# Enduring Play Season 2 Episode 5_ Tim Cullings

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**SPEAKERS**

Enduring Play Computer, Tim Cullings, Cheryl Platz

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**E**  **Enduring Play Computer**  00:00

Initializing enduring play podcast season two engine. Decompressing audio. Synchronizing waveforms. Reticulating splines. Launching podcast lobby.

**C**  **Cheryl Platz**  00:16

Welcome back to enduring play, the podcast, where we explore what it takes to create video games that don't just survive, but thrive. I'm your host, Cheryl Platz, video game designer, director and author of The Game Development Strategy Guide from Rosenfeld media. Enduring play season two is about scaling our game development ideas beyond the individual. A common thread through most of our conversations is the collective through communities of game developers, through game education, through games research, and through the events and systems that support the releases and people making our games. Few games are released in a vacuum. So how do we scale together? This week's guest is Tim Collins, Executive Director for Seattle Indies, North America's largest indie game development community for 20 years, Tim has been building communities. He's gone from IT professional to a game developer with both indie and AAA experience to an organizer who believes that the Pacific Northwest is the global heart of the creative economy. It may say Seattle Indies in the name, but there's room in Tim's community for everyone, whether you're just showing up in the discord to be a mentor or to connect with other experts, or whether you're looking to show up at the slice conference, and even if you're just listening to this episode to find notes that you can use to start your own game development community or to inspire you on your own journey from outside the industry to game development professional, there is something here for you, as there is with every episode of Enduring Play.

**E** **Enduring Play Computer** 01:50

Loading episode preview.

**T** **Tim Cullings** 01:51

Frank and open discussions about the business of making video games, which is something that indies don't really talk about ever. They just want to talk about the cool game they're working on, and that's understandable. It's their art, it's their passion, but business is a part of it, too, if you're trying to make this your living. So we have a lot of great people with a lot of great experience here in Seattle that are very willing to generously give their time and wisdom to share, to try to help other people do the same thing. We kind of have, like, co opetition. I call it here. It's like, you know, everybody's wants to be the best, but they also want to see everybody else do well, too. The Rising Tide kind of lifts all the boats around here.

**C** **Cheryl Platz** 02:29

Let's get into the game.

**E** **Enduring Play Computer** 02:31

Player, one. Cheryl Platz, pronouns, she, her. Player, two. Tim cullings, pronouns, he, him. Podcast, level start.

**C** **Cheryl Platz** 02:44

Welcome back to Enduring Play, the Podcast where we explore what it takes to create games that don't just survive but thrive. I am your host, Cheryl Platz, and I am very excited to be here with the executive director of Seattle Indies, Tim Cullings, who has worked on an astonishing variety of industry experiences, and now as a community leader, shares that experience with the next generation. Tim, thank you so much for being here today.

**T** **Tim Cullings** 03:07

Yeah, you're welcome. Thanks for having me on.

**Cheryl Platz** 03:09

You're currently best known for your phenomenal work with Seattle Indies, which is the largest independent game developers organization in North America. Can you start our listeners out with an overview of your work at that organization and what they're about?

**Tim Cullings** 03:20

I'm Tim Cullings, like you said, Executive Director at Seattle Indies. Seattle Indies is the nonprofit organization that supports the largest community of independent game developers in North America. We run hundreds of events throughout the year. Last year, we hosted over 300 events online, in person, to give developers a chance to have a community. For a lot of them are people who work from home, independent devs, small studios that like don't have an office to, you know, meet and bounce ideas off people. So we provide them that space to meet other developers, chat, learn from them, connect, find people that they want to hire and be on their team. You know, learn about business practices and things that you might not know about running a studio, and, you know, ask technical questions about the art of game development. So that's that's a little bit about what we do.

**Enduring Play Computer** 04:06

Loading podcast level one, from IT to indie

**Cheryl Platz** 04:16

What about you? Specifically? What was your journey like on the path to executive director of Seattle Indies. How did you get into gaming?

**Tim Cullings** 04:25

Myself, I've been in the industry for this will be my 16th year coming up, 17th, I think I started in 2010 when I moved across the country to Seattle from New York. Was in upstate New York for most of my life, working mostly in it for both enterprise companies and small startup software companies, one that survived the sort of.com crash of the early 2000s and hung around for a long time. And it was that experience, really, that set me up to get into games, because I was supporting a software development team. That was using a pretty what ended up being a pretty similar stack to what game developers use, or at least the company that hired me, or initially was using tech, was almost identical. So had that experience, and kind of knew the process of creating a product, even if it wasn't a game, it still gave me like relevant experience of understanding the life cycle of going from like concept to product and everything that goes in goes along with that, from like an IT support background

**E** **Enduring Play Computer** 05:28

loading, tutorial level information technology and enterprise app development.

