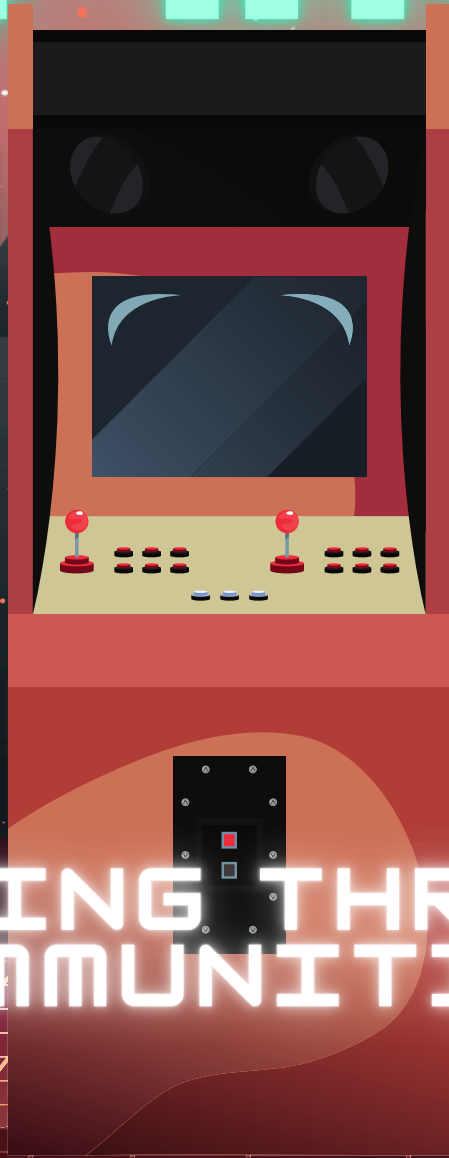


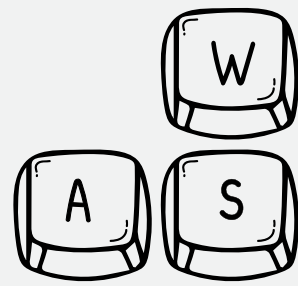
LEVEL UP YOUR GAME



BUILDING THRIVING
COMMUNITIES

JONAS SINGH

WWW.ZULUSHI.COM



CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1:
Press Start: Planting the Seed

4

CHAPTER 2:
Leveling Up: Turning Passion into Progress

6

CHAPTER 3:
Quest : Finding the “Hangout” Spot

9

CHAPTER 4:
Going Viral: When Opportunity Knocks

11

CHAPTER 5:
Game Over? Pivot and Play Again

14

CHAPTER 6:
The End Game: A Legacy that Outlasts You

18



INTRO

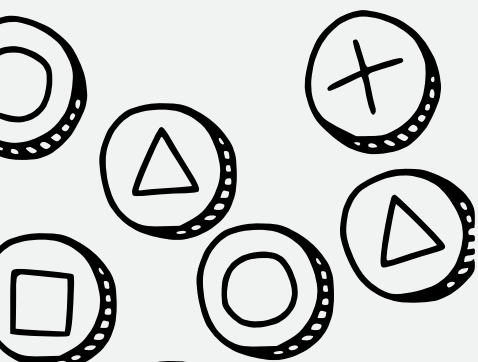
HELLO THERE! I'M JONAS, ALSO KNOWN ONLINE AS ZULUSHI...

Community means different things to different people, but to me, it's always represented a place of belonging. Whether it's the devoted Star Wars fans, League of Legends enthusiasts, or fervent political movements like the Trump rally supporters, each of these communities has fostered a profound sense of loyalty, a "ride or die" mentality, and unwavering support among its members. Regardless of your opinion on their mission or beliefs, **one thing is undeniable—they've mastered the art of creating super fans.**

In this e-book (or blog—call it what you will), I'll share the story of how I built a community of over 2.5 million active members across various platforms and made the leap from an unknown streamer to a full-time creator, YouTuber, and filmmaker.

