



LEAN CANVAS MODEL

IN COLLABORATION WITH GAME DRIVE

CONSUMER NEEDS.	PRODUCT OFFERING.	UNIQUE SELLING POINTS.	COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.	CONSUMER SEGMENTS.
Identify and describe key consumer needs.	Outline how the game fulfills the consumer needs.	Share a compelling one-liner and 2 - 3 key selling points that highlight the distinctive nature and excellence of the game.	What sets you apart from other games/studios e.g. early adopters.	Provide a list of your primary and secondary target consumers, along with their respective characteristics and demographics.
	KEY METRICS.		CHANNELS.	
	List some key numbers detailing how your business is doing e.g. wishlists.	HIGH-LEVEL CONCEPT Enumerate the marketing actions that will effectively showcase your selling points.	List your paths to reach consumers.	
COST STRUCTURE.			REVENUE.	
Provide a high-level overview of your marketing budget.			Disclose your business model(s), value propositions, and forecasts - revenue and units sold.	



Lean Canvas Model

The following canvas model is specifically devised for analysis in the games industry and to aid VAF participants in creating a MarCom plan with an emphasis on marketing activities. By completing this in the early stages of development, participants can make informed choices that suit the market and target audience.

This model is to be used in the beginning stages of the development, when there is still time to implement changes and/or adjust the game direction if need be, to have a better connection with the market and target audience.

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COST STRUCTURE. Provide a high-level overview of your marketing budget.		REVENUE. Disclose your business model(s), value propositions, and forecasts - revenue and units sold.		

Instructions

We suggest starting the research in each of the respective categories separately and using the Lean Canvas Model as a tool to summarise findings and have a better grasp of the bigger picture of the project.

Each of the dimensions is explained in detail in the *Model Explanation Section*. Further in the document, a table is presented that summarises the purpose of each listed dimension and gives examples of different questions that entrepreneurs can ask themselves. This table is to be used as a Quick Reference Guide.

Note, that you can fill in this canvas in any order you find fit. Each part builds upon the next, so you may likely have to go back, revise, and check that everything works together. Therefore, prior research is of high importance.

The terms 'product' and 'game' are used interchangeably in the descriptions.



Model Explanation

Consumer Needs

The Consumer Needs section covers the research into the current state of the Games Industry and those related market opportunities. First and foremost, an understanding of the overall gaming market is needed to make informed business decisions. The focus of the research is to understand the possibilities in the industry, summarise the preferences and expectations of gamers, and outline the unmet needs of the customers. Summarise the trends in the industry that might affect your project, from new developments (e.g. a new console on the market) to growing possibilities (e.g. cloud gaming) and market performance.

This chapter serves as a basis for defining the target audiences ([customer segments](#)) for your game and the success KPIs, for example the total obtainable market size. Outline the genres that your project is covering, research who is most interested in this genre (demographics), and which platforms are the most suited for your genre. Keep in mind that later you will define your target audiences based on these metrics.

If available, provide the sales statistics for each of the competitors. These can be used later to estimate the likelihood of forecasts and to outline the [key metrics](#) of success.

There is a variety of sources that can aid in accessing the health of the industry, trends and new developments that might be relevant. Some of these include Newzoo (Global Report), GameDiscoveryCo newsletter articles, GWI Gaming Reports, ESA (US focused), VGInsights, GamesIndustry.biz, VGChartz, VideoGamesEurope, SteamSpy, GameAnalytics.com, etc.

Product Offering

The following chapter outlines all the key information regarding your game. For this chapter use excerpts from the Game Design Document to define your game, its mechanics, genre(s), narrative elements, graphics, etc. This chapter serves as a concise definition of the game you are developing, offering less detail than the Game Design document.

Add additional descriptions comparing and addressing the needs of the market from the previous chapter. Use this chapter to fine-tune the parallels between market needs and what your project will offer to fulfil these. When possible, compare the needs of the market to your USPs and vice-versa: compare your USPs to what might appeal to the customers.