**C** **Cheryl Platz** 05:35

IT, in this context, stands for Information Technology, which is typically used in a business context to refer to the team managing the digital hardware devices, systems and software that keep a business running everything from your laptop to the cloud, systems that base your customers. IT systems tend to be fairly universal. If you could do it in one industry, your skills will likely transfer in some way across industries, as Tims did. I also spent time designing as part of an IT group at the Gates Foundation. Enterprise is a term you often hear when discussing business to business software. It does not, sadly, refer to a spaceship. In this context, enterprise means large corporation, and usually refers to a company with over one to 2000 employees. Smaller than that and you're a small to medium sized business with more one size fits all solutions. Once you get to a certain size, you need standards and systems to scale safely. The same is true of players when scaling a game, and many of the infrastructure challenges that face enterprise companies shipping apps mimic the issues faced by live service games.

**T** **Tim Cullings** 06:36

That part of it I was pretty prepped for when I got into games in 2010 at airtight games was my first company. I worked at a smallish, double A studio at the time in Redmond, Washington. Got to work on a few games there in my time, the main one being a game called Murdered Soul Suspect that shipped way back on the Xbox 360 and the PS three. It doesn't seem like that long ago, but also, like, 1000 years ago in game, game parlance. So yeah, that was, like, my baptism into the industry, was getting into that team, and, like, I knew the ins and outs of the IT infrastructure, and got that working really well for them. But I, like, had no clue about games and how you'd make games as a professional, and it was like a world apart, different from, you know, what I expected going into it,

**E** **Enduring Play Computer** 07:26

loading podcast level two, a portal to mentorship.

**C** **Cheryl Platz** 07:30

How did you make that transition from information technology and enterprise software to game developer?

**Tim Cullings**  07:38

I was super fortunate to land on a team with Kim Swift, who one of the creators of Portal. We just had her at a fireside chat last week here in Seattle at one of our events games and education industry collider. And she really kind of took me under her wing on her smaller team, or I kind of forced my way there because, you know, I liked what they were working on, this game called Quantum Conundrum that was very similar to portal, clearly inspired by Kim's experience.

**Enduring Play Computer**  08:04

Loading narrative cutscene: Kim Swift and Portal

**Cheryl Platz**  08:09

Game designer Kim Swift graduated from Seattle area game development college Digipen and Co-developed Narbacular Drop, a student game that won the IGF student showcase in 2006. The game resulted in job offers that led to Kim's eventual role as leader of the portal team, a game which shipped two years later in 2007. Portal was a Valve game released as part of the legendary console PC bundle The Orange Box. Protagonist Chell is forced through a series of progressively more improbable physics challenges using a portal gun while supervised by GLaDOS and artificial intelligence at Aperture Science laboratories. The sequel, Portal 2, was released in 2011. Portal hits the motivators of play, of immersion, fun and mastery well with its dark humor, rich story and challenging puzzles. Being part of a bundled set and a short game for its time period, the original portal went on to sell millions of copies, garner great review scores and Wired even called it "one of the most influential games of its decade", as it created cultural phenomena like "the cake is a lie" and "Weighted Companion cubes." Fun Seattle area trivia, that cake is based on a real black forest cake from the Regent Bakery Cafe in Bellevue, Washington. If you know, you know, if you don't, you should go play Portal. As for Kim Swift. She left valve in 2009 to join Airtight games, which is where she crossed paths with Tim. Quantum Conundrum was a puzzle platformer published by Square Enix, and represented Kim's desire to make games appealing to broad audiences, both casual and dedicated. Kim has since worked with many studios, including Amazon, Electronic Arts, Google and Microsoft, and as mentioned, recently appeared at the Seattle Indies games and education industry collider that I also had the good fortune to attend back in February 2026.

