

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

Chapter 26: Localization and Testing

Half a month had passed since NGI published that sensational interview that seemed determined to shock the industry.

With several major AAA titles from both domestic and international publishers launching during that period, the attention surrounding Morning Star Games had long since cooled down.

Although the company's official Weibo and Bilibili accounts had each accumulated over 200,000 followers, not a single update had been posted so far.

As a result, engagement had practically vanished. Most people simply followed the accounts and never bothered to unfollow.

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January 3rd.

Just after the New Year holiday.

Sitting in his rented apartment, Chen Xu opened the official social media accounts and took a look at the statistics.

He let out a long sigh of relief.

Excellent.

Just as he had predicted.

Without any substantial content to maintain interest, players' enthusiasm really couldn't last.

This piece of good news finally allowed Chen Xu to relax a little.

Leaning comfortably against the sofa, he opened the system panel to review the company's finances.

[Loss Conversion System]

[System Funds: 45.31742 million yuan]

[Settlement Time: 89 days remaining (If no official product is released before the deadline, the settlement date will be postponed.)]

[Personal Funds: 404 yuan]

"Difficult! Difficult! Difficult!"

Looking at the remaining 45 million yuan in system funds, Chen Xu couldn't help but feel a headache coming on.

Pulling out his notebook, he started doing some calculations.

From late October through November and December—a total of roughly two and a half months—salaries and overtime pay had consumed 11.24 million yuan.

The biggest expenses had occurred during late November and December.

It wasn't because everyone had suddenly started working 24/7, rather, it was due to outsourcing art assets and related resources.

But those costs would largely end in January.

At this point, only the Fountainhead Palace and the Hirata Estate remained unfinished among the major environments.

Most of the regular enemies, elite enemies, and bosses had already been completed.

Future expenses would mainly consist of salaries and the remaining art outsourcing fees.

Meanwhile, the acquisition of the company, equipment purchases, rent from October until now, and employee meal subsidies totaled around 7 million yuan.

Then there was the largest expense of all: the outsourcing contract with Hyakukin Studio.

Including the fees for Osaka Bank, Komon Law Firm, and various miscellaneous expenses, the total came to roughly 34 million yuan.

The remaining costs—team dinners, office supplies, reimbursements, and equipment purchases for the break room—were relatively insignificant.

There were only three months left until the project's settlement deadline.

Rent, utilities, and employee salaries would at most burn through another 12 million yuan.

And that estimate already assumed the highest possible spending on the annual company party and year-end bonuses.

Even then, Chen Xu doubted the figure could go much higher.

After all, in the eyes of the system, Morning Star Games still hadn't released a single product, meaning there were undoubtedly strict limitations on such expenditures.

"At this rate, I still have around 30 million yuan that I can freely allocate."

"As for the game project itself, the only remaining opportunities to spend money are localization, voice acting, testing, and marketing."

"But translation and localization don't actually cost that much."

Thinking about the market rates, Chen Xu felt somewhat depressed.

Top-tier localization services typically charged around 700 yuan per 2,000 Chinese characters.

It sounded expensive, but Sekiro only had around 250,000 words of text.

Even if the game were translated into major languages such as English, Japanese, German, French, Spanish, Italian, and Russian, the total cost would only be a little over one million yuan.

Adding smaller markets like Korean, Portuguese, Polish, and Thai still wouldn't increase the budget by much.

And those figures were based on premium rates.

In reality, companies often received discounts through negotiation.

Voice acting was more expensive, but not by a huge margin.

The main reason was that this parallel world's animation industry was nowhere near as developed as the one from Chen Xu's previous life.

For prominent voice actors, a long line of dialogue might cost around 300 yuan.

But again, that was essentially the highest public quote from first-tier celebrity voice actors.

And that pricing only applied when there were a few dozen lines.

Large-scale projects involving substantial dialogue were usually negotiated under entirely different contracts.

One common model was hourly billing.

