

# he Publisher's Corner

A forum for Publishers and Developers

[Paul Baldwin from Domark Software](#)

As I prepare for this year's Mac World Boston I can't help myself from thinking about my first Mac World experience. It was a year ago but I remember the experience like it was yesterday ..... like the time I got cold cocked my sophomore year at Berkeley.

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Allow me set the stage. I had been working in the sales and marketing department at Domark software for over seven months. You can measure experience in the computer games industry like dog years. Things move so fast that seven months is like having 2 years of experience (give or take 2 years of experience). Anyway, I was feeling fairly confident, our Macintosh product Flying Nightmares was the first entertainment title shipping for the Power Mac, I had been wined and dined by Apple at the big Power Mac launch a couple months before in New York, units were flying off the shelf, and I had already begun marketing and PR for Domark's second Power Mac title Out of the Sun. Like I said, I was ready to take Beantown by storm.

Apple once again went out of their way to help us so we had a snazzy little kiosk in the Power Macintosh Pavilion. My mission was simple - show off Flying Nightmares and present our forthcoming release, Out of the Sun, to the Mac faithful. I was gonna be a star. The night before I dreamt my interactions going like this. "What?!, this is your company's first Mac title ever. You have done a helluva job son!" What do they say, -ignorance is bliss?

### The Show

It all started out fine enough. Jason Ridge and I had our "thanks, but it really wasn't that big of a deal" speech down to an art form. Then the public was let in and reality set in. "Flying Nightmares was a @\$#\*\$ port!", "Your \$#%% interface stinks" or my favorite "I love the game but your %\$\$#@ fonts are PC."

Needless to say I really didn't expect the warm response I received. The above may be somewhat of an exaggeration (I am in marketing after all), but the message was loud and clear and Domark/I needed to hear it. The Mac market is an entirely different animal. No make that beast! I say beast in a totally affectionate way, of course. You guys with damn good reason love your Mac. At the time the Mac market was starving for games but the core was not going to be force feed just anything. Yes, they liked the game, but there were questions.

"Why didn't Flying Nightmares utilize all the excellent technical aspects the Mac offers?", and objections, "We maybe a smaller market than the PC but we are a vocal bunch." This was the message we heard time and time again. Loud and clear!

After the initial shock I really started to make progress. I began to really experience and appreciate how grass roots and fanatical the Mac market was. And despite the unusual way some of the Mac enthusiasts show their affection, the show was the most useful source of marketing information I could have ever experienced. Gamers, resellers, user groups leaders all went out of their way to offer advice. Their was a central theme, we don't want alot of crap but rather solid, well thought-out titles.

### The Aftermath

As I said, the experience was invaluable. From that point on, Domark and I personally would grow our Mac business organically. Changes would be made. Both in development process and how we marketed our products. Some valuable lessons learned which I would pass along to anyone considering introducing a game in the near future.

1. First off. Just do it. The Mac market has remarkably few barriers to entry in terms of raw capital needed to play and how to distribute your product. The Mac heads who jumped on me at Mac World, via the Mac catalogs, will help you with the distribution part of the equation granted you have a solid game.
2. If possible don't "straight" port. There is no problem bringing a product out for the PC and Mac, that is our philosophy, but make sure the product has taken advantage of the Mac. If you must in order to get your foot in the door (like we did), than fire away. I am a Mac convert now, so I am speaking in idealistic terms.
3. Take special care to utilize the things that make the Mac so great, i.e. make a sharp, intuitive interface, take advantage of resolution advantages, etc.
4. Go after the core market. This one is really a necessity. If you have not considered what the Mac enthusiast wants you are missing the boat big time.

5. Make a GOOD game. If you want to make an average game enter the PC market.

### Specifics

The purpose of this piece is to pass along the lessons Domark has experienced so your first venture into the Mac market will be easier. Above, in very general terms, I have chronicled some of Domark's experiences. The message once again is simple. The Mac market is hard-core and I mean this in the best way. Not only can you make some money but in terms of personal achievements or contributions to the Mac gaming industry as a whole, you can really make a quantifiable difference. This is something the PC market has a tough time providing. I know.

Why enter the market.

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Relatively small barriers to entry. Our development and marketing budget for Flying Nightmares was about \$30,000 to start.

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Openness of market. Despite the current flow of titles, the Mac gaming market is still wide open. As an example, Nightmares, at the time of its release, was the first new flight sim for the Mac in almost two years. Currently sports and role playing are vastly untapped.

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Easier distribution model. The Mac catalogs, Mac Warehouse, Mac Zone, Mac Connection, Mac's Place, Mac Mall etc. have been and continue to be excellent cost effective ways to distribute product.

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This one is a new one. Apple is actively pursuing and aiding new publishers. The time is right.

How to market without big bucks.

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Trade Shows. Trade shows can be expensive, but you get to speak to the core gaming audience as well as key retailers. A booth is nice but savvy publishers can get noticed via guerrilla methods.

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User Groups. This goes along with the grass roots nature of the market. If you can manage to get these guys on your side it can go a long way. User group mailers, live demos to local User Groups, as well as rebates and special pricing for groups work well.

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Public Relations/Magazine Reviews. Although there are not nearly as many magazines that cover the Mac market, these are a great way to get the word out. Your best free advertising is a product preview and, of course, a review. The on-line publishing arena is growing daily so as you pursue reviews don't forget the on-line folks.

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On-line demos. These are worth their weight in gold. Create your own forum to push your product. A perfect example of a company who does a great job of this is Bungie Software. Check these guys out on AOL!

- Catalog Advertising. These are mentioned above. These buys serve two purposes. They move product and advertise your product. A must.

- OEM/Bundle deals. If you can work a deal with a joystick manufacturer or publisher these can be great. No box is needed. More often than not a disk/CD and manual is all you need. Make sure the deal is in your best interest.

- Distribute a demo via a magazine. Today poly-bagged CD ROMs are all the rage. There are always megs available for Mac demos.

These are just a few tips for any publishers interested in entering the market. I hope these are helpful. And be sure to watch your blind side!