**Tim Cullings** 09:47

I kind of just started showing up at their meetings, and they didn't tell me to go away. So the other team was kind of in a reboot of the game that they were working on. So I just sort of latched on to that team and started doing QA for them and got a chance to do a little production work, and became the Social Media Manager, because the social media kind of started to become more of a thing in 2012 and 13, and nobody at the studio had time to figure that out. So I just took it on and did it. Then got into doing pitch meetings, finished that project, and the sequel got canceled, and we were looking for our next thing to work on. So, you know, I just worked with Kim a lot, coming up with new ideas and finding anybody out there who had money that could potentially fund us, to keep us going. So that was like quite an experience, super fortunate to have had that she really didn't have to do all that. And was great to meet to, like, mentor me. And she was the one who introduced me to the indie community when her and I went to PAX West to promote Quantum Conundrum to the press, when she asked if anybody wanted to go, and nobody raised their hand, so I went. I'd always wanted to go to a conference like that as an exhibitor, and took the chance, and we ended up just sitting in a hotel suite for three or four days, cycling through bloggers and newspaper people and website people came in to play the game, some like early podcaster ish type of people when podcasts were kind of just starting out, came in. She kind of knew the people at the indie mega booth when that was a thing, and took me down there to meet some people who are still some of my best friends in the industry today, who weren't even living in Seattle at the time, but have since moved here and still keep in touch. And yeah, they've gone on to great things. Partly, though, this was all her fault for pushing me in that direction.

**Cheryl Platz** 11:24

What a great story of mentorship.

**Enduring Play Computer** 11:27

Tutorial level, the many faces of PAX

**C  Cheryl Platz  11:31**

As we've discussed in a few episodes by now, one of the most influential modern gaming events was originally known as the Penny Arcade Expo, which started in Seattle, Washington in 2010 the conference split due to size, and the Seattle version was called PAX Prime for a few years before landing on PAX East for the Boston version, typically each March. PAX West For the Seattle version each Labor Day weekend, and Pax unplugged for the tabletop focused version in Pennsylvania each November, and PAX Australia in Melbourne, Australia. If you take away anything, take away that Tim was early career and built connections amongst peers that have lasted him a lifetime. Instead of thinking of networking as finding the person who's already got the thing you want, think of networking as finding people you really like and going through your career together, helping each other, you'll find it more fun and more rewarding for everybody involved.

**E  Enduring Play Computer  12:22**

loading podcast level three, the spirit of indie developers

**C  Cheryl Platz  12:28**

At each turn of the journey, like you were game, you put yourself in there and you're like, I'll do social media, I'll I'll do QA, I'll do everything. And, you know, it's, it's such a timeless breaking into game story, because I talked to so many people who are like, Well, I really want to do game do games, and I so I just did whatever needed doing. Is that, do you find that spirit something that a lot of people in the indie scene have in common?

**T  Tim Cullings  12:51**

Yeah, for sure. I mean, it's mostly out of necessity, like it was for me, like, I guess I didn't have to do any of that, but somebody at the studio had to do it, and I cared enough to try, so they didn't stop me, and I did an okay job at it, so that part was good. And, yeah, definitely a lot of Indies have that same spirit, and that's why I like being in the indie space so much. Like after, you know, airtight unfortunately closed in 2014 because the double A studios, pretty much all went away that year. The big companies shifted to, you know, focus more on their internal IPs, and the Amazons and big tech companies all kind of sort of bought up the rest of the talents, and 10 years later, here we are kind of restarting the double a scene, it Seems like.

**E  Enduring Play Computer  13:38**

Podcast level paused, begin host commentary.

**Cheryl Platz** 13:42

Why are there so many A's when we talk about game studios, why can't we just use another letter? Well, the term AAA, which is used to refer to the biggest game companies, likely came from finance. Triple A bonds are a type of bond rating used to indicate the safest investment opportunities. Obviously, that term was adopted long before the current stretch of layoffs. Nature abhors a vacuum of acronyms, so more terms cropped up around this one. One of those is double A, more subjective double A is often cited as development teams of 50 to 100 people, often a third party developer. If you want to learn more about terms like third party developer and their relationship to other companies in game development, you can check out chapter three of my book, The Game Development Strategy Guide, which helps navigate situations like this. Wikipedia cites pub G battlegrounds and Claire obscure expedition 33 as double A. So while they may be smaller teams, they're not always smaller impact, and that speaks to some of what we know about organizational health. Throwing more people and money and a problem doesn't always solve that problem more effectively, the two pizza team ethos from Amazon purportedly limited internal teams to approximately a dozen people or less the number of people who could be fed by two pizzas in order to foster more rapid decision making. How then do big studios manage to create massive creative expressions which are also cloud services? Is effectively at scale. Well, it's hard, and that's why we're seeing so much instability. A return to double A is a return to more manageable teams, and hopefully healthier teams. It might even mean better games.

