Indie Audio:
## A Guide to Successful Outsourcing

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About Me

Hexany Audio: Sound & Music for Games & Apps

‣ Entered the game audio world in 2008

‣ Studied game sound & music at the Berklee College of Music

‣ Founded Hexany, a 4-person team of composers and sound designers

‣ Console (Xbox 360/PS3/Wii), PC/Mac, Web, iOS, Mobile

‣ Shooter, Horror, Adventure, MMO, Casual, Apps, etc.
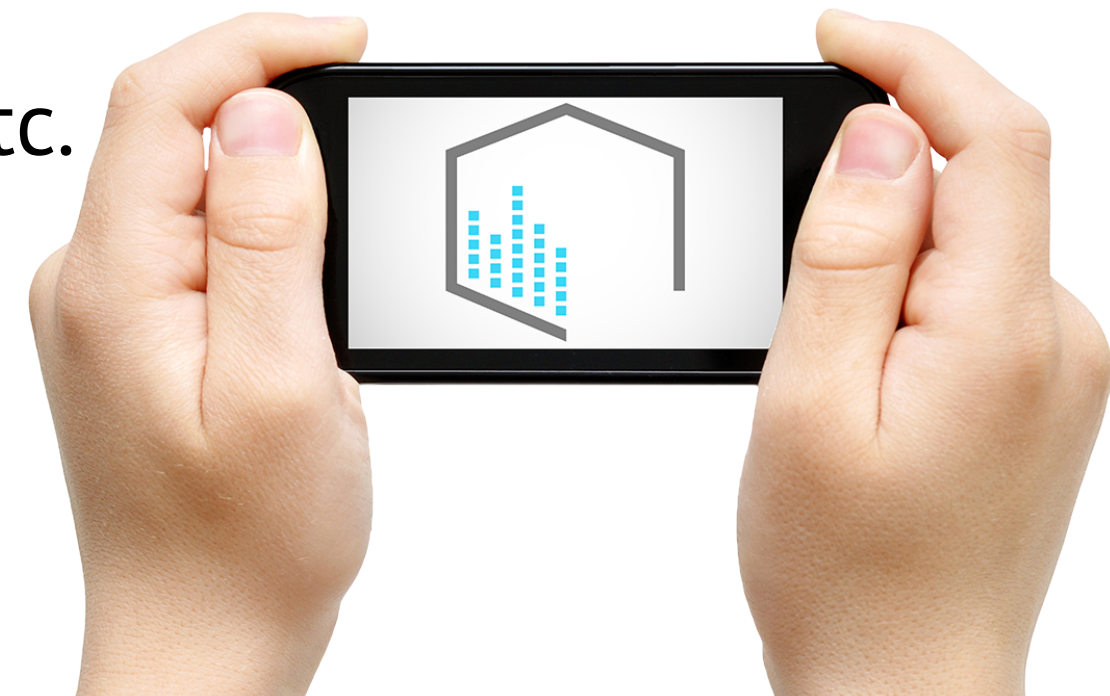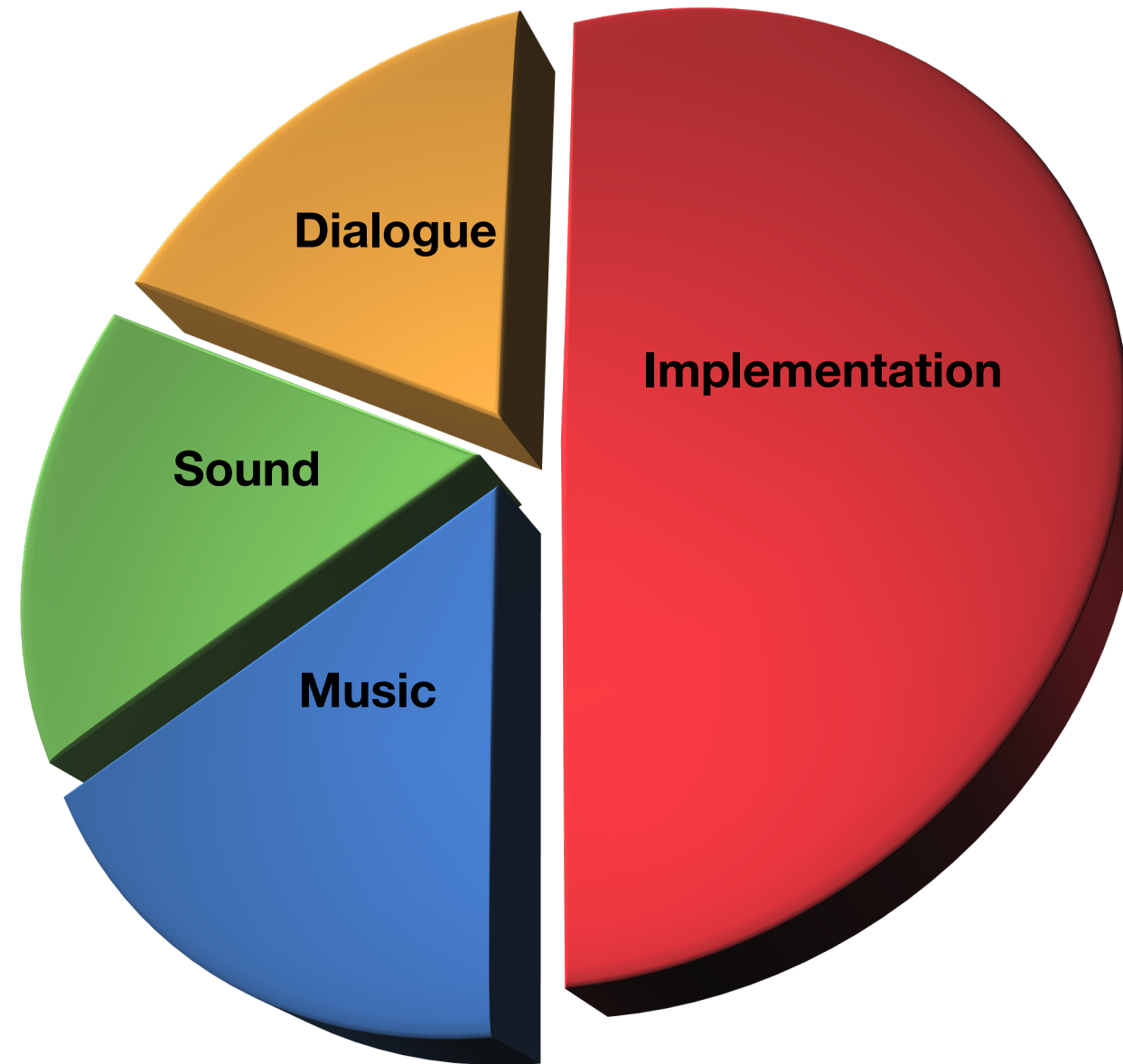
4 Focus Areas

