

Getting Your Independent Game Noticed in 2013

Mike Rose

UK Editor, Gamasutra



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

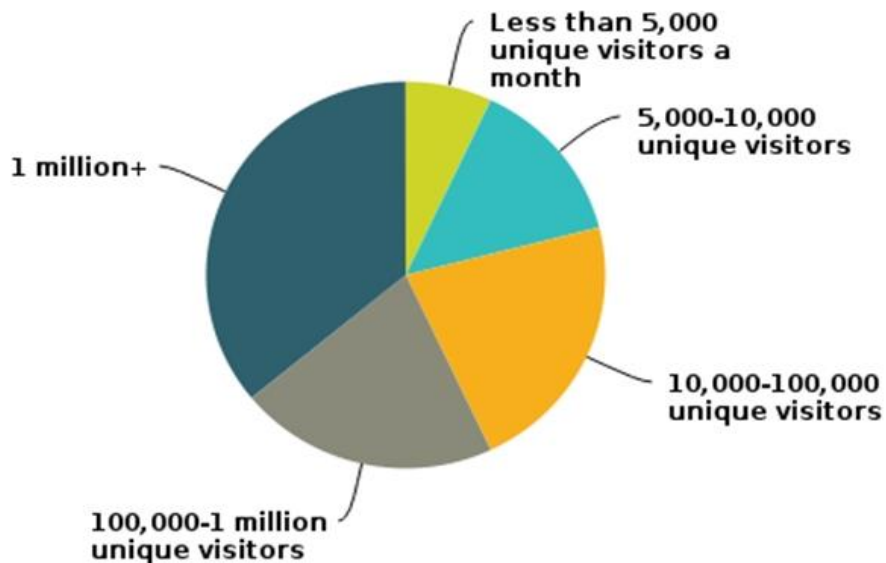
GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE EUROPE

COLOGNE, GERMANY
AUGUST 19-21, 2013
EXPO DATES: AUGUST 19-20

2013

Getting covered by the press

- Editors get dozens of emails every day
- It's so much harder now to get noticed
- The smallest of mistakes can cost you coverage
- You have to stand out from the crowd, and give people a reason to cover you



Answer Choices	Responses
Less than 5,000 unique visitors a month	7.02% 8
5,000-10,000 unique visitors	14.04% 16
10,000-100,000 unique visitors	21.93% 25
100,000-1 million unique visitors	21.05% 24
1 million+	35.96% 41
Total	114

The basics of getting press coverage

1. You need a hook

- An angle that makes your game interesting, and sets it apart from everything else
- If I picked you out of the audience now, would you be able to intrigue me in 10 seconds?
- Imagine a news story about your game – what would the headline be?

Examples of recent hooks

- *Black Annex* – a modern game made in QBasic
- *Imp Paired* – made by an architect
- *Incredipede* – Woodblock artist, made in over a dozen countries
- *Falskaar* – “The *Skyrim* mod that's also a job application”

2. Build connections

- If the editor knows you in some capacity, it's far more likely that they'll cover you
- Introduce yourself at shows like GDC, and sell yourself as much as your game
- Be part of conversations on social media, so that when your name comes up, you're recognized

Examples of connections

- *OlliOlli* - John Ribbins and Roll7
- *Imp Paired* – Nicholas Lister
- Vlamber's JW

The hook, line and sinker

The hook: The “story” that sets your game apart from everything else

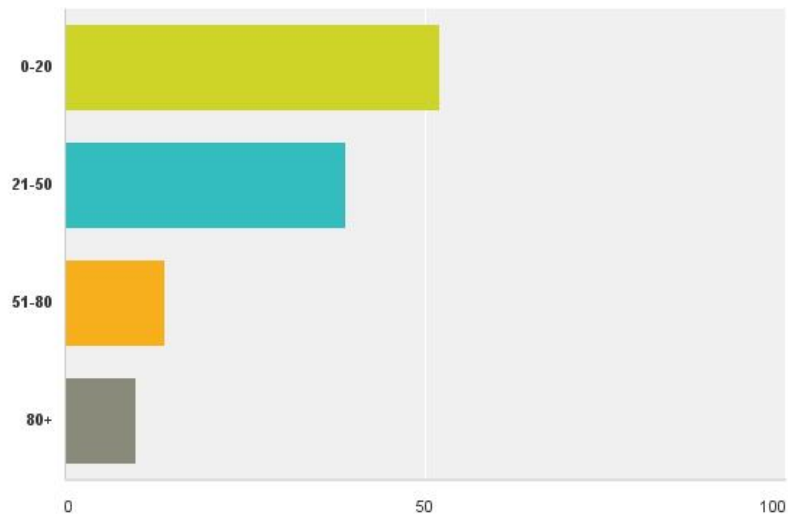
The line: The introductions and conversation that keep your game firmly in editors’ minds

