



**MARCH 18-22, 2024**  
**SAN FRANCISCO, CA**

# It's All About Time(lines)

Marketing Your Game From Finish to Start

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Derek Lieu

**#GDC2024**



**You waited until the last minute to market**



**You unexpectedly have to make marketing assets**



**Can't find a trailer editor that's not booked**

ONLINE — 1



Derek Lieu 👑

**You didn't dedicate time to building a community**





You showed too much of your game too soon

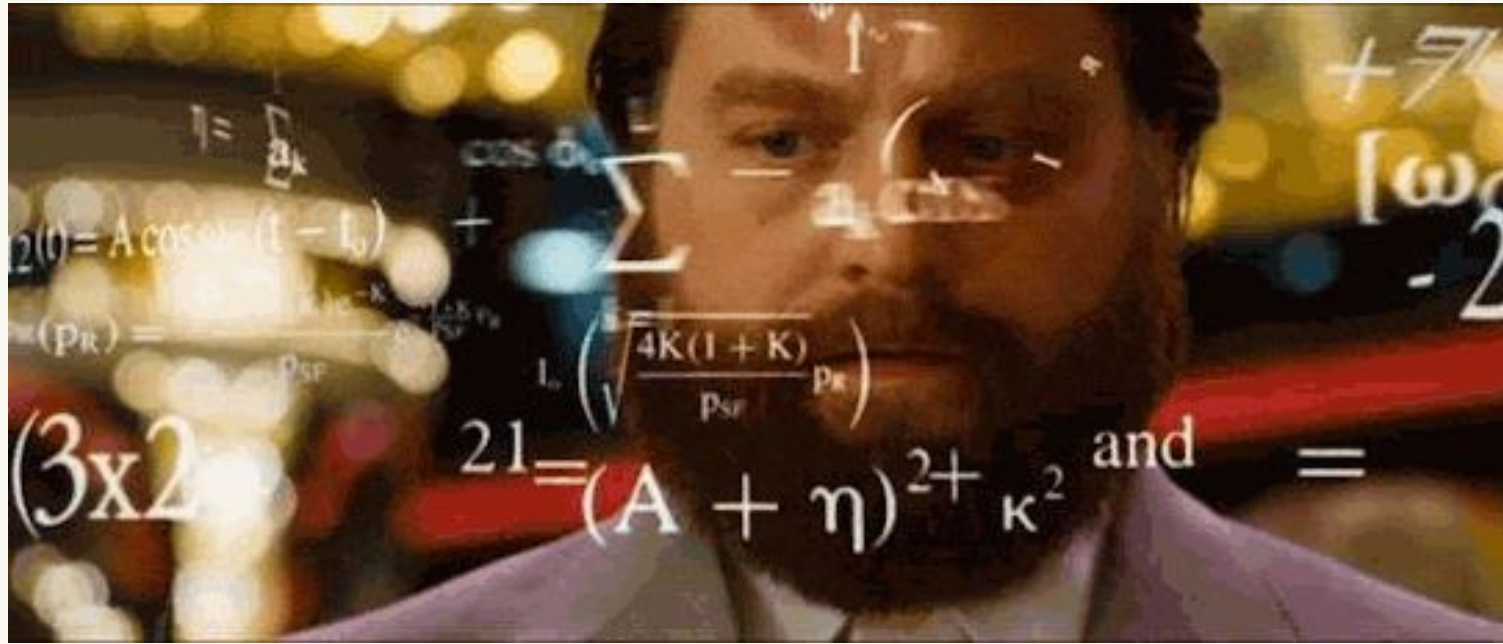


**Your last minute marketing assets don't turn out well**

# You Need a







**Market thoughtfully & strategically**



**Know what assets you'll need and when you'll need them**



**Avoid crunch!**



PATRICK'S  
**PARABOX**

ISLES OF  
**SEA & SKY**



**HAVEN**

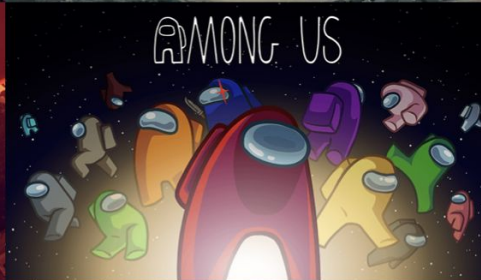


