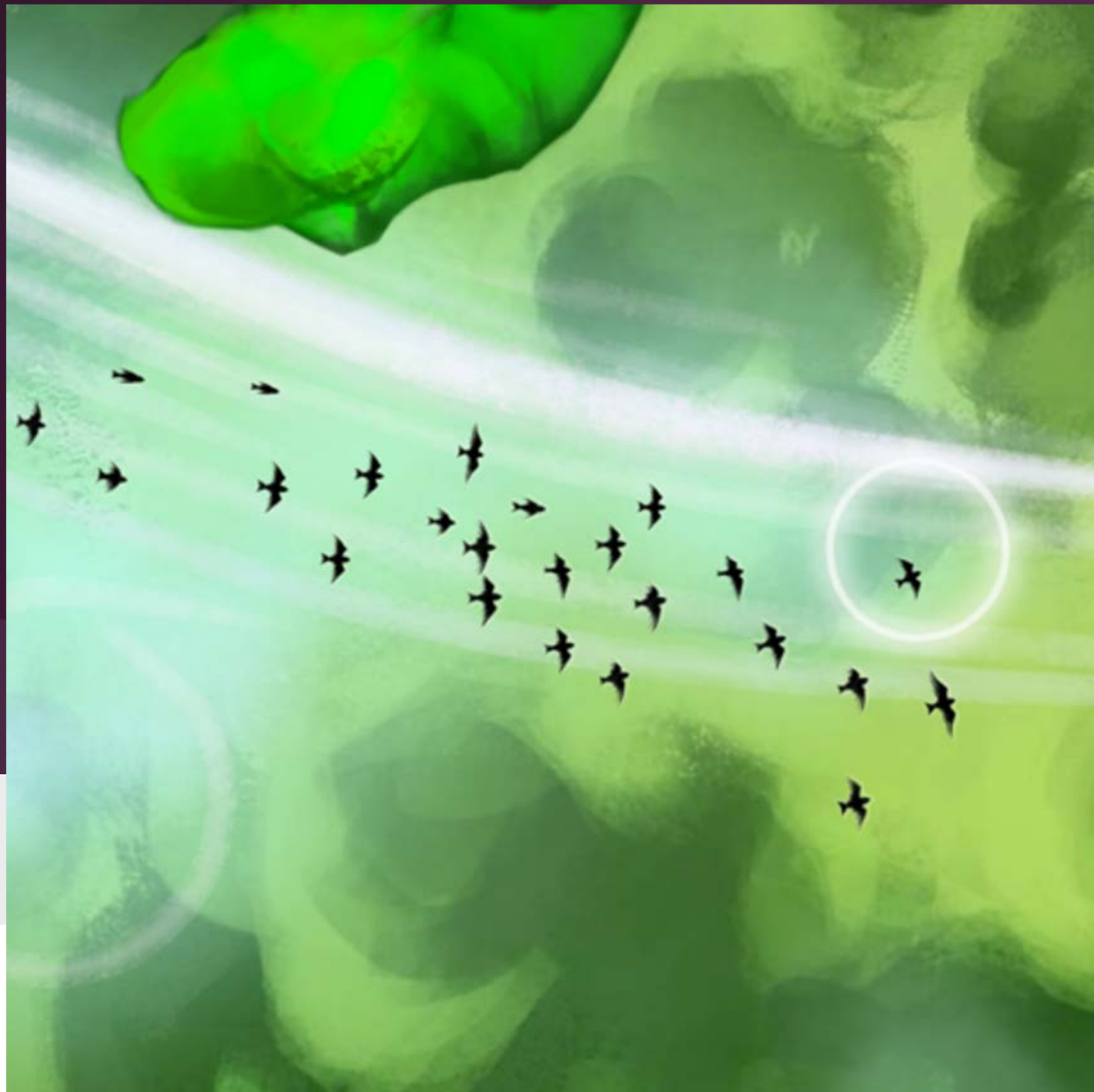# Marketing and Selling Games

John Austin - @kleptine
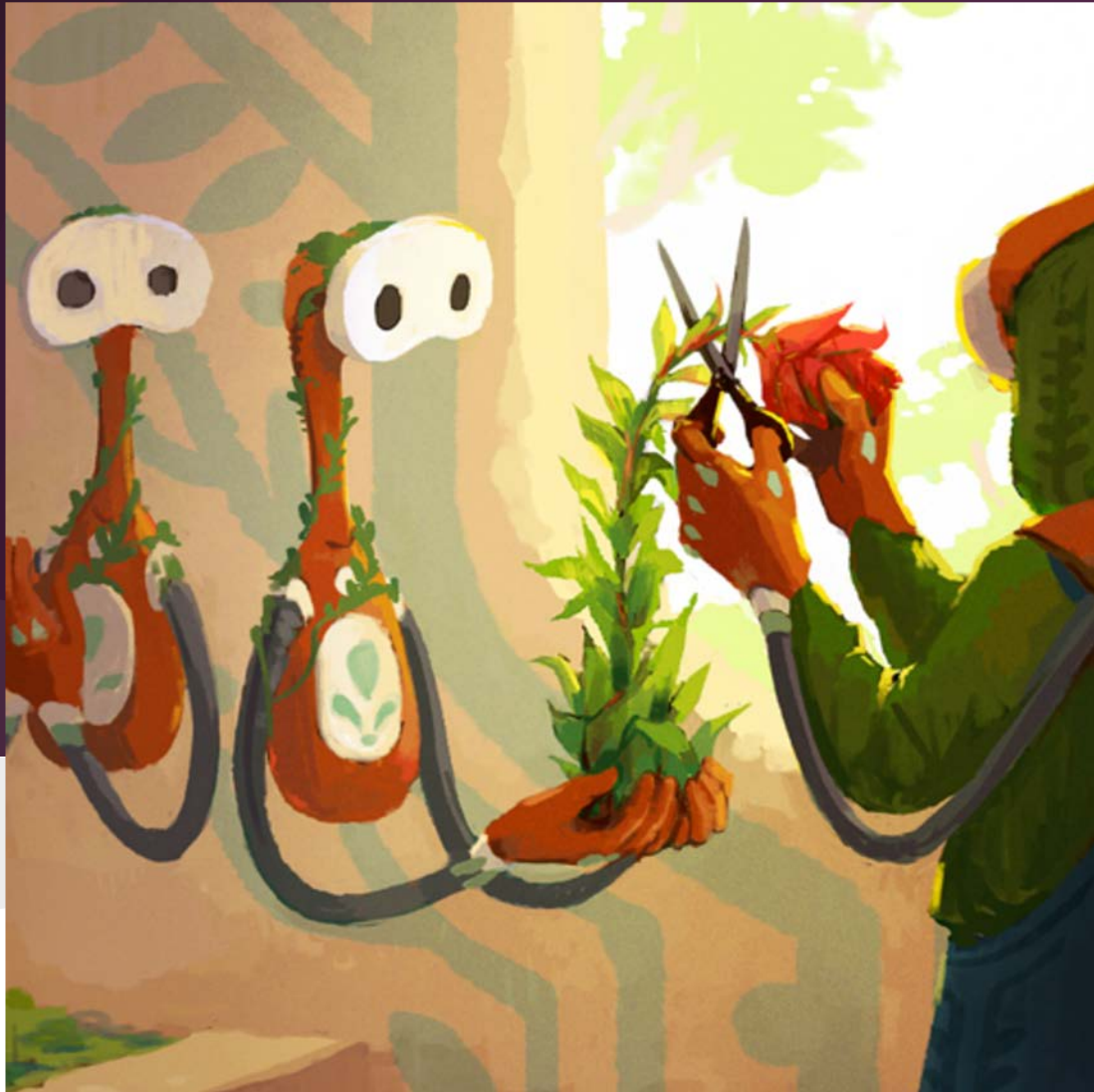*Pontoco* - @hellopontoco

Overview

