MindSlayer
Business Proposal

Elevator Pitch

Genre

MindSlayer is a stealth based action horror game with strong movement based sections. The player plays as a roguish psychic assassin, known as a MindSlayer, sent to kill a religiously fanatical Baron. Navigating their way through the maze-like castle, they must avoid enemy detection in tense stealth sections, and take down cult leaders in movement based mind games in order to locate and assassinate the Baron.

Conceptual Statement

Set on an island in 18th century France, in a castle similar to the Neuschwanstein, a Baron has started a cult, worshiping a supposed 'Sea God' that grants its followers powers and alters their bodies in demonic ways. The MindSlayer corps sees this situation as a threat to themselves, and has sent out an assassin to take out this false god and its followers.
The player plays as this assassin, a member in the group of psychically enhanced individuals that have been secretly keeping the balance behind the scenes for centuries, with themselves on top. Using their psychic abilities they must kill this fanatical Baron without leaving as much as a fingerprint of evidence behind. Using their telekinetic powers to wield a clockwork creature/knife from afar and using telepathy to enter the minds of the immortal cult leaders and destroy them from within.

Executive Summary

The Plan

BoneFuel Studios aims to develop this product within the confines of one year. Development costs are £152,500 for our student team of 10, including housing and education costs, which will require ~10,150 copies to be sold at £15 each. We will employ the Agile development method to ensure the product is complete in a timely manner whilst also allowing us to regularly communicate with our client. We will be using Unreal Engine 5 for its unique capabilities of creating high graphic fidelity environments and assets.

The Problem

Movement based fps games are currently seeing a rise with games such as *Ultrakill* (New Blood Interactive, 2020) and *Neon White* (Annapurna Interactive, 2022), seeing massive success both commercially and critically. These examples are much like us with small companies trying to make a name for themselves in the games industry, and we understand that they achieved this by carving out a place in the market with unique aesthetics and mechanics. So in that same

sense our game also aims to to satisfy a gap in the market for our dark, gritty, occult aesthetic combined with our assassin themed, movement based horror mechanics.

In our research of this potential gap in the market we found a handful of examples of this assassin style gameplay including the massively popular *Assassin's Creed* (Ubisoft, 2007), but one's with our chosen aesthetic are even fewer, the closest example is the *Dishonored* (Arkane Studios, 2012) series, however with our occult religious theming and our stronger horror themed mechanics we move away from the power fantasy that *Dishonored* presents and into a darker and more dangerous play space. As such we have identified our gap as a stealth based action horror game with strong movement based elements, that is then elevated by our dark, gritty, occult aesthetic.

The Solution

Having identified the gap in the market as a specific genre combined with a unique aesthetic, our gameplay decisions must reflect this. Therefore we have assigned ourselves 3 core pillars we feel reflect what makes our product stand out. Tense, as we want any and all gameplay to give this sense of tension, whether that be the extreme of horror or the lower lying sense of dread. Fluid, we understand that the benchmark for many movement based first person games are their fluidity of movement, we feel this is important enough to be considered as a core pillar of the product's development. Digetic, similar to fluidity, we want to strip down the elements that will break the player's immersion to ones that purely provide a function, in this sense all three elements are working in tandem towards the goal of fulfilling this gap.

The Team

- 6 Artists: 2 environment, 2 character, 2 concept. One of the strengths of our team lies with our heavy weighting of artists, we want to play to this strength by working in unreal where we can utilise the engines better overall graphic quality to make detailed models and environments.
- 2 Designers: 1 narrative, 1 level/mechanics. By dividing our designers into vastly different specialisms we aim to cover more ground and maximise our potential output.
- 1 Animator. The animation load has been reduced by focusing on first-person mechanics and having set enemy types.
- 1 Programmer. By pairing down our mechanics to focus on the games core parkour stealth base, we aim to once again reduce the load on our programming department.

Market Research

Player Persona - Greg

Gender:
- Male. We recognise this plays into a predominantly male assassin fantasy.

Age:
- 16-25. We also recognise this as a teen to young adult appeal especially.