While I'm not a game developer, I've probably spent more hours immersed in games than most—after all, they've been the foundation of my career.

Though this is written with indie game developers in mind, the insights I'm about to share are applicable to anyone looking to build a loyal, engaged community—regardless of the industry. Let's dive in!



CHAPTER N.1

PRESS START: PLANTING THE SEED



HOW GAMING SHAPED MY PATH

For as long as I can remember, I've been a huge fan of video games—from the early days of N64 to COD Zombies, Halo, Skyrim, and eventually Fortnite. These games became a part of who I am. I fell in love with the epic fantasies, the competition, the community, and the thrill of leveling up. As the youngest of three brothers, and being nerfed by my prepubescent reflexes, I often fell victim to spawn kills, quick scopes, and, well, many other offenses. But that didn't stop me, and my love for gaming never wavered. I knew that whatever life threw at me, these moments would stick with me, so I kept gaming and gaming and gaming.

I ended up graduating from a small town in northern Canada, with a population of around 80,000 people, and I felt lost. I had no idea what I wanted to do because, in a way, I was looking for something that could match the excitement of gaming—or at least just find something that I was somewhat interested in. But I quickly realized that this might never happen. My mom always encouraged me to pursue post-secondary education, so after graduating, I checked out my local college. To be honest, there weren't many options, but I picked one that seemed at least slightly interesting: computer networks and electronics technician. And it sucked. This program was far from what I imagined. Let's just say taking an IT course feels like studying magic without all the fun spells. I didn't want to become some network IT help desk person, but I had already paid my tuition, so I toughed it out and graduated.

During this time, I couldn't shake the idea of pursuing a career in gaming. Nothing else captured my focus or excitement the way gaming did. I realized that if I truly wanted this to happen, I had to take the leap and give it a shot.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Find Your Spark: For me, gaming was my spark—it fueled my creativity and excitement. For game developers or indie studios, your spark might be the stories you tell or the worlds you build. Identify what fuels your motivation and let it anchor you during the tough times.

Lay the Foundation: Building a community starts with consistency. Whether it's posting content, building a game, or connecting with players, showing up regularly and refining your craft builds trust.

Stay True to the Mission: Games create experiences, and communities rally around those experiences. Stay focused on delivering value to your audience while remaining flexible to evolve.

CHAPTER N.2

LEVELING UP: TURNING PASSION INTO PROGRESS

LEVELUP↑

One morning, I was sitting down for coffee with the family of my childhood friend when his dad, John, chuckled and said, “I’m going to tell all my friends to let their kids play more video games—just look at Jonas, he’s famous!”

I couldn’t help but smile. Of course, I wouldn’t go as far as calling myself “famous”, but it was a funny moment. The truth is, most people never manage to turn their passions into careers, so hearing John say that felt both amusing and a little surreal. It served as a reminder that most people don’t leverage their passions to drive productivity. In fact, you must be very intentional and it’s rare when everything aligns just right.

THE SPARK

Building a community doesn’t happen overnight. It starts with a spark—something you care deeply about. For me, that spark was gaming. It wasn’t just entertainment; it was an escape, a way to explore new worlds and ideas. That passion eventually became the foundation for my journey into content creation and community building.

But passion alone isn’t enough. Turning it into progress requires intentional steps, consistency, and the ability to adapt. When I first started sharing my ideas and content, I didn’t have a clear roadmap. I just knew I wanted to connect with others who shared my enthusiasm for games and storytelling. It began with creating content that I was excited about—gameplay montages, tech reviews, tutorials, behind-the-scenes glimpses of projects—and putting it out there, even when no one was watching.

For indie studios, the creative process often mirrors this experience. You pour your heart into developing a game, hoping it resonates with an audience. But the process doesn’t stop at creation; it’s about finding ways to share your story, engage your audience, and invite them into the world you’ve built.

CONSISTENCY WAS MY SUPERPOWER

The turning point came when I committed to showing up regularly, regardless of how small the audience was at first. I treated every post, video, and interaction as an opportunity to provide value. It wasn’t just about showcasing my work; it was about starting conversations, asking for feedback, and making my audience feel heard.

