

SAE Institute London



Marketing Strategy

Indie game marketing for Riff Raff studios

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Introduction

As defined by Google, a digital marketing strategy is a plan of action designed to promote and sell a product or service (Google). Riff Raff Studios is an indie game company where our game was developed as a WebGL(website hosted game) deployed on a live website.

This document details the steps taken to create our marketing plan to market and promote our new project, Kevin's adventure, an indie game ideal for a young audience thanks to the lack of violence in the game.

As riff-raff studios lacked a real audience before our marketing started building up, we produced personas of our target audience to understand how to proceed when marketing. In addition, we analysed and positioned our company within the industry and its competitors, plus evidence on how the strategies we chose impacted our website.

Marketing outline

Researching Marketing Techniques

Our research into marketing techniques led us to several options that were efficient when marketing an indie game. We have listed the ones we thought were relevant:

- App store optimisation: suitable for games on mobile platforms.
- Influencer marketing, it is beneficial to have someone reviewing your game or product and sharing it with their audience.
- Direct marketing: This allows us to interact and invite users to play our game.
- Social media: The number of users on these platforms is billions of people, which increases every day. This allows us to reach a wider audience.
- Becoming active on forums and communities allow us to reach users interested in the main topic.
- Participating in events will help us to get our game showcased to a large audience.

This research allowed us to pick an appropriate marketing technique that will suit our target audience's needs. Having mentioned our audience, we have to consider that indie game studios are small, especially if it is a studio that is just starting with no audience, like us.

Brand

Riff-Raff studios is a company that mainly focuses on building games for younger audiences, focusing on a softer aesthetic, being inspired by games such as Legend of Zelda, Animal Crossing and Spyro. They mentioned that their studio wanted to dabble in experimental games, not just one genre but a range. However, we wanted to present ourselves as a friendly company with a sense of humour, therefore, we needed to find an audience that would enjoy both the studio and also the products they produce.

To solve this, we created four personas to help us better understand the audience and target them better. An overall look at our personas, they are notably young, passionate about video games or play to pass the time, and can access a pc desktop or laptop with an internet connection.

Personas

John Doe - 14 years old

John is a year nine student at Maryland School. He has good grades and behaviour. He lives with mum, dad and his younger brother Angel, including Atlas the cat and Rio the dog. Thanks to his good behaviour and grades, his parents gave him a PC as a gift for graduating.

Normally he would spend a few hours on the computer playing free online games, especially those of adventure. He enjoys short but fun games, so he can play them back any time he wants. He and his friends have a chat server on discord where they communicate when playing.

He is very artistic and creative, likes to draw and paint. Every weekend (or at least one day of the weekend) the family goes out to walk either in a shopping centre or the park and then when the evening comes is movie time. He is constantly looking for games that he thinks could be interesting and recommend to his friends.

Derek Shepherd - 10 years old

Derek is a year five student at Karasuno School - he is a good student and a good classmate. His best friends, Meredith and Mark, play board games and hide and seek during the break or free time. They would even do a sleepover together in Derek's house and continue playing board games.

Derek likes the countryside, and his dream is to build a house with a beautiful view of the trees and the forest. He enjoys drawing, and his mum gave him as a present an iPad so he could start digital drawing - "the first steps to become a *great* architect", his mum says all the time.

If he is not drawing or in school or with his friends, he will be looking for online games to pass the time. He is not interested in long narrative-focused video games. However, he enjoys games with short stories and simple goals that he could play repeatedly, and if he finds the game exciting, he will let his friends know to build the record of "who is the quickest to finish this level". *The Unstoppable Trio*.

Jacqueline De La Vega - 13 years old

Growing up, Jaqueline used to play all sorts of board games with her older brother Daniel, 15, as well as putting together puzzles. When they finally got a console for Christmas when she was 7. They both began to play and expand their interests to gaming, playing whatever game their parents bought for them. Since getting her Nintendo switch (which was a gift from her parents for her excellent grades year-round), she has been addicted to "Animal Crossing" and "My time at Portia". She enjoys the interactions with NPCs and the game's graphics; the aesthetics mainly grab her attention as it resembles her favourite animated shows. Having turned 13 years old recently, she was gifted a £30 gift card to spend as she pleases. She is looking for games that match the cute aesthetic and will look for games with her parent's consent.