Key Metrics

To assess the success of the game in the future it is important to define what success means to you and your game. This chapter focuses on defining the most important variables that will be compared by the end of the release cycle and further. Therefore, it is also important to note down the current metrics of the projects (if any).

In general, key metrics typically include some (or all) of the following variables, depending on the game/project and the production timeline:

- **Wishlists**
 - Current wishlists and the desired/projected wishlist count before the release.
 - Wishlist conversion rate (%)
 - If available, note down the industry standard and genre standard values. Conversion rates can be found on websites such as GameDiscoverCo.
- **Daily and Monthly active users (MAU)**
 - Depending on the project, whether it is multiplayer or not, these metrics might be wildly different.
 - What is the player count needed to support the game design and keep it lively?
- **Retention Rate and Churn Rate**
 - Especially important for Mobile-oriented and Online Multiplayer games.
 - Retention rate represents the percentage of players who return to the game after their first play session.
 - Churn Rate is the rate at which players stop playing the game. Sometimes there are 'roadblocks' that prevent players from progressing and therefore dropping the game, which are not as obvious at the game design stage.
- **Customer Acquisition Cost**
 - How much money (marketing & advertising) would you need (or are you willing) to spend to acquire one user.
 - $CAC = (\text{cost of sales} + \text{cost of marketing}) \div \text{number of new customers}$
 - Overall, the benchmark is to keep the CAC at $\frac{1}{3}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ of the value a customer will bring.
 - This is beneficial for budget calculations and investment requests.
- **Followers and Game (Brand) Recognition**
 - Followers of the Steam & Console Hubs.
 - Followers of the game (or developer profile) on various social media platforms (e.g. X, Reddit, Facebook, Discord).
 - Estimate a realistic follower growth across all socials.
 - When possible, calculate your K-factor.
 - This metric defines your virality by calculating how many new users are introduced to your game by those average existing users.



- K-factor value is beneficial for forecasting the budget and organic growth.
- PR outreach & coverage goals
 - Which influencers and press could potentially bring the needed visibility to your games, as well as how much extra visibility would benefit your game and sales.
 - Support with MAU for each press outlet.
 - Support with the followers and viewer count of each influencer.
- Revenue and Unit Sales
 - Define and forecast what are the possible revenue and unit sales based on your game's genre and the values outlined prior in this research.
 - The following values play a role in the forecast: market size, genre, budget, k-factor.
 - These metrics are closely related to the [Revenue](#) chapter, where the business model is outlined, and forecasted values from this chapter are used as KPI metrics.

When filling out the Lean Canvas Model use these metrics to form tangible goals in the following departments: Marketing, Financial, Strategic, (Franchise), Community, and PR milestones. Use the departments and goals that are most relevant to your game and success.

Unique Selling Points

This chapter covers all the interesting aspects of your game discussed in the [Product Offering](#) chapter and is based on the market research and competitors' definitions from the [Consumers Needs](#) chapter.

Use this chapter to define and explain the top 3 most interesting features that make your game stand out in the eyes of the customers and the total market. They can fit within one or many of the following categories (use these as examples rather than defined rules for categorization):

