Alpenglow

From Prototype to Publication

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Stumptown Gamecrafters Guild
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So you have a
board game…

What Next?
What do you want to achieve?

What Next?
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I want to hold my professionally printed game.

What Next?
What do you want to achieve?

I want to sell the idea/game.

What Next: 3 Paths

1. Pitch a Game Publisher **(low risk)**
2. Self Publish via Crowdfunding **(high risk)**

What Next: 3 Paths

1. Pitch a Game Publisher **(low risk)**
2. Self Publish via Crowdfunding **(high risk)**

3. Order some Professionally Printed Copies
& Call it Good **(no risk)**

Transition

Game *Designer* to Game *Publisher*

March 2023

So you have a
board game…

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board game...

Theme
Mechanics
Art
Rules
Playtesting
Prototypes
Feedback

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Kickstarter?

So you have a
board game…

Theme
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Feedback
Sales & Marketing
Manufacturing
Publication
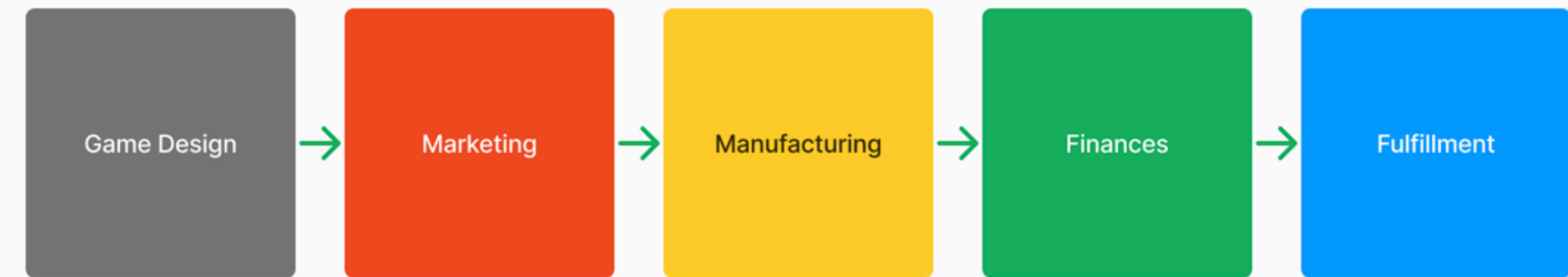*Distribution*
Fulfilment
Customer Service

How Alpenglow went from a hobby to a business.

Board Game, Inc.

Steps for self publishing your board game

Go-to-Market Strategy for Crowdfunded Games

I Want to Launch my Game on Kickstarter

Deciding to go from game designer to publisher is a pretty big decision. This diagram illustrates my go-to-market strategy for Alpenglow starting with the moment the game was fit through Kickstarter to print. This diagram walks through all of the stages of game publishing and manufacturing into bite sized pieces and is intended to be a potential path towards getting your game promotes, manufactured and on game tables.

Produced by Sean Wittmeyer and Waterworks Games, updated December 11, 2023.
Questions? Reach out via wittmeyerwaterworks [at] gmail.com

| Game Design | → | Marketing | → | Manufacturing | → | Finances | → | Fulfillment |

Start Here

This diagram is for you if you are here:

| Design the Game | → | Write Rules | → | Art | → | Playtesting | → | Playable Game with Rules |

Go-to-Market Strategy for Crowdfunded Games

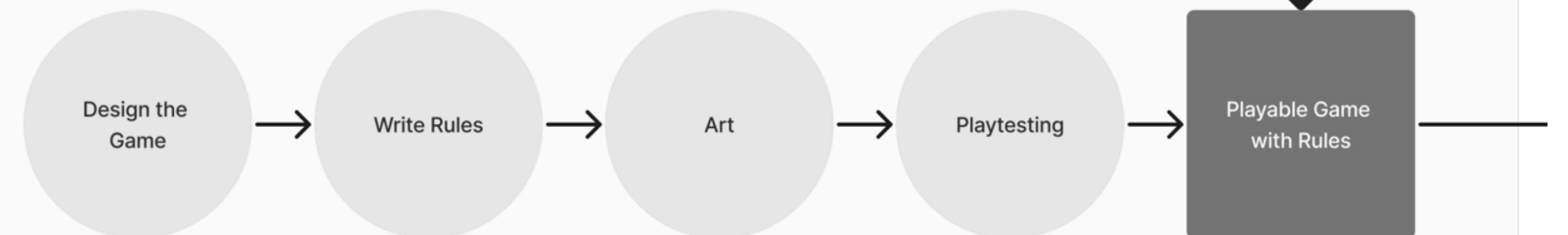## I Want to Launch my Game on Kickstarter

Deciding to go from game designer to publisher is a pretty big decision. This diagram illustrates my go-to-market strategy for Alpenglow starting with the moment the game was fit through Kickstarter to print. This diagram walks through all of the stages of game publishing and manufacturing into bite sized pieces and is intended to be a potential path towards getting your game promotes, manufactured and on game tables.