Thomas Jefferson - 15 years old

As a youngster, Thomas has limited access to the internet as their parents believe children should spend little time on devices and more time out in the real world. However, understanding that the web and some media entertainment is beneficial for their only son, they have allowed him to go online for 1 hour of supervised playtime. Thomas loves to play games such as water girl and fire boy; however, he often likes to try new games with his parents' approval. Therefore, Thomas goes on to game blogs, searching for new games suitable for him. He is most likely to play games with high reviews and those with a soft aesthetic, and he is not interested in gory, scary or violent content.

SWOT Analysis

In order to create a strong marketing strategy, in addition to researching and getting an idea of our target audience, we also need to know our position in the industry amongst our competitors. A SWOT analysis helped identify our company's strengths and weaknesses and find possible opportunities and threats we might face in the future.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Our company develops free to play games.</p> <p>Our company organises events to engage with our users.</p> <p>Our game is published on a web server, no need to download it.</p>	<p>We have limited video game platforms.</p> <p>Saturated market.</p> <p>Users might prefer or trust more recognised titles.</p> <p>Amount of similar genre games.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>New games to be developed or to be updated.</p> <p>Try different genres of games.</p> <p>Develop games for different platforms.</p>	<p>Lack of audience.</p> <p>High expectations from users.</p> <p>Increase the number of competitors.</p>

Figure 1 - Table detailing the SWOT analysis we did on the brand, product and industry

Strengths:

- **Our company develops free-to-play games** - Riff Raff Studios offers an exciting free-to-play game to earn the user and as our target market is young, the trust of their parents leaving their child playing our games.
- **Our company organises events to engage with our users** - We like to host and organise events that have similar ideas of the game but in real life.
- **Games are published on a web server** - This means no time wasted in downloading, does not take up storage, and all that is needed is a good internet connection and a browser.

Weaknesses:

- **Limited video game platforms** - For now, our games are only compatible with desktop devices, so if a user wants to play from another platform, it will not be able to, and they might lose interest.
- **Saturated market** - The gaming industry is large and different games are showcased and released in a year; this is good competition.
- **Recognised titles** - Users might prefer and trust recognised titles or game studios.
- **Similar genre games** - This weakness relates to saturation in the gaming industry, but specifically with games with equal genres.

Opportunities:

- **New games to be developed** - More game ideas can come to life, and updates for the games we already have can be implemented.
- **Different genres of games** - Riff Raff Studios could immerse and offer a diverse range of genres of games.
- **Develop games for different platforms** - Games could be developed for various game platforms (mobile, tablets, ps5, Xbox)

Threats:

- **Lack of audience** - As we are a starter company, we do not have an audience to start with, so we need to create visual media to engage and gain users.
- **High expectations from users** - Relating to the previous point, we have to share visual media corresponding to the game and give the audience what they expect.
- **Increase number of competitors** - As new games might be showcased or released every day, the amount of competition grows each day exponentially.

The gaming industry is immense; thousands of games are released every year. This time, we are in the indie game industry section. At the E3 Indie Showcase of 2021, 12 indie games were showcased, and approximately 70 games were showcased in the 2021 Guerrilla Collective E3

showcase to be released in the next few months. As Kevin's Adventure is a non-profit/free to play game, we could evade large company competitors.

Our competitors are indie game studios that are currently developing and releasing games with similar genres to "puzzle, exploration, adventure" and targeting a similar target audience as ours. After researching a few indie game studios, we highlight the following ones as our closest competitors:

Vagabond Studios, currently developing and deploying a puzzle and exploration game for a young target audience.

Octavi Navarro Arts & Games, an independent game studio, has developed puzzle and adventure games.

Blowfish Studios, currently offering an engaging puzzle game for a young audience, having more than 1,500,000 downloads and trust in the indie section.

Our customer base that ranges from 10 to 15 years old expects an adventure game where they will help our protagonist solve puzzles to win the final prize. As it is a young audience, they are looking for a soft visual environment and soft colours.

In order to meet their expectations, we can make use of key success factors (KSF) to ensure the success of our company. **Strategic focus**, in order with leadership, management and planning:

1. Team leaders of both developments of the game and the website assign tasks and goals to be achieved on a weekly basis, so we have new features to showcase each week.
2. This weekly basis achievement will help us to showcase the product on the destined date.

Marketing focus with customer relations and responsiveness:

1. Develop a marketing strategy that allows us to engage with our audience through different channels.
2. Interact and keep engaging with our audience by communicating with them with the latest updates about the product.
3. We invite our audience to follow our development process of the product through our developer logbooks.