**garden.  
story**



**KEEP TALKING  
and NOBODY EXPLODES**

**HOLE  
DOWN**





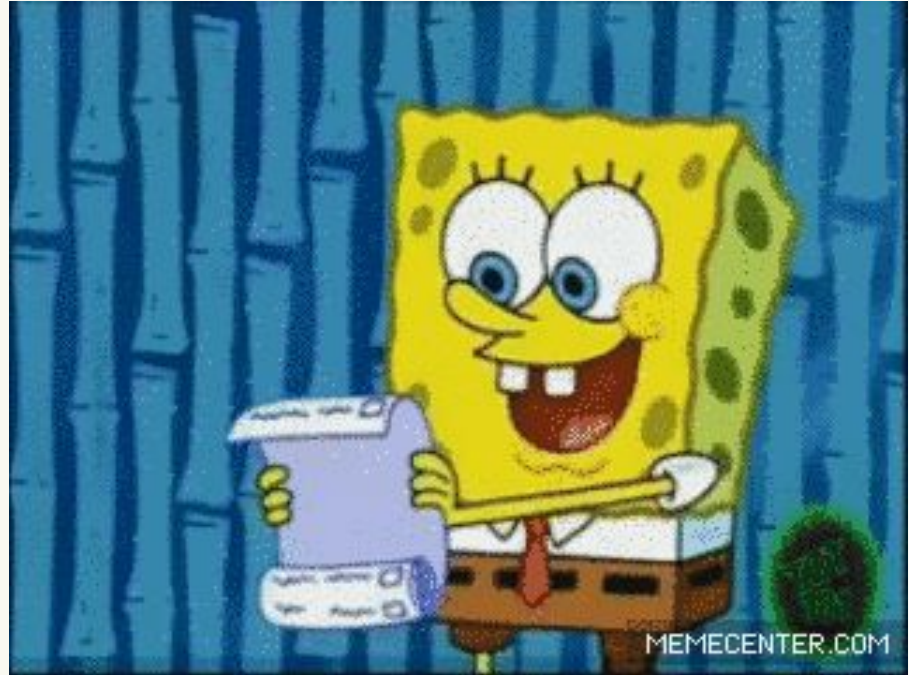
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# What is a Marketing Timeline?

- A checklist of marketing tasks and when they need to be done
- Includes steps to complete, and by whom



# Prerequisite: Know your available resources

- Are you self funding? Do you need to pitch for funding?
- What is your marketing and production budget?
- How many people are working on marketing?
- Do you have money to hire help?
- What is your timeframe?





# Prerequisite: Know your game's most marketable qualities

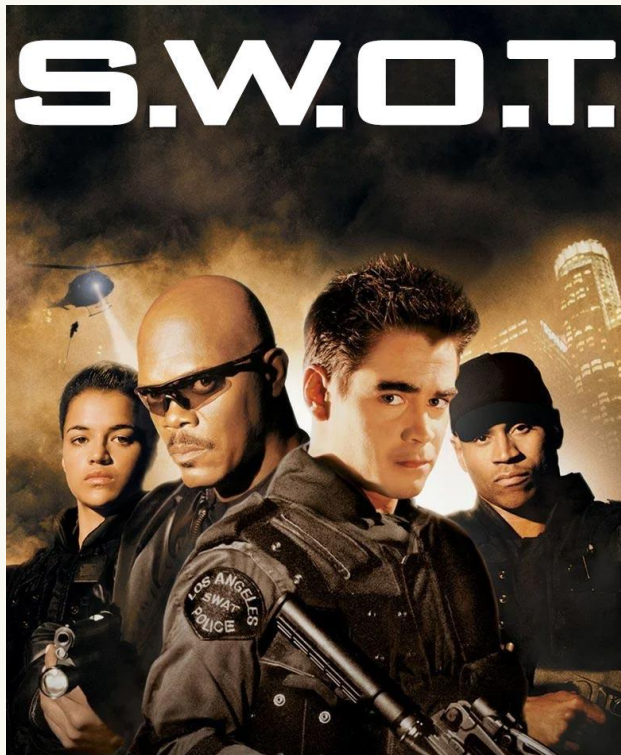
(This will determine the kind of marketing you do)

- The art?
- The animation?
- The writing?
- The game mechanics?