Indie studios can do the same by sharing the development process, asking for input on design choices, or running polls to involve the community. The goal is to make followers feel like they’re part of the journey, not just observers.

FOCUSING ON PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION

It's easy to get caught up in making everything perfect before you launch, but I quickly learned that progress mattered more. Early on, I experimented with different formats and content styles, taking note of what resonated and adjusting along the way. Every iteration taught me something new about what my audience wanted.

For indie studios, this might mean sharing early builds, concept art, or gameplay snippets to gather feedback. Transparency not only builds trust but also allows you to refine your game based on real input from potential players.

FUELING PASSION WITH PURPOSE

At times, growth slowed, and motivation wavered. What kept me going was reminding myself of the bigger picture: building a space where people could connect, share ideas, and feel inspired. That purpose fueled my consistency and helped me push through moments of doubt.

For indie studios, the purpose might be to create immersive stories, provide entertainment, or introduce new mechanics to the industry. Reconnecting with that purpose during challenging phases can reignite motivation and drive progress.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Show Up Consistently: Progress is built one step at a time. Post content, release updates, and keep your audience engaged.

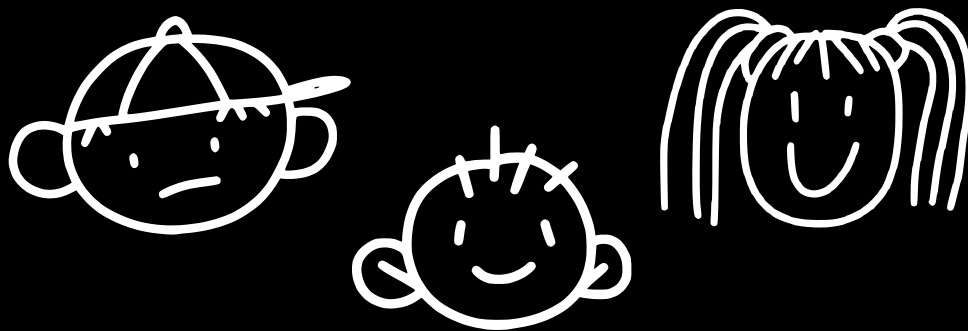
Focus on Quality Over Perfection: Don't wait for everything to be flawless. Publish, test, and refine as you go.

Invite Participation: Make your community feel like they're part of the journey by involving them in decisions and giving them behind-the-scenes insights

CHAPTER N.3

QUEST:

FINDING THE "HANGOUT" SPOT



HOME BASE

Every community needs a home base—a place where members can hang out, connect, and grow closer. For me, it started with TikTok. Short, engaging videos allowed me to reach a massive audience quickly, but I knew I had to build something deeper. I nurtured those early connections and funneled my audience into longer-format videos on YouTube, where I could tell richer stories and share more complex ideas. That transition strengthened relationships and allowed me to focus on quality over quick hits.

But now, as my community has grown, I see the need for an even more interactive and personal space—a Discord server. Discord has been a game-changer for countless creators and game studios, fostering tight-knit groups that feel like virtual families. Yet, I've neglected it so far—not as a failure, but as an opportunity to pivot. I plan to build that space, focusing on active discussions, exclusive content, and behind-the-scenes access. This shift isn't just about creating another platform; it's about giving my community a true hangout spot where they feel connected and valued.

CREATING YOUR AVATAR

To identify your ideal hangout spot, start by creating a detailed profile of your target audience—think about their appearance, age, gender, interests, and the types of games they enjoy. Where do they spend their time online? While this exercise will give you a solid starting point, don't be surprised if the data tells you something different. The true insights will come from the data gathered through your posts and social platforms, which will reveal who's actually engaging with and loving your content.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Different platforms offer different loyalties: TikTok helped me grab attention, YouTube built stronger bonds, and Discord will cement those relationships. Whether you're building a game or a brand, don't be afraid to evolve **where your audience gathers**.