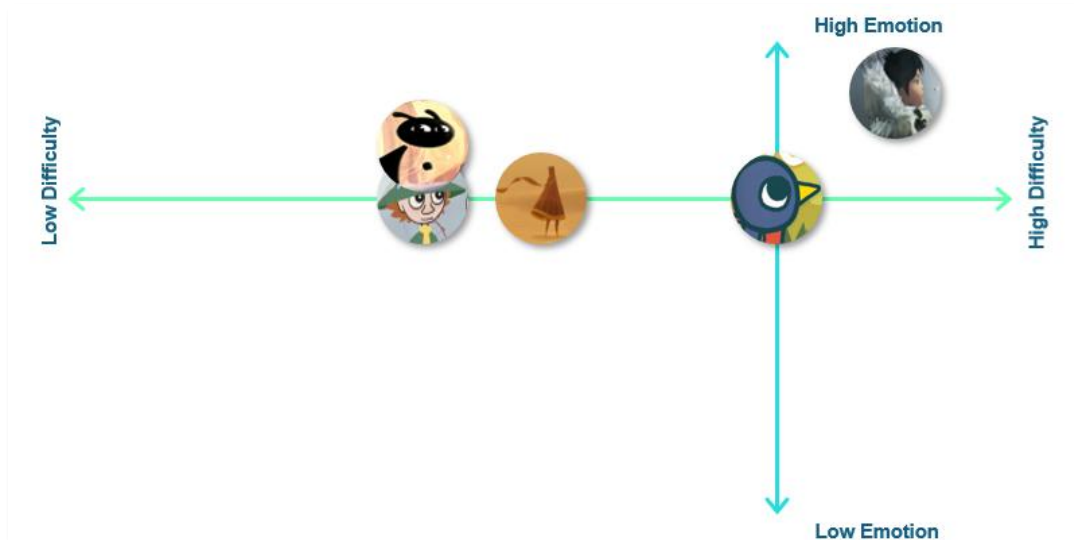
- Innovative Gameplay Mechanics
- Character Customizations Options
- Graphics and Art Style
- Game Performance
- Community and Social Integrations (e.g. innovative multiplayer or ways to engage with the game)
- Compelling Storyline, Narrative, or Theme(s)

Define why your chosen value proposition categories are exceptional and distinct. For example, saying that you have a 'unique art style' is vague and does not explain what is so 'unique' about the art style to readers and customers. A better example would be: "hand-drawn animations utilizing traditional animation technology". The unique selling points must be concise, descriptive, and relevant.

Finally, utilise the defined USPs to assess the positioning of your game in the market. Most commonly this is done using the **positioning matrix**, where you



can use your strongest USPs as two axes to outline your advantage compared to the alternatives on the market (existing games). An example is outlined below:



High-level Concept

In this model, the overarching concept represents your ideas on how to frame your game in the best light. Specifically, how to make sure that the USPs that were outlined previously are effectively communicated to anyone who comes across your game/projects.

Describe how you will communicate each of the USPs to customers using marketing. Describe these in detail as a blueprint for the further Marketing Plan and Execution. Each of the USPs can be supported by one or more assets: screenshots, logos, key art, trailers, (store) texts, and descriptions. It is helpful to get inspired by analysing the assets of competitors.

Think about this subchapter as designing a business card for a product, where you need to determine how best to explain it to people who have never seen it before. Outline the strongest ways that the game's idea is conveyed by choosing the strongest asset types for your promotion (video streams, key art, screenshots, texts, short video cuts, GIFs, etc.). What are the best ways to showcase the game's features and what kind of atmosphere must the assets adhere to? Mention any elements or keywords that need to be present across all communication. The assets must be consistent and convey a complete message, while also staying consistent and memorable.

It is important to describe the tone of voice and the initial marketing approach. It might change in the long run, especially after running content tests on different social channels and platforms. Additionally do the opposite as well and make sure to outline things that AREN'T meant to be shared, which are kept for the discovery in the games e.g. mechanics, story beats, voice actors, locations.

For example, if your game has unique multiplayer mechanics, add at least two characters interacting with each other to the key art as this will help imply the multiplayer aspect. If your game has a minimalist visual style, show the depth of



the game by showcasing UI or different gameplay modes. If your game is narrative-driven, make sure there are no spoilers in the screenshots and plan at what time in marketing you would like to reveal the different story beats.

For the Lean Canvas Model itself, add an elevator pitch headline (or a tagline) to summarise your game's communication approach, make it stand out and be remembered. To help you find your tagline, you can outline the approach to asset creation in general.

