

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

Chapter 66: Cutting Costs and Increasing Revenue

June 27

Chen Xu took some time to check on the game's development progress.

The script was essentially complete.

At most, once they had a playable build, they would make a few adjustments based on how the scenes looked in practice.

As for the art assets, the hostage apartment from Connor's first chapter had already been finished.

It differed somewhat from the original version, but the overall layout of the apartment remained fairly faithful.

The rest was simply a matter of building the game itself.

They were still using the same engine they had used to develop Sekiro.

However, thanks to the experience gained during Sekiro's development, the entire team was progressing much more smoothly this time.

Meanwhile, the motion-capture studio in Osaka had officially begun operating.

The three lead actors would all arrive next month.

"Prioritize recording all of their scenes first. That's stipulated in the contracts," Chen Xu said during a video call with Eiji.

"Understood." Yamagami Eiji nodded.

Recording all of an actor's scenes in one batch would also make later editing and voice recording much more convenient.

"Oh, President Chen..." Eiji hesitated for a moment before continuing.

"Is the company still hiring? I have a few friends who'd like to try applying."

"We're not actively recruiting at the moment."

Chen Xu thought briefly before adding, "But since you're recommending them, have them send their résumés directly to Secretary Zhou. If they're qualified, we can hire them."

Morning Star Games wasn't actually short on manpower.

The real issue was office space.

Chen Xu already felt the workplace was becoming crowded.

If they were going to recruit more people, he'd rather wait until after this game's financial settlement.

At that point, he'd expand the company's office and hire another batch of employees.

Still, since Eiji had personally recommended them, there was no harm in bringing them aboard if they were capable.

After discussing the motion-capture department with Eiji and Shinji for a while longer, Chen Xu ended the call.

Leaning back in his chair, he began thinking.

‘Once the game's finished, we can relocate the motion-capture studio and expand it together with the company.’

‘As for the game engine... depending on how the next settlement goes, if I still have too much money that I can't spend, it's probably about time we started developing our own engine as well.’

There were two main reasons.

The first was simply increasing investment.

The budgets for both his games and the system's leverage funds would inevitably continue to grow.

Right now, development budgets of one or two hundred million yuan—even three hundred million—weren't actually that large.

Converted into U.S. dollars, they were only in the tens of millions.

But once budgets reached hundreds of millions—or even higher—simply throwing more assets at a project wouldn't always solve the problem.

A game engine, on the other hand, was a bottomless money pit.

Even after it was developed, whenever new technologies emerged, if you didn't keep pouring money into improving it, it'd become outdated within a few years.

So if he established an engine development department, he'd never have trouble finding ways to spend money again.

The second reason was independence.

Although Unreal Engine 5 was a commercially available engine, who could predict the future?

Not to mention that every game required paying a 5% royalty.

Besides a game engine, developing a digital game storefront would also be a promising direction.

Currently, all of Morning Star Games' titles were sold through Steam.

But in the future, if he created his own platform, just like Ubisoft and EA had done in his previous life, sales would absolutely plummet.

Otherwise, Ubisoft and EA wouldn't have eventually crawled back to Steam after leaving it for several years.

Imagine it.

He creates his own digital storefront and releases his own games exclusively there.

A game with a development budget of several hundred million only manages to sell one million copies because it's locked to his own platform.

Then add in all the costs of developing and maintaining the storefront itself.

Wouldn't he lose so much money that he could drive a Rolls-Royce, wear a Vacheron Constantin, and move into a 10,000-square-foot luxury villa?

Just imagining that lifestyle was enough to make him grin.

Unfortunately, Chen Xu knew the system would never approve something on that scale with Morning Star Games' current size.

Letting out a sigh, he temporarily shelved that grand ambition.

Just as Chen Xu was lost in thought, there was a knock on the office door.

Zhou Ran walked in carrying a thick stack of medical examination reports.

"President Chen, the hospital has finished everyone's physical examination reports. Would you like to look them over?"

Some time earlier, Morning Star Games had given everyone a day off to undergo comprehensive medical checkups.

Now the results had all come back.

Chen Xu didn't even bother taking the reports.

He knew he probably wouldn't understand most of the medical terminology anyway.

Besides, wasn't that exactly why he had a secretary?

This kind of thing was part of a secretary's job.