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Design the Game → Write Rules → Art → Playtesting → Playable Game with Rules

Find and Engage your Audience

Build Awareness and your Brand

The first place to start is to build your own brand. It can be as simple as your game and as grand as a full publishing company but people will want to know what your game is and who you are. Start by submitting your game to BoardGameGeek. Build your presence online with social media and a website, set up a place to collect emails and share your story. Focus on your story and why someone should care about you and your game.

- Launch Social → TikTok? Twitter? / TikTok / Instagram/Facebook → Starter Content → Invite Followers
- Create BGG Listing
- YouTube Videos → Film Overview → Film How to Play
- Launch Website → Google Analytics → Setup MailChimp/ Email List → Landing Page (or Launch Platform)
- Blog → Product Page → Contact Form (or Launch Platform)

→ Playable Game Ready for Reviewers

→ Order Professional Prototypes

Promote

Get your Game Out There

Remember that you need to bring the crowd to your crowdfunding project, Kickstarter, Gamefound, and others won't promote your game for you unless it is already successful. Build your audience by promoting it at conferences and by sharing copies with reviewers and content creators. Use social media to build a brand and an awareness to your game and give them a place to learn more. Lastly, gather your audience by collecting email addresses for a newsletter, followers on Kickstarter's presunch page, and other places where you engage with your customers.

- Email Signup / Landing Page
- TikTok / Meta (Facebook/Instagram) / Twitter / BoardGameGeek
- Email Signup
- Kickstarter Landing Page → Start Advertising
- Reach out to Reviewers, Content Creators → Up and coming / Big Names → Product Photography / Playtest Quotes and Video → Make Kickstarter Video
- Attend Conferences

→ Hit Target Subscriber/Follower Count

Crowdfunding

Are You Ready to Launch?

Set clear goals for how big your audience needs to be and where that audience is so you can be confident when you announce a launch day for your project. Set a funding goal and assess how many followers you will need to hit your day 1 funding target (projects with 40% or more of funding in the first day have a higher likelihood of succeeding, projects with 60%+ will benefit from limited Kickstarter promotion). Test your campaign page and get feedback by sending preview links to friends, reviewers, and other people helping you with your project. Build hype with social media, share games with reviewers and ask them to embargo posts and reviews until your project launch, and when you feel your audience is big enough, hit publish.

Your first day will be the exciting part of the campaign, work to maintain the energy by engaging with backers, join the conversation with followers, and add stretch goals to give people a reason to keep coming back to the campaign. Be careful how much you offer and don't be afraid to say no to some requests that may increase the cost of the game. A well oiled campaign is one where the creator planned every step of the way from launch to funded.

- Launch Kickstarter → Project Updates / Publicity/ Blogger Outreach / Advertise / Events → Funded

Manufacturing and Finance

Push Print

Congrats, your game was funded and is ready to go to the manufacturer. Start by setting how many games you will need. Add up orders from backers, late pledges, online sales, and any retail/distributors if you have made those arrangements. Games ordered by consolidators/distributors come with steep discounts (50-60%) but they get games into stores simplifying the sales process. Selling via your own website is where you can increase profits but requires that you operate the store and find customers. Plan ahead so you can take advantage of economies of scale (the more games you order, the less each one costs to make and ship) but don't order more than you can afford. Remember that the funds you raised are for freight, taxes, and other costs so make sure you have money set aside.

- Open Pledge Manager
- Collect Shipping, Taxes, Late Pledges → x300 Consolidator $8 / Retail → Distributor/ Retailer $40
- Calculate First Run Quantity → x1000 Kickstarter / x300 Direct to Consumer
- Distribution Quantities and Purchase Orders

→ Place Manufacturing Order

Fulfillment

The Last Mile

Your games are about done and ready to hit the seas, now is time to schedule freight and make fulfillment partners aware that your game is coming. Send order lists to your fulfillment partners, pay for customs/taxes, and build up hype again. You will have extra games going to each partner so it is time to promote the game and let people know they can finally get it if they missed the Kickstarter. Keep up promotion and advertising so you can sell the games you have for sale. Once your initial games go out to customers, you start to become a customer support agent for your brand, handling questions, shipping out missing components, and answering questions related to your rules.

