

## ONLINE VIDEO GAME PRODUCTION MASTER'S DEGREE A FORMAL PRODUCT PROPOSAL

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**Abstract.** This formal product proposal details a service development plan for a new online master's degree program based on videogame development. An analysis of competition and positioning is developed by looking at similar offerings by other institutions while looking at their inherent strengths and weaknesses. These results are reviewed and used as tools in order to use as means of researching the target audience for this product. Qualitative and quantitative data will be obtained to have a clear view of the product's positioning against other programs in the market. Finally, a development strategy will be made based on the information obtained in order to stay true to a previously established mission statement.

**Keywords:** Online education, distance learning, videogame development degree, multimedia, Latin America.

### Introduction

Daena Digital Institute of Business and Technology is an online institution focusing primarily on Masters and Doctorate degrees created and based in Mexico. The intent of this document is to detail a service development plan for a new online master's degree program based on videogame development. This program will be primarily aimed at Latin American markets, given the low accessibility to these kinds of programs in these markets. As such, an analysis of the current competition and position against it is made, by looking at local institutions which offer similar programs, as well as looking at institutions abroad to see their strengths and weaknesses. This will help the institution in having a better sense of scope towards its market-research and development strategies.

These strategies in particular are looked at, by establishing a relationship between the tools used to develop and distribute the programs as means of researching the target audience and their thoughts on similar programs on other institutions. Based on this the institution will have qualitative and quantitative data to work with, and have a clear view on its position to market towards its target audience. Likewise, a development strategy will also be made based on the research done, by staying true to the institution's overall mission statement, as well as the program's specific vision and purpose to its audience. It must stay true to

itself during its development, while allowing room for any improvisational changes to be made along the way.

Finally, a launch strategy is developed as a result of the knowledge obtained from both the market research and the ensuing development strategy. This will be primarily comprised of marketing the program through relevant social media platforms, making sure that the target audience knows the exact nature of the program, and making the information available accessible and understandable.

### **Product Description**

Daena Digital Institute of Business and Technology is an online institution focusing primarily on Masters and Doctorate degrees based in Mexico. The programs are designed to be integrated freely for a working-class market, particularly for those who have no time for traditional education.

In this particular instance, the product to be developed will be a Videogame Development Master's degree program, which will include an established educational structure, and will give the opportunity for a Latin American audience, as well as an international audience to learn the trade and skills necessary to become a successful professional in the videogames industry, from a business and technological perspective, allowing them to become future entrepreneurs and help the Latin American industry grow as a result.

Because this is a fairly new educational field, of which there aren't any established institutions to offer this kind of education to this particular market in Latin America, the innovation at hand would be Adjacent as these kinds of degrees are offered in more developed countries such as United States or Japan, while have yet to be explored properly in Latin American countries.

The idea for this product came after starting a research to find out how many institutions were handling this career, as well as the amount of accredited institutions within Latin America that were offering a similar service.

Because of the lack of sufficient information available, Daena concluded that the market was very much ripe with opportunities as there aren't many competitors offering this career to Latin American markets, which meant that there would be enough room to innovate and appeal to a potential market with a margin of success by being pioneers.

### **Product Offering**

Daena Institute of Technology will offer fully accredited Videogame Development Master's degrees through its state-of-the-art platform, by catering towards recent bachelor graduates of business or multimedia degrees which include animation, programming, among other similar programs which are looking to expand their knowledge through secondary levels of education.

This will be beneficial for students which wouldn't have access to technological specialty programs such as video game development programs in the past. This is to generate interest in a commonly unexplored academic area within the Latin American market. This will be beneficial to both students and professionals within the ever growing Latin American videogame industry, as it will help legitimize the industry's academic field.

A particular benefit of this service will be accessibility to the Latin American Market. There are very few institutes which focus on this market, or try to appeal to its sensibilities by giving them access to education previously available almost exclusively in more developed countries such as Canada or United States.

Technological appeal is another strong point of Daena's program. As the institution is exclusively distance-oriented, this gives it the advantage of reaching a higher number of potential students by having an accessibility not many other Latin American schools can offer. This can also help in getting rid of the stigma currently found in distance learning in these countries.