**Enduring Play Computer** 15:12

loading podcast level four from double A to triple A.

**Cheryl Platz** 15:17

You also have some experience working at some very big AAA studios, isn't that, right?

**Tim Cullings** 15:22

That's been a thing. But, yeah, after that, I went to what was, you know, Facebook, oculus at the time, started there at the beginning of 2015. Spent six years there through the most, mostly all the way through the end of 2020 and that was like, you know, a different world, again, going from a double, a really scrappy make do with whatever you can type of situation to, like, limitless budget of Facebook and just pouring in people and money as fast as they could to make the product. And, you know, I'd never worked on hardware before, so that was all a really big learning experience for me. And don't think I'd ever really want to go through the experience of, like, building a whole new platform and all the software that goes with it, and the games on a new platform that's in development at the same time that was intense, like, leveled up my skills and abilities super fast. Also had to just, like, kind of do a little bit of everything at the same time, because we were, like, only 300 people when I first got there, trying to build a, you know, a VR platform, basically a whole new game system from the ground up. And they had me doing like, demos for people who came in the office, a little bit of QA, a little bit of, like, logistics, of purchasing and shipping stuff, and going to, like, e3 to demo this stuff. And, like, Yeah, I had to just, like, make do again, and I was just on a much bigger scale.

**Cheryl Platz** 16:46

It's funny because you said only 300 people, right? And you go from, like, the smaller studios, then you get into this, this Oculus, and 300 people doesn't seem like enough that. And it just speaks to how big that challenge is of shipping new hardware, but I want to double click on that because you hinted at the circle of gaming life, right? Because you were like, Oh, we're rebooting the double A's. And first I want to double click on what your definition of double A is, because everybody's kind of like, that's a triple A. I can see that. I'm curious, do you have a clear definition for double A, or is it just one of those things, like, you know what? When you know what? When you see it, it's not EA and it's not it's more than one person and less than 10,000

**Tim Cullings** 17:27

Yeah. I mean, I would say, but just based on my experience, we had the most we had was 90 ish people when I was at airtight. And I don't know exactly what the budget of the bigger game that we worked on was, but it was somewhere in the like 20 to $50 million range. So that kind of is my idea of double A's more than 20, less than 100 people making a bigger, more ambitious type of game, I guess, than, say, like an NDA game that maybe, you know, still is a great game, but art wise and assets, and it's a little bit, you know, less labor intense, I would say, to produce, then a bigger double A style game that's probably going to be more 3d and have more content than, say, most indie games. But that's sort of how I think of it in my mind. I know it's kind of a big debate for people. I

**E** Enduring Play Computer  18:41

loading, podcast level five, the volatile world of video game hardware.

**C** Cheryl Platz  18:48

It's interesting. We may have gotten a reprieve because there's no more hard drives, but we were kind of coming up on another cliff, right? We had the next generation of PlayStations, and the switch two is already here. Who knows if there's another Xbox? But I didn't have like space to write about it in the book, but I wanted to talk about like, the cycle of like console replacement, because there's this whole expansion, compression thing that happens to studios. And I don't know about you, but I feel like whether it's conscious or unconscious, some of these studios were like, well, if I can hide behind these layoffs and shed a bunch of people, I know I'm going to have to get rid to get rid of anyway, while the current platforms die. I guess I might as well, because it's so expensive to start development on a new platform, the dev kits and everything that like those teams start out small before they get big. And so that was it felt like the last time we did this reboot cycle, a bunch of teams, you get the lack of investment on the old platform, because no one's buying the games. But the new platforms are still very small, because there's only like 10 dev kits, and then everybody else is stuck in the middle waiting, and that feels like maybe where we are right now. But I don't know if you've seen anything concrete like that in the community?

**T** Tim Cullings  20:00

Yeah. I mean I'm a little far removed from it now, but, you know, seeing Valve dip their toe back in the water, of like, making a Steam Box again and another new VR headset is interesting. You know, they're kind of filling a gap. They're seeing that there's a market need for that sort of thing. They have so many, like, players on Steam why not try like the steam deck did well enough, I think that they might be interested to try doing hardware again. And I'm certainly interested in myself and likely checking those out when, when they come out, because I guess it's less of a thing now, but back when I used to do it work, I just, like, did not want to be on a computer after I was done working. So if I was going to play a game, I just would play on a console, though it was not going to was not going to have like 20 driver updates and whatever before I could actually play the game. So that's just me. But, yeah, I don't know.

