Fireproof Games case study
Their games, their ways

Case Study

Ten artists, four developers, 10 million+ downloads

FIREPROOF GAMES

When six of EA Games' lead artists founded Fireproof Games (formerly Fireproof Studios) in 2008, they had a secret plan right from the start. They wanted to do a little more than just function as hired guns knocking out assets for other game developers. Fireproof Games had a dream to create their own games, their own way. It was a dream that eventually led to a series of mobile games, which have sold over 10 million copies to date.

"We build games in a very organic way," Meade says. "We start with a simple idea at the outset, make things up as we go, feel out the idea, and see if the game works. Unity makes that part so much easier. It's a natural way to make video games."

Barry Meade, Fireproof Games' Commercial Director

The facts in brief

Developers of the award winning 'The Room' puzzle game series & Omega Agent VR title, Fireproof Games is currently 14 developers, comprised of 10 artists and 4 programmers.

The challenge
A team of artists with an obsession for games wanted to pursue their dream of creating their own cool content. But that required a game engine, programmers and other resources, which they just didn't have when they were starting out.

The solution
The growth of the mobile market, combined with the appearance of the Unity game engine, levelled the field for Fireproof Games.

The results
Able to pursue their creative vision, Fireproof Games developed The Room. The critically-acclaimed tactile puzzle game was followed up with two sequels, and altogether, the series has sold over 10 million copies.

THE CHALLENGE
You can't drive a car with no engine

Fireproof Games planned to build a business foundation on freelance projects for other studios. They would use that base to finance their own creative pursuits when they'd gathered enough resources and the time was right. After four years, though, their time still hadn't come.

They'd enjoyed success in the first years of their business as outsourced game design experts who could effectively function as an in-house part of other studios' teams. They had designed 3D environments for all kinds of genres, from racing games and platformers to shooters and rhythm-action. But they wanted even more independence. They wanted to do their own thing.

Just wanted to do what they do best
By the end of 2011, it still didn't look like Fireproof Games had enough capital to develop a console game, and see their dreams come to life. Just as you can't drive a car with no engine, you can't develop a game with no developers and no foundation on which to build it.

"We just wanted to do what we do best: to make video games, the kind we knew from console and PC," says Barry Meade, Fireproof Games' Commercial Director, "but at the time, it looked like we couldn't do anything. We had been successful, yes, but we still simply didn't have the resources to create an engine on our own. What we knew could do, though, was to create really good content."

THE SOLUTION
Fireproof Games acquires a secret weapon

Then, in 2012, a shift occurred in the market. Something happened that allowed Fireproof Games to realize their dream of creating their own titles.

"Mobile was becoming big back then, and really, it was the arrival of Unity that made the difference for us. Unity allowed us to create something of our own on mobile," Meade says. "It made it be all about content, not technology."

How Unity made it all about content
The growth in the mobile game market and the openness and ease-of-use of Unity converged at just the right time to give Fireproof Games the chance they needed. It played to the creative strength of their team.

"We didn't need every piece of tech under the sun," Meade says. "Unity gave a small team like ours just enough of a push to allow us to concentrate solely on content. It levelled the field, so we could compete with teams much bigger than us, not on technology infrastructure, but on content. After all, at the end of day you sell content; players don't care what your engine is called. But to us, Unity was like a secret weapon."

THE RESULTS
Three rooms and 10 million downloads later

In 2012, Fireproof Games hired one programmer, and they were able to just pick up Unity and run with it. The level of its performance and the speed of its workflows meant that they could produce quality content fast. Unity helped them avoid bloat – too many meetings, and too much paperwork – and instead follow their natural instincts as artists, creative people and game developers.

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Created a demo in just six weeks
With Unity, Fireproof Games was able to create a demo for their first title, The Room, in just six weeks for mobile and PCs. The final version was made with just one programmer, something which would not have been possible without Unity, according to Meade.

Although Fireproof Games had always believed in their creative vision, they were still pleasantly surprised by the speed and level of its success. The Room's combination of tactile experience, teasing puzzles, eery atmosphere, and linear storyline captivated gamers. It won Apple's 'iPad Game Of The Year 2012' and numerous other awards and has since achieved number one status in over 60 countries.

"The fortunes of our small team were turned around practically overnight, and as soon as our last freelance contract was up, we flipped to become full-time games makers and haven't looked back since," says Meade.

In the following years, the eagerly awaited Room Two and Room Three were released on multiple platforms, and the success continued with over 10 million copies of the series currently sold.

Just as Fireproof Games had looked to their muse for inspiration when they created The Room, they have continued to experiment freely with the new possibilities of VR.

"One of the reasons we made Omega Agent was to learn about VR. We were sitting around the office one day, and someone said, 'If VR became a thing, what would we do that was different. Ideas started flying, and we went into overdrive," Meade says.

They took cold war super spies, a nuclear powered jetpack and a little James Bond flair, and put it all together using the possibilities of VR technology. The result was Omega Agent, which is available on Oculus Rift, Samsung Gear VR, and HTC Vive, and is receiving rave reviews.

As in the past, Unity allowed them to follow their instincts.

"It all comes down to ease of use and simplicity of the software," Meade says. "Unity has just been a great enabler, which we simply can't do without."

Got a question?

Get in touch

About Unity Technologies
Unity Technologies is the creator of Unity, a flexible and high-performance end-to-end development platform used to create rich interactive 3D and 2D experiences. Unity's powerful graphics engine and full-featured editor serve as the foundation to develop beautiful games or apps and easily bring them to multiple platforms: mobile devices, home entertainment systems, personal computers, and embedded systems. Unity also offers solutions and services for creating games, boosting productivity, and connecting with audiences including the Unity Asset Store, Unity Cloud Build, Unity Game Performance Reporting, Unity Analytics, Unity Ads, and Unity Everyplay. Unity Technologies serves over 1 million monthly active developers including large publishers, indie studios, students and hobbyists around the globe. For more information, visit: **unity3d.com**