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## book publisher Suggestion to Panther / Matrix ...

Posted by ERutins - 2008/11/16 23:03

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Just going by what I've seen. I don't see Matrix being nearly as aggressive as some other companies when it comes to exploring different sales channels, advertising or pricing . I'm interested to hear what you're seeing. Can you be more specific?

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(5) If you're *\*really\** smart, build (2), (3), and (4) into a *\*campaign\**. Aspiring generals start with little scenarios and few rules, win a minor battle with the tutorial holding their hand, and get some cooler panzers for the next game. Stir in a few new rules, fire up another tool palette, and show them how to <new thing here. By the time they get their first Tiger *\*abteilung\**, they'll be hooked. Is this the way to build a breakout game? Maybe not. But *\*something\** has gotta be out there that works better than, It's hopeless! The niche is unbreakable! Ignore my works, ye mighty, and despair! I don't disagree with any of your suggestions in theory or in principle. Many of these kinds of methods have been proven winners in the past, if implemented properly. It's worth realizing though that it all costs money and time, of which there is rarely enough of both to do everything. While budgets for most games have gone way up in the last ten years, budgets for wargames have probably gone down. Regards, - Erik

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## book publisher Suggestion to Panther / Matrix ...

Posted by Giftzweg - 2008/11/16 23:03

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What you'd end up with is not a game I'd like to play. Didn't you like PANZER GENERAL? I sure did. And really all I'm proposing is a game that presents a simple, PANZER-GENERALian vibe to the newbie, but got more complex and hardcore - *\*if you want it to\** - as the campaign progressed. Call it plagiarism, but that's exactly the way SQUAD LEADER worked; you started with simple, easy scenarios where you read a few pages of rules, and worked your way into the system gently. But now imagine the SQUAD LEADER rulebook where you have to digest the whole thing to play the very first scenario. If you think about it, this is the way almost every super-mainstream game works. Even in Nintendo DUCK HUNT, you didn't have four ducks taking off at the same time in the first level.

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Highway to the Reich went to retail, by the way, and has been available in the secondary market at budget prices for years now. Really? Why would they do this in a niche market? <g

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Posted by Steve Bartman - 2008/11/16 23:03

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I'm sorry, but I never said price is not a sales determinator. Price changes, however, make sense if by reducing your price 10% you get at least 10% in increased unit sales. What I'm saying is that for hard-core wargames like HTTR and COTA, price is not a key determinant. A hard-core audience is going to be interested in it and not many folks beyond that audience will. I may think that HTTR and COTA are fantastic wargames, but I'm deluding myself if I think most of my extended family would actually be interested in it even if it were \$5. They might recognize it as a stable, well-designed game but they wouldn't want to buy it for themselves as it's not in their area of interest. The point is that there comes a certain point when you see that decreasing the price further actually does not result in enough incremental sales to increase or maintain the same profit level. Perhaps that last line is what you meant to say

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Posted by Frank E - 2008/11/16 23:03

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Just going by what I've seen. I don't see Matrix being nearly as aggressive as some other companies when it comes to exploring different sales channels, advertising or pricing . I'm interested to hear what you're seeing. Can you be more specific? How many games has Matrix tried to sell on Steam over the last 2 years? How many games has Matrix put into the stores in the last 2 years? How many newsletters has Matrix put out in the last 2 years just to keep their customers informed about what's new? Ever done a 'loyal customer's discount' and offered those gamers that spend a lot of money with you 50% off on any 1 game? Ever tried to bundle games and offer them at a heavy discount? How about a civil war pack with the games by AGE, Grisby and Gil R for \$90? How many interviews has Matrix done in the last 2 years with people in gaming press? Why not sell something like HTTR for \$10 or even offer it for free? If people like it, they might actually buy the next 2 games in the series for full price. Rgds, Frank

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wargame developers that niche only provides a marginal income. What this hobby really needs is another cross-over hit like Panzer General. Maybe, but that seems unlikely to come from the other side of the fence. And hard-core wargame designers don't seem interested in making a lot of money any more. Steve

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(4) Couple the (2) selectable tool palettes and (3) increasingly complex scenarios into a phased-instruction rules system like they did in the old SQUAD LEADER boardgame. You read a few pages of tutorial, play a very simple scenario with very few rules and very few interface elements (palettes), and then move on. In this way, the learning curve flattens right out. Yeah, I'd like to see more of that in general. On the other hand, we tried that with Forge of Freedom and people seemed to either ignore it or wish that the documentation just skipped ahead to the Advanced game. I see this point as key, however, and it dovetails nicely with another observation I keep harping on as the years go by: Games don't feature enough small, simple, intimate scenarios. Take one of your latest games, WW2:RTV. Nice, slick, simple game with excellent gameplay and interface. But except for Poland, every single scenario is a multi-continental monster lasting 100 turns or more. Why not put in dozens of operational scenarios like Normandy or Afrika or France '40 or Balkans or Bagration? If you want any hope whatsoever of a breakout (or even a niche expander ) then it's just imperative that you cater to the guys who want a simpler, smaller gaming experience.