**C** Cheryl Platz  20:50

It is not just you. I mean, I have a computer science degree. I still yell at Steam when I'm like, "Why did you just ask me about what Direct X 10 or nine? I don't, I don't care. Play the game." I get so mad.

**T** Tim Cullings  21:08

Yeah, it's just like, I just want you to, like, sit down and open it up thing and play like, it's definitely an interesting

**C** Cheryl Platz  21:14

Reminds me of all those boot discs for when I was growing up, which really dates me. But right that, like, what you back in my day, when we went uphill both ways, you'd have to make a boot disc for every MS DOS game because all the sound drivers were different. But you know what? I was younger then, and I don't want to do that anymore, and so yes, I'm right there with you. I'm like, and that's why console games, right? Like consoles are predictable.

**E** Enduring Play Computer  21:38

Launching podcast level six, a battle for console and platform certification

**C** Cheryl Platz  21:45

But that also means they're a lot of work, and that's an interesting thing. I don't know if you've run into this talking to indies who are trying to make the jump from PC to console. This is something as a game leader, I've run into where people who've mostly worked in PC, maybe a little bit of mobile, they underestimate how complicated it can be to move to console like the reason consoles are magical is technical requirements checklists that make the games predictable. There's this just secret, higher standard that if you've never hit it, it I'm so sorry, it's going to be so much harder than you think it is due to your build approved. And everybody always thinks that they're going to get exceptions, that their game is going to be good, that the platform holder is going to be like, No, you're cool. Like, no, no, no. I don't care how big you are, they're going to fail you because the capital B and button is not capitalized. That's how this is going to go.

**T** Tim Cullings  22:33

Or there's some uh, unrepeatable bug they find that you can't figure out on your end in yours.

**Cheryl Platz** 22:42

I'm not gonna, like, I have definitely had one game crash the future. And they were like, "Yeah, you failed." Like, what? "How did I fail?" "We can't tell you." I have to ship! Like, Christmas doesn't move. They're like, they sent someone - they wouldn't tell us what it was, and they fixed the code themselves. Oh my... so I love consoles, but I'm also like, please go, go with respect, because they there's a reason they are predictable, yeah, and it is always more work than you think it is.

**Tim Cullings** 23:14

For sure, but yeah, I mean, like tools, like Unity has made it pretty, like, a little easier. I mean, you still have to get through cert, but at least they kind of have it already set up so you can make a console build and it'll work fairly reliably. I mean, you still have to know all those things about icons and start menus and like, there's a ton of stuff that you should hire a producer to get you through, or somebody that can understand those things and has time for it if you're a developer and you don't want to read it all and figure it out. Just a pro tip there, but yeah, I don't know who I mean, the console has also opened up a bigger market for indies. Switch has been a really great platform for a lot of our indies, and extended the tale of a lot of games that you know came out on different platforms and had a relaunch on switch and found a whole new audience of people, because it's just like a really good form factor, I think for a lot of indie games that maybe don't need, like a super powerful desktop PC to play, or even an Xbox or Playstation or whatever, you can just take it on the go and play for a couple hours. It's like really a great, great way to experience an indie game. And I think that's sort of been a staple for Steam deck and other handhelds is like the indie explosion has really, like benefited from those handheld devices that you can pick up and play for a couple hours or while you're on a bus or a plane or whatever. Yeah, so that's been a good benefit for a lot of our Indies. And also you can it's easier to just pack a steam deck now and demo your game on that at a convention, rather than having to lug a huge computer wherever you're going around the world, the country, or buy something when you get there and hope you can return it. Or, you know, I didn't say that, but...

**Enduring Play Computer** 25:01

Launching podcast level seven, getting discovered in a crowded market.

**Cheryl Platz** 25:07

It's great to hear that both the steam deck and the switch are serving the community so well. You know, when I think about both of those marketplaces, the thing that comes up for me is discoverability. You know, we are in Next Fest right now. I don't know when we're going to air this particular episode, but it'll probably be a couple weeks after. But do you see any trends, or do you have any counsel for the people in the Seattle Indies community who are trying to navigate the like astonishing complexity of trying to get noticed in this very crowded market?

