The Indie Publisher Pitch Deck

A slide-by-slide template for pitching your game to any publisher

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Why this exists

I've been on both sides of the publisher pitch. I've sent pitches as a developer at studios trying to land a deal. I've received hundreds as a publisher at PlayWay, CreativeForge, and now Mad Octopus, and I can tell you which pitches got responses and which got ignored after 30 seconds.

Most decks I see fail for the same reasons:

- The first slide is the studio logo, not the game
- They explain *what* the game is but not *why it will sell*
- They have no numbers, just vibes
- The "ask" is vague: "we'd love to partner with you"

This template solves all of those. Replace the `[PLACEHOLDERS]`, follow the slide order, and you'll be ahead of 90% of the decks publishers see.

A few hard truths first:

1. **A great deck doesn't get a bad game signed.** It does, however, get a good game *read*. That alone is worth doing this properly.
2. **Length matters.** 10–15 slides is right. Past 20, publishers stop reading. Under 8, you look unprepared.
3. **Format matters.** PDF, not PowerPoint that requires their fonts. 16:9. Under 20 MB. Hostable as a link.
4. **You are pitching the business case, not just the game.** A publisher is making a financial bet. Help them see the math.

How to use this

1. **Build the deck in Figma, Keynote, Google Slides, or PowerPoint.** Whatever you're fast in.
2. **Export to PDF.** Always send PDF as the primary attachment.
3. **Host on a public link too** (Notion, Dropbox public, your domain). Some publishers prefer browser viewing.

4. **One deck per publisher.** Customize Slide 11 ("Why You") for each. Generic decks signal you sent the same thing to 50 publishers.
5. **Send the deck only after a short email pitch** has piqued interest. Cold deck attachments often go straight to trash.

THE SLIDE STRUCTURE

#	Slide	Purpose
1	Cover / Hero	Make them want to keep reading
2	The Hook	One-sentence pitch
3	The Game	Genre, mechanics, core loop
4	Show, Don't Tell	GIFs / key art / video link
5	The Market	Comparable titles & their numbers
6	The Audience	Who buys this and where they live
7	Status & Roadmap	Where we are, what's left
8	The Team	Why we can ship this
9	Current Traction	Wishlists, coverage, demo data
10	The Business Ask	What we need from a publisher
11	Why You (specifically)	Customized per publisher
12	Contact & Links	How to follow up

Optional appendix slides at the end (5–10): trailer link, detailed budget, key art gallery, design pillars, technical details.

SLIDE 1: Cover / Hero

Purpose:

Make them want to keep reading.

On the slide:

- **Game title**, large, bold, top of slide
- **One-line tagline**, the pitch in 10 words
- **Hero key art**, full-bleed background or 70% of the slide
- **Studio name**, small, bottom corner
- **Date**, bottom corner
- **"CONFIDENTIAL"**, top-right corner (optional but standard)

What to avoid:

- Studio logo as the focal point, they don't know your studio yet
- Stock photos / placeholder art
- "Pitch Deck" as a subtitle (we know, that's why we opened it)

Example tagline:

> *"A roguelike about a courier delivering parcels in a city that rewrites itself every night."*

SLIDE 2: The Hook

Purpose:

In one sentence, make them want to play your game.

On the slide:

- One headline (1 sentence, max 20 words)
- Three sub-bullets that pre-empt the obvious questions
- One supporting GIF or screenshot

Headline formula (pick one):

- "It's [familiar reference] but [unusual twist]."
- "[Mechanic verb] your way through [setting] in this [genre]."
- "What if [familiar genre] but [unexpected mood/scale]?"

Example:

> ## [Game Title]
>
> ***Dark Souls' combat, in a town that lives a 30-minute day-night cycle, with a permadeath economy.***
>
> - Single-player, 20–40 hour campaign
> - Releases Q3 2026 on PC (Steam), Switch later
> - Built in Unreal Engine 5, current build is 80% feature-complete

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SLIDE 3: The Game

Purpose:

Show them the core loop in a way they could re-pitch to *their* team.

On the slide:

- **What the player does** (one sentence, the verb)
- **Core mechanics** (3–5 bullets, specific)
- **Core loop description** (1 short paragraph)
- **Genre + tags** (the actual Steam tags you'll use)
- **Optional:** a small "core loop" diagram (Plan → Execute → Reward → Repeat with specifics)

The publisher will ask themselves: "Could I describe this game to my boss in two sentences after closing this deck?" Help them.