1. Marketing Crash Course

2. Game making as a business

3. Case Studies!

Gathering Sky (2015)
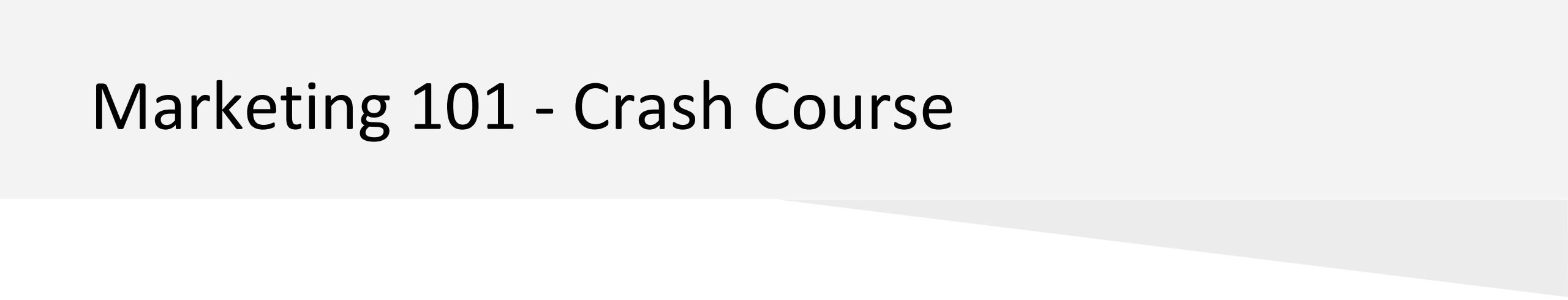
The Last Clockwinder (2022)

