

You Were Told to Lose Money By Making Games, and You Actually Did It?

Chapter 13: Hyakukin Studio

The time Chen Xu had scheduled was mid-November.

To be honest, he really didn't want to choose that time because it was the off-season for tourism.

Whether it was airfare or hotel rooms, prices were usually at their lowest during this period.

But he didn't really have a choice.

After all, this was supposed to be for project development. Even if he wanted to push the schedule back a little, he'd still have to get past the system's approval.

Still, although he felt somewhat regretful, Chen Xu didn't dwell on it too much.

After all, these were only minor expenses.

The truly massive spending would begin after they arrived in Japan.

Airline tickets, hotel bookings, and other arrangements were all being organized.

No official announcement was made, yet the news still spread throughout the company.

After all, visa applications and hotel registrations required employees to provide identification documents.

As a result, words naturally got around.

During lunch break, the company chat group was buzzing with discussion.

"Did the company really sign an outsourcing agreement with Hyakukin Studio?"

"It should be true. The participant list has already been finalized, and they're preparing to book flights."

"But Hyakukin Studio's outsourcing fees aren't cheap. Is our company really that wealthy now?"

"Of course. Just look at our current benefits and the equipment we're using. I've never heard of a game company letting employees use hardware like this for AI-assisted development."

"Exactly. And they actually pay overtime in full. Can you believe that?"

"But from what I've heard, this trip isn't just about collaborative development. The main goal is to learn Hyakukin Studio's experience with action-game development."

"Learn development experience? But I've heard Hyakukin Studio doesn't exactly have a great reputation in that area."

"Yeah. Last year, Baldy got into a Twitter war with Microsoft. The question is whether it was Hyakukin's fault or Microsoft's."

"I think it was probably Hyakukin's fault. A friend of mine worked at a company that outsourced to them before and said they got burned. We're not going to get burned too, are we?"

"What happened? Can you elaborate?"

For a moment, the company chat became extremely tense.

Then someone posted the first risqué picture.

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Osaka

Hyakukin Studio

"They don't just want us to handle outsourcing? They also want to do collaborative development on-site?"

Kamiyama Atsushi rubbed his shiny bald head, utterly baffled.

He had honestly never heard of such a thing.

Their studio had handled outsourcing work for many game companies.

But clients usually fell into only two categories.

The first type believed Hyakukin Studio had strong technical expertise and wanted them to handle part of the game's development.

The second type simply lacked sufficient manpower and needed to outsource portions of the project to stay on schedule.

Regardless of which category it was, collaborative development wasn't normally part of the equation.

In the first case, if you're hiring an outsourcing studio, it's because you don't possess the necessary expertise yourself.

So what exactly are you going to collaborate on?

In the second case, if you're already short on manpower, why waste precious human resources on so-called collaborative development?

Wouldn't that simply increase development costs for no reason?

At the end of the day, games were products.

And products were supposed to generate profits.

Traveling all the way here for collaborative development—the airfare, hotel costs, and most importantly the productivity lost during travel time—those expenses were enormous.

From a business perspective, this was the behavior of a complete sucker.

Is there something wrong with this company?

Kamiyama Atsushi rubbed his bald head again, still unable to make sense of the situation.

"I think they're probably trying to learn our technology."

Beside him, Inaba Hideki frowned and offered his opinion.

As Hyakukin Studio's vice president, he was a veteran of the Japanese gaming industry.

In fact, he had once been one of the industry's first-generation star producers.

After giving it some thought, he quickly understood the intentions of this company called Morning Star Games.

They wanted to learn from them.

To secretly absorb their know-how.

And that was perfectly normal.

Not just in the gaming industry—every profession had people trying to learn from the best.

"Then should we reject it and turn down the outsourcing contract?"

Kamiyama Atsushi frowned.

But when he thought about the generous outsourcing fee, he couldn't help feeling reluctant.

Their own latest project had just launched, and once again, it had been a complete commercial disaster, so they desperately needed an influx of cash to help the company recover.

Although Hyakukin Studio was well-known, there weren't many companies that could actually afford their outsourcing fees.

At the same time, they couldn't simply lower their prices.

After all, although lowering your market value was easy, raising it back up afterward was much harder.

On top of that, Hyakukin Studio's reputation over the past two years hadn't exactly been flattering.

That alone had scared away some potential clients.

Under those circumstances, having a gullible customer come knocking on their door—and one willing to pay a premium outsourcing fee at that—wasn't something Kamiyama wanted to pass up.

But regardless of how tempting it was, the thought that the client not only wanted them to handle development but also intended to learn their techniques left a bad taste in his mouth.

"Why reject them? If they want to learn, let them come."

Inaba let out a laugh.

"When the time comes, we'll just drag our feet. Show up for work without actually putting in the effort. It's not like we haven't done it before. They're not even a domestic competitor—just some overseas game company."

They had done this sort of thing before.

In fact, one of the world's gaming giants—Microsoft—had once hired them to help develop a major first-party launch title for a console.

Back then, they had taken the money and barely done any real work.

They dragged the project out for more than a year, effectively collecting a year's worth of pay for doing very little.

Of course, their reputation had still been excellent at the time.

It was that incident that had started their decline.

But the company approaching them now wasn't Microsoft.

It was merely some small studio they had never even heard of.

Besides, game development always involved unexpected setbacks.

Develop, break things, rebuild, and continue developing.

Wasn't that sort of seemingly wasteful process perfectly normal in game development?

When the time came, as the so-called experts in action-game development, they could simply drag out countless tiny details.

What could the other side possibly do about it?

"So we're taking the contract?"

Kamiyama felt convinced.

Even though being roasted online back then had been humiliating, the money they received had been undeniably satisfying.

"Of course we're taking it! Why wouldn't we?"

Inaba stroked his small mustache with a smug expression.

"Money is practically being delivered to our doorstep. Are we supposed to refuse it?"

"We can agree to all of their requests in the early stages."

"But once development actually starts, aren't we the ones who decide how things get done?"

His smile grew even wider.

Being a decent person might require having a conscience.

But if you stopped caring about being decent, then you wouldn't need a conscience at all.

And without a conscience, making money became much easier.

They want to learn our technology?

Do they really think we'll let them?