**Tim Cullings** 25:38

Yeah, it's, it's challenging, to say the least, everybody's trying a lot of different things. I think getting into something like Next Fest is important. Like any kind of event that gets a main steam page feature is going to drive just like millions of views and potential wish lists to your game page. We run, we Seattle Indies. We run Seattle Indies Expo (SIX) every year around PAX West time here showcasing, last year, we had 50 games from our community showcased at a free event that runs on the Sunday of PAX West every year. And we also run a steam event alongside that. We started that during the covid years when we couldn't do an in person version of the event, and have kept it going. And just the one we did with very little promotion, gets over, like, a million views every year, just by virtue of being on Steam. And the couple, the one time, I think we I managed to get it featured, or valve actually helped us get a feature that got, I think, over 5 million views or something. So, yeah, if any, anything you can do to get a feature in Steam is going to help boost your game. They used to be, you know, influencers for the past 10 years or so have really helped a lot, and I think they still can drive a lot of traffic and eyeballs just the platforms where you find those people are changing as people players are, you know, generations are changing and people are different. People are playing, I guess, so, you know, they're on different platforms, like mobile devices, Tiktok or whatever the people are using these days, which I don't really go on much, but it just depends on where they know, like where your market is, and how to find them. Like somebody suggested to me randomly at an event that I should post about like SIX on Reddit. And I don't really use Reddit all that much. We posted it on there and got, like, a huge uptake of people coming to the event, and it's been really effective marketing tool for our events. So I wouldn't have thought of that, because I don't use it, but like talking to people who are in those demographics and finding out where they're finding their information and targeting those, I think, is helpful. And then, you know, people are still using publishers to help get discoverability, and some are better than others, like we have hooded horses, a big one here in Seattle, they but they have a really tight niche of the games that they produce, of like 4x Strategy type games, and their audience knows exactly what they're looking for and goes there and supports them. So if you're making a game that has a very specific niche like that, like, find the publisher that's good at producing those games and making hits and like, do what you can to make them watch publisher game basically because that that's going to be a big benefit to you.

**C** Cheryl Platz 28:19

You know, the story about Reddit is a good reminder that the things that got us here are probably not going to get us to wherever the next step is. Things change all the time, and that that is a recurring theme when I talk about the motivators of play too. Like there's so many people who want to make the games that we made like the aughts, but that is not necessarily the game that the large majority of the market's looking for anymore, and it's so hard to like ground yourself and just lead with curiosity and ask, like, what? What is everyone looking for right now? Where is everyone? Are you in a discord? Where did everyone go? What? Why can't we just all be on Twitter anymore? But no, everything's brilliant, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**T** Tim Cullings 29:03

I mean, when I started - the My dream was like, I want to see our game get reviewed on X-play and featured in like PC Magazine.

**C** Cheryl Platz 29:10

and Nintendo Power!

**T** Tim Cullings 29:15

Nobody even knows what those things are anymore. So, yeah...

**C** Cheryl Platz 29:19

At least Pax is still here doing okay, that's cool. GDC is still around. E3 not so much. So, like, two out of three, ain't so bad.

**T** Tim Cullings 29:29

But I did get to go to e3 a couple times and So that was fun.

**Cheryl Platz** 29:32

But I just, I like, the first e3 I went to, it was they had, like, sort of 180 degree screens, and the next e3 I went to, EA had 360 screens. I'm like, Well, I guess you won that. You can't have any more than full circle screen. You get three hundred sixty degrees? that's full full winning. It was, it was just so it was so funny. All of all E3 but rip three, but we've got, we've got other things now.

**Enduring Play Computer** 29:57

Loading, podcast, level eight. The rise of a regional community.

**Cheryl Platz** 30:03

You mentioned in your intro that Seattle Indies is the largest indie community in North America, which is pretty awesome. Talk to me about that journey, like, when did that transition happen? And what do you think has been most critical in the sort of success story of Seattle Indies.

**Tim Cullings** 30:25

The group started when I first moved here around that same time, actually, back in 09, 2010 it was a few of the studios who were here at the time, like clay and 17 bits and students from DigiPen who just kind of wanted to have a fun little group to get together and have drinks every once in a while

**Enduring Play Computer** 30:50

Podcast level paused, begin host commentary.