Marketing 101 - Crash Course

Marketing 101 - Crash Course

Marketing is about **maximizing your luck.**

Marketing 101 - Basics

What you <u>will</u> need:

- Website
- Trailer
- Screenshots
- Press Kit

Strategy 1 - Closed Development

The silent force (Valve, Microsoft, most AAA's, Apple)

Depend on putting out consecutive high-quality games

Build hype through mystery, little leaks of information (ie. HL3?)

Strategy 2 - Open Development

Practiced by many independent developers.

Build hype through information and **community involvement**

Every engaged community member becomes an evangelist

Social Media

Require building a following:
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Discord

Don't require building a following:
- Reddit
- Tiktok
- Imgur

PR - Press Releases

First PR Beat for VR and PC Gaming Press

Subject: VR puzzle-automation game 'The Last Clockwinder' trailer + partners with Myst devs Cyan

Hi {First Name}!

Indie studio Pontoco have shared the **'Inside the Clocktower' trailer for *The Last Clockwinder***, a VR automation-puzzle game coming to Meta Quest 2 and Steam in Summer 2022. The studio has also announced two new partnerships: publishing support from **Cyan Ventures**, the publishing arm of the development studio behind *Myst*, Cyan Worlds and additional funding and bizdev support from **Robot Teddy** (*Among Us*, *SUPERHOT*).

PR - Press Releases

Subject: Guide a flock of birds in meditative adventure "Gathering Sky" - want a demo at PAX East or GDC?

Gathering Sky (formerly named Apsis) is a meditative, experimental adventure game coming to iOS, Android, PC, Mac, and Linux in April 2015. We're showing the game at PAX East and GDC and would love to give you a first look!
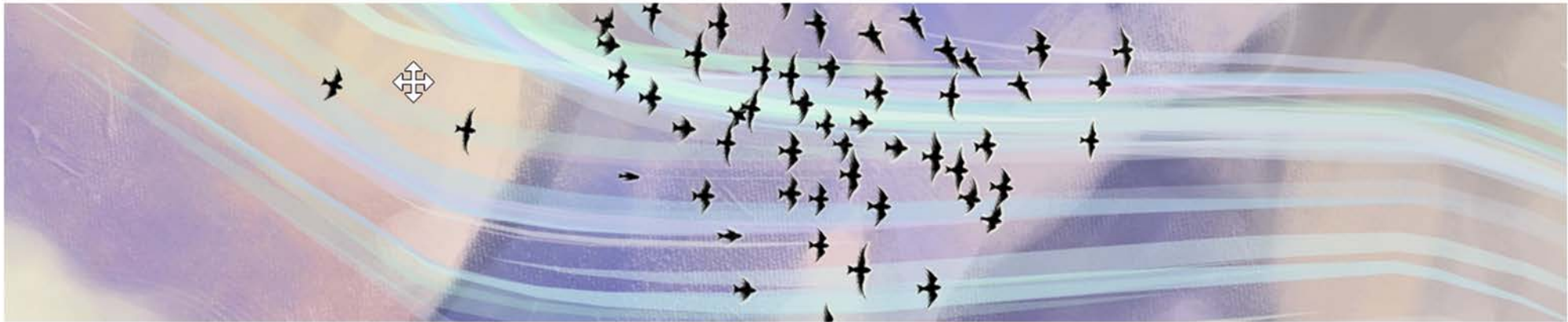
About Gathering Sky
It begins with a single bird high above the ground. You guide the bird through the sky with your touch or a mouse, exploring the world and finding other birds to join you. Your flock grows as you travel across the beautiful skies of a far-off land and create an expressive story without words.

Gathering Sky received the "Most Promising Indie Title" award at the Indie Prize Showcase in San Francisco this past Summer.