- Negotiate Local Fulfillment per region / Negotiate Freight / Negotiate Retail order / Open Web Store
- Ship to Fulfillment Partners → Track shipments / Maintain tracker communication
- Amazon Sales Open Provider (30% take rate) / Promote/ Advertise / Shopify, etc Open Provider
- Arrives at warehouses / Arrives at stores → Local Pickup Events / Deliveries to Backers/Pre-Orders / Open Sales

Estimation and Research

- Create Game Components List → Manufacturer Intro → Manufacturer Quote → Design Revisions, Stretch Goals & Requote
- Solicit Freight Quotes (for estimating costs) → Establish Landed Cost per unit → Taxes/VAT per unit → Kickstarter Unit Cost → Kickstarter Target → Manufacturing ready for Kickstarter
- Reach out to Fulfillment Partners → Europe Spiral Galaxy Meeples Dist / Australia/ SE Asia Aetherworks ZHenHub / USA/Mexico Quartermaster Bridge, Fulfillrite, Gameratt → Fulfillment Cost per unit

Know the Business of Game Publishing

When you choose to crowdfund a project, you are choosing to run your project like a business. Some projects are small and real but their reach and scale may be limited as a result. Before asking for money, know how much you need. Who will manufacture/print the game and what is their minimum order quantity? How will it get from the factory to your customers and who will ship/fulfill orders? Where are your customers and how will customs and taxes/VAT be paid? How much should you charge for a copy in order to avoid losing money? Check out a great primer on Kickstarter finances:
https://boardgamegeek.com/blogpost/123110/kickstarter-games-price-breakdown

Cost vs Value: How Much Should Your Game Cost?

Setting a cost for your game will be a mix of setting a target cost (based on similar games) and evaluating how much it will cost for you to make the game. Your cost starts with the cost to manufacture the game and includes the freight cost to fulfillment partners or your home, customs/VAT/sales taxes, your sunk costs (money you spent on the game to develop it already) and fees (business, accounting, kickstarter, payment processing, fulfillment, etc). The industry has a nice way to estimate the cost - the rule of 5. Calculate the landed cost (manufacturer cost + ocean freight) and multiply that by 5. This should be close to your MSRP/RRP. So if the manufacturer cost for 1 copy is $8 and the cost to get it to your fulfillment warehouse is $2, your landed cost is $10 and your MSRP should be $50-60.

Rule of 5:
Landed Cost (manufacturer + freight) x 5 = MSRP
20×5=$100
Include shipping in kickstarter pledge?
60% retailer discount = $40 (covers landed+gmt)
MSRP $100
Kickstarter $60 (Day 1 promotions, etc)?
- Sean Wittmeyer

Minimum order 3000
Multiple languages? (2nd ed.)
Multiple regions or US only?
Shipping?
Sales tax/VAT/Customs?
- Sean Wittmeyer

How Fulfillment Works

Getting Games from the Factory to the Game Table

Depending on the type of game and how many games you plan to print, fulfillment might be as simple as handing them out at a local pickup event and shipping packages out of your living room. For many projects, it starts with games sitting on pallets at a factory and it may make more sense to work with fulfillment partners to get your game to customers. Reach out to fulfillment partners who help pack and ship your games to customers. Estimate how much ocean freight will cost to move the games to your fulfillment warehouse(s) and make sure you have a plan in place before you start manufacturing.

- Manufacturer
  - 30% → Freight → Distributor Warehouse (EU#) → Courier → Customer
  - 60% → Freight → Fulfillment Warehouse USA → Courier → Customer
  - 10% → Freight → Distributor Warehouse ASIA → Courier → Customer

Our path to Kickstarter

- *Website & Social Media*
- *Email List & Newsletter*
- *BGG Listing*
- *Film Intro Video → YouTube*
- *Manufacturer Intro & Quote*
- *Design/Price Stretch Goals*
- *Order Prototypes/Review Copies*
- *Kickstarter Landing Page*
- *Send Games to Content Creators*
- *Product Photography*
- *Advertising*
- *Conferences*
- *Fulfillment Quotes*
- *Freight Estimates*
- *Taxes & Customs*
- *Target Landed Cost*
- *Launch Kickstarter*
- *Day 1 Hype & Promotions*
- *Customer Service*
- *Events & Outreach*
- *Updates and Industry Hype*

Establish a Market

Kickstarter is a tool to test product-market fit.
Is there an market willing to buy your game?

- *Website & Social Media*
- *Email List & Newsletter*
- *BGG Listing*
- *Film 5-min How to Play video → YouTube*

Estimation & Research

Know the business of game publishing before you enter it.

- *Manufacturer Intro & Quote*
- *Design/Price Stretch Goals*
- *Order Prototypes/Review Copies*

Promotion

You need to bring the crowd to crowdfunding.
Get your game in front of your customers.

- *Kickstarter Landing Page*
- *Send Games to Content Creators*
- *Product Photography*
- *Advertising*
- *Conferences*

Kickstarter Follower Count
Newsletter Audience
BGG Subscribers

Our target:
Newsletter Audience > 2000

Expect 10-30% Conversion Rate
(at end of campaign)

Day 1 Conversion Rate
355 / 2400 = 14%

Target Day 1 Funding Targets
30% for likelihood of success
60% for Kickstarter promotion

Advertising Methodology

Social Media:
Meta, Google, TikTok, X
Content Creators, Reviewers, Display Ads/
Promoted Posts, Organic Posts

Community:
BGG, Conferences, Events
Reviewers, Display Booths, Playtesting

Finances

What is the price of your game and what are the costs to get it to game tables?