Competitive Advantage

While this chapter focuses on the advantages that you have over the competition, it is important to highlight that a good competitor analysis and overview are key to finding your strengths in the market. As mentioned previously it is crucial to have the competitor overview including the following: list of competitors, their pricing (international), their positioning (use the positioning matrix described in the [USP chapter](#)), their content (website, assets, communication, game features) and social media strategy. Based on this, you will be able to identify which advantages you have over other games and the do's and don'ts for your genre.

Competitive advantage refers to any game/project attributes or organisational/company benefits that enable a game to outperform the competition and can't be easily emulated. This can cover any practices that are unique to your project and may give you an opportunity for greater visibility in the industry. Focus and outline the most important ones in the Lean Canvas Model.

Examples can include:

- **Partnerships** – additional help from various organisations, companies, or established individuals. Or an already-established relationship with distributors.
- **Innovation** – using proprietary technology and developing new internal tool(s).
- **Development approach** – relying on community feedback or feedback from professionals, game iterations, bug collection methods, etc.
- **Niche** – targeting niche markets more effectively than other competitors by using unique methods.
- **Brand Equity** – using a well-known brand and capitalising off its relevance.

Channels

Use this chapter to list the ways you intend to reach your customers. This information partially comes from [market research](#) (especially competitor insights) and from the target group definition. Refer to the most popular social media channels among the target group that you chose and those people who play your game's genre.

The information in this chapter should cover the following areas: Distribution, PR (e.g. key distribution, email outreach, press outlets), Social media (primary and



secondary), Community (channels), Support and Feedback channels (these can overlap with other areas, but important to mention), News and information distribution (e.g. Steam Hub Announcements, Reddit FAQs). Outline the strategy behind every channel or ask for help with your social strategies.

Ideally, you know this information through market research and by filling out the Lean Canvas. For example, feedback and support is a feature implemented on Steam, however it is not as acutely present on Nintendo Switch. Therefore, Steam acts as both a distribution and support hub.

Customer Segments

In this chapter, you define your main target audience. Your target audience is based on your prior research into the demographics of the games industry and the player's genre preferences.

The information included here should cover the following topics:

- **Demographic Segmentation** – details on the average age range, gender, education, and occupation of your target group.
- **Psychographic Segmentation** – covers the lifestyle and interests of the target group (excluding gaming).
- **Behavioural Segmentation** – analysis of the player's habits, for example, the frequency of gaming, amount to spend on games per month, preferred genres, and gaming patterns.
 - As a part of Behavioural Segmentation assess the target group through Bartle's Archetypes or Newzoo's Gamer Segmentation.
- **Geographic Segmentation** – Countries you plan to focus your attention on.
 - What languages do you need to translate your game and store page into?
- **Needs and Wants of the target audience** – information on the desires of the target audience extrapolated from market research.

NAME	
DEMOGRAPHIC. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25-45• Male• American• Middle income• In a relationship• Parent	
GAMER TYPE. Explorer, lapsed gamer, immersion	WOULD BUY BECAUSE. Visuals, music, relaxing, short, emotional, suitable for children, low price.
PSYCHOGRAPHICS. Overall: puts his family first, loves and cares for animals, loves to play games but doesn't spend too much time on them, believes in the healthy body/healthy mind principle.	DESCRIPTION. Brandon is now in his thirties and has young children. He grew up with video games and still loves them, but struggles to find the time to play them. In recent years he has moved towards short indie games that he can pick up, play and finish in a couple of sessions. He particularly enjoys playing video games with his children. He tries to find games that are fun for both him and his children. He loves seeing them enjoy games as much as he does, and values the bonding that comes from playing together.
BEHAVIOUR. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Likes: platformers, action-adventures, FPSs, puzzles, etc.• Buys a few games a year, mainly indie hits that catch his attention.• Buys merchandise based on games that leave a lasting impression.• Owns a PS5, a Nintendo Switch and a Steamdeck.• Active on X, video game websites, Instagram, Metacritic and YouTube.• Buying behaviour influenced by Metacritic (user) scores and friends.	WOULD BUY BECAUSE. We came up with Brandon as a persona for our primary target audience based on wishlists, offline play sessions, feedback from conventions, social media A/B testing, and feedback from our demo on Steam.