(Available to watch on YouTube!)

# Prerequisite: Competitive Analysis



## Pre-Marketing Marketing

A Guide to Games Market and Competitor  
Research

(Available on the GDC Vault)

## Prerequisite: Production Timeline



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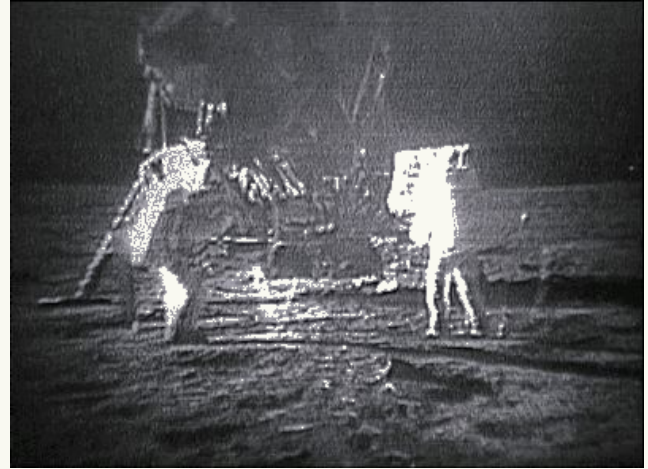
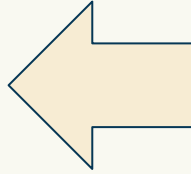
Marketing and production timelines should be integrated





# How to Make a Marketing Timeline

# 1. Start at the launch and work back to the announce



**6 months <**



**< 18 months**

Tip:

**The longer the public timeline,  
the more marketing you have to do!**



Tip:

**Your marketing needs to make  
strategic sense for YOUR game**

# Why work backwards?

- Easier for asset planning
- You know how much time you have
- Avoid crunch
- Figure out what to reveal about your game and when
- More likely to stick to a launch timeline
- More accurate information for platforms & publishers

Tip:

**BE REALISTIC**

Tip:

**Plan your launch to be 3-6 months later  
than your current plan**



## 2. Write out ALL the marketing tasks you can think of and/or want to do

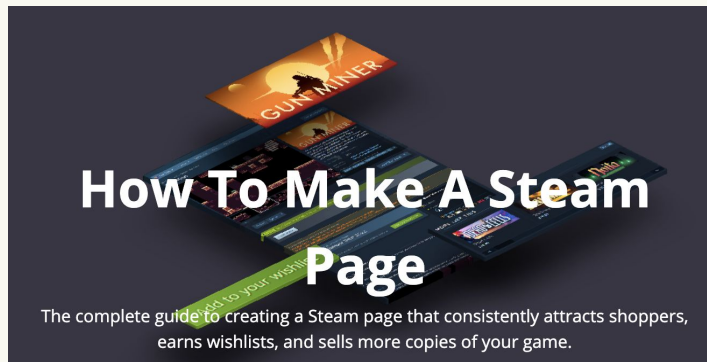


# List of Marketing Tasks

(Non-exhaustive)

# Mandatory Marketing Tasks

- Store page
- Trailer
- Key art
- Capsule image
- Capsule description



**HowToMakeASteamPage.com**

# Highly Recommended Marketing Tasks

- Steam Next Fest
- Demo
- Online festivals
- Announcement trailer
- Date announcement trailer
- Gameplay/story/narrative trailers
- Other Steam events (Wings event, Cerebral Puzzle Showcase etc.)
- Community building/social media
- Steam updates
- Press Outreach
- Streamer outreach
- Newsletter
- Press kit



# Nice to Have Marketing Tasks

- Paid Trailer editor/outsource your capture
- Paid Community Manager to make TikToks & Shorts 3-7 a week
- Paid marketing person for strategy & assistance
- In person conventions (if it makes sense for your game)
- Paying streamers/conducting outreach to streamers with demo
- Live streams

**3. Decide what public marketing beats you want for your game  
(and how many you will have) with calls to action for those beats**



# Tip:

**The amount of time from announce to launch  
Determines your marketing beats (and how many you will have)**

# Marketing Beat Examples

**Announcement  
Trailer**

**Steam Next  
Fest/First Demo**

**Launch Trailer/Game  
Reviews**



#### 4. Break each marketing beat into small, clear, actionable steps.



Tip:

**Everything you put out often involves many, many steps**

# Store Page

- Capsule Image
- Capsule description
- Screenshots
- Trailer
- Game description
- Tags, etc.
- & More!