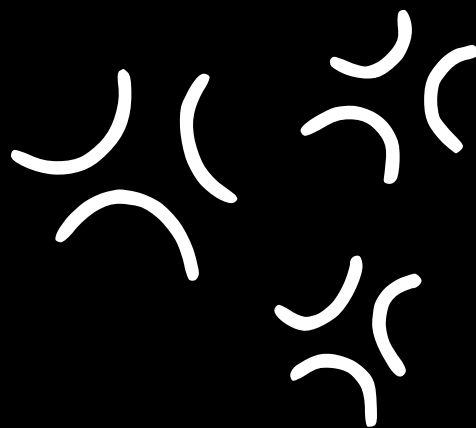
Choose the Right Platform for Each Stage: Short-form content grabs attention, while long-form strengthens bonds.

Focus on Connection Over Reach: Prioritize platforms that allow deeper engagement.

Keep Evolving: Your audience grows and changes—meet them where they are.

CHAPTER N.4

GOING VIRAL: WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS



LUCK... OR SO THEY SAY

Then on August 13th, 2020, something happened that would change my life forever. A short video that I had posted on TikTok and completely forgot about blew up big time. I woke up to a million views and thousands of new followers. The video was about my journey as a newbie Twitch streamer, and looking back, I kind of cringe a bit, but I'm so glad I decided to post it because it was the start of something awesome. There was an audience out there that cared and was interested in my journey. With so many eyes on me, I decided it was time to become a professional gamer. I went all in—gaming, streaming on Twitch, pouring in hours practicing, building and editing techniques, grinding tournaments. I was making progress.

My community kept growing—10,000, 50,000, and soon 100,000. All of a sudden, companies started reaching out to me for collaborations and offering me money. One day, I got an email asking me to be on a reality show, and I thought it was spam at first, but I accepted, and they flew me out to Italy. I ended up doing a bunch of crazy things, like skydiving and jumping out of a battle bus. The show ended up getting canceled and never aired, but it was so much fun, and it was really good for my on-camera skills. I was living the dream I had always hoped for—doing what I loved as my full-time job.

Going viral wasn't something I planned for—it was the result of consistent effort, genuine passion, and a bit of timing. The opportunity didn't come out of nowhere, though. It was built through groundwork—months of creating content, engaging with my audience, and refining my message. When the moment arrived, I was ready to meet it head-on. For indie studios, these moments can come in different forms—a trailer that hits the right emotional chord, a demo that captivates streamers, or a tweet that sparks a wildfire of interest. The key is recognizing the opportunity and being prepared to capitalize on it.

SEIZING THE MOMENT

I vividly remember the day my content started gaining traction. It wasn't just one video but a series of efforts that built momentum. I treated each new interaction as a chance to deepen my connection with the audience. For indie studios, this means being present—responding to comments, thanking players for feedback, and riding the wave of excitement. Going viral doesn't mean resting on the success of one post. It's about transforming a single burst of attention into sustained growth.

BUILDING ON MOMENTUM

Virality fades quickly if you're not intentional about keeping the momentum going. I made sure to follow up my viral moment with more content, collaborations, and engagement.

Indie studios can do the same by:

- Doubling down on winning content.
- Sharing behind-the-scenes updates to maintain transparency and hype.
- Engaging influencers or streamers who show interest in your game.
- Offering free demos, exclusive content, or contests to keep players involved.

TURNING VISIBILITY INTO LOYALTY

Getting attention is one thing—keeping it is another. I focused on building relationships, not just views. For studios, this means showing appreciation to the early adopters of your game and making them feel part of something bigger. Give them reasons to return, whether it's through dev diaries, sneak peeks, or surveys that let them influence development.

CALL TO ACTION

What would you do if your game went viral tomorrow? Take time today to map out your plan. Prepare your follow-up content, outreach strategies, and engagement tactics. When the moment comes, you'll be ready to turn visibility into community and momentum into success.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Be Prepared for Opportunity: Success can come suddenly, but it's only meaningful if you're ready to sustain it. Have follow-up content and engagement plans in place.