If you deem it necessary, add a secondary target group. The secondary target group does not receive as much attention from marketing activities but is regarded with respect and support when it comes to interaction.

One of the helpful models to fine-tune and conclude this chapter is the 'Customer Persona' model. This is a detailed, semi-fictional representation of an ideal customer based on market research and real data from existing customers. You can add the average characteristics to the persona, as well as give them a fictional name. The picture on the right is an example of such a customer persona. Note that you can replace some of the blocks in this model, especially if



you want to highlight different characteristics of your audience (gamer type, gaming brands, etc.).

Use the space in the Lean Canvas document to summarize your Customer Persona in a few characteristics.

Cost Structure

Generally, the following chapter covers all the expenditures that your business incurs from the start of the game development. An overview of all the costs is beneficial to have in any case, therefore outline and include the following costs:

- **Development Costs** – everything related to game design, art creation, programming, testing, sound design, and salaries.
- **Distribution Costs** – all the costs related to distribution, for example, Steam Direct Fee, PS Dev Kit, etc.
- **Operational Costs** – ongoing infrastructure expenses including server hosting, maintenance, and customer support (if applicable).
- **Administrative Costs** – studio business expenses including office rent, utilities, legal fees, accounting, and others.
- **Marketing Costs** – branding, localisation, player acquisition, award submissions, advertisements, and anything that involves converting players to your game.

Since marketing costs and the budget are often related to other available funds, make sure that the cost overview and the ROI are presented and backed by research and knowledge. This model has a high emphasis on the marketing and commercial performance of your game. For the Lean Canvas Model use the space to outline the needed funds for each of the campaigns in the following four categories: PR, Community (& social media), Advertisement (per channel), and Events (offline & online). These values are meant to help align with the key metrics and goals, and will be used to calculate ROI and even contribute to research concerning setting the minimum game price.

Revenue

The final chapter is dedicated to forecasting the performance of your game/project, deciding on a business model, and presenting the proposition overview, based on your research. With the [market research](#), you have likely gathered information about the possible addressable market and the number of players that can potentially be interested.

It is important to outline the business model for your game and all the monetization options that will be utilised in the project. It is also important to show how exactly this business model will earn income.

Some of the business model examples include: Premium Model, Freemium (Free-to-play) Model, In-app Purchase(s) Model (including loot boxes and randomised items), Subscription Model, In-game advertising (applicable to mobile games mostly), Crowdfunding, and Licensing. There can be a mix of business models as well, for example having ads in a mobile game but also offering the IAP option to remove them.



If you are planning to release the title in Early Access support the forecast with relevant figures related to average performances of Early Access titles. These titles often perform less successfully than full releases, as players are sceptical of the lack of content and/or features. For example, the conversion rates to buyers might be lower, while the conversion to wishlists might be higher.

When releasing the game, a common strategy is to release additional content as well, to upsell products in the bundle and individually. For example, using Soundtracks, Supporter Editions, etc. You can use this in calculations, where around 10-20% of the players could convert and buy the extra products, raising the revenue.

If you are using the premium game models (or DLC models) note down the regional pricing as well (USD, EUR, GBP, JPY). Keep in mind the platform distribution costs (e.g. 30% of game sales go directly to Steam) as well as retail price points, if released physically (they often prefer higher-priced products). Furthermore, compare your chosen pricing to your competitors, whether it is enticing for players to jump over and try your product based on the price/quality (content) ratio.

Depending on your business model, the revenue generated will be different, as well as the time window for revenue generation. For example, single-player games generate the most revenue closer to release (there are various outliers and exceptions to this), while mobile games and online-only games are more likely to generate revenue in the long run with a higher retention rate.