Improving negotiations and collaborations with audio contractors

1. Contracts

2. Compensation

3. Communication

4. Conceptualization

Defining "Audio Services"

▸ Music

▸ Sound

▸ Dialogue

▸ Implementation

Area #1: Contracts

1.Contracts

2. Compensation

3. Communication

4. Conceptualization

Key Contract Points

Make sure these are covered in any agreement

‣ Who owns the copyright

‣ What are the delivery milestones/deadlines

‣ What will be delivered

‣ How much are you paying the contractor

‣ How will revisions be handled ("reasonable number of revisions")

‣ What are your usage rights for the audio

‣ Soundtrack distribution (Kickstarter) -- obtain the right in writing

Agreement 1: Work for Hire

The developer obtains all of the rights (AKA "Buyout")

‣ Developer obtains complete copyright ownership of "The Work(s)"

‣ Developer can then use audio however desired, because they own it

‣ Developer has the exclusive right to use the audio

‣ + "Hassle-free" agreement prevents many potential future issues

‣ - Can be very expensive for developers ($$$)

Agreement 2: Non-Exclusive License

The audio contractor obtains all of the rights

‣ Don't be afraid of these!

‣ A way to obtain custom, quality, inexpensive audio

‣ As long as your contract is clear, you can have unrestricted use of the audio in your project

‣ + Save a LOT of money ($$$$$)

‣ + Custom, quality music

‣ - Audio contractor can license the audio to anyone else

Agreement 3: Exclusive License

The compromise

‣ Audio contractor retains complete ownership of the audio

‣ Developer obtains exclusive right to use audio in project as desired

‣ Exclusive licenses usually expire in 1.5-3 years

‣ Agreements can then be re-negotiated or rolled over to a Non-Exclusive

‣ A healthy compromise between Work for Hire and Non-Exclusive

Area #2: Compensation

1. Contracts

2. Compensation

3. Communication

4. Conceptualization

Payment Structures

Most common forms of payment

‣ #1 Question: How much do you charge?

