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What Do We Mean When We Say "Indiepocalypse"?

Jeff Vogel
Spiderweb Software



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Who Am I and Why Am I Here?

My name is Jeff Vogel.

I started Spiderweb Software in 1994.

Spiderweb
S O F T W A R E



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Spiderweb

S O F T W A R E

We're a tiny little indie game company based in Seattle.

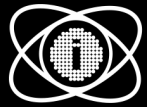
www.spiderwebsoftware.com

Twitter: @spiderwebsoft

Blog: <http://jeff-vogel.blogspot.com/>



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We have written a bunch of low-budget fantasy role-playing games for Windows, Mac, and iPad...

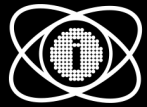
AVERNUM **Geneforge**

NETHERGATE **AVADON**
THE BLACK FORTRESS

Key point: all of our games are very similar.



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Our games:

Exile: Escape From the Pit

Exile 2: Crystal Souls

Exile 3: Ruined World

Blades of Exile

Avernum

Avernum 2

Avernum 3

Avernum 4

Avernum 5

Avernum 6

Blades of Avernum

Nethergate

Nethergate: Resurrection

Geneforge

Geneforge 2

Geneforge 3

Geneforge 4: Rebellion

Geneforge 5: Overthrow

Avadon: The Black Fortress

Avadon 2: The Corruption

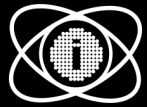
Avernum: Escape From the Pit

Avernum 2: Crystal Souls

(I've been around a while.)



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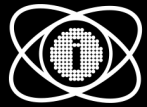


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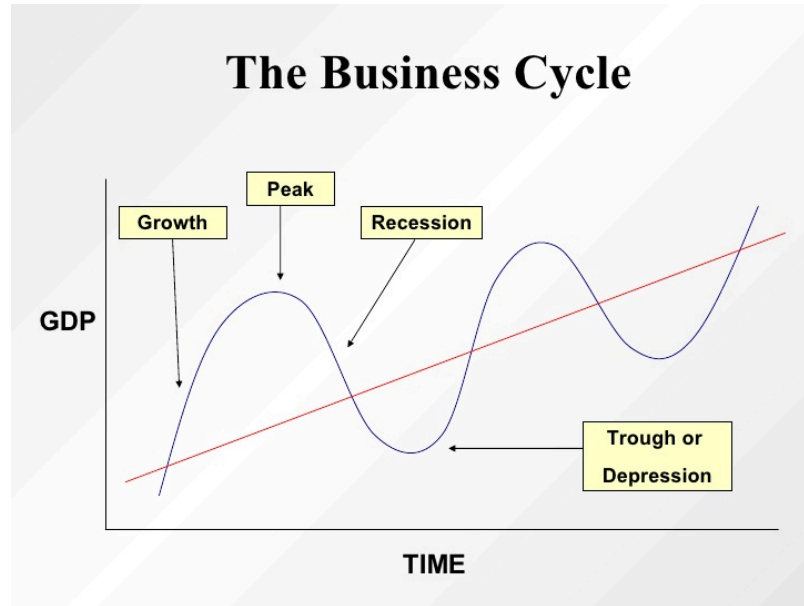
**This brief talk is about the history of the Indie Glut
(or Indie Boom & Bust)**



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**Or, as the rest of the world calls
it, the Business Cycle.**



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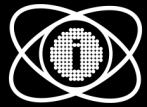
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What I won't call it:

The Indie Bubble
(a great clickbaity name, but not really accurate)



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Or, God Help Us, the

Indiepocalypse

(No. Nobody believes indie games are actually going away.)



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I will tell my story of the Indie Glut.

I'll use sales figures for 4 of my games (released 2010-2015) as illustration.



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A story of the Indie Boom that needs to be proven:

It started around 2008.

- 1. AAA innovation not so great.**
- 2. Games like Braid, World of Goo, and Castle Crashers prove indies are good.**
- 3. Indie-friendly online stores (Xbox Live, Steam, iTunes) appear.**



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Indie games became hot.

Lots of demand. Not much product.

The \$\$\$ drew developers, who rushed to make their own hawt new indie title.