Location:
- United Kingdom. Being a small company run in the UK means that we can play on patriotic purchasing.

Career:
- Back end developer. A person that would be likely to visit websites like itch.io and try indie game experiences.

Salary
- £110,000. The average salary of a back end developer, unlikely to be concerned on pricing of small purchases.

Education:
- University degree. Higher education with a background in computer science and a potential interest in the code of our game.

Technological Background:
- High level of understanding. Working with any kind of code language shows a high understanding of current technology.

Gaming Motivation:
- Escapism and nostalgia. As for many working class individuals, gaming serves as an escape from the dull day to day, as well as harking back to a time where there were no deadlines or quotas to meet.

Other Non-Gaming Interests:
- Social media and PC maintenance. Watching videos on sites like YouTube, as well as repairing old PCs. These are the types of hobbies that may lead an individual to stumble across a smaller indie game, via video recommendations and word of mouth in smaller dedicated communities.

Aspirations:
- Monetary gain. Greg does not have larger aspirations and instead seeks to secure his current lifestyle.We can serve as a comfort to this mindset, as an easy way of exploring whilst still remaining in that comfort zone.

Target Audience

Bartle's Taxonomy:

Acting

Killers

Achievers

✗

Players ← → World

Socializers

Explorers

Interacting
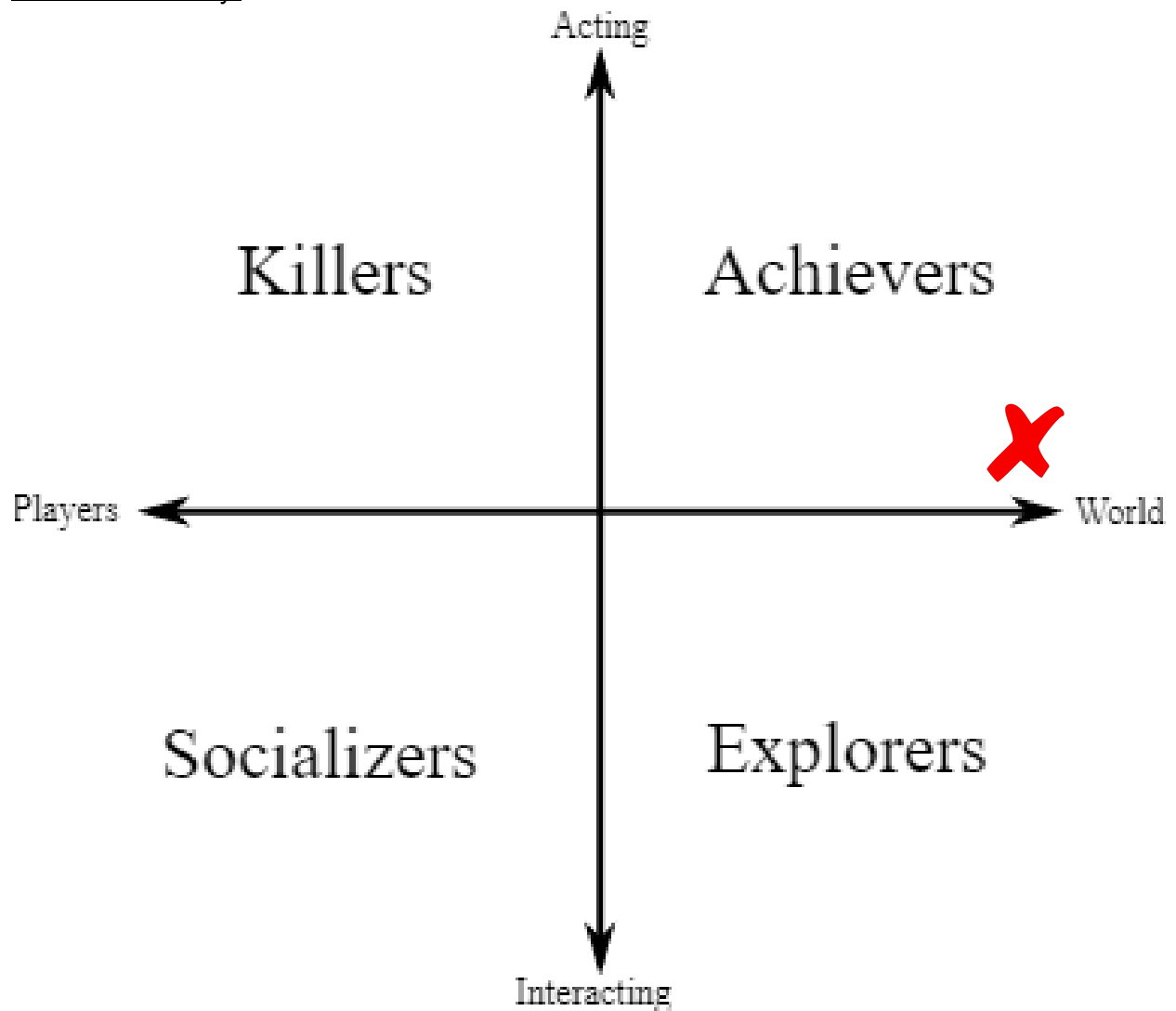
MindSlayer is a single player experience with little focus on socialising with players or characters, the core design does not accommodate for a killers' mindset with the focus primarily being around exploring the environment and navigating hazards. It leans towards achievers as an experience that can be beaten, however, it also rewards those who are intrigued by it's environment and make the choice to explore it.