Build on Momentum: Keep the excitement alive by engaging your audience, releasing updates, and staying visible. Focus on building long-term relationships with your audience rather than chasing viral moments.

Be ready: When opportunity knocks, open the door.

CHAPTER N.5

GAME OVER?

PIVOT AND PLAY AGAIN



HITTING A WALL

Then I hit a wall. I could not keep up with the competition and I kept dying to 9 year olds. I was burning out because there were so many other creators, and it was hard to be unique and stand out. I was also getting tired of live streaming and keeping up that level of enthusiasm for so many hours. But I wasn't ready for all of this to end in failure. I decided it was time to shift focus.

It was around this time that I realized my content had started to blend in with everyone else's. I lacked a unique edge—something was missing. It was a wake-up call: a skill issue.... So, I decided I needed to invest in a better skillset. I took the plunge and enrolled in a crash course on Unreal Engine and virtual production—fields that had intimidated me up until then. The learning curve was steep, and six months later, I'm still uncovering new things. But this investment in my skills has paid off. Now, my content stands out, and the opportunities ahead are limitless.

THE REAL REASON MOST GAMES FAIL (HINT: IT'S NOT MARKETING)

Ask yourself a tough question: Does my game truly stand out? Does it feature innovative game design, mechanics, or unique elements that make it memorable? The reality is that many indie games struggle to be marketable because they don't compete with the best in their genre. I get sent thousands of game keys each year from studios boasting why their game is revolutionary, and in reality, most of the games don't measure up. **Most aspiring indie developers only have a surface-level understanding of their genre's top-tier games.** To raise your game, dig deeper. Scrape data from Steam and resources like [games-stats.com](https://www.games-stats.com) to identify the quality benchmarks and ensure your game is on par with the best.

LEARNING TO FAIL FORWARD

Early in my journey, there were moments when things didn't go as planned. I tried to become a professional gamer, but that dream quickly flopped. Then, I turned to streaming, only to burn out shortly after. Videos I'd poured weeks of work into, thinking they'd be exciting and impactful, fell flat. It would've been easy to see these as definitive failures, to feel defeated by them. But instead, I chose to view them as checkpoints—moments to pause, reflect, regroup, and move forward.

Failures reveal what doesn't work, but they also highlight what might. Instead of scrapping everything, I focused on identifying patterns: What resonated with my audience? What messages sparked engagement? What fell flat, and why?

For indie game studios, the lesson is simple—testing and failing fast allows you to adjust without losing momentum. Treat your community-building efforts like a game. Each setback is a chance to unlock new strategies and insights.

ADAPTING TO THE MARKET

The gaming landscape is dynamic, and communities evolve just as fast. What worked at the start might not work later. I experienced this firsthand when engagement slowed after initial hype. Rather than doubling down on outdated tactics, I adapted.

I shifted my content strategy, testing new themes and formats. I listened to my audience, learning what they wanted more of—and what they didn't. By being flexible and responsive, I kept the momentum alive. For indie studios, staying in tune with your audience's changing needs is crucial. It's not just about making changes—it's about making the right changes at the right time.

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Your community looks to you as much as you look to them. When they see you pushing through challenges and adapting, it builds trust and loyalty. I shared my struggles openly, turning them into stories that resonated with my followers. Instead of hiding failures, I reframed them as learning experiences.

For indie studios, this transparency fosters deeper connections. It shows your audience that you're human, and that you're committed to creating something meaningful—no matter the hurdles.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Reframe Failure: Treat setbacks as checkpoints, not the end. Analyze, adapt, and keep moving.

Stay Flexible: Communities evolve—keep experimenting and pivoting based on feedback.

Be Transparent: Share your struggles and wins to create trust and loyalty.

Focus on Resilience: Show up consistently, even when things aren't perfect.