The other was payment based on total word count—charging a certain amount per character, with the final payment determined by the total script size.

Players often encountered games where a cutscene contained a very long sentence, but the protagonist only voiced the first few words.

That usually indicated the studio had signed a word-count-based contract.

If he hired only top-tier voice actors and recorded localized voiceovers for every language version, then the remaining thirty million yuan could indeed be spent in one shot.

But the system would definitely never approve of that.

After all, there was absolutely no justification for it, nor any cost-effectiveness.

'Still, I'll do my best. Everything will use the highest possible standards. For voice acting and localization, I'll spend as much as I can.' Chen Xu thought to himself.

As for the remaining funds, his only hope was the testing phase.

But that was difficult too.

And what about marketing and promotion?

On that subject, Chen Xu had only one thing to say:

Until the very last moment, he wouldn't spend a single cent on advertising.

For the QA testing phase, Chen Xu still planned to outsource everything.

Technically, Morning Star Games was large enough to build its own QA department, but he had no intention of doing so.

The reason was simple: the team would never be large enough.

After all, even counting accounting and administrative staff, Morning Star Games still didn't have many employees.

Even if Xiu Fu managed to swing his pickaxe aggressively in Osaka and poach another twenty or thirty people from Hyakukin Studio, the company's total headcount would only barely exceed one hundred.

Under those circumstances, how large could an internal testing department really become?

How much could they possibly spend on salaries and equipment?

If he was going to spend money, he wanted to spend a lot of money.

He would simply hire three of the most reputable QA outsourcing companies in the country and have them conduct round-the-clock testing in three shifts.

Unlike voice acting and localization expenses, which might be restricted by the system, Chen Xu was completely confident that the system wouldn't be able to stop him when it came to QA.

After all, omitting localization for smaller markets—such as Korean or Thai—wouldn't significantly affect a game's overall quality, but QA was a completely different matter.

In his previous life, *Cyberpunk 2077* had earned enormous profits thanks to its marketing campaign.

However, the company's reputation and public image had taken a massive hit.

The core issue wasn't just that many promised features never materialized.

A huge part of the backlash came from the game's terrible launch quality.

The game felt as though it had skipped the QA phase entirely.

There were even game-breaking bugs in the main storyline, including black-screen errors that prevented progression.

And perhaps the most absurd example was that the special Cyberpunk 2077 limited-edition Xbox console couldn't even run Cyberpunk 2077 smoothly.

That was the kind of thing that left people completely speechless.

Meanwhile, while Chen Xu was busy figuring out where else he could spend money...

In Osaka, the action system outsourced to Hyakukin Studio was also nearing completion.

As the project approached its final stages, Xiu Fu was no longer devoting every day solely to development work.

Instead, during these final weeks, he spent most of his energy building relationships with the employees he had already identified as recruitment targets.

The results were extremely encouraging.

As the old saying went, there are four kinds of ironclad friendships.

They hadn't studied together, nor had they served in the military together.

But they had worked side by side on game development projects, which created a sense of camaraderie.

They hadn't shared ill-gotten gains, nor had they gone womanizing together.

But they *had* visited saunas, explored nightclubs, soaked in hot springs, and shared cups of sake.

Their personal relationships had undoubtedly grown much closer.

More importantly, however, two consecutive months of salary payments and a detailed breakdown of Morning Star Games' employee benefits had completely hooked them.

"Xiu Fu, when can we leave?"

Standing at adjacent urinals in the restroom, Yamagami lowered his voice and asked quietly.

"Be patient a little longer. Once the project is finished, you can start moving over in batches. And let everyone know that we'll reimburse airfare and travel expenses as well."

Xiu Fu glanced toward the colleague keeping watch at the restroom entrance before replying in an equally low voice.

After finishing up and zipping his pants, Yamagami nodded and gave a thumbs-up.

Watching him walk away, Xiu Fu let out a long breath amid the sound of running water.

"Brother Xu, mission accomplished. I haven't let you down."