

# GDC 2013 - The Velveteen Marine Appendix

## The Power of Belief in Natural Selection 2

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### Key points

- After NS1, community offered to donate to continue development. \$20k/year for a couple years, just enough to live.
- After \$250k angel funding, we launch teaser in the hope community will help pre-purchase a non-existent game. We raise over \$1M and we are forever bonded to our community. We now believe that the community wants what we are building.
- Due to giving out our level editor, environment art, textures and map design guidelines, our community starts making maps. Community member psych0man shows up with finished map that plays better and performs better than any of ours. We acquire it from him and the “fire sale” is avoided. This map sustained our players’ belief through the next year and a half of rocky pre-releases.
- Due to giving out our Lua IDE and all our game code (weapons, movement, economy, UI, everything), we discover Andi, an extremely talented programmer with no experience. He understands our game deeply and cranks out so many new features we have to hire him. We had been looking for a programmer up until then, but couldn’t find out. Hiring Andi was a no-brainer, and without him our game wouldn’t have been anywhere near as good (and probably wouldn’t have shipped).
- Australian Hugh has been cranking out so many high-quality NS2 videos, that he completely eclipses our own efforts. He has more subscribers than we do, and puts out a video a day. He starts highlighting psych0man, Andi and our own work, which gives us all a boost. After flying to San Francisco twice on his own dime, we hire him before release and is our full-time in-house PR guy.
- All of our QA and playtesting is handled by Obraxis, an animator who spends hours every day reproducing bugs. He becomes a critical member of the team as we put out over a hundred of versions of the game.
- The SF team has their hands full trying to ship v1.0 of the game but knows we must promote it. Our community steps up and offers to help man our booths at PAX Prime, Gamescomm, and Eurogamer. Wearing developer shirts, no one knows nor cares that they are representing us in full. They know the game so well at that point that they probably do a better job than we would have.
- Team STILL needs more money to finish the game - a lot more (it would be ~\$3M before we were done). An NS1 fan tells his investor friend at Perfect World that he needs to meet with us, because we have such an incredible community. It’s a fantastic fit and within 20 minutes of meeting, we’re hammering out terms. With a negative bank balance, we quickly negotiate with Perfect World to secure over \$1M in funding.
- There are many more examples I didn’t cover: our 10-year community admin Comprox

(whom also did customer support), the Amazon programmer who decided we needed a spectator mode at v1.0 and built it entirely, the fact that we hired almost all of our mappers directly from our community.

- Why did our community help us?
  - We HAD a community. Most developers don't.
  - We established fair and polite [community guidelines](#), and enforced them politely but firmly.
  - Since the Constellation donations began, we started thinking of our community as “one of us”, instead of “us vs. them”.
  - Today we have over 100k users and 2M posts.
  - We made mistakes, but we were always humble and admitted them. We ask our community for forgiveness. They forgave us because we made amends and we learned from them.
  - Timely and nice responses to all reasonable e-mails and messages.
- Since Halloween 2012, we've sold over 300,000 copies on Steam in \$5M in gross revenue.
- In today's connected, online age, maybe it's time to start thinking about the “development team” you don't have yet - the one that exists outside of our core team. The ones that believe in you so strongly, they will do anything to help, if you only make it possible.

## Media

The short story of The Velveteen Rabbit

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/williams/rabbit/rabbit.html>

Original NS2 launch trailer, used to start pre-orders.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxfjfBeC6tQ>

Natural Selection 2

<http://www.naturalselection2.com>

Hugh's 600+ videos

<http://www.youtube.com/naturalselection2hd>

Hugh unveiling of ns2\_summit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVy29AtahB4>

Andi's prototype videos

<http://www.youtube.com/kenia43>

Indie Booth The Movie - Building the NS2 booth at PAX East 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gvk9Ai7emZg>

## Further reading

Penny Arcade detailed interview about community, struggle

<http://penny-arcade.com/report/editorial-article/the-10-year-struggle-to-bring-natural-selection-2-to-life>

Natural Selection 2 Gamasutra postmortem

[http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/187299/postmortem\\_unknown\\_worlds\\_.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/187299/postmortem_unknown_worlds_.php)

Presentation Zen and The Naked Presenter - Garr Reynolds

Be Heard Now (the ultimate speaking/fear book) - Lee Glickstein

Community Building on the Web : Secret Strategies for Successful Online Communities (was crucial, now still relevant) - Amy Jo Kim

[Taming the Forum Tiger](#) - Eric Heimburg