One of the strongest benefits of this particular degree is its accreditation. Since it is a difficult process for institutions to get legal accreditation for newly developed programs such as video game development in Latin America, this separates Daena from other local institutions which offer similar programs, without the legal and international recognition of institutions outside of Mexico.

### **Competitive Analysis**

With the advent of technology and the ease of accessibility for many to use this technology in constructive ways, there are now a greater number of schools which offer programs catering to many different industries. Among these are specialized schools such as DigiPen institute of technology and Full-Sail University which focus in the fields of technology, animation and video game development. These schools have both local and distance learning options in Master's degrees and PHD's with specific setups.

There has been a growing amount of interest in the academics behind video game development, partly because of the amount of potential revenue being generated by salaries within the industry. According to Game Career Guide in 2013, salaried game developers in the U.S. made an average of \$83,060 (2013).

As mentioned, there is a great amount of institutions looking to diversify their repertoire of careers, often looking for newly accepted programs such as animation, multimedia, and so on. Because of this, people are looking for the more legitimate programs and institutions they can find, as means of getting the best education they can afford.

In the case of local competitors, there are many institutions in Mexico which offer a variety of multi-media programs such as Centro de Estudios Superiores de Diseño de Monterrey, which focuses primarily on careers of both creativity and technology (2016). These local schools however, often lack any sort of access to distance learning education tools for students to use, restricting access to those

residing in local areas exclusively, which gives Daena the opportunity to market itself as an institution open to any student in Latin America.

Another point to add is that most of these institutions offer programs that are not specifically directed at game development itself, but rather as a subset of many different multimedia disciplines, which may deter students to enroll in these courses as they might not be interested in the rest of the given disciplines.

One of the few local competitors which do offer a direct counterpart to Daena's videogame development program would be the University of Advanced Technologies, which is located in Guadalajara, Mexico. This university offers Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Videogame Design and Development, with local and online modules available. ("Historia", 2016). However, these programs are yet to be accredited by Mexico's Public Secretary of Education, which means that Daena has a competitive advantage over it.

Taking this information into account, the lack of accessibility coupled with the deficient amount of accredited institutions handling multimedia programs gives Daena the opportunity to grow as an institution, and set itself apart to be a pioneer in the Latin American Market. This means there is a lot of room for development of similar programs which can have very profitable results if the right audience is reached through the best methods possible.

## **Market-Research**

When it comes to researching the market in order to test the concept of an online videogame master's degree, there are many different avenues and strategies to choose from as an institution. One of the first priority steps in order to do a proper market research would be to use the same tool used to both distribute and utilize the product: The Web. According to Bessant and Tidd (2011) in the context of using the web as a tool for market research "In its simplest form the Web is a passive information resource to be searched – an additional space into which the firm might send its scouts. Increasingly there are professional organizations

which offer focused search capabilities to help with this hunting – for example, in trying to pick up on emerging ‘cool’ trends among particular market segments.” (p.277)

By using the internet as means of gathering information, Daena will be able to look at various samples from both local and international institutions’ platforms in order to analyze what resonates with the market and what doesn’t. Among some of the activities involved with this specific strategy are: looking at testimonials from both students taking similar online courses in western countries like the United States, and graduates of these aforementioned courses. This will allow Daena to have a more objective look at the overall climate of the industry by looking at the service quality from the perspective of students, graduates, and aspiring students. This strategy also connects to another strategy which is working with active users of similar services. Using this strategy in conjunction with web research is important as students of these institutions are more likely to feel stronger emotions about the product in question. (Bessant & Tidd, 2011 p. 278)

With this information at hand, Daena will be able to generate enough quantitative information to work off of, so that any mistakes that other institutions have done in terms of their marketing approach can be fixed, or in the case of successful marketing approaches, can be adopted and localized to local markets. It is of especially important priority to look at the opinions of those interested in this particular program so that any basic expectations held by aspirants can be met accordingly.

A great resource for Daena would be to look at what other successful institutions have done in order to promote their programs. A specific example of this should be by look at the University of Advanced Technology’s game production and management master’s degree, which offers detailed descriptions on their programs and how to get information from them in order to entice students to enroll into their programs (University of Advanced Technology, 2016). Looking at the reception of these programs from students, alumni, and graduates will help Daena

have a clear picture on the commercial landscape at an international level, so that appropriate strategies can be applied towards its development and marketing.