With these factors, we will be able to note how our competitors could meet those factors to figure out who would be the leading pack among the others. For the strategic focus, we do not have much information as it is something about how they planned their development process.

On the other hand, with the marketing focus, we can say that vagabond studios meet every KSF. In contrast, Octavi Navarro Arts & Games meet two of them, excluding developer logbooks and Blowfish Studios meets one of them, its marketing strategy engages their audience through different channels.

This leads to Vagabond Studios being one of our main competitors in the industry, this competitors analysis was inspired thanks to the blogpost about competitor analysis by Pestleanalysis Contributor (Pestleanalysis Contributor). Thanks to this, we are ready to present our digital marketing strategy.

Digital Marketing Strategy

The marketing tools and platforms we will be using for Kevin's Adventure will be **direct marketing, email marketing and content marketing.**

Our primary marketing strategy is content marketing, we are using the itch.io platform to write blog posts to engage and market our game with the audience. With these blogs, users and readers can follow our development progress and hopefully feel more engaged.

Direct Marketing will take protagonist with our word of mouth by mentioning our game to people that meet our target audience and like our visual style and genre of the game, a virtual scavenger hunt event, where in order to engage and gain more users, we will hide letters around the game, our website, our blog posts and our newsletter emails, and with this letters, the users will have to form a word that will give a clue for the next level of Kevin's Adventure, last but not least, our personal social media accounts where we will be sharing information about events, such as the scavenger hunt.

Email marketing will be used with MailChimp. It's an email marketing service that gives updates on the development of our game and events to come. This will be located on our website as a subscribe form where users can insert their email addresses and subscribe to our newsletter to get updates on the game's development via email.

Goals

Goal Monitoring

In order to monitor the following goals, we used google analytics to see the progress of how many users were active per day and week. However, initially, we tried out Matamo, but after a couple of weeks of struggling to understand how to register the activity on our website. We decided that we would revert to Google analytics as it was what we learned how to use. Therefore our beginner level understanding of it made us feel confident in using it.

After our first try of inputting Google analytics with our website, we were immediately receiving data. All the data shown in the direct marketing section of the report is gotten through Google Analytics. For our other marketing strategies, itch.io and MailChimp have their own analytics that records all our users' activity. How many views per blog post and the open rate and click rate on the emails.

Itch.io

We had set up our personal goals for our marketing on itch.io. Our main two goals were to have a minimum of 3 views per week paired with at least ten views per post. These goals were based on our research on how well blog posts do with a 4-5% conversion rate. There were various ways we accomplish these goals, such as having a link to our blog post on our main page, our interaction with others posts and even through the scavenger hunt that, to be completed, needed to pass through our blogs to find our hidden “word”.

We sometimes reached and surpassed our viewer per post-goal within the first two weeks; see Figure 2. This is proven with our 7.14% click-through rate, which is higher than expected for blog posts which fall to 2-3% according to databox; we spaced out blog posts with tags such as “indie games/ developers, puzzle, indie” was the best tags to use to get our posts noticed the most.

Posts

Status	Post	Published at	Views	Likes	Comments
PUBLISHED	End of Scavenger Hunt!	🕒 1 day ago	9	0	0
PUBLISHED	Drawing Near to the End!	🕒 4 days ago	16	1	0
PUBLISHED	Major updates on the game!	🕒 5 days ago	20	0	0
PUBLISHED	Scavenger Hunt Clue!	🕒 13 days ago	73	0	0
PUBLISHED	Only 3 weeks to go!	🕒 13 days ago	33	0	0
PUBLISHED	Demo Day Conclusion	🕒 13 days ago	29	0	0
PUBLISHED	Latest improvements!	🕒 20 days ago	38	0	0
PUBLISHED	Our Studio	🕒 20 days ago	30	0	0
PUBLISHED	Kevin's Adventure Beginnings	🕒 20 days ago	30	0	0

Figure 2 - Analytics from itch.io, more specifically views per post

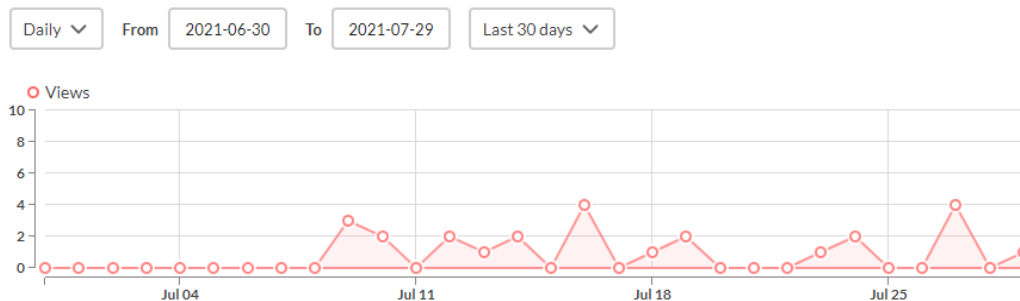


Figure 3 - Daily views of the itch.io “dev logs”