Example:

What the player does

Plan a parcel route at dusk; survive a city that re-arranges itself overnight; deliver before sunrise or lose your run.

Core mechanics

- Procedural city layout regenerated every night
- Permadeath: dying loses your earned upgrades but not your route knowledge
- Branching dialog with NPCs whose memory persists across runs
- Crafting-driven progression: 80+ tool upgrades
- Three difficulty tiers with cosmetically distinct city aesthetics

Genre & Steam tags

Action Roguelike · Top-down · Procedural · Permadeath · Story-Rich · Pixel Art

SLIDE 4: Show, Don't Tell

Purpose:

Convert "interesting" into "I want to play this."

On the slide:

- **3–5 high-quality animated GIFs** (or a video link if the deck is hosted online)
- Each GIF labeled with **what mechanic it demonstrates** (one short caption)
- A clear, prominent link to the **trailer** (YouTube or Steam)

Important:

- These GIFs are the deck's centerpiece. If your GIFs are bad, the game looks bad, even if it isn't.
- GIFs should show *gameplay*, not menus, not splash screens, not concept art animations.
- Each GIF should be 3–8 seconds, looped, and tell a tiny story.

Layout example:

```
 +--------+ +--------+ +--------+
|  GIF 1 | |  GIF 2 | |  GIF 3 |
+--------+ +--------+ +--------+
 Stealth    Combat     Branching
 takedown   reaction   dialogue

      [▶ Watch the 60s trailer]
```

SLIDE 5: The Market

Purpose:

Prove this game can sell. Numbers, not vibes.

On the slide:

- **3–5 comparable titles** released in the last 2 years
- For each: estimated sales (or review count), price, what your game shares with it, what's different
- **Total market size estimate** (1 sentence)

Use real numbers from VG Insights, SteamSpy, Gamalytic, or public reports. Round numbers. Cite the source.

Example:

Comparable	Year	Est. units sold	Price	Shared with us	Different from us
`[Hades]`	2020	5M+	$24.99	Roguelike, story-rich	Larger scope, top-tier production
`[Loop Hero]`	2021	1M+	$14.99	Loop-based progression	Less twitch, more strategic
`[Cult of the Lamb]`	2022	3M+	$24.99	Dark whimsical tone, base building	Different core gameplay
`[Vampire Survivors]`	2022	5M+	$4.99	Replayability, "one more run"	We're slower, deeper

Bottom line: *Games in this space routinely sell 200k–5M units at $15–25 price points. We believe* `[Game Title]` *realistically targets* `[X]-[Y]k units in year 1` *at a* `[$XX.XX]` *price.*

SLIDE 6: The Audience

Purpose:

Show you know *exactly* who buys this game and where to find them.

On the slide:

- **One-paragraph audience persona** ("They played X, complain about Y, follow Z creators")
- **3–5 specific communities** where they live (subreddits, Discords, forums)
- **Their typical price point** and purchase behavior
- **Why they'll buy *this* game specifically**

Avoid:

- "Anyone who likes good games"
- "Fans of indie games"
- "Hardcore and casual players alike"

Example:

> ## Who buys this game
>
> Players who finished Hades 1 and Hades 2 and are looking for the next thing in that "tight loop + narrative" space. Often own 50–200 Steam games. Price-sensitive but pay for quality ($15–25 is the sweet spot). Active in r/roguelikes, r/indiegaming, and the Roguelike-likes Discord. Follow creators like Northernlion, Splattercat, and Wanderbots.
> Currently underserved by the AAA market and overwhelmed by low-effort roguelikes on Steam. Looking for tight, polished, weird.

SLIDE 7: Status & Roadmap

Purpose:

Show the project is real, the timeline is realistic, and you know what's left.