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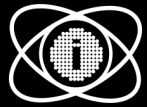
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At some point, maybe around 2011-2012, supply met demand, and we hit our peak.

But still, the new indie games kept flowing in. LOTS of them.

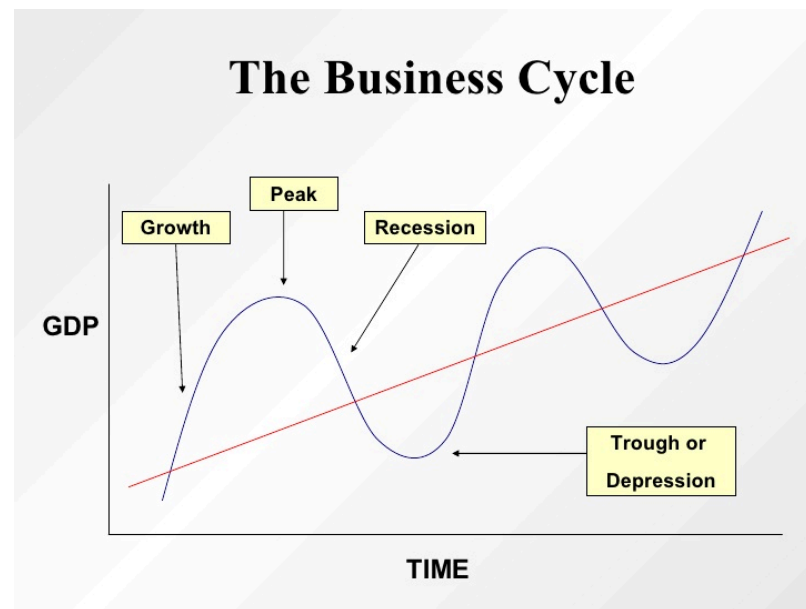


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Friendly reminder drawing:



(For more info: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_cycle)



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Eventually, the amount of product exceeded the demand for it.

Gamers have finite budgets.

News outlets have finite space.

This leads to the final, inevitable phase of the Business Cycle: Recession.



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**THERE IS NO APOCALYPSE HERE.
JUST SHRINKING.**



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But is any of this true?

[CITATION NEEDED]



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I'm going to give you Steam sales figures for my last four games, to start building a base of actual data.



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The games in question are:

Avadon: The Black Fortress (2010, \$10)

Avernum: Escape From the Pit (2011, \$10)

Avadon 2: The Corruption (2013, \$10)

Avernum 2: Crystal Souls (2015, \$20)



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Comparing sales of two games is usually apples & oranges.

These four games are quite similar.

Why?



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They are all:

- 1. Indie retro low-budget high-text turn-based.**
- 2. Very similar styles.**
- 3. Mac & Windows.**
- 3. Vast majority of sales on Steam.**
- 4. Minimal PR, mainly word-of-mouth.**



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Significant differences:

The earlier games got more press and bundles.

The earlier ones have been out longer (but all are well into the long tail).



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I will give copies sold and total earnings on Steam.

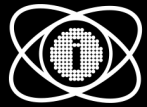
Bundle Steam keys ARE counted in # of copies and not in \$\$\$ earnings.

There's a LOT of inexactness here.

I just want to show the drop in sales for my retro, niche product.



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So here are the Steam Sales Figures (as of Feb, 2016):

**Avadon: The Black Fortress (2010, \$10, heavy bundle interest)
62681 copies. \$313,000.**

**Avernum: Escape From the Pit (2011, \$10, some bundle interest)
61959 copies. \$290,000.**

**Avadon 2: The Corruption (2013, \$10, some bundle interest)
51051 copies. \$101,000.**

**Avernum 2: Crystal Souls (2015, \$20, NO bundle interest)
7546 copies. \$111,000.**



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All of my other sales (bundles, iTunes, iPad, our own site, GoG.com) have followed a similar downward pattern.

Though you'll have to take my word for it.

(But why would I lie? You think I'm BRAGGING that I can't sell product?)



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THE BIG TAKEAWAY:

The games business is hard.



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So that is the conjecture of what is happening.

This has all happened before.

It will all happen again.



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