The sinker: Once the hook and the line are in place, your chances of scoring coverage greatly improve

The ins and outs of the games journalist's inbox

Q1 How many work-related emails (from devs, PR, etc) do you receive a day on average?

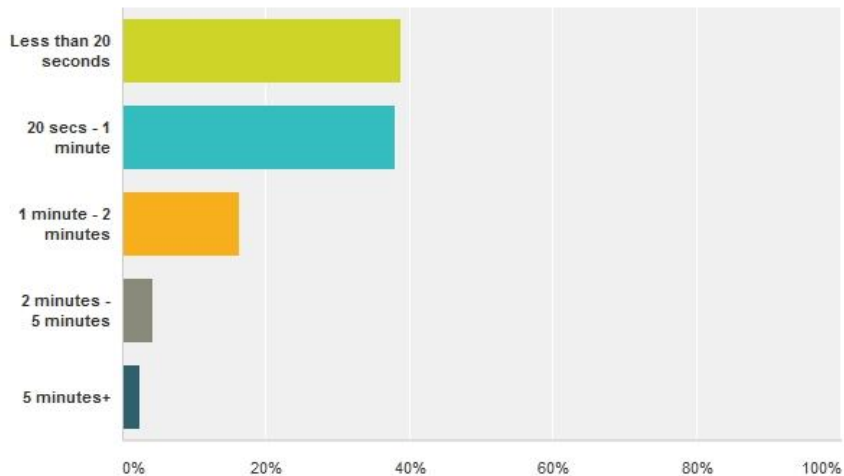
Answered: 115 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
0-20	45.22% 52
21-50	33.91% 39
51-80	12.17% 14
80+	8.70% 10
Total	115

How much time do you estimate you spend reading each email on average?

Answered: 116 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Less than 20 seconds	38.79% 45
20 secs - 1 minute	37.93% 44
1 minute - 2 minutes	16.38% 19
2 minutes - 5 minutes	4.31% 5
5 minutes+	2.59% 3
Total	116

The perfect pitch

Be personal

- You are not a large-scale company. Stop trying to act like one!
- Personalize every single email
- Address me using my name
- But don't fake it
- Just be a real person – it's actually not that hard

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	Average Ranking ▼
An interesting developer story	40.35% 46	12.28% 14	21.93% 25	4.39% 5	6.14% 7	4.39% 5	6.14% 7	4.39% 5	114	6.17
A Steam code	24.56% 28	23.68% 27	13.16% 15	8.77% 10	12.28% 14	5.26% 6	6.14% 7	6.14% 7	114	5.88
A link to download the game for free	10.53% 12	23.68% 27	14.04% 16	18.42% 21	8.77% 10	7.89% 9	8.77% 10	7.89% 9	114	5.11
A link to a YouTube video	6.14% 7	12.28% 14	19.30% 22	26.32% 30	14.04% 16	7.89% 9	7.89% 9	6.14% 7	114	4.84
A link to a game's website	9.65% 11	9.65% 11	12.28% 14	13.16% 15	14.04% 16	21.05% 24	12.28% 14	7.89% 9	114	4.36
A link to the game's Steam page	0.88% 1	7.89% 9	7.02% 8	13.16% 15	19.30% 22	21.05% 24	19.30% 22	11.40% 13	114	3.61
A press release	7.02% 8	7.02% 8	7.89% 9	8.77% 10	14.91% 17	17.54% 20	10.53% 12	26.32% 30	114	3.56
A link to the game's Greenlight page	0.88% 1	3.51% 4	4.39% 5	7.02% 8	10.53% 12	14.91% 17	28.95% 33	29.82% 34	114	2.68

"I feel it's important for a developer to have a bit of fun with their emails, inject some personality and show how much they love what they do. Knowing that a developer is passionate is important to me, especially when dealing with indies."