"How did everyone's health checkups turn out?" Chen Xu asked directly.

Having thoroughly prepared in advance, Zhou Ran explained, "President Chen, your health is in pretty good condition. The doctor recommends exercising more regularly and staying up late less often."

Chen Xu nodded.

After all, he was still young.

And ever since he'd noticed Xiao Dao and Xiu Fu gaining weight, he'd started living a much more disciplined lifestyle himself.

Every day he worked out alongside the employees in the company gym.

The cafeteria also served relatively healthy meals.

As for afternoon tea, he only ate cakes and other desserts occasionally.

He rarely drank coffee or soft drinks anymore.

Most of the time, he just drank plain water.

"What about the employees' health?" Chen Xu asked.

"Most of the staff are experiencing mild sub-health conditions," Zhou Ran reported.

"Planner Gong Qi and Planner Ying Gao both have slightly elevated blood pressure, blood lipids, and body weight."

"But overall, no one has any serious illnesses."

"Quite a few employees have minor wrist and cervical spine problems, but nothing requiring medication. The doctors said that improving their daily routines, eating healthier, and exercising more should be enough."

It was actually a fairly normal result.

After all, in this era—especially in the game industry—most people suffered from one degree or another of sub-health and occupational ailments.

"I see."

Chen Xu thought for a moment.

"Keep a closer eye on everyone's condition."

"Also, let's establish an internal company medical reimbursement program."

"For work-related health issues such as neck and wrist problems, if national medical insurance doesn't fully cover the expenses, the company can reimburse part of the remaining cost."

"The reimbursement standards and coverage can be decided later."

"And don't announce this yet. Research it first and report back to me."

He wasn't planning to promise unlimited coverage.

If an employee developed a terminal illness and required intensive care costing tens of thousands every day, that obviously wouldn't qualify.

After all, such illnesses were, at most, only one percent related to work.

But with the system backing him, he could still afford to provide certain employee benefits.

At the very least, he never wanted Morning Star Games to become one of those companies that fired employees the day after they were diagnosed with a serious illness—or even refused to pay legally required severance.

Meanwhile, Zhou Ran had been quietly observing Chen Xu's expression.

From the thoughtful look on his face as he considered employee healthcare, to the hint of disappointment that followed—she noticed everything.

Why is President Chen disappointed?

Morning Star Games already offers incredible benefits.

The newly renovated cafeteria had only opened after ensuring all harmful chemicals from the renovation had dissipated.

The company had purchased gym memberships for everyone.

And now he was planning to introduce healthcare benefits as well.

Even after doing all that...

He's still dissatisfied?

At that moment, Zhou Ran was deeply moved.

What an exceptional... almost perfect boss.

Being able to join Morning Star Games—and become President Chen's secretary—was truly fortunate.

In reality, however...

Chen Xu really was disappointed.

And, technically speaking, it was because of employee benefits.

Right after giving instructions about the healthcare reimbursement program, an idea suddenly occurred to him.

Could the company, just like it purchased gym memberships, buy membership cards for foot massage and massage parlors as an employee benefit?

Massages could help relieve neck and wrist strain.

Or perhaps they could simply establish an in-house rehabilitation and relaxation department.

Hire professional massage therapists so employees could properly recover from work.

And as the company's owner—who also happened to be the lead designer, planner, and project director—surely having a dedicated massage therapist assigned to him wasn't asking too much?

After all, he really wasn't that wealthy anymore.

Every now and then he'd enjoy a nice meal, then get a massage and a foot massage afterward.

Each outing easily cost 20,000 to 40,000 yuan.

Add in the over 1.2 million yuan he'd already spent on his Mercedes-Benz S400L Luxury Edition, and the amount of money he personally had available was now under 450,000 yuan.

Not to mention the car was registered under his own name.

Fuel, maintenance, and servicing all came out of his own pocket.

So Chen Xu's train of thought suddenly expanded.

Maybe he could keep "taking advantage" of the company's budget.

Improve employee benefits while simultaneously reducing his own personal expenses.

Unfortunately, the moment those ideas surfaced, the system immediately flashed a bright red warning.

His beautiful dream was strangled before it could even begin.

He had no idea whether Morning Star Games simply hadn't reached the required scale yet, or whether the idea directly violated the system's rules.

What a pity.

Such a terrible pity.