

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

Chapter 12: Spending Money Is Too Hard

As the game project was officially approved, the various development details of Sekiro were quickly finalized.

In less than a week, the team's responsibilities had been fully coordinated.

At this stage, the primary task of the project was producing the foundational art assets.

As for the game itself, after discussions with Gong Qi, Ying Gao, Xiao Dao, and Xiu Fu, Chen Xu ultimately decided to develop it using Unreal Engine 5.

This was the game engine most widely used by major studios across the industry.

It wasn't because its capabilities completely surpassed every other engine, rather, there simply wasn't another commercially available engine that was as powerful and suitable for large-scale game development.

In the past, there had been quite a few choices on the market.

And just the upfront licensing fees alone could cost several million dollars.

But everything changed after Unreal released its new generation engine and adopted a revenue-sharing model.

For the advanced custom version, the annual fee was only \$999.

Games made with it would only be charged a 5% royalty after revenue exceeded \$1 million.

With such a cost advantage, competing engines simply couldn't keep up.

As a result, Unreal seized the market first and continuously invested in technological upgrades and research.

By now, it had long since swept aside its competitors and become the undisputed industry leader.

The only alternatives left were proprietary engines developed by major companies for their own internal use, none of which were available to outsiders.

"If only they charged an upfront licensing fee of one or two million dollars..."
Chen Xu sighed.

Unfortunately, there was no way to spend that money.

[System Funds: 91.5 million yuan]

[Settlement Time: 139 days remaining (if no official product is released by the deadline, the settlement date will be postponed)]

[Personal Funds: 404.4 yuan]

Looking at the system panel before him, Chen Xu felt miserable.

Over the past month, he has done everything possible to spend money freely.

The company acquisition.

Replacing equipment.

Improving employee meals.

His own apartment rent and car expenses.

He had even spent a fortune renovating the company's lounge area.

Yet despite all that, he had only managed to spend less than a tenth of the available funds.

Now the company was already running smoothly!

What if, by the time the game was finished, there were still tens of millions sitting in the company account?

Just imagining that scenario made Chen Xu feel awful.

Can't spend it all. Can't spend it all. There's simply no way to spend this much money!

"Spending money is too hard!" Chen Xu sighed once again.

Spending money without restrictions was easy, but spending it according to the system's rules, while also ensuring the money wouldn't somehow come back to bite him, was a completely different story.

More importantly, he had to use that money to make a decent game and somehow achieve a loss when the project settled.

That was even harder.

Just as Chen Xu was drowning in frustration, a knock sounded on the office door.

"Come in."

After receiving permission, Gong Qi and Ying Gao entered, both looking excited.

"President Chen, we've already contacted Hyakukin Studio. They're willing to take on our outsourcing project. Here's the proposed budget. Please take a look."

Gong Qi handed over a prepared document.

Chen Xu accepted it and skimmed through the contents.

Like most outsourcing arrangements, Hyakukin Studio would primarily handle the game's animation work and part of the programming.

In addition, Morning Star Games would be responsible for covering a portion of Hyakukin Studio's employee salaries.

Compared to the outsourcing proposal Gong Qi had previously shown him, the terms offered by Hyakukin Studio were significantly more expensive.

But that wasn't what Chen Xu cared about.

What truly caught his attention was the final budget amount.

12 million yuan.

Compared to the previous estimate, it had nearly doubled.

But why was it still so little?

The outsourcing fee was only this much?

How was he supposed to spend all the funds provided by the system?

Noticing Chen Xu frown once again, Gong Qi and Ying Gao felt their hearts sink.

That expression... Was President Chen still dissatisfied?

Had he done something wrong?

Or had they overlooked something important?

His mind filled with confusion, Gong Qi desperately reviewed every step of the process, trying to figure out what he might have missed.

But at that moment, Ying Gao suddenly felt a flash of inspiration.

Ying Gao felt that he finally understood President Chen's concerns.

"President Chen, we've already contacted Hyakukin Studio. They've agreed to let us participate in collaborative development on-site, so we'll have a better opportunity to... uh, learn from their technical expertise and experience," Ying Gao quickly explained.