  ‣ Lump sum (usually milestone-based)

  ‣ Hourly rate

  ‣ Per-minute music fee

  ‣ Per-track music fee

  ‣ Profit sharing on the backend (often with a lump sum up front)

Indie Audio Budgets

Expect to pay 5-10% (5-8%) of your total budget

▸ Very low budget - Under $5-10K -------------- Audio Budget: $500-1000

▸ Low budget ----------- $10-20K -------------- Audio Budget: $750-2K

▸ Medium low budget---- $20-30K -------------- Audio Budget: $1-3K

▸ Medium budget --------$30-50K -------------- Audio Budget: $2-5K

▸ Medium high budget --- $50-100K ------------- Audio Budget: $3-10K

▸ High budget -----------$100K+ -------------- Audio Budget: $6K+

$80k Kickstarter Project

DISCLAIMER: This example does NOT reflect the "average" project

‣ **Common Problem**: Game audio needs exceed 5-8% of project budget

‣ <u>**OUR SOLUTION:**</u>

‣ Approximately 20 minutes of music, 10-20 Dialogue Assets, 250-350 SFX, implementation

‣ $8,000 Work for Hire, 3% backend

‣ <u>**ALT SOLUTION: SCALED BACK TO WORK WITHIN $5K BUDGET:**</u>

‣ Approximately 15 minutes of music, 150-250 SFX, consultation

‣ Exclusive for 18 months, 1.5% backend

Value

How do I know I'm getting a good value for my money?

‣ Consider hiring a game audio professional instead of your brother's band

‣ Be cautious of the individual who claims to do everything (music styles, etc.)

‣ Don't discount working with students, they can offer a fantastic value

‣ Give up things that cost you nothing, like putting their logo in the credits

‣ Get them invested in your success- regular Skype calls, Kickstarter info, etc.

Area #3: Communication

1. Contracts

2. Compensation

3. **Communication**

4. Conceptualization

Communication

Find a common language to communicate in

‣ Reach out to your composer or sound designer early in development

‣ Don't attempt to communicate using musical terminology

‣ Example: What does "epic" really mean?

‣ Communicate the mood, emotion, and narrative you hope to evoke

‣ **What do you want the player to feel?**

‣ When playable demos aren't possible, any bit of art helps

Area #4: Conceptualization

1. Contracts

2. Compensation

3. Communication

4. **Conceptualization**

Establish a Clear Concept

In a perfect world...

‣ Establish what audio will be needed where, early in the design process

‣ Figure out technical limitations (footprint, file format, loops, etc.)

‣ Find example tracks of music if you have a specific style in mind

‣ If you're not sure what you want…. ASK us!

Temp Music & Sound
Save yourself time and money

▸ Most audio teams will send temp tracks based on concept discussion

▸ Temp tracks help establish a basic "sound" for your game, without expense

▸ Provide detailed feedback about these tracks -- what you like/dislike

▸ Put these tracks in game and see how they play

▸ Be cautious about becoming overly attached to these tracks

▸ Example: Different visions

Deliverables

What you should be getting...

▸ Compressed = .MP3, .M4A, M4P (AAC), .OGG, .CAF

▸ ALWAYS obtain uncompressed files (.WAV preferably over .AIFF)

▸ Consider asking for a project's Stems (separate instrument tracks)

To Summarize...

▸ **Contracts:**

  ▸ Work for Hire

  ▸ Non-Exclusive (license)

  ▸ Exclusive (license)

▸ **Budgets:**

  ▸ 5-10% of your total budget

  ▸ Consider backend payments

  ▸ Get your contractor invested in your success

▸ **Communication:**

  ▸ Reach out to your audio contractor early

  ▸ Don't describe with musical terminology

  ▸ What do you want the player to feel?

▸ **Conceptualization**

  ▸ Figure out your concept early on

  ▸ Use temp tracks

  ▸ Obtain WAV files