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## book publisher Suggestion to Panther / Matrix ...

Posted by eddysterckx@hotmail.com - 2008/11/16 23:03

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Just going by what I've seen. I don't see Matrix being nearly as aggressive as some other companies when it comes to exploring different sales channels, advertising or pricing . I'm interested to hear what you're seeing. Can you be more specific? How many games has Matrix tried to sell on Steam over the last 2 years? How many games has Matrix put into the stores in the last 2 years? How many newsletters has Matrix put out in the last 2 years just to keep their customers informed about what's new? Ever done a 'loyal customer's discount' and offered those gamers that spend a lot of money with you 50% off on any 1 game? Ever tried to bundle games and offer them at a heavy discount? How about a civil war pack with the games by AGE, Grisby and Gil R for \$90? How many interviews has Matrix done in the last 2 years with people in gaming press? Why not sell something like HTTR for \$10 or even offer it for free? If people like it, they might actually buy the next 2 games in the series for full price. Good points - I personally keep hammering the need to keep existing customers better informed nail. I know Matrix has released 50+ games in their existence of not even 10 years and that just keeping the business going takes lots of time and effort and that the core team is really, really small. If I may be crass for a second : in some ways I think that if you had skipped on a couple of mediocre titles and put the time & effort put into those titles in expanding your customer base you'd be doing even better. I'm not saying you're doing a bad job, I'm just saying you could be doing a better job if you could just take a step back from the daily grind & rush and have a look around. Easy for us to say - I know - and it's no coincidence, nor dumb luck, that Matrix grew from the new kid on the block to the proverbial 800 lb gorilla so you must be doing a heck of a lot of things right, but still : it couldn't hurt to take a step back and reflect on what it is you're doing

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and how it could be done even better. I couldn't help but notice how Mr. Rutins briefly displayed that us versus them attitude again, that somehow criticism of the way things are done today is just an attack on Matrix. I didn't read it that way at all, as I'm pretty sure that what you read in here is mostly constructive criticism, we're not the enemy here, we're guys who'd love to see you succeed so you can finally buy that Ferrari. Greetz, Eddy Sterckx

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### book publisher Suggestion to Panther / Matrix ...

Posted by CaligulasHorse - 2008/11/16 23:03

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Anyone who hasn't bought HTTR at full price by now doesn't want it at that price. Or at least not as many who might want it at \$45. That you're still selling a few copies to folks who discovered wargames yesterday may be blinding you to lost opportunities for much more still-profitable volume at \$45.

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Guys, this is a bit more than just inserting a new bitmap and will require a complete overhaul of the engine. Moving everything from MFC to DirectX is just the first step and in a sense it's easier to go that way with a new engine than adapting an older one, but I'm sure a cool half a million bucks can fix it all and make it look like a mainstream game. The trouble is that once you have those mainstream graphics, that's not enough. You have to simplify the gameplay enormously too to even have a shot at the mainstream market. What you'd end up with is not a game I'd like to play. Yep, there's the rub.

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Really? Why would they do this in a niche market? Heh. We did it to give it the largest possible audience, to expand awareness of Matrix Games and because back then the retail market for PC games was also a fair bit better than it is now. As I've been pointing out to people, we do send games to retail, we do discount games, but one size does not fit all. Regards - Erik

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These aren't FMCG's, they're much more like books, and Matrix pricing policy and tactics look like a book publisher's, in some respects. Most book publishers makes their money off their tail, and radically discounting tail prices just because a book has been out for a while doesn't make sense. People will buy those books when they get around to it and they have the time, for the price they expect to pay for a good book. Every now and then you do targeted discounting, for the kinds of reasons Erik mentions, but you don't ratchet down the general pricing. Of course, that's putting it too strongly. Book publishers do of course reduce pricing on their long tails, but the time frames are indeed long, and the reductions have floors way above marginal costs. Eg: a big thick Anthony Trollope novel first published in 1857, sitting in the classics section of the bookstore with a \$12 price tag. Of all the people I know I think I am the only one who actually reads Trollope, but there's enough of us out there in the world at large for Penguin to reprint and sell at what must be a great unit margin, year after year.

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Anyone who hasn't bought HTRR at full price by now doesn't want it at that price. Or at least not as many who might want it at \$45. That you're still selling a few copies to folks who discovered wargames yesterday may be blinding you to lost opportunities for much more still-profitable volume at \$45.