Why spend extra money hiring Hyakukin Studio?

Wasn't the whole point to learn from their accumulated experience in action-game development?

That was the most important aspect of this outsourcing arrangement!

No wonder President Chen seemed somewhat dissatisfied with them.

They had completely missed the key point when reporting their progress.
How could President Chen possibly be satisfied?

Hearing Ying Gao's words, Chen Xu's eyes suddenly lit up.

That's right!

A company-sponsored vacation.

No, wait—it should be called a business trip for professional development.

If employees were traveling abroad and working hard for the company, the treatment they received should be pretty good, right?

First class might be too much for the system to approve, but business class should be fine.

Send ten or twenty people abroad, book a batch of business-class tickets, and there goes another one or two hundred thousand yuan.

And while they're away, they should eat well too, right?

Although Hyakukin Studio was located in Osaka, where living costs were lower than Tokyo's, with so many people, the food budget should still be at least 200 yuan per person per day.

Then there was accommodation.

That should be good as well.

At the very least, they should stay in a proper star-rated hotel.

And there would be transportation allowances.

All of that counted as expenses.

Furthermore, if they were working alongside the developers on-site, they couldn't exactly rely on Hyakukin Studio for equipment, they would have to bring their own.

But since this was company business, it would be unreasonable to expect employees to pay out of pocket.

Even if they already owned laptops, what if the hardware wasn't powerful enough and reduced development efficiency?

Therefore, the company would need to provide high-end laptops.

Another huge expense.

And, most importantly, he himself could tag along with the team and enjoy a nice trip.

Perfect.

"Very good. Excellent. As long as you're mentally prepared. Draft a list of twenty people, then coordinate with the finance department and finalize the budget," Chen Xu made the decision immediately.

Twenty people was already a sizable group. He didn't dare push things too far, worried that the system might reject it altogether.

As for Ying Gao's talk about learning technology...

He couldn't care less.

If they wanted to learn, then let them learn.

After all, he wasn't trying to deliberately make Sekiro a bad game.

As for whether this might hurt his grand plans of losing money in future settlement cycles, that was a problem for the future.

Right now, the most important thing was achieving an impressive result for this first settlement period.

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Ying Gao worked fairly efficiently.

Before the end of the workday, the budget proposal for the Osaka trip had already been delivered to Chen Xu's desk.

However, the cheerful Chen Xu quickly became unhappy after reading it.

"Not even two million yuan?" Chen Xu was stunned.

This was nowhere near what he had imagined.

Round-trip airfare would cost approximately 12,000 yuan per person, totaling 240,000 yuan.

Accommodation was budgeted at 400 yuan per person per day, with everyone sharing double rooms.

For a two-month collaborative development period, that came to only 480,000 yuan.

Transportation and meal allowances were set at 250 yuan per day, totaling another 250,000 yuan.

The largest expense was supposed to be laptop procurement.

But because they were buying in bulk—and because of connections established during previous equipment purchases with regional distributors—the laptops could be purchased at prices significantly below official retail rates, even cheaper than what many dealers paid.

Aside from that, there were various miscellaneous expenses, but none of them were substantial.

In fact, they didn't even exceed the airfare budget.

"President Chen, these benefits are already extremely generous," Ying Gao quickly explained after noticing Chen Xu's dissatisfaction.

For an employee with principles, having a boss who was too willing to spend money could sometimes be difficult as well.

What company in the industry offered treatment like this?

After all, they hadn't even produced a single successful title yet.

Although it wasn't his own money being spent, Ying Gao still felt uneasy.

He was genuinely worried the company might go bankrupt.

After all, he understood the difference between enjoying one perfect meal and having good meals for years to come.

Listening to Ying Gao, Chen Xu realized that he couldn't continue raising employee benefits.

Otherwise, the system would probably shut down the idea.

But if improving benefits wasn't an option, how could he spend more money?

Then suddenly, an idea struck him.

Wasn't everyone so eager to learn technology?

In that case, maybe there was something he could do with Hyakukin Studio after all.

Thinking of this possibility, Chen Xu's eyes brightened.