The game also features an original 45 minute score composed by Dren McDonald and performed live at the San Francisco

Factsheet

Developer:
LimboLane
Based in Ithaca, NY and Burbank, CA

Release date:
Steam - May 31 2019
Itch.io - May 31 2019

Platforms:
Windows
MacOS (10.14 and earlier)

Website:
smileformegame.com

Regular Price:
USD 12.99

Request Press Copy

Description

Smile For Me is an unconventional first-person Point-and-Click Adventure about making people happy! Immerse yourself in a captivating multi-media world, and be the Silent Savior of the Habitat's residents. Nod and Shake your head to chat with new friends - or hunt for clues to cheer them up. As "The Big Event" draws near, you must help the troubled residents of the Habitat and de-mask the mysterious Doctor Habit... before it's too late.

History

Smile For Me began when the two members of LimboLane first met on Tumblr in April of 2018. After seeing Yugo's art for the first time, Gabe reached out to propose a short first-person experiment, inspired by the likes of Bernband. Within a week, a concept had solidified and the two began prototyping mechanics and sketching a menagerie of characters and environments. Yugo's love for multimedia materialized into the game's collage-art and live-action puppetry, while Gabe's desire to create immersive, nontraditional mechanics resulted in the game's nod-and-shake controls. All content was created remotely - with Gabe located in New York, and Yugo in Michigan, later California. Long phone calls were spent dreaming up the crazy, surreal aura that is Smile For Me. The first playable demo was finally crystalized in October of 2018, pumping the two up to see the project through like never before. Progress sailed through the winter, and into the next year, with a beta launching in early March. The game was released on May 31, 2019 on Steam and itch.io, for macOS and Windows.

Pitching Your Game

Press release should have a pitch targeting players/investors
- Elevator pitch (1 sentence)
- Narrative Pitch (1-2 sentences)
- Gameplay pitch (2-3 sentences)

Meredith Hall is an excellent resource
- https://medium.com/@merryh/how-to-build-a-brand-handbook-brandbook-876f9c8644eb)

Pitching Your Game

Elevator Pitch
- *One sentence, short and snappy, easy to recall*
- Should convey demographic/similar games w/o you saying it

Narrative Pitch
- Should convey the *emotions,* not the story/plot
- Word choice very important here

Gameplay Pitch
- Highlight how the player interacts with the world
- But do **not** explicitly name your genre

Putting it Together

Elevator Pitch

Narrative Pitch

ABOUT THIS GAME

Baba Is You is an award-winning puzzle game where you can change the rules by which you play. In every level, the rules themselves are present as blocks you can interact with; by manipulating them, you can change how the level works and cause surprising, unexpected interactions! With some simple block-pushing you can turn yourself into a rock, turn patches of grass into dangerously hot obstacles, and even change the goal you need to reach to something entirely different.

Gameplay Pitch

PR - Youtube/Twitch/Influencers
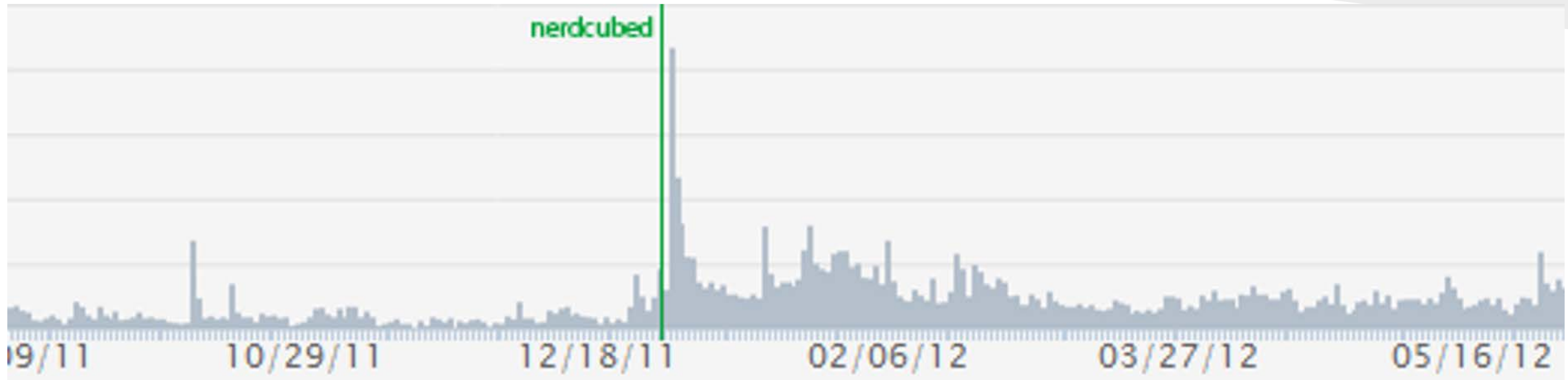
Overgrowth preorder sales before
and after nerdcubed released a let's play
(credit: Wolfire Games)