Therefore, it is important to show the forecast for 1-month, 1-year, and 3-year performance, outlining the break-even point for investors and the associated timeline. This can help with keeping your cash-flow overview in mind.

For the total breakdown consider how many game copies can you sell in the different success scenarios: what are the low, mid, and high forecasts for the product?

Finally, there are some online forecast calculators you can use as a comparison tool, to figure out how realistic it is. One of these tools is provided by GameDiscoverCo.

Quick Reference Guide

Type	Description	Questions
Consumer Needs	Describe the gap in the market, that (might) need filling. Identify and describe what the key customer needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are popular/trending game genres?• What are the 'upcoming' game trends?• What is missing on the market?• What are current market conditions?• What does your target audience want to play?



Type	Description	Questions
Product Offering	Outline how your game fulfils the consumer/market needs. Describe your game.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the game address the needs of the customer? • Describe your game in 1 sentence. • What makes the game innovative compared to the market? • What are the additional benefits of the product to the customer?
Key Metrics	List current and future goal key metrics that you will be using to measure the business performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List current Wishlists, Followers on Steam, social media, other outlets, Sales (if any), and Costs (if applicable). • Define the goals for success based on which metrics you want to grow. • Define any other Finance, PR, or Community goals. • Define the milestones you want to achieve and the time frame.
Unique Selling Points (USPs) High-level Concept	Share 2-3 selling points that highlight the distinctive features of your game. Make them concise and to the point. As an addition to this template, note down marketing actions that will showcase USPs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the differences that set your game apart from the competition? • What are the key features that are appealing for players? • What features make your game unique? • How can you showcase your USPs through marketing? • What assets can showcase your USPs in the best light?
Competitive advantage	Outline the (market/business) conditions that uniquely favour your game.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What advantages (internal, external) does your game/business have, that your competition doesn't? • What market conditions are in your favour? • How does your production/technology give you the edge? • What resources/partnerships does your business possess that others don't?
Channels	List different ways you intend to reach your customer. From social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the distribution channels? • What are the primary and secondary social media



Type	Description	Questions
	media, to store pages and websites.	channels to reach your target audience? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the discoverability channels? • What are the ways for players to get in touch with you?
Customer Segments	Outline your primary and secondary audiences, alongside their respective descriptors (demographics, devices, countries). Customer Segment refers to the distinct group of customers with shared characteristics and needs that a product (your game) aims to serve/provide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sort of players will be interested in your game primarily (primary audience)? • Which alternative audiences could be of interest (secondary audiences)? • What are the hobbies, social media habits (most used channels), and demographics of your audience? • What specific needs does your target audience have?
Cost Structure	Provide a high-level overview of your (marketing) budget. While filling this out, keep in mind that the detailed overview is provided further in the document, use this space to provide a summary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much money do you plan to use for advertising activities? • How much money in total do you plan to use for social media and community engagement? • What is your budget for online/offline events? • What is your budget for (local) PR?
Revenue	Share your sources of future revenue and monetization strategy. Outline the following: Business Model, pricing model, value propositions, and forecast (revenue and units sold).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the business model for your game? (Free to play, Season pass, DLC, Premium game, etc.) • What is your revenue forecast for 1 month, 1 year, and 3 years? • How much time do you need to break even? • What is the pricing strategy (Premium/IAP)?

Additional Sources

For more information about Lean Canvas, you can visit the following sources. Please keep in mind that the canvas presented in this document has been altered to help with the VAF process specifically. The other models are useful for different points of the development of your company.



- Miro. (n.d.). *What is Lean Canvas.* - <https://miro.com/strategic-planning/what-is-lean-canvas/>
- Khalimonchuk, K. (2022). *How to Fill In Lean Canvas Template: The Guide to Shaping Your Startup Idea into Product.* - <https://fulcrum.rocks/blog/fill-in-lean-canvas>

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