# How To Make Your Own Videogame: Joe Chang talks about the Kiwi Game Starter

*Ever wondered how you could create and publish your own videogame? Wonder no more. In 2014 the New Zealand Game Developers Conference launched the Kiwi Game Starter. The idea is simple: put New Zealand game developers in a Dragon's Den-like competition to pitch and produce a video game. It was a [huge success](#), with 18 teams entering, and this year's competition looks like it'll be even bigger. We love us some home-grown gaming, so Bigpipe has stepped up to sponsor [this year's event](#) with a $5000 cash prize and two UFB Elite plans for the winners.*

Last year's winner was procedurally-generated survival-horror game Phantasmal, which went on to enjoy a successful Kickstarter and has been tearing up Steam Early Access with a 9/10 user rating. Developer Joe Chang tells us how it went down.

Our team applied last year for the Kiwi Game Starter event with our survival horror roguelike game: Phantasmal. It was an incredible experience, and it was a lot how we'd imagine it'd be to pitch to a "real" publisher. This was particularly exciting for us, as to date we were more or less just hobby game developers.

This was an opportunity to compete on a national level as true indie developers. Although we had been making games for only a couple of years, our advantage was that we were veterans of the IT industry. Jeff, the lead developer, had worked for the

last decade plus as a corporate developer/architect and I had come from a software testing and test management background.
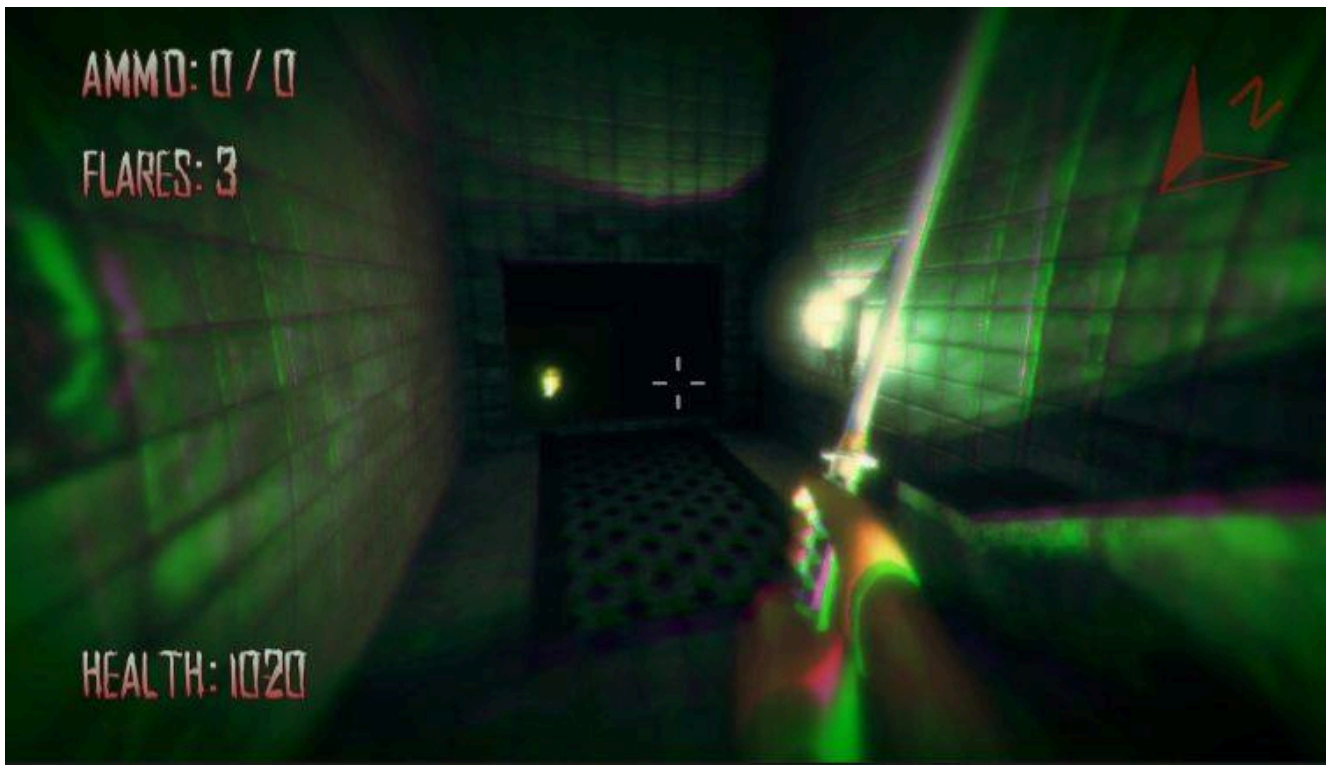