# Screenshots

- Brainstorm what you want to show
- Finalize art
- Finalize UI
- Program Debug Options
- Take screenshots
- Decide which screenshots are good
- Format screenshots

# Press Outreach

- Ready your store page for wishlists
- Make a press list
- Draft a pitch for your game with your hook
- Make your Presskit
- Make screenshots/GIFs
- Make your trailer
- Set your trailer live
- Write trailer description
- Pick an announcement time
- Decide if you want to embargo

# Announce Trailer

Are you making it externally or internally?

## INTERNALLY

Ready Build

Concept Trailer

Capture footage

Edit trailer

## EXTERNALLY

Ready Build

Make list of editors

Will you send them footage?

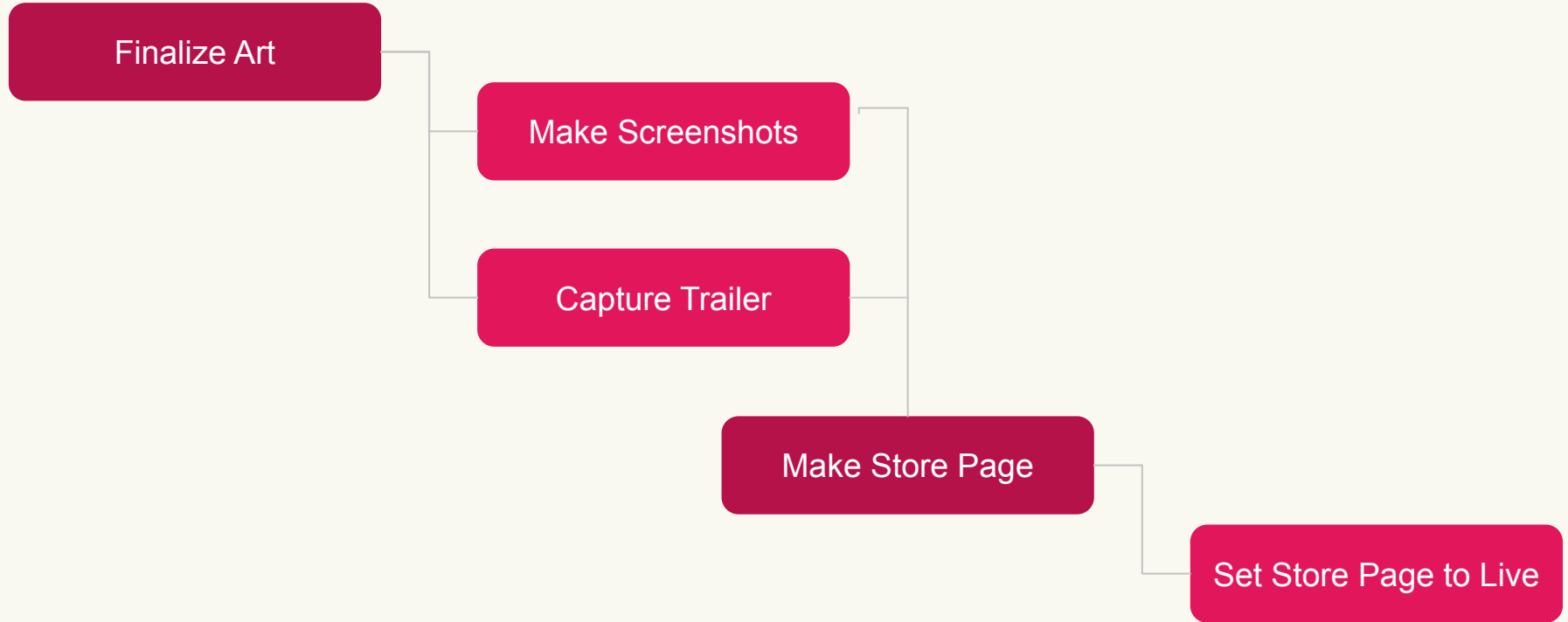
Set milestones schedule



Tip:

**Breaking everything down into small steps  
& seeing them will feel overwhelming**

## 5. Get a bunch of stickies for your tasks and put them in a logical chronological order



## 6. Assign the tasks to people

Capsule Description	Dana
Trailer	Derek
Key Art	Justin
Screenshots	Guillaume
Memes	Victoria
Make Store Page	Chris

## 7. Determine approximate amount of time needed for each task



## 8. Add marketing tasks to your production timeline (it will get longer)



# Example: Adding items starting at the end

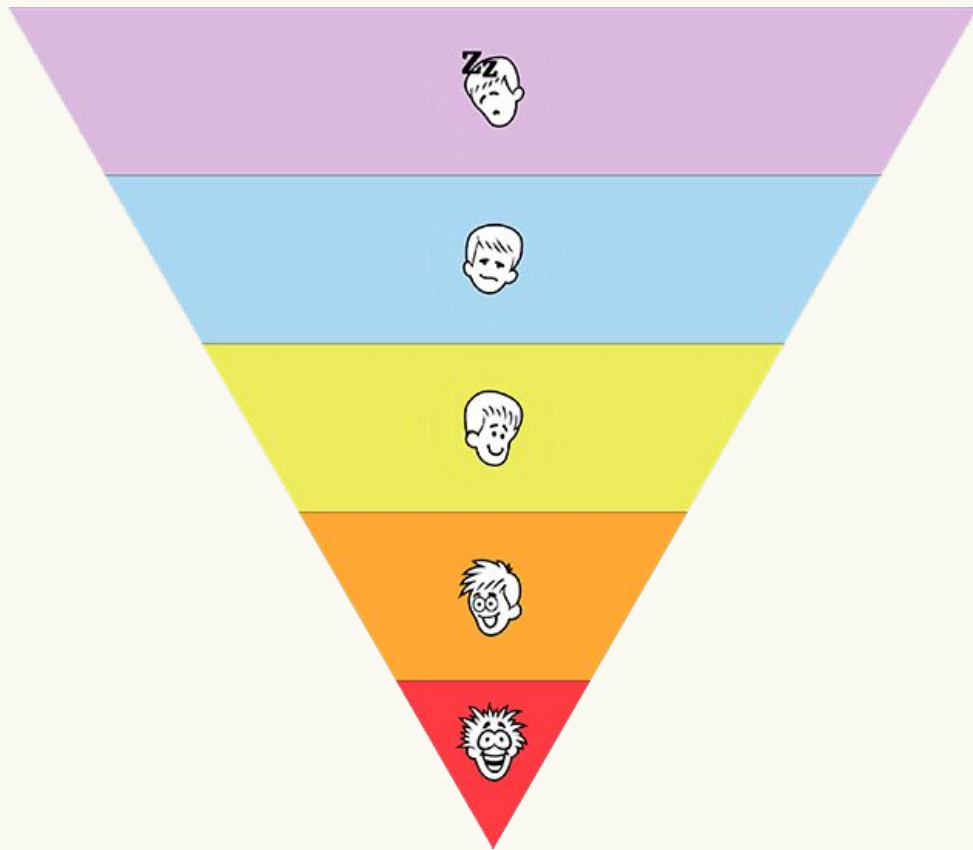
07					08				09				10			
W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4
			▲			▲							Press Outreach			
														Draft Newsletter		
					CERT											Trailer Live

**Launch!**



# Trailer Timeline

**Announce**  
**Gameplay**  
**Story**  
**Dev Commentary**  
**Overview/101**  
**Launch**  
**Accolades**  
**DLC/Updates**