"Don't sound like a robot."

"Aim the mail directly at me. I know it is hard, but being part of a mass mail has a lot less effect."

"Actual news. Not 'our game exists.' Something that will *inform* readers. Hitting a sales milestone, setting a record, an all-new mechanic - these are good examples of news narratives."

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	Average Ranking
Big walls of text, not to the point quick enough	27.83% 32	19.13% 22	13.91% 16	13.04% 15	11.30% 13	8.70% 10	2.61% 3	3.48% 4	115	5.85
Impersonal text	13.04% 15	13.04% 15	21.74% 25	15.65% 18	14.78% 17	13.04% 15	6.96% 8	1.74% 2	115	5.18
Got your name/company wrong	22.61% 26	12.17% 14	13.04% 15	10.43% 12	13.04% 15	8.70% 10	13.04% 15	6.96% 8	115	5.08
Obvious copy and paste job, same email clearly sent to dozens of people with the name altered at the start	11.30% 13	13.91% 16	18.26% 21	18.26% 21	11.30% 13	13.91% 16	6.96% 8	6.09% 7	115	4.96
Lack of links	11.30% 13	14.78% 17	12.17% 14	16.52% 19	17.39% 20	12.17% 14	10.43% 12	5.22% 6	115	4.82
Email is just a press release	6.96% 8	13.04% 15	6.96% 8	8.70% 10	11.30% 13	16.52% 19	26.09% 30	10.43% 12	115	3.90
No review/preview code/link	2.61% 3	6.09% 7	8.70% 10	11.30% 13	13.91% 16	19.13% 22	13.91% 16	24.35% 28	115	3.37
You don't know the person or the company	4.35% 5	7.83% 9	5.22% 6	6.09% 7	6.96% 8	7.83% 9	20% 23	41.74% 48	115	2.84

“The email subject line reads like spam.”

“A lot of mail I get lists a lot of vague or redundant information. If I'm reading through three or four paragraphs, I'd like to gain as much information as possible.”

“Vague. Trying too hard to be fake friendly. Trying too hard to look cool, or trying too hard to be WACKY AND ZANY. Basically trying to ‘stand out’ by doing the wrong thing. The right thing is ‘why is this interesting.’”

“If it fails at personalization. For example, I don't write about eSports or MOBAs or competitive gaming, but I routinely get e-mails saying things like, “Because of all the great articles we've seen you write on [name a MOBA here].” That's worse than not trying.”

How should you supply assets?

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average Ranking ▼
A presskit() page	41.38% 48	22.41% 26	20.69% 24	9.48% 11	6.03% 7	116	3.84
A Dropbox link (or similar)	25% 29	38.79% 45	19.83% 23	13.79% 16	2.59% 3	116	3.70
Attached to the email	18.97% 22	24.14% 28	29.31% 34	13.79% 16	13.79% 16	116	3.21
Linked to on the game's website	13.79% 16	11.21% 13	23.28% 27	43.10% 50	8.62% 10	116	2.78
Linked to on a website like GamesPress.com (or similar)	0.86% 1	3.45% 4	6.90% 8	19.83% 23	68.97% 80	116	1.47

dopresskit.com

Other key points when dealing with the press

- Provide a contact email that is easy to find! Sometimes finding someone's email address is like a puzzle
- If English isn't your first language, get someone to check over everything you write. Even if it is, still check for typos, as they are an instant turn-off
- Bad publicity can become good publicity - if a writer says nasty things about your game, disarm them by commenting back as nicely as possible
- Consider whether you need a PR company representing you or not

How does the press deal with PR?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Email the PR company back	69.83%	81
Find the contact for the developer and email them directly	17.24%	20
Tweet the developer	1.72%	2
Other (please specify)	11.21%	13
Total		116

“Used to email PR but often quicker to approach developer directly. An even split at the moment.”

“I’m probably not going to pay attention to anything a PR says about an indie game.”

“Email the PR company back, but also find the contact for the developer for future contact.”

Reading materials

Five PR tips indies really need – Leigh Alexander

The Big List of Indie Game Marketing – Pixel Prospector

An Indie Game Developer's Marketing Checklist –
Robert DellaFave

The indie marketing plan - Joost van Dongen

Mike Rose

@RaveofRavendale

mike@gamasutra.com

Thanks for listening!

Questions?