**Cheryl Platz** 30:54

We are about to hear about the rise of the Seattle Indies organization, and to fully appreciate the story listeners from outside the area may appreciate a little bit of context. Full disclosure, I currently live on Seattle's east side, which is a series of suburbs on the east side of Lake Washington, and is an area Tim will mention later on. The Seattle region is actually a large, sprawling metro area made up of cities you've probably heard of. Seattle, of course, home of Amazon and PopCap Games, as well as mega crit games, an indie studio from the Seattle Indies community, best known for 2019 slay the spire and its recently launched sequel and eggro crab, another studio from the Seattle Indies community, best known for 2025 peak, a partnership with landfall games that some consider to be the next great entry in the friend slop genre we discussed in episode two of this season. Across the water on the east side, you'll find Kirkland, as in Kirkland select, where Costco comes from, home of Harebrained Schemes, the studio behind the Shadowrun games and battle tech for which I did voice acting in 2018 also Redmond, as in, the home of Microsoft, Nintendo and the Japan Institute of Technology mentioned earlier. There's Renton, where Wizards of the Coast is located. Of course, Magic, the Gathering and with its ever growing forest of skyscrapers, Bellevue, home of valve, Sucker Punch, Bungie arena, net and, of course, my current employer, who does not sponsor this podcast, but in the interest of full disclosure, The Pokemon Company International. That's just some of the companies that are operating

**Tim Cullings** 32:21

Just chatting about making games, that started to gain attention. I started coming to the meetups in like 2013 I think, when we were working on smaller games at airtight still, and they were more indie targeted, and I had very little understanding of indies. So I started coming to the meetups to meet indies and learn more about them and what makes them tick, and what makes a good indie game. Because I didn't really know at the time. I was more of a triple A gamer at that time, and didn't really have many thoughts about the indie scene that was on the rise. And came to a couple meetups, met some really awesome people that are still like some of my best friends today, and yeah, from there, we just started growing like 2015 ish 17 bit decided they were moving their operations to Kyoto. Their studio was our gathering place for our monthly Social meetups that now happen at stoop in Capitol Hill a big brewery here in Seattle. You know, it was kind of like a secret handshake kind of deal where you had to know where to be and, you know, go to a kind of seedy part of town and stand in a really dark, dusty warehouse room with a bunch of guys drinking Rainier like it was not very welcoming to women or people who don't identify as men. I would say, you know, I like realized that when I brought a woman co worker of mine to one of the events, and I was like, Hey, this is a maybe not most welcoming environment for her. So yeah, after they left, we had kind of been like absorbing other like meetups that were doing their own thing. Like the East Side meetup was its own thing. And what's how many support group that runs every Saturday or coworking meetup was its own event, and the organizers of those events were getting over text and were just volunteers, basically, who were just doing it because they liked it, and when they decided to move on, they let it roll up under Seattle Indies umbrella. And we had people who wanted to take it over SIX started growing out of bounced around to a few different homes in its first couple years and started getting offers of real money from like Microsoft and corporations, and it was kind of awkward to have them send it to, like one of our personal bank accounts that we realized, like we had to have some kind of structure. So me and the four other main organizers at the time formed it into the nonprofit's version that it is now back in late 2016 to give it some structure and some longevity, and it really opened up the doors for us to grow a lot by just having that structure and making it a legitimate business. You know that we got offers to have venues for free or very discounted rates, and. Um, eventually, you know, figured out applying for grants, started working with other nonprofit orgs in the in the city that are doing similar things that we are doing in slightly different spaces in creative economy, work. You know, last few years, I've been advocating with our government to support game developers here in Washington State, which is the second largest game development hub in in the US, behind California.

**Cheryl Platz** 35:24

So if I'm interpreting you correctly, then one of the major takeaways here is consistency matters, and your community can only show up for you if they know when and how to show up.