Gamer Motivational Model:

Immersion "Once Upon a Time"	Creativity "What If?"	Action "Boom!"	Social "Let's Play Together"	Mastery "Let Me Think"	Achievement "I Want More"
Fantasy The desire to be someone else, somewhere else.	**Design** The appeal of expression and deep customisation.	**Destruction** The enjoyment of chaos, mayhem, guns and explosions.	**Competition** The enjoyment of competition with other players (dual or matches).	**Challenge** The preference for games of skill and enjoyment of overcoming difficult challanges.	**Completion** The desire to complete every mission, get every collectible and discover hidden items.
Story The importance of an elaborate storyline and interesting characters.	**Discovery** The desire to explore, tinker and experiment with the game world.	**Excitement** The enjoyment of games that are fast paced, intense, and provide an adrenaline rush.	**Community** The enjoyment of interacting and collaborating with other players.	**Strategy** The enjoyment of games that require careful decision making and strategic thinking.	**Power** The importance of becoming powerful within the context of the game world.

Whilst there are certain elements of MindSlayer that allow for a tactical, well thought out approach, that may lead it to being misidentified as just a game of Mastery, however, the games' core identity aligns more with that of an Mastery-Achievement mindset. There are also still strong elements of Immersion, with the overarching narrative and world building drawing in a wider player base.

Age Rating:

With the realistic artstyle, graphic depictions of violence and gore are corner stones of this games' identity. Pairing these factors with use of fear and potential mild bad language means this game should be marketed towards a rating of 16 at minimum.

The Competition

Dishonored (Arkane Studios, 2012):
- A very popular action-adventure franchise, for its assassin themed gameplay and steampunk aesthetic.
- On top of the assassin themed gameplay the assassin also has supernatural powers which help the player character both traverse the environment and complete their job of assassination.
- This "assassin themed gameplay" primarily revolves around stealthing and avoiding detection, but the tools the players are given are open-ended enough that they have multiple playstyle options.

Hitman (IO Interactive, 2007):
- Another popular title in the action-adventure genre, this time a more modern assassin with third person shooter mechanics.
- This title focuses on using the environment in a variety of creative ways to distract, assassinate or simply cause chaos.
- Similar to *Dishonored,* the core gameplay loop revolves around giving the player an objective and the tools to accomplish it but leaving the solution up to them. This sandbox style of play appears to be a popular theme amongst the genre.