Direct

The main goal for our direct marketing campaign is mainly to get users onto our website through referral marketing, posting on the game developer social media accounts (that have a good following), and by participating in a demo day; an event where we showcased the game and gave visual details about the development to a large audience.



Figure 4 - Graph from google analytics detailing data we monitored - this is spanned across thirty days



Figure 5 - Data from google analytics showing our progress over a week from 15th - 21st July.

To improve our direct marketing, we hosted a virtual scavenger hunt. The goal was to get users onto our website to look for the letters hidden across our email, blog, website, and game.

Email

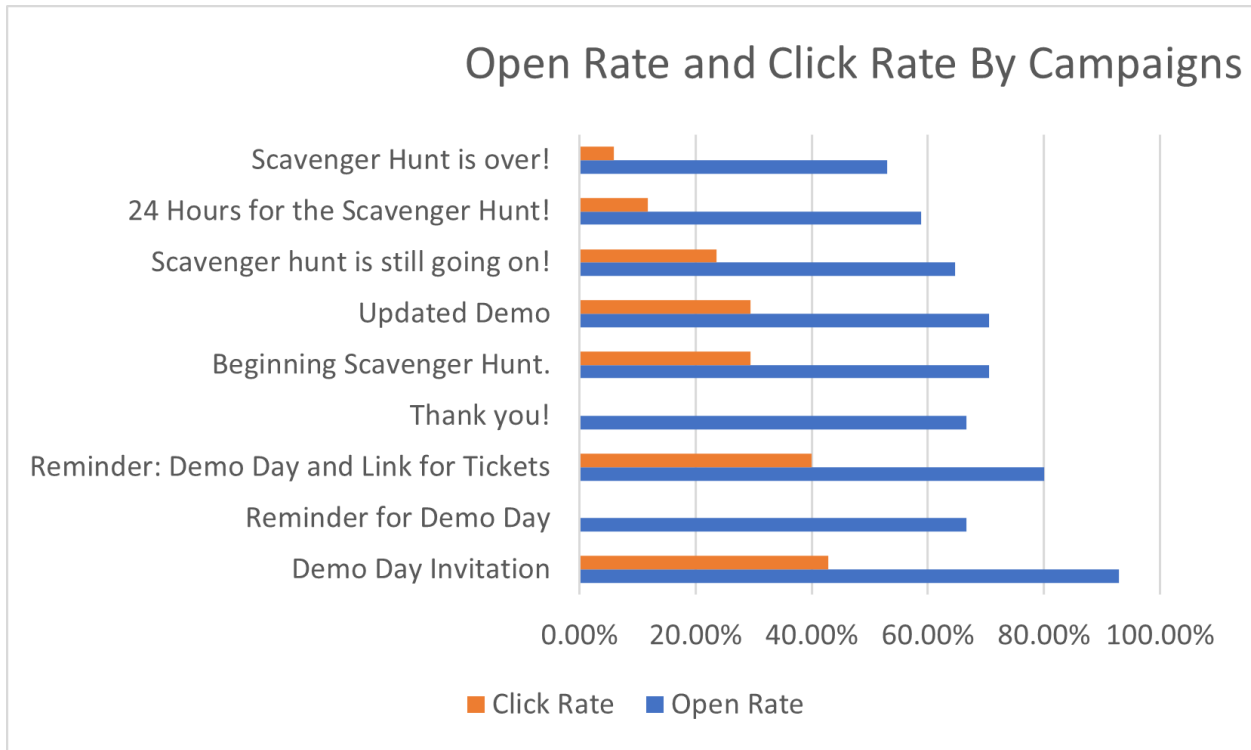


Figure 6 - Open Rate and Click Rate By Campaigns bar chart




Our main goal for our email marketing campaign was to get a minimum of a 50% open rate in all separate emails. As we can see presented in Figure 6, we have achieved this goal, this helps us record that our users are opening and hopefully reading our emails.