### **Safety and Health Concerns**

In the context of safety and health concerns, since Daena's service is mostly seen from the user's end perspective, a lot of hazardous concerns from the institution's perspective are avoided. However, the institution must stress the need to have safety and health warnings given to its students in the form of warnings against the prolonged use of computer hardware. As mentioned by The United States' Office of Environmental Health and Safety (n.d.) "There are a number of symptoms that may be experienced by computer operators. These symptoms include: visual fatigue, blurred or double vision, burning and tearing eyes, headaches and frequent changes in eyeglass prescription. There is no scientific evidence that computer work causes permanent eye damage, but the temporary discomfort that may occur can reduce productivity, cause lost work time and reduce job satisfaction. Eye complaints are usually the result of glare (direct, specular or diffuse) or visual fatigue." (p.1)

Keeping in mind these circumstances, the institution must make sure that the student environment will be free from having to put students in a situation where they might be forced to stay at long periods of time in front of their computers. This includes looking at Daena's program format, and make sure that it complies with the mandatory health and safety regulations of Mexico's Secretaria de Educación Publica, also known as the local public secretary of education.

### **Development Strategy**

In order for Daena to have a successful development strategy, the differentiation between the institution and those with similar programs already existing must be analyzed. This way, the institution will have a clear sense of identity against others, so that the service's development has a stronger resonance with its audience, and have a more powerful commercial following by local

audiences once the program is released to market. Other factors to take into consideration are those which are considered important factors of success for a development strategy, such as commitment of senior management, clear and stable vision, improvisation, and collaboration under pressure. (Bessant & Tidd, 2011 p.381)

Of these factors, Daena will take a close commitment to have a clear and stable vision. This being that of giving the service of an accredited online game development's master degree program to Latin American audiences, which in the past have been unable to access academic programs of this nature. This vision is supported by having specific parameters to work with, that must stay within expectations of development, similar to any other programs made in the past by the institution. For this factor to be successful the institution must focus on the aspect of the customer's needs and what the institution will be able to offer with this service.

Daena must stay open to the concept of improvisation, such as making changes to the program while in development in order to stay relevant with the needs of customers, while avoiding common pitfalls such as changing the scope of the project. There needs to be a combination of ingenuity and planning in order to be commercially successful, while also being innovative to the target customer.

The program in question needs to include topics that are relevant to the videogame industry as a whole, but also must deal with the needs of students for a post-graduate level education, such as techniques for how to be an entrepreneur in the industry, while supporting the research of the industry from a commercial perspective, and as an entertainment medium.

### **Launch Strategy**

Once the program has been completed and accredited accordingly, Daena Digital Institute of Business and Technology must look at an appropriate launch strategy. Since the service is based on distance education, the audiences must be



made aware of it through the way the program is marketed. This means that all advertising material must have the declaration that the program is online based to avoid any primary confusion of the service's purpose during the project's launch.

Another important step would be to look at the way the program will be marketed towards potential students. The first step for this would be to have a presence in social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, among others so that audiences are able to follow Daena's marketing campaign which will be performed through these platforms. There are many other advertising tools available, but there must be a focus on these platforms given that online students are more likely to see online advertisements for these programs than other traditional forms of advertisements.

The institution must stay quick and constant regarding any request of information made towards the program, in order to build a base following of aspirants looking to know more information. The information given must be accessible and understandable to anyone, while being visually appealing as well. In terms of partnerships, the institution must look to communities established by people with interests similar to the material to be distributed. This would be any gaming-related conventions or events, both to videogame consumers and videogame developers alike. All of the information given initially should be distributed prior to any targeted enrollment date, in order to ensure that there will be enough interest to have an initial academic session started.

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Jose Luis Abreu Noriega is a professional game designer. He has an Associate Degree in Visual Communication with a Video Game Design Major from Austin Community College. He also holds a Bachelor of Science in Technical Management from Devry University at Chicago, which concluded with a Summa Cum Laude Honors achievement. Currently working as a Consultant for the Spenta Game Institute in Monterrey, Mexico and developing mobile applications and games.