- *Fulfillment Quotes*
- *Freight Estimates*
- *Taxes & Customs*
- *Target Landed Cost*

Landed Cost

Manufacturing Cost ($12.50/ea)
+
Freight to Fulfillment Warehouse(s) ($2.50/ea)
=
Landed Cost ($15.00/ea)

Rule of 5 (Landed x 5 = **$75 MSRP**)

Economies of scale and Stretch Goals
Fulfillment costs and last mile shipping
Selling in the US vs RoW
Customs and Import VAT
Sales Taxes and VAT
Brokerage Fees

Crowdfunding

You have an audience ready to buy and it's
time to push go.

- *Target Funding Goal*
- *Day 1 Hype & Promotions*
- *Customer Service*
- *Events & Outreach*
- *Updates and Industry Hype*

Funding Goal

MOQ = Minimum order quantity (1500)
1500 x 12.50 = 18,750
+Tooling, etc +$2000

Sunk costs
Advertising, Materials, Prototypes, Apps/Platforms/Tools, fees, taxes
+$2000 to $10000+

Freight
~$2.50 x 1500 = +$3750

Promotion and post-campaign costs?

Our goal was $38k
Our Kickstarter goal was $30k*

$15 (landed cost) x 4 (industry standard) = $60 Kickstarter price
$38k/$59 = 644 backers required to fund.

Manufacturing & Finance

Pushing print and spending the money you raised.

Freight & Fulfillment

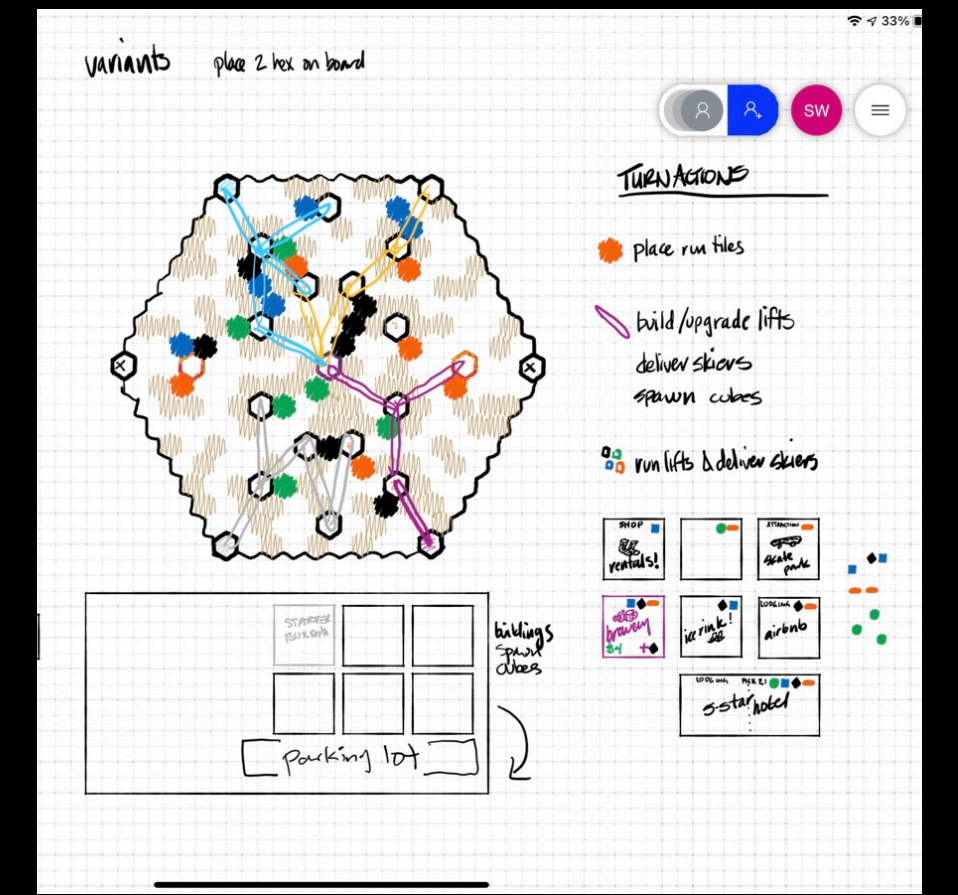Planning for the trip from the factory loading dock to the doorstep.

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WATERWORKS

The Game Works

Getting funded on Kickstarter

Changing Roles

Getting funded on Kickstarter