We wanted to include the click rate data because it varies within different campaigns. This has a reason, not all of our emails had an instruction for them to click something. The demo day and scavenger hunt campaigns highlighted a button for the user to press and be redirected to either get their tickets for Demo day or know more information about the scavenger hunt.

Thanks to this, we recorded how our audience interacts within the emails. We learnt that if we want the user to do something like visit our website, instead of just writing it in the email, we have to make it easy for them, so we add into our email an element, such as a button for them to follow our instructions.

Timeline

An essential part of this project was our collaboration and our resolve to complete our weekly tasks. Our schedule allowed us to keep track of all the work we had done and needed to complete. Furthermore, this allowed there to be no mix up in communication as we could see everything clearly. Below we have outlined what we accomplished week by week, from week seven onwards.

Date:	Weeks:	Content:
23.05	1	<p>Research on similar products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - what sort of platforms work best for our client - What is the content they post
01.06	2	<p>Built-up marketing strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How many times do we want to post on our blog posts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What sort - Types of campaigns we ought to work on - Creating illustrations/ content that we can use to post
		 
08.06	3	<p>Posting on Itch.io</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three posts per week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post three posts through different times of the day: peak times are 11 am, 3 pm, and 4 pm. These are based on the peak times of other blog posts. - Post three posts in a week spread out across three different days
15.06	4	<p>Logistics for Scavenger Hunt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning letter placements - Going through and testing how difficult it was to complete - An email campaign that was going to bare the hidden letter. - Plan time to talk with game devs to talk about how they are going to integrate the letters into the game - Pre-write blog posts and how they are going to hide the letters
		<p>Scavenger Hunt Clue!</p> <p><small>Kevin's Adventure • Devlog</small></p> <p><small>Like 2021-07-18 by riffraffstudios</small></p> <p><small>Share this post: [social icons]</small></p>  <p><small>Here at riff raff studios we have launched a virtual scavenger hunt, the information is on our website, take a look to join: Scavenger Hunt! (riff-raff-studios.netlify.app)</small></p> <p><small>For those of you here to find the next few letters, we have been posting on Itch.io about our journey, our success and progression. Take a look at our Itch.io posts, perhaps read a few and see what stands out to you. Maybe something resonates and sheds a light on the next clue.</small></p> <p><small>There are a total of two letters to find on the Itch.io posts.</small></p>

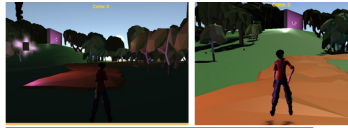
22.06	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The scavenger hunt is live! - Post blogs that were written in the previous week. Space them out across a 2-day interval. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add in new tags such as #marketing #scavengerHunt #Prize <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Drawing Near to the End! <small>Kevin's Adventure • Devlog</small></p> <p><small>👍 Like 1 2021-07-24 by rffraffstudios</small></p> <p><small>Share this post: 🐦 📧</small></p>  <p><small>In two weeks from now, we would have hit our deadline for our project. Despite this, our team stays strong, working on any small improvements in order for our game to be the best it can be. Throughout our journey we have grown as developers and our ability to work in a team has become a well worked skill.</small></p> <p><small>Riff Raff studios is an example of how far you can go. Our team started from 0 and built up our audience with a team of dedicated web and game developers; we have worked through this deadline tirelessly to produce our game but if you have no time restraints, then imagine what you could accomplish. If you want any tips on how to gather a crowd to your games, we will be posting in the following days our strategy, what did and didn't work, how we planned out our marketing and lastly, a review on how it went overall.</small></p> </div>
28.06	6	<p>Scavenger Hunt is over!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Email campaign detailing what our hidden word was. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thank them for their participation - Use illustrations to make the emails more personalised to their purpose by adding “thank you” to one of them. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Riff Raff Studios says</small> Thank you for participating in our Scavenger Hunt</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Thank you</i></p> </div>
	7	Submission of report and presentation

Figure 7 - The timeline consists of images of content we created for our marketing scheme.

Conclusion

In conclusion, with those mentioned above in this report, we can observe the route of our marketing strategy and take it as a good form of marketing to promote future products, allowing us to apply the knowledge acquired efficiently. As marketers, we have learned to be flexible with our strategy and not fixate on an idea throughout our journey.

First, research and learn from others' mistakes, learn your competition and find a way to create an even more engaging marketing strategy than them. However, the most crucial factor is the numbers. The form you chose to monitor the statistics is significant as this will help further understand your audience; what works, what does not work, where we might improve and how we might adapt a technique.

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