On the slide:

- **Current status** (e.g. "80% feature-complete, content production phase")
- **Visual timeline** of the past 6–18 months + next 6–12 months
- **Major remaining milestones**
- **Target release window**

Example:

```
PAST                            NOW                             PLANNED
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
2024 Q3: Prototype complete                                   Q3 2026:
2024 Q4: Vertical slice       2026 Q2 (now):                   Steam launch
2025 Q1: First demo           - 80% feature-complete           (PC)
2025 Q3: Steam page live      - 12,400 wishlists
2025 Q4: Closed alpha         - Localization underway         Q1 2027:
2026 Q1: Open beta            - Polish phase ahead            Switch launch
```

Remaining work (honest):

- `[X weeks]` content production (3 of 5 biomes built, finishing last 2)
- `[Y weeks]` polish and bug fixing
- `[Z weeks]` localization for `[6 languages]`
- `[W weeks]` marketing campaign + Next Fest

SLIDE 8: The Team

Purpose:

Convince the publisher this team can actually ship.

On the slide:

- **Team size** (e.g. "Solo dev + part-time artist + composer-on-contract")
- **For each key person:** name, role, prior shipped games, optional photo
- **Studio history** (1 sentence)
- **External support** (publisher, porting partner, audio, localization)

Be honest. A 1-person team that ships beats a 10-person team that doesn't. Publishers know this.

Example:

> ## The team
>
> `[Name]`, Game Director, Lead Programmer 8 years gamedev. Previously shipped *[Game A]* (200k+ units) at *[Studio X]* and *[Game B]* (sold to *[Buyer]*).
> `[Name]`, Art Director (full-time) Background in pixel art and animation. Prior credits: *[Game C]*, *[Game D]*.
> `[Name]`, Composer (contract) Soundtracks for *[Game E, F]*. 200k Spotify monthly listeners.
> **External:** localization via `[Studio]`, marketing consultation via `[Mad Octopus / TBD]`.

SLIDE 9: Current Traction

Purpose:

Prove there's real interest in the game *right now*.

On the slide:

- **Wishlist count** (current, with trajectory)
- **Demo data** (if applicable, downloads, completion rate, wishlist conversion)
- **Press coverage** (logos + 1–2 review quotes)
- **Community size** (Discord, Twitter / Bluesky followers, only if meaningful)
- **Steam Next Fest results** (if applicable)

Avoid showing a number unless it's meaningful. "120 Discord members" is worse than not mentioning Discord.

Example:

> ## Where we stand today (`[YYYY-MM-DD]`)
>
> - **12,400 wishlists** (growing 80–150/day, 30% spike during last Next Fest)
> - **Demo: 28,000 downloads, 19% wishlist conversion** (industry average: 15%)
> - **Press coverage:** PC Gamer, Rock Paper Shotgun, GamesRadar, Indie DB
> - **Community:** 2,100 Discord members, 8,400 X followers
> - **Awards:** Nominated for *[Festival X]* Best Indie 2026

> " `[Quote from review, short, specific, complimentary]` " *[Outlet], [date] · [link]*

SLIDE 10: The Business Ask

Purpose:

Be explicit about what you want. Vague asks get vague answers.

On the slide:

- **What we want** (services, funding, both, or co-publishing)
- **Why** (specific, not generic)
- **What we're offering in return** (revenue share willingness, exclusivity, etc.)
- **Budget needed** (if asking for funding), itemized

Possible asks (pick what applies):

What we're looking for

Primary: Full publishing services, marketing, PR, influencer outreach, Steam page optimization, launch coordination.
Secondary (optional): `[$X]` development funding to cover the final `[Y months]` of production.
Itemized:

- Localization (6 languages): `[$X,XXX]`
- Composer final tracks: `[$X,XXX]`
- QA + bug bounty: `[$X,XXX]`
- Marketing assets (trailer, key art revisions): `[$X,XXX]`
- Reserve / contingency (10%): `[$X,XXX]`

Open to: revenue share ranging from `[X]%` to `[Y]%` depending on services and funding provided. Console rights negotiable.
Not open to: full IP transfer; non-compete clauses beyond launch window.

SLIDE 11: Why You (Specifically)

Purpose:

Show you researched this publisher and aren't sending the same deck to 50 others.

This slide is the single biggest differentiator in a stack of pitches. *Customize it for every publisher.*

On the slide:

- **One paragraph** on why this publisher fits this game
- **References to their actual portfolio** (games you respect that they shipped)
- **What you specifically admire about how they operate**

Avoid:

- Generic praise ("you have a great track record")
- Listing things every publisher does ("marketing, PR, influencer outreach")
- Confusing publisher names (please)

Example:

> ## Why Mad Octopus
>
> We've been following Mad Octopus since the launch of *[Game Y]*, the way you ran the demo campaign around Next Fest 2025 was exactly the kind of focused, transparent operation we want for `[Game Title]`. Your 100%/10% revenue split is genuinely rare in this industry, and your willingness to work as a co-publisher (without forcing visible branding) is a perfect fit for how we want to position our studio.
> We also know Piotr's background at PlayWay and CreativeForge means you have institutional knowledge of niche genres that AAA-leaning publishers don't bring. That matters for a game like ours.