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Why not sell something like HTRR for \$10 or even offer it for free? If people like it, they might actually buy the next 2 games in the series for full price. We offer Steel Panthers: World at War, War in Russia, Pacific War, Titans of Steel and the War Engine all for free. Who else is giving away that many free games? On top of that, we have games priced as low as \$19.99 in our regular catalog. I also see the deals we've struck for the TalonSoft games, the Harpoon Series, Steel Panthers and Close Combat as major investments we've made to bring back wargamers who were familiar with and followed these titles (which had great retail exposure in their day) and hopefully raise awareness of Matrix Games and all our developers and titles. A rising tide lifts all boats, as they say. Regards, - Erik

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I see this point as key, however, and it dovetails nicely with another observation I keep harping on as the years go by: Games don't feature enough small, simple, intimate scenarios. Take one of your latest games, WW2:RTV. Nice, slick, simple game with excellent gameplay and interface. But except for Poland, every single scenario is a multi-continental monster lasting 100 turns or more. Why not put in dozens of operational scenarios like Normandy or Afrika or France '40 or Balkans or Bagration? If you want any hope whatsoever of a breakout (or even a niche expander) then it's just imperative that you cater to the guys who want a simpler, smaller gaming experience. I completely agree and in fact I've advised the same. As the publisher though, we can encourage, advise and suggest. We can't always make things happen exactly the way we want - part of that is allowing our developers the creative freedom to make the games they want to make. I can only say that as publishers, we are totally sold on this concept and have seen good results from it in terms of player feedback and sales. For an example of what I'd like to see more of, see the Gary Grigsby's War Between the States release, which comes with four interactive in-game tutorials as well as twenty (20) video tutorials, on top of a great manual. Regards, - Erik

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I couldn't help but notice how Mr. Rutins briefly displayed that us versus them attitude again, that somehow criticism of the way things are done today is just an attack on Matrix. I didn't read it that way at all, as I'm pretty sure that what you read in here is mostly constructive criticism, we're not the enemy here, we're guys who'd love to see you succeed so you can finally buy that Ferrari. I'm not sure where I gave that impression, beyond my response to the first few replies which seemed to me to be just attacks. After getting a little exercised over that, I hope my further comments have been constructive. I don't see any of you as the enemy, I see you as our customers and our core market. Regards, - Erik

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a toss who a book is published by, generally, but Matrix etc do have a real brand opportunity, and risk. If the time cost is really the biggest factor for a lot of their customers, they should really focus on bringing that down and branding their ability to do it, IMO. That means: doing a lot better than they do in terms of getting new releases bug-free, really focusing on UI's right, putting work into manuals, tutorials etc. I see people saying from time to time that stuff isn't the publisher's job, but I call crap. That's like saying a book publisher's job doesn't include editing, layout, physical book design etc etc. Book publishers don't have a big opportunity to brand this stuff because it's been commoditised. Games publishers, on the other hand, suck at doing the analogous things, so there is a real opportunity for anybody who can get them right, IMO. I think you're right about this, but it's still a lot easier said than done. The best laid plans and all that... this is definitely an area though where we've been working year after year to try to improve everything we do. Regards, - Erik

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## book publisher Suggestion to Panther / Matrix ...

Posted by Bloodstar - 2008/11/16 23:03

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Um... CEAW \_does\_ have a demo. Did they have demo AT RELEASE?

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## book publisher Suggestion to Panther / Matrix ...

Posted by Frank E - 2008/11/16 23:03

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If the only goal were to get HTTR or COTA into as many hands as possible, then price cuts would make sense. If their goal is to maximize the total profit over the entire life of the product, then it doesn't, from what we've seen. Trying to maximize the total profit over the entire life of the product isn't a worthwhile measure of anything unless the Matrix lineup only consists of one game. Max profits per game != Max profits for Matrix and arguably, those two goals are mutually exclusive. Rgds, Frank

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## book publisher Suggestion to Panther / Matrix ...

Posted by Bloodstar - 2008/11/16 23:03

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You do realize he doesn't know squat about this game, probably never even played it, but just uses it as a stick to hit Matrix at every occasion in the hope that some of the things he says stick in other people's mind? Luckily most people, after reading a couple of posts by him, realize he's a look mom, no brain guy and take everything he posts with a truckload of salt. Theatre of War 2 is almost ready, that will keep him occupied for a while gazing at all those beautiful pictures of zombie-brain-dead tanks. At least he can occasionally win a scenario against that AI. You could do a lot better than this.... but you are hopeless case. This is NOT a Matrix games primarily you primatus! :) This is Slitherine game that was just copublished by Matrix idiot. Slitherine is publisher not just developer. Your brain is worse than worst AI. Mario

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## book publisher Suggestion to Panther / Matrix ...

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reads Trollope, I was gonna, but I heard that his stuff was, ya know, a bunch of trollope. <g Steve

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Sometimes I wonder what WITP would look like if done by Blizzard. Not just big budgets, but also a commitment to quality art, sound, docs, and rock-steady coding out of the gate. Nice dream I suppose. We and 2by3 did WITP on a shoestring and a prayer. It was a whole company effort and frankly, I wonder how many large developers or publishers could have done it on the pittance we all had for a budget at the time. With that said, I think you'll really like WITP AE, from the comments I've read from you and the improvements I've seen. Hopefully, AE will do well so that we can do a new, from the ground up WITP 2 somewhere down the line. Regards, - Erik

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Um... CEAW \_does\_ have a demo. Did they have demo AT RELEASE? I thought so, but I can't vouch for that without double-checking. Regards, - Erik

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