It was a daunting goal, but what we lacked in raw technical skill for game dev, I felt we made up for it with professionalism and pure determination. A significant portion of the contest was also business based — which I had some experience in.

The first part required a written submission of a business case for our game including a demo. We were shortlisted, and made it through for the "Dragon's Den" presentation at NZGDC.

On the day we had an opportunity to demo our game to the judges and general public prior to the presentation. With much embarrassment, our demo struggled to run on Jeff's old laptop, and I noticed that our other two competitor's games, Swordy and Sector 42, were far more polished and technically superior.

I didn't realize it right then, but David Brevik, the creator of Diablo, was also playing our game, and he was kind enough

to even help fix our clunky laptop when it crashed!

So I walked into the presentation with diminished confidence, but I was determined to still give it my best shot. Making games was still my life long dream after all!



Fortunately, another skill that I had cultivated over the years was public speaking — I had been a member of Toastmasters for years, albeit on and off.

I made my presentation with as much passion and conviction as I could muster, and woohoo! We were successful!

I was absolutely over the moon — I never imagined I would get this far. I'd have to say that was one of the proudest experiences I'd ever had.

About the time that we won the competition, we were just about to wrap up our Kickstarter, which was also successful.

It wasn't instant, but not long after the Kickstarter, we were also Greenlit in Steam, which meant that we would be able to sell our game.
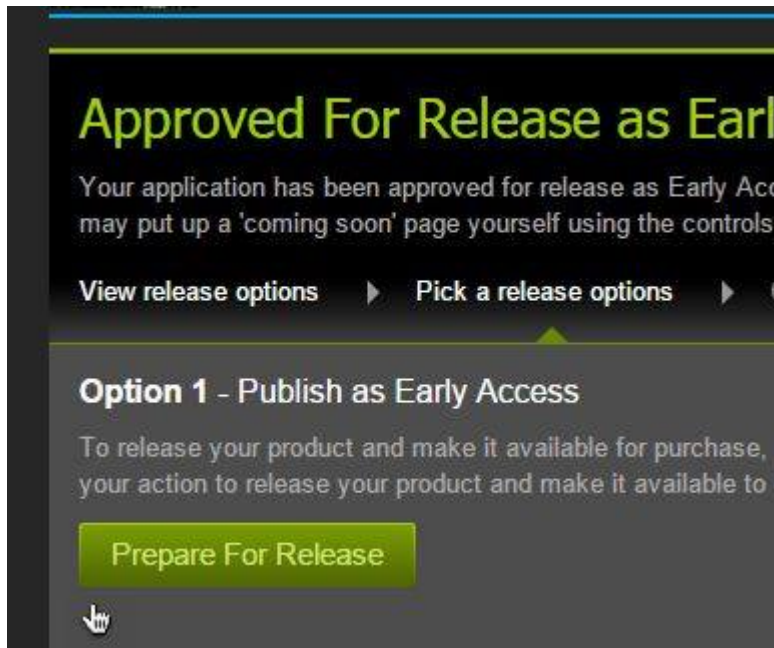
Overall, it was a great year. I can definitely say that the Kiwi Game Starter contributed to our success.

Since then, we have released our game on Steam Early Access, and we are still continuing to learn about indie game development every single day – it's an incredible journey!

*[Check out Phantasmal for yourself at the Steam store](), and make sure you check out our NZ Game Developer Conference coverage here at Blogpipe and on our [Twitter]()!*