In games, the "Game Over" screen isn't the end—it's a reset. The same applies to building a community. When you hit roadblocks, treat them as opportunities to pivot, level up, and keep playing the long game. Every restart is a chance to come back stronger—and the real win is staying in the game.

CHAPTER N.6

THE END GAME:

A LEGACY THAT
OUTLASTS YOU



STEPPING INTO LEADERSHIP

Building a thriving community isn't just about gathering followers—it's about creating a legacy that lasts. As I leveled up in my journey, I realized that success isn't only measured by views, downloads, or likes. It's about impact—how deeply you connect with your audience, how you inspire them, and how you build something that outlives trends. This chapter dives into taking your community to the next level, turning it into something meaningful, lasting, and bigger than yourself.

EARNING TRUST AND BECOMING A GUIDE

A strong community needs more than entertainment; it needs leadership. Early in my career, I thought people followed me because of my gameplay and humor. But the more my audience grew, the clearer it became that they were sticking around for something more—they trusted me.

Trust is earned through consistency and delivering value, but maintaining it requires accountability. Whether you're an indie studio launching a game or a creator growing your following, leading by example is key. Share your successes and struggles openly, and your audience will feel invested in your journey. Transparency turns casual followers into loyal supporters who stick with you through highs and lows.

SCALING IMPACT AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Legacy isn't just about what you create; it's about what you share. Once I gained traction, I realized I had insights and strategies that others could benefit from. Instead of hoarding what I'd learned, I began sharing tips about community building, content strategies, and lessons from my failures.

For indie game studios, this might mean sharing dev logs, tutorials, or insights into your creative process. Teaching others not only adds value but also solidifies your position as an expert in your field. It builds credibility and deepens your impact.

PAYING IT FORWARD

Building a legacy means leaving something behind for others. For me, that means helping the next wave of creators find their voice and build their communities. Whether it's mentoring new creators, collaborating with indie developers, or giving shoutouts to those just starting, I've seen how powerful it is to lift others up.

For indie studios, this can be done by spotlighting fan art, highlighting player contributions, or even mentoring smaller dev teams. Paying it forward strengthens connections and shows your community that they're part of something bigger than themselves. Legacy isn't about being the biggest; it's about making the biggest difference. Invest in others, and your community will thrive.

Whether you're a game developer, content creator, or indie studio, your journey doesn't end here. This is just another checkpoint in a larger quest to create something that lasts.

LET YOUR COMMUNITY CARRY THE TORCH.

When you think of Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, or Skyrim, you don't just think about the incredible masterpieces these creators crafted—you think about how these communities have far outgrown anything the creators could have anticipated. These creators planted seeds, but they left room for the community to imagine endless possibilities, from rich lore to fan-created quests and alternate endings. As the visionary, you set the stage, but it's your community that carries the torch, breathing new life into the world you've created. A true community doesn't just follow—it evolves, expands, and outlasts its origin, becoming something bigger than you ever imagined.

CALL TO ACTION:

Ask yourself: What impact do I want to leave behind? How can I build something bigger than myself? Start today. Focus on consistency, quality, and value. I hope you found value in this book and that it helps set you up for success in your game and all your future endeavors. I'm often on the road, attending game conferences like Gamescom, GDC, and others—so who knows, maybe our paths will cross someday!

If you have any questions, feedback, or requests, feel free to reach out to me at business@zulushi.com. I'd love to hear from you!

LEVEL UP YOUR GAME

SYNOPSIS:

What does it take to create a community so loyal, so passionate, that it outgrows you? From Star Wars guilds to League of Legends clans and even political movements, the secret lies in fostering a "ride or die" mentality that turns casual followers into lifelong superfans.

In this compelling ebook (or blog—call it what you will), I pull back the curtain on how I went from an unknown streamer to a full-time creator, YouTuber, and filmmaker with a thriving community of over 2.5 million active members across multiple platforms.

Whether you're an indie game developer, a creative entrepreneur, or someone simply looking to grow an audience that lasts, this is your blueprint for turning passion into impact—and building a legacy that stands the test of time.



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