SLIDE 12: Contact & Links

Purpose:

Make the follow-up trivial.

On the slide:

- **Primary contact** (name, role, email, time zone)
- **Steam page URL**
- **Press kit URL**
- **Trailer URL**
- **Demo URL** (if available)
- **Studio website**
- **Studio socials**

Make every URL clickable in the PDF. Test the PDF after export.

Example:

> ## Let's talk
>
> `[Your Name]` , `[Role]` , `[Studio]` `[email]` · `[Discord handle]` · `[time zone]`
> Game: `[Steam URL]` Trailer: `[YouTube URL]` Press kit: `[URL]` Demo: `[Steam URL or "On request"]`
> Studio: `[website]`
> Available for a 30-minute call any time after `[earliest date]` . Happy to send a Steam key on request.

APPENDIX SLIDES (Optional, 3–10 extra)

Add these *only if relevant* and *only if they answer questions a publisher will likely ask*.

Appendix A, Detailed budget breakdown

Tables, not vibes. Salaries, contracts, software, hardware, marketing, contingency. If you're asking for funding, this slide is mandatory.

Appendix B, Design pillars

3–5 pillars (e.g. "Every death teaches", "City is the antagonist", "No two runs share the same map"). Useful for narrative-heavy or systems-heavy games.

Appendix C, Key art gallery

5–10 hero shots, large. For games where visual identity is the selling point.

Appendix D, Technical details

Engine, target platforms, performance benchmarks, save system, accessibility features. For technically distinctive games.

Appendix E, Risk & mitigation

What could go wrong, what you'll do about it. Smart publishers love to see this. Bad publishers think it makes you look weak. Submit accordingly.

Appendix F, Marketing plan summary

Even if you're asking the publisher to handle marketing, showing you've thought about it sets a tone. 2–4 channels, planned content cadence, Next Fest target.

Appendix, Common deck mistakes I see weekly

The 47-slide masterpiece.

No one reads past slide 15. Cut everything that doesn't directly serve the business case.

No GIFs. *Static screenshots can't show feel. If your game has interesting motion, show it. If your game doesn't have interesting motion, fix that before pitching.*

The "we're passionate" slide. Everyone pitching is passionate. Skip it.

The "competitive landscape" slide with a 4-quadrant chart. These almost always look like marketing-school exercises. Use the comparable-titles table instead.

Hidden numbers. "Strong wishlist growth!" is not a number. "12,400 wishlists, growing 80–150/day" is.

Embedded video files. Use links to YouTube. Embedded videos break in 50% of PDF readers.

Inconsistent branding. Five different fonts, three logo versions, screenshot resolutions all over the place. This is your business pitch. Spend a day polishing the visuals.

The "we'll figure out marketing" slide. Publishers will assume you can't market because you didn't try. Even a one-paragraph plan changes the tone of the conversation.

Wrong publisher name on Slide 11. Yes, it happens. Yes, it ends conversations instantly.

Appendix, What publishers (probably) read

Most decks get a 60-second skim. Specifically:

1. Slide 1 (does this game look interesting?)
2. Slide 2 (what is it?)
3. Slide 4 (does it look good in motion?)
4. Slide 9 (does it have traction?)
5. Slide 10 (what does this dev want?)

If those five slides land, they'll read the rest. If they don't, no number of "Design Pillars" slides will save you.

Optimize accordingly.

Need help refining your deck?

Mad Octopus partners with indie devs on Steam launches, and one of the things we genuinely enjoy is reviewing pitch decks (even from teams who don't end up working with us). We've been on both sides of the table for over a decade.

If you'd like a free deck review, send us yours at madoctopus.fun or in our Discord. We give honest feedback. We don't sugarcoat. That's the point.

Good pitch decks don't get bad games signed. But they do get good games
read

. That alone is worth doing this properly.

, Piotr