**T** Tim Cullings  35:36

You know what drove our growth was, was that and like, having our meetups more consistent, because, you know, the originally it was kind of just like, whenever 17 bit wasn't busy, they would just put something on Facebook and say, Hey, come on down and BYOB basically, and we'll be here. And if you saw it, you saw it, and you were there. But, you know, moving it to the same day on the same, you know, every month at the same venue at the same time, made it like more of a predictable thing, and people just know to show up there. And now we have, like, 100 plus people coming every month to just hang out and chat and, you know, give us opportunities to start working with places like Pacific Science Center and DigiPen and aie in the local schools that support game development to do programs there, and now we do, like, a Saturday co working session every every week at aie that's in the Seattle Center. And, yeah, just expanded our ability to have more partnerships and take on more sponsorship money. And, you know, grew into the initiatives that we've started in the last few years, which led to a starting SLICE the new B2B event that we did last year for the first time that you know, Seattle has been sorely lacking a developer focused event for the last few years, since the smaller ones that used to come like Pocket Gamer and Casual Connect and Games Forum all sort of moved on to other cities because they kind of weren't hitting the market of what the people who are here, they're programming. So we pretty we know the community here, at least from the indie side of things, and built an event around them and for them based on a lot of feedback and listening to the community, and it went much better than we could have hoped for. So now that's going to be an annual event. So yeah, all of those things, plus the base of the big studios and tech companies that we have here is just something that attracts people to Seattle, plus the great environment that we have here, you know, really mostly clean air most of the year when it's not, you know, forest fire season, and a little bit more rain than some places, but a lot more dark in the winter than a lot of places. But when it's nice, it's great. And there's a lot of places to go outside and get out in nature, if that's your thing. Or, you know, there's a lot to do in Seattle, so people come here and don't really want to leave, because that's a great place to live. And then when it's dark and rainy, you just sit inside and make games, and

**C** Cheryl Platz  38:10

we were gonna do it anyway.

**E** Enduring Play Computer  38:18

Tutorial level, the DICE Summit

**Cheryl Platz**  38:22

Let's talk about a conference that has nothing to do with PAX. I know, shocking. The DICE Summit, where DICE stands for design, innovate, communicate and entertain, is an annual event run each February in Las Vegas by the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the quote, advancement and recognition of the Interactive Arts as an event targeted more at industry leaders, it focuses more on round tables and networking activities like go karting, a Magic the Gathering tournament and Dungeons and Dragons, although it does typically feature meeting rooms and a few high profile talks each year passes were over $3,300 per individual in 2025 even higher than Game Developers Conference prices, which are typically called out as inaccessible, even though that past price ranged from $649 to 2499 in 2026 strangely, it's impossible to find 2026 prices for dice, even though the event is over, it's easy to see why Tim and his team would be inspired to create something a little more accessible for west coasters, running smaller studios.

**Enduring Play Computer**  39:26

launching podcast level nine, the Seattle loves indie creators Expo.

**Cheryl Platz**  39:32

Thank you for the opportunity last year to be a part of SLICE. It was really great and such good energy. And I loved, like the roundtable portion, some of those conversations were really energizing, but I'd love to hear more, because you talked about how some conferences left because they didn't understand what the local community needed. And obviously you did, what do you think makes slice different and what resonated the most this year?

**T** Tim Cullings 39:56

Yeah. I mean, we, we sort of Cheekily named it SLICE after DICE, because we like that event. And so we took, like, some of the better elements of that, like the speed networking and the round tables that we really like from dice, and brought that to SLICE. A lot of people can't afford to go to that event because it's very expensive for tickets, and it's more for like, see the suite executives, you know, big business people doing business, big business, basically. And we wanted to sort of create an indie version of that that people could afford with tickets that were only $100 and managed to get over the dream venue that I wanted to have it at, which was McCall hall here in Seattle, a big concert hall, surprisingly, is very affordable for nonprofits, since it's owned by the city. So it worked out perfect that we could have it there, you know, it has the right vibe as it was getting closer. And once we finally booked the venue, I realized I was like in over my head planning wise, since I'd never really done an event like that before. So I realized I needed a team for slice and, you know, and to try to give it a bit of legitimacy, we intentionally selected industry veterans from the area who had all built companies of their own, or were in the process of building companies like hitch gittman and John kimmick and Jen McLean, and people that I'll probably forget more than he'll be mad at me. But yeah, we just assembled the best team. And Jenny, of course, she was a huge help to kind of motivate us to get this whole thing going.

**E** Enduring Play Computer 41:25

Podcast level paused, begin Host commentary.

**C** Cheryl Platz 41:30

Let me pick up a few of those names dropped on the floor for you. John Kimmich has a long history of strategic advisory roles to various companies, many of which are gaming companies, including Harebrained Schemes, the game studio started and co founded in Kirkland by Mitch Gitleman and Shadowrun creator Jordan Wiseman. Full disclosure, Mitch was my connection to slice because Mitch and I worked together when I did an actual play of the Shadowrun tabletop series at hyper RPG. That show is called Shadowrun corporate sins. You can check it out on YouTube and fun trivia fact season two was recorded in the Penny