Dark Souls (From Software, 2011):
- An action-RPG, this title has little focus on stealth or movement, however, the map design shares many similarities with MindSlayer.
- The maps of dark souls are unique in their interconnectivity, forever looping back on itself with progression being marked by shortcuts and new areas to unlock.
- Their core gameplay loop revolves around navigating an area, analysing, and achieving the correct path through its hazards, which inevitably culminates in an encounter with a unique and challenging boss.

Points of Reflection:
- Games that feature an assassin style gameplay excel when they are giving the player agency over how they tackle the objective.
- This must be facilitated by flexible core systems such as a variety of unique abilities or dynamic environments.
- When selecting a *Dark Souls* style map design it's important to understand whether or not it will integrate into and facilitate your core gameplay loop. In the cases of *Hitman* & *Dishonored* both feature unique styles of map design that highlight their mechanics.

How Will MindSlayer Utilise This:

The core mechanics are simple but aim to give the player large amounts of freedom in how they tackle obstacles, the parkour surfaces allow for the player to choose how they would like to use their movement, although there is a clearly defined path for most challenges in this game, we fully expect and encourage the player to try to come up with their own. With the knife bringing accessible utility to the kit, having a variety of different functions throughout the gameplay.

Financial Analysis

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:
- As mentioned our high number of talented artists is excellent for producing high quality assets.
- Unreal's potential for higher graphic fidelity.
- Our team has strong morale and camaraderie, which is of course important when working on a team project.

Weaknesses:
- The low number of designers, programmers, and animators has proven a troublesome bottleneck. However, we have had the opportunity to outsource.
- The learning curve of adopting Unreal has certainly not been without challenge. However, our designers and programmers have shown rapid adaptability to the new program, which is promising for future content.
- During development, our team has strived for grand aspirations, and oftentimes we have had to downscale these ideas. Fortunately, given more development time our team would certainly be able to achieve these goals.

Opportunities:
- By identifying the gap in the market for our product, we hope to capitalise upon it.
- Working in close proximity to so much eager talent we have been given the opportunity to outsource some of our tasks as and where needed.
- As students of Falmouth University, we have been able to lever talent from non-game development departments such as actors to voice our characters.

Threats:
- Much of our competition uses stylised art as a way of quickly producing assets with drastically reduced development time, in order to keep up with demand we will have to work twice as hard to keep up. However, this choice to go against the grain will serve to be one of our defining features.
- With such popular releases as *Ultrakill* and *Neon White* releasing to such acclaim in the last five years, the demand for polished movement based first person games has been put in the spotlight. Whilst this means the potential for competition has been stirred, it also means there is a well established playerbase eager for content like our own.

PESTLE Analysis

Political:
- The belief that violent video games can cause violence is a political platform still used to this day and may be one that has an effect on a violent game such as ours.

Economic:
- The current economic housing crisis within the UK will surely have a knock-on on development costs of the game.

Social:
- Our religious theming may make our game less popular in highly religious sects within areas of America or the UAE.

Technological:
- Working in Unreal has its drawbacks in regards to specs required to download and run games developed within it.

Legal:
- The international success *Grand Theft Auto* (Rockstar Games, 2013) was banned in the UAE for violent content, with such laws a violent game like ours may face the same penalisation.

Environmental:
- As a digital only sale, our game should not have a measurable environmental impact. Regardless, we are wary of the environmental impacts that some digital products can have such as NFTs.

Financial Forecasting

Student Forecast:
- (£9,250 (years education cost) + £6000 (years housing expenses)) x 10 (team members) = £152,500 (breakeven)
- If sold at £15: 10,167 copies would need to be sold to meet our breakeven.

Industry Forecast:
- ((£25,000 (based on average game developer starting salary UK) x 10 (team members)) + £40,000 (10 person office space at £80/sq ft)) x 1.25 (25% development costs on promotion) = £362,500 (breakeven)
- If sold at £15: 24,167 copies would need to be sold to meet our breakeven.

We recognise this level of success is not guaranteed on a student game, however, we see this product as a platform to make a name for BoneFuel Studios. We have already discussed the potential of franchising the MindSlayer universe into other genres of games based on the MindSlayer organisation, so we see this product as a long term investment on top of what we have built thus far.