# Among Us VR

## **Reveal Trailer**

The Game Awards

Dec 9, 2021

## **Gameplay Trailer**

Meta Gaming Showcase

Apr 20, 2022

## **Feature Details Trailer**

Upload VR Showcase

Jun 9, 2022

## **Launch Trailer**

Oct 11, 2022

# Shadow Gambit: The Cursed Crew

## Cinematic Reveal Trailer

Jan 24, 2023

## First Gameplay Trailer

Jan 24, 2023

## Character Trailer

Future Games Show

Mar 24, 2023

## Story/Release Date Trailer

PC Gaming Show

Jun 11, 2023

Steam Next Fest - Jun 19, 2023

## Launch Trailer

Aug 17, 2023

# How long do trailers take to make?

**In-house developer:** 8-10 weeks

**Med Exp Editor:** 6-8 weeks

**Pro Editor:** 4-6 weeks

**Animated Trailer:** > 2 Months for 30-60 seconds

**CG Trailer:** > 6 Months

# Trailer Steps & Milestones to put on your timeline

- Book an editor
- Get the build debug options ready
- Start working with the editor
- Time for revisions
- Finish art assets for final capture
- Final Capture & Polish
- For consoles add 1-2 weeks deadline before launch
- For online show submission can be 1-3 months before the show



# Marketing Timeline Examples

# Patrick's Parabox Console Port Marketing Timeline

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# Subpar Pool - A mobile-centric launch

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# Unannounced Game- A Game in Pre-Pitching for funds

Jaunary	Visual one sheeter for pitch started	Art, story, mechanics, features		Complete	Dana + Team
December-January	Key mechanics and core gameloop finalized to be able to utilize in pitch			In progress	Team
January	Timeline estimate for game dev to be able to speak to marketing calendar in pitch	Producer to create approximate production timeline		In Progress	Producer
January	External Messaging Create			Complete?	Dana
January-February	External messaging feedback	Test it with friends/game devs etc.			Dana
January-February	Visual one sheeter completed	Art assets, story outline, differentiators, features		In progress	Dana
February	Storyboard short trailer for pitch		Need to determine if making trailer internally or externally		Team
	Evaluate external messaging and				

# A Not-Yet-Announced Title Aiming for Summer Festivals

February	Capture updated screenshots				team
February	Capture updated GIFs				team
February	Firm up external messaging/Steam messaging	Review of previous internal and external messaging			Team
March	Ensure footage is created/can be captured for trailer editor to record in early April	Game in place to be recorded or faked			Team
March	Craft press kit text				Dana
April	Work with trailer editor to create trailer for potential summer showcases				Dana+ Trailer editor + Team
April-May	Summer showcase applications	Exclusive asset or announcement being offered; decision about what to say regarding release timing in these applications			Dana + Team



# A Not-Yet-Announced Title Aiming for Summer Festivals

June	Decide who you want to pitch for an exclusive first announcement				Dana+ Team
June	Consider creating a second piece of content to consider providing two exclusives; if you do not leverage it here you can leverage down the road for a later beat	Would need additional footage or asset to utilize			Team
May-August	Consider fall events for potential announcement vs going alone	Event calendar			Dana + Team
July	Ensure footage is created/can be captured for trailer editor to start recording	Game in place to be recorded or faked			team
July	Pitch exclusive game announcement	List of outlets			Dana
July	Social media calendar for first month of posting on TikTok + Discord channels allocated	Game footage; access to anything team has recorded while working			social media contractor
July	Email drafted for initial game announcement	Details of announcement timing			Dana

# Marketing Timeline Tips!

# You need a timeline for before your timeline



# Make a backlog of marketing assets you can pull from



**Contact showcases, press, or channels who can boost your trailer!**



Save something exciting about your game for launch





# Don't make a trailer if you have no marketing use case for it



**Don't announce your launch date before passing cert**





# Summary/Recap

1. Know how to talk about your game and your overall resources you have
2. Work backwards from Z to A - start with your launch and work back to today to figure out how much time you have
3. Write out a list of all the marketing tasks you might want to do
4. Figure out how many beats you want to have
5. Write down all the tasks you need to complete per beat
6. Break down each beat into the tiniest, minute tasks possible
7. Put tasks in logical, chronological order
8. Assign the tasks to someone
9. Figure out how long each task would take you (or that person)
10. Revisit your production timeline and integrate your marketing tasks into it
11. If all looks good; you're done!
12. If the timeline is now too long, cut some of your game dev or cut some marketing tasks to make it work within your necessary time or budget

# Free Worksheet!

[bit.ly/gdc2024timeline](https://bit.ly/gdc2024timeline)



# Thank you!



[SpokeAndWheelStrategy.com](https://SpokeAndWheelStrategy.com)



[Derek-Lieu.com](https://Derek-Lieu.com)