Festivals / Shows

Google "Game Festival Calendar" or "Game Conference Calendar"

Hiring Someone Else

Unnamed Marketing/PR Company:

Marketing - 6 Months Minimum - £4,000

PR - 3 Months Minimum - £3,000

Influencer Marketing - 2 Months Minimum - £3,000

Community Management - 3 Months Minimum - £3,000

Steam Optimisation - One-off Cost - £2,000

Hourly Consulting - £200/hr

Community Management (Hourly) - £200/hr

Game Making as a Business

Business Development (Making Friends)

Meetup.com

IGDA (Independent Game Developers Association)

Conferences – just go, hang out, and be a nice person.

Have to live in a big city (SF, LA, Seattle, NYC) 🙁

You can also hire someone to do this (Agents, Publishers)

Platform Partnerships

Oculus

Sony

Microsoft

Apple

Google

.. Netflix?

Publishers

Provide **business services** and **funding** in exchange for **revenue share**.

Devolver

Annapurna

Kowloon Knights

Very easy to get screwed over, but can definitely be worth it.

Venture Capital

Provide **funding** and **networking** in exchange for **company ownership**.
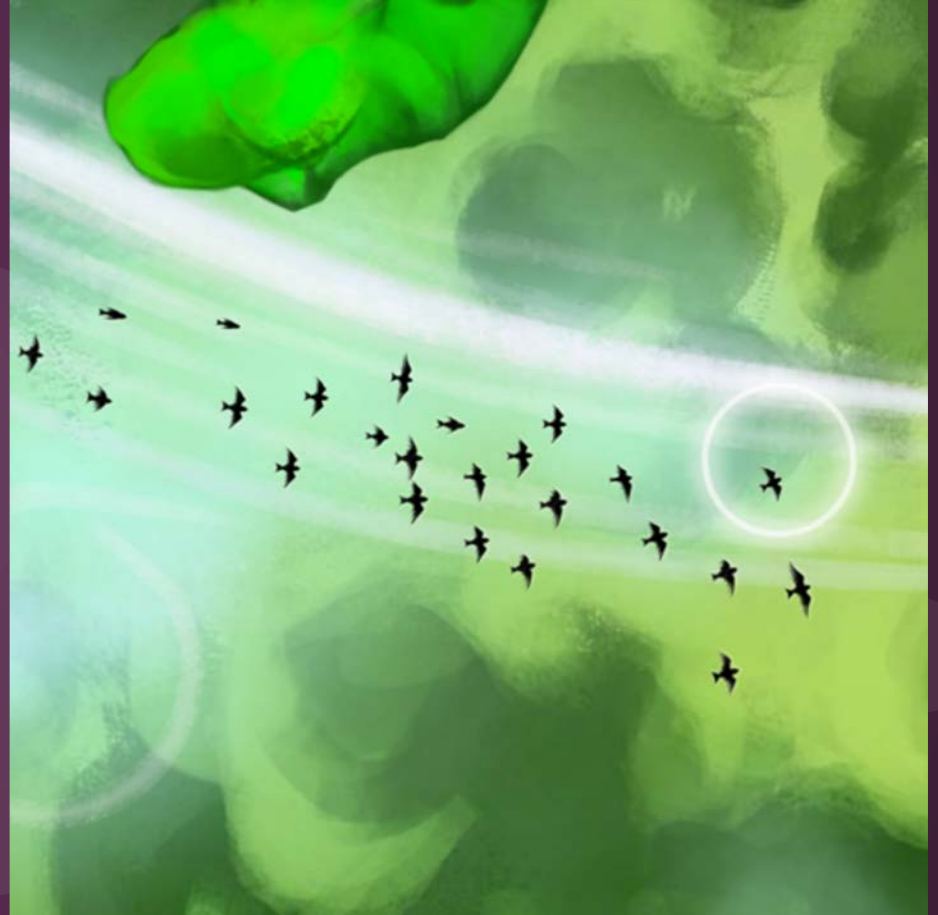
A16Z

YCombinator

1up Ventures

Tencent (kinda)

Requires you to sell/IPO your studio ~7-10 years in the future.

Planning for the Long Term

- All-in on one game.

- Multiple games at once (pipelined).

- One for them, one for us.

- Games as a service.

- Wealthy patron (?)

Case Study
Gathering Sky

Case Study
The Last Clockwinder