I did that for a number of years and it was crazy-- flew constantly everywhere, stayed in hotels that didn't have lice and stuff. It was nice. A lot of getting to do really cool things.

I ended up getting sick after that and spent a few years away from the industry. And when I came back, I'd been playing so many independent games from small indie teams-- things like stuff that John Blow had made or Fez or just a lot of the games-- Castle Crashers, Alien Hominid, those sorts of games. And I realized there was an analog to what I was already doing with Harmonix, which was kind of the-- in indie games, you really do have to sell the artist.

You're selling the artist. You're trying to get people to come because if you don't have an interesting story in a way or that you can sell to the press or to journals, you're not going to get anybody writing articles about you for the most part. That's just the case. The big AAA companies have lots and lots of money so they can plant lots and lots of articles.

And as far as indie stuff goes, the only way you can sell yourself is having a good story that a journalist wants to tell because if you don't have that, there's really no upside for them to write an article about you or your game or anything like that. I know that seems a little cynical, but there it is. That is the case.

So let's see-- so when I went to Fire Hose, the differences in the marketing, like I said, was when I was at Harmonix, a lot of what I did in community management was making sure everybody was really invested in the product, in ourselves as a team. But a lot of it was also keeping our secrets-- making sure that people weren't leaking information from inside of the company, making sure play testers weren't leaking inside of the company, making sure an unannounced project that a coder on there didn't go in and update their LinkedIn profile and say, hey, we're working on Rock Band 2 at the time before we'd announced Rock Band 2, and then there's a huge thing.

So a lot of my stuff was managing what information got out. In independent games, my job is to make sure all of the information gets out and that we are constantly screaming for people to notice us because there's so much competition. I mean, just look at the explosion of independent games in the past let's say five years, six years. 2008 I think is really when it really started becoming this definitive thing that you can point at.

There's a lot of people, and a lot of people who also equally want people to pay attention to them, and there's only so many outlets and there's only so many places where people are going to be able to read about it. So you're really fighting. There is a sort of-- it could very easily turn into a sort of crabs in the bucket situation, just everybody pulling each other down.

Luckily that's not really how the indie game scene works. A lot of people are trying to push each other up, which is nice, but you're still competing with so many other people for a limited amount of slots of articles.

The one thing I've learned since I've been at Fire Hose is that actually matters very little if in the end-- and by that, I should say I mean that in terms of sales of the game. A big article on Kotaku isn't going to sell your game, not anymore.

When I first started in the industry, that absolutely was the case. A big article in GameSpot or IGN, one of the big-- 1UP at the time-- that would put you over. That could definitely help put you over.

But at this point, that's just simply not the case. And even a year ago, I was saying that, and that everybody should probably put more of their marketing time towards getting YouTube people to cover their games. And now that's sort of the predominant theory, but I think that's going away, too, because everybody who likes games has a YouTube channel and does Let's Plays.

So in a way, it's sort of a reflection of what indie is doing at the same time. Now that there's just so many people, the market sort of flooded. The novelty has worn off. So it certainly can help, but it's something you have to be careful, too. You can't put all of your eggs in one basket.

But with indie, too-- so when I was at Harmonix, I ran a team of I think at our height 12 people. So that was 12 people doing just community management and just doing public relations. At Fire Hose, I do that, all of it, and I'm also a designer. So it's like a part of my overall job and I'm the only one doing it.

So I have to choose what we do far more carefully and I have to do it without any money whatsoever. Certainly you can put money into buying ads or doing Facebook ads or that sort of thing, but I don't think that that's necessarily the best use of your time all the time. And a lot of companies don't have the budget beyond their salaries to actually buy these ads, so what

do you do?

And that goes back to what I was saying. It's community management, and I guess I should get into a little bit of what community management is. When I started doing community management in 2007, it wasn't a thing really. I think there was one video game company that wasn't an MMO, that didn't make MMOs, that actually had anything approaching a community team, and that was BioWare.

Right around Neverwinter Nights, they put together a community team of two people, I think, and that was just to manage their forums. And let's see, that's probably around 2002/2003. And in that time, you really only put together a community team if you had a large multiplayer game, generally an MMO. So at the time, Asheron's Call had something or Ultima Online had it and early World of Warcraft all had these community teams.

There was an element of promotion to it. There was an element of marketing to it, but it wasn't so much that. It was more customer service. They were really there to deal with problems that came up as they went.

BioWare where they sort of broke the mold a little bit was it wasn't about that. It really was about the company having direct access to communicate with their fans, and vice versa. I once was half-joking that my job as a community manager at Harmonix was ombudsman because I felt like I had to represent the company to the fans, and then I had to represent the fans to the company, which involved being as honest as possible at all times with both, which is a real difficult tightrope to walk.

So with community management, what you try to do is you try to build out the people who love your games. You're trying to make them into the people who talk about your games online. You're basically creating a kind of an ad hoc sales force, a word of mouth way of promoting your game because that's like if you read an article on Kotaku, do you immediately go out and buy a game? Probably not.

You might do a little bit more research on it. You might read up a little bit more on it. You might go to Metacritic and check the reviews, that sort of thing. But if a friend tells you, like just a person you know is like, "Hey, I'm checking out this game. There might be multiplayer. We should check this out," you're far more likely to buy it.

Community management is the art of managing word of mouth. You're getting people to tell

their friends, the people that they know. You're getting people to tell the people who trust them that this game is good so that those people then go on and buy it. And join your community, hopefully, and then they go on and tell.

So what started for Harmonix, a lot of what we did is because-- and there's a scalability aspect to it. When I created the Rock Band community site, that was 100% forums-based. We did Twitter. We did Facebook. Like I said, we did tons of live events, but everything was very much based around the forums.

Part of that was because Twitter hasn't happened yet, or was just happening and not as many people were talking about it. This was early 2007. So everything we did, we build our this huge site. We had forums. I think I was managing at that time a registered community of about 350,000 people on the forums, and that's why we needed a team. It was big.

And there was an aspect of customer service. You might remember-- I don't know how many of you guys were really playing that at the time, but when it first came out, there were issues and articles about the issues about the instruments. Any time you debut new hardware, there's generally going to be problems or there's going to be issues, and that happens.

So leading up to it, it was very much like, Rock Band's going to be awesome. We're doing rock. And then as soon as it came out and those issues started coming up, the job just clamped down into 100% customer service all the time, just trying to manage all of that. Which was something that having come from technical, I wasn't necessarily prepared to do.

But I think with any game, no matter who your audience is, no matter what, it's very valuable to have some sort of protocol for customer service leading up to it. That's something I think that you should definitely do.

At Fire Hose, we don't have forums. We have a Facebook page. We have Twitter. But forums, they're not what they used to be. The communities aren't forums, aren't the same as they used to be, and sometimes they're just more trouble than they're worth to manage. It could be it's very time-consuming to stop all the spam, to get in the middle of fights and stop people from hurting each other.

And we were very hands-on. We weren't a website where it was like, say whatever you want. Post whatever you want. We were very hands-on about abuse and that sort of thing.

At Fire Hose since we don't have as big of an audience-- we don't have 350,000 people who are following what we're doing who are registered users who are going to follow everything that we say and everything that we do and are really hugely invested in the company or our games-- so we have to find other ways. One of the things that's probably the biggest thing-- I should bring this up here-- is we started up a Twitch channel, and this was just as the live video and live streaming was starting to really become a thing. So it was a couple years ago.

We had Go Home Dinosaurs, which you might have seen on the scroller. That was a game that we put out last year. That was coming out and we wanted to get attention for it. And we realized we wouldn't be able to get every the YouTube video star to feature our dumb game that was awesome-- it was awesome-- about dinosaurs stealing barbecue from early mammals.

We knew we weren't going to get every YouTube star to cover it. TotalBiscuit did actually, somehow, but we realized we kind of had to build our own community and really kind of make our own press for it rather than spend all of my time. Our marketing budget is my salary. There's not extra stuff where I'm buying up ads and everything.

So we started meeting with Twitch. Actually, they came out here to talk about how they wanted to get more indie games on there and we sort of struck up a relationship with people at Twitch, and that got us front page promotions.

So for instance every day, Monday through Friday from 12:00 to 12:30 on Twitch, you will see my big stupid face staring out at you from the screen because we're on the front page right in the thing, and anybody who goes to Twitch is going to see our game first. That cost us absolutely zero dollars. As far as budget goes, all that takes is my time because we talk to them and we try to create good content that also helps their brand, as well.

But that brings us-- you can see so far since we started up our channel, four million people have watched it. Four million impressions is way outside of our price range. It's just outside of our-- that would be tens of thousands of dollars to get that many people to get an impression of our product, to get an impression of Fire Hose, to get an impression of our games, to get an impression of the people who worked there.

It would take that long, and part of the way we do is like I said, every day, Monday through Friday 12:00 to 12:30, I put on a show. It's about Let's Quip! That's actually my game. I should mention Fire Hose, we have three games going right now.

We also do outside projects. We take on contract work. Right now we're working on a project with DARPA that's pretty cool that actually teaches people *not* to shoot people. It's pretty fun.

But we have three eventually commercially available products that we're working on right now. One is Let's Quip! That's a game I'm designing. That's a comedic debating game.

That's what I do on the show Monday to Friday 12:00 to 12:30. Just I invite local comedians in and we just talk about different aspects of comedy while playing the game, and that has actually been wildly successful. I had Jackie Kashian, who's a very big touring comedian who I'm a huge fan of. She came in on the show.

And on that show, I think, over the course of that one half-hour, we had something-- I want to say it was 24,000 people, which is great. Like I said, I would not be able to pay for that. I would not be able to afford that.

But all it takes is my time. We also have three other shows that we do. So there's the Monday show. So that's 2 and 1/2 hours out of the week. And then we have a Tuesday show in the afternoon from 4:00 to 5:00. That's one of the other games that we're working on.

Chris Chung, who's a local developer, he's working on a game called Catlateral Damage that you may have heard of. Catlateral Damage is really, really rad. You're basically a cat. It has first-person shooter controls.

Your family's left the house for a little while, so you have a limited amount of time to just destroy all of their stuff. And it's great. You're just pouncing around knocking things on the floor. You get points for destroying people's monitors. It's great. It's exactly what cats do.

It's very, very fun, and Chris is this lovely guy. He loves cats in a way that's sort of very honest. There's nothing ironic about, and he's kind of the perfect person to host a show about making a game about cats.

So we gave him this spot, 4:00 to 5:00, where all he does is he sits there with Unity open and he shows what he's been working on that week. And he tells people, like, we do this, we do this. I just added in these things. This is how I did that in Unity.

So it's one part demonstration of his game and one part tutorial, and that brings in people, too-- people who want to learn more about making video games as well as people who are just

interested in a game about cats knocking your stuff over. And that really works for him, and it really fits the theme of this game.

The other game we have is a game called 20XX, which we just announced two weeks ago. If you are a fan of games like Mega Man X or those sorts of platformers, it's a game very much similar to that. We're working with a team out of I believe Maryland. It's where they currently reside.

So part of that is we-- I should clarify that Fire Hose Games late last year as opposed to just a studio, we opened up an incubator for independent games. So for the most part, local indie game developers who have good games that they really want to work on can come to Fire hose, get a monthly stipend, get office space, and we'll help them with the development of the game. We'll help them with the promotion of the game. We help them with kind of everything. And it's more like a partnership.

Both Catlateral Damage and 20XX are part of that program. And it's great working because that's like Catlateral Damage and 20XX and Let's Quip! are three incredibly different games.

Like I said, 20XX has a very sort of Mega Man X feel. It's very hardcore. It's very platformery.

Catlateral Damage is about cats, so that has a completely different audience. I'm sure on a Venn diagram, there's some crossover.

And then Let's Quip! is just a game where you write words down. Like you write tweets and then you try to be funnier than other people.

The three games have almost no shared audience across them, so we have to approach everything very, very differently. I think showing Let's Quip! but actually showing comedians playing it, that helps because that actually plays into the narrative of the game, the fiction of the game, which is allowing you to be funny. And then we have comedians come in and kind of vote on whether you're funny or not, and that's creating sort of a cult of personality.

And at the same time, they're also meeting the creators. So like I said earlier when I was talking about how people pushing the artist as opposed to the art, we sort of play into that a little bit. Having Chris Chung come in and just show development on [INAUDIBLE], it's so earnest. If you get a chance, you should really watch it because he's just the most likable, smart dude who's just going through.

And for a live stream where he just basically has Unity open and he's just moving things around, he gets several thousand people over the hour watching him, which is nuts. But it's great. People love it.

With 20XX, we've just started. I'm just working on the marketing plan for that, the marketing map for the next six months or so. And I should say that's when I'm just planning out this month, these are the things we need to talk to. We need this many screenshots. We need to have a trailer for February. We need to have this.

And just coming up with those milestones in the same way that I'm sure you come up with your milestones for your project. We're doing the same thing, but on the marketing end. These are the goals we need to hit in December. These are the people we need to talk to in January. If we can get an exclusive for February, that means we're going to need to be talking about it in December and have a pitch for that, have some sort of PowerPoint presentation or just a really good email with good resource screenshots and videos and stuff that we can send out to different outlets to try to get a little bit of coverage.

Even though I said that articles don't have a direct effect on sales, they do have a direct effect on zeitgeist, I guess I should say, so there is a sort of cultural cachet that comes from having a big article on your games there. It doesn't necessarily translate to sales. But if you know how to use it and take advantage of that cultural cachet, you can bring more people in, which I find useful.

But every single one of these games, I have to market differently because they're marketed to different people. Like I said, 20XX, also that game is going to be on Steam. It's I think it was $14.99, and that game we put out in early access. That's one of the early ways we're trying to market it is getting it out on early access and getting people who are excited about Mega Man-style platformers really talking about that game and very excited about that game.

Whereas with Let's Quip!, that's just going to comedy fans. All I'm doing is talking to comedians for the most part because comedians if they like the game, they're going to tweet about the game. And it turns out comedians have lots of fans who like comedy. Who would've thought?

And then with Catlateral Damage, as far as I can tell, the audience for that game is every person on Earth. It involves cats. It involves mindless destruction. It's everything the world is asking for right now. It's just beautiful and I love Chris and I love the game. It's amazing.

But since in a way that's a little bit more of a mainstream game, that also takes a completely different approach because we're not selling that game to hardcore gamers. Hardcore gamers are certainly invited, but this is a game that I can give to my mom or I could give to a friend who already likes video games, and both could get something out of that.

And that takes a different approach because you don't want to come up with a-- like, I wouldn't want to come up with an ad or a promo for the game that was like, this is the baddest game ever. It's going to destroy your life. I'm not going to be advertising that way because that'll turn off the people who are not hardcore gamers. They're not going to want to play something that acts like it's going to destroy them.

Whereas also if you go too soft on the other side, that's going to turn off other people. So you're going to find sort of a midway line between that, and that's another thing I'm working on right now with Chris. But as far as video goes on Twitch, I think that's very, very helpful. I should probably start getting ready to take questions, I think.

But I guess one of the things you asked me, too, is about IGF in the IndieCade. For me, it's a hard thing because I do certainly find value in marketing for as far as award shows and stuff, like the IGF getting awards. I personally have a whole lot of problems with the whole how awards for any art. I guess I think I just have personal problems.

I think it's very, very valuable. And I think especially for young developers who are trying to their name out there, getting your game into as many festivals as possible is great. Don't break the bank doing so.

A lot of them require submission fees. So if you can find festivals that fit the genre of the game, just do your research. Know what you're submitting to.

Like IGF has something like 7,000 people submitting every year, and that costs money for you to submit. So if you think you can compete, definitely do it. Otherwise, put your efforts into a different festival which still you could win something and then you can put that on everything that you market the game with. Like, the winner of the 1989-- I don't know why I went with 1989. I'm old.

So, yeah. You just put that award on there. I'm sure you've been on Steam and you've seen they have a section where you can actually just put links to every award you've got, and then it

shows up and there's a little graphic. That's really good and that can get your name out there. And even though I have a problem with it, I can still see the value in it.

IndieCade is one of the funnest things I've ever been to. And every time I get really down on this industry, which happens, going to IndieCade makes me remember why I love working with the people I love. I love this industry, and I love the weird crap that people come up with because it's a great place for games that were completely outside the mainstream to exist and live.

That's how I found out about this game last year called Dominique Pamplemousse. I don't know if any of you have played it. It's a musical. It's an opera game, which is adventure singing. It's nuts and it's great, but people never would have found out about it if it weren't for just winning the IGF Award, for noticing weirder games that are outside the mainstream like that.

But I think I should open things up for questions if anybody has anything specific. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: So you mentioned about how articles don't directly translate [INAUDIBLE]. Do you think that's also starting to be true for AAA, or is it more of a direct [INAUDIBLE] expect to get [INAUDIBLE]?

SEAN BAPTISTE: I think there's probably still some value to for AAA, and part of that is because the one thing that's great about being a AAA developer is you have resources, and lots and lots of resources. So one of the things we would do any time you talk about the launch of a game, it'd be like, OK, so let's say Assassin's Creed. The next one supposed to come out on September 9, 2015.

You want to own that *Newsday,* and that means you are planting articles on it for September 8 and September 9 at every outlet in the world so that that day when every person who checks video game blogs, reads a video game blog, the only thing they're going to be reading about is your game. It's basically like playing a commercial on a loop for an entire day until you've subliminally made that person buy your game. That's sort of the whole idea.

Independence-- we cannot own a *Newsday.* It's very difficult because it's expensive and time-consuming-- really, really time-consuming to own a *Newsday* as an independent because just planting one major article in a big thing, like say a cover article for GameInformer-- that's so many man hours between the person who's negotiating that deal and making it happen,

coming up with a story like the narrative for the game you're trying to sell. Plus also art resources, like getting your artists to deliver a whole bunch of screenshots, but also Photoshops of all of the characters.

That's so expensive in time and money, and indies can't do that. So I think for us, we can get articles. But really getting an article in everything simultaneously on the same day-- the funniest thing that ever happened is when Go Home Dinosaurs came out, I was sending review codes out to things. And I was like, so we have an embargo for this, and one reporter literally wrote back, Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

We don't have that. We don't have the muscle to be like, we can back up this embargo. AAA places have a hard time backing up an embargo, but they have the benefit of being like, well, if you don't adhere to this embargo, we're not going to give you coverage of the next game. Whereas if you're an indie, you would be cutting your nose off right there. Like, fine, you don't get to do the next game, and they'll tell you won't have a next game. So like I said, there's certainly cultural cachet I think for indies, but it's more valuable for AAA.

AUDIENCE: So community management as you described it is a word of mouth deal for a lot of it. Is part of your purview then doing bundle sales and other types of sales where if you get somebody to play the game, maybe they'll talk to somebody else about the game?

SEAN BAPTISTE: Yeah. Doing bundle sales-- see, that's another one I'm torn on because I see the value in bundles sales, but I see that that value is diminishing day by day. There are so many bundles out there, Humble Bundle being one of the biggest. But then there's, like, 70 other ones that you can go to.

And Humble Bundle's great to work with because they're very protective of the Steam keys that you put out, whereas a lot of the other bundle places, they don't have as much security. So what happens is you put your thing in a bundle. That bundle sells 10,000. You get $0.13 on the dollar for whatever people paid, or less. Probably less-- probably much less.

But you're not getting that much money. You're selling at a discount to try to get a huge amount. The thing is what a lot of the people buying those are, they're overseas. And what they're doing is they're not buying the game because they're fan of you or your game or they want to play it or your game was just one other thing in the bundle. They're buying up Steam keys and then they are selling them on their own sites overseas.

So basically they're buying your game and 15 other games for $5.00 total in the bundle, and then they're selling all of those at half off of retail price. And that cuts into your sales so bad because when people actually do want to play your game, they're looking for a deal. So they end up going to this off-brand site that's selling Steam codes from it, and it's rough.

There's a lot of indies who've shot themselves in the foot by going to Bundle Crazy and then really killing the long tail on their sales in my opinion. Yep?

AUDIENCE: How big an impact did TotalBiscuit have on Go Home Dinosaur sales?

SEAN BAPTISTE: I think a few more people found out about it. I don't think it had on sales, not much. Not much. And even at the time, that was when that was sort of happening. And it wasn't the most glowing play-through of all time that he's ever played it, but he liked it and he said it was really fun and dumb, which is what we were going for. But in the end as far sales goes, it wasn't as big of a driver as one would think.

I do know of games that TotalBiscuit has covered that has had a pronounced effect on sales, but they're multiplayer games. Like our game, it was single-player. Whereas if you have a multiplayer shooter or if you have something like Hearthstone, a game where people are playing together online, that's his audience.

His audience does care about e-sports and does care about big multiplayer games, and ours wasn't that. So I don't know if that was necessarily the best fit, but still nice that he liked it, nice that he played it. Oh, yeah? Go ahead. No problem.

AUDIENCE: Do you also manage the Steam forums for any of the games, or do you solely do just--

SEAN BAPTISTE: I do you manage the Steam forums a little bit, mostly for customer service because that would be the first place people would go rather than emailing us. We had a link inside the game where people could email us if they had problems, if there were bugs or something like that. [INAUDIBLE]. [INAUDIBLE].

But a lot of people went straight to the Steam forums and would talk about their problems on there and do direct sort of stuff. But as far as building up the community there, some games work for that and some games don't. I think games that are multiplayer just do better as far as Steam forum communities. It's just easier to grow a community like that, build a community there.

But where for single-player games, people are less interested in, I think, talking to other people about them. Maybe Skyrim, that sort of a single-player game where there's a huge expansive world and there's more to share and it's less linear, I think there might be more room for community on Steam. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: Can you talk about IndieCade as an event [INAUDIBLE] rejuvenation. On Monday, we had Jenna come in.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

She was talking about how she spends so much on events. And I'm wondering how do events factor in and how you think about events in terms of sales, in terms of [INAUDIBLE]?

SEAN BAPTISTE: So events are difficult for indies because events by their very nature cost money to travel to, to stay at. Luckily the independent community is great because we'll just call up 19 other companies and be like, hey, you guys are going to this? Cool. Want to get an Airbnb?

And then we just share it and try to keep costs down, but it's still expensive. You can't do that for a flight or to get places. Well, you might be able to. You shouldn't.

But I will say this-- if you can go to an event, if there's any conceivable way you can go to an event, and I mean just about any event where there's other game developers there talking about games, any sort of game-based conference or expo, go to it. Absolutely go to it.

I've been talking about word of mouth. One of the best ways of word of mouth is going out and meeting other developers who have other communities supporting their games-- talking to them about their game, you talking about your game, and just sort of sharing because then they are going and they're going to be probably be, hey, check out this new friend I made. He's making this game and it's pretty cool.

And you're getting more people noticing it. And it's better to be part of the overall game development community than it is to be outside of it. But by the same token, sometimes you just don't want to talk to people, and that's fair, too.

AUDIENCE: Actually, it made me think, in the past, did you play other people's games on your FireHost?

SEAN BAPTISTE: Yeah, I should mention that. So when we first started out, like I mentioned, we did it because

we wanted to sell *Go Home Dinosaurs* and another game that we had made a port of it called *Slam Bolt Scrappers.* And so we started off with that, and it became very apparent after two weeks that we only had two games, and that's not a good show. That's not a great show.

So that was our Wednesday show. That was our inaugural show on our live stream channel. So after those two weeks, we were like, what else can we do? We shouldn't give up on this because we don't have two games. How do we build our audience more?

And then we were like, what if we played other people's games? And then we realized, well, what if we bring in other developers and then they bring in their games with them? And then we play their games while they're standing next to us, and then we just talk about it? And I have a standing desk at work and it's just two of us standing there and playing games.

And we just interview and talk to them about the game that they made while we're playing it. And I've called that sharing. You create it, you bring your own spotlight, and then you share it. And that helps. We help get other, smaller-- because we don't do a lot of big games. It's very rare.

We did Super Smash Brothers, I think is the biggest game, the biggest marketable game, that we've had on our live stream, and that's just because everybody at the office is addicted to it. But largely, we have other people in. Like in January, we had Zoe Quinn in. We had people before that, like just a bunch of other developers throughout the country because sometimes they couldn't come in, so we'd have them Skype in.

And it's helped them, but it also helps us because it gives us content for our show. It helps give them exposure and it helps build our audience over time because they're tuning into an exciting show. And watching game developers talk about game development and seeing that sort of inside baseball is for some reason exciting to people. I don't know why, but there's something that people enjoy tuning into about it.

PROFESSOR: Anyone else have comments, question? All right. Thank you so much for coming.

SEAN BAPTISTE: All right. Thank you very much for having me. Thanks, guys.

[APPLAUSE]

Good luck on your projects this week. I look forward to seeing them.

PROFESSOR: Are you going to be able to just stick around for a little bit, or you have to run off?

SEAN BAPTISTE: Yeah, I'll be around.

PROFESSOR: Cool. So if anybody wants to talk to him now, feel free to come on down and talk to him. We're going to break for about 10 minutes. Come down and sign up.

Other thing I should note-- [INAUDIBLE] is coming today at around 2:30 to talk to some of the teams if you want to talk to her. If you have burning questions about your game that you need to get answered by one of our clients, she's here and available to talk you. Otherwise, the rest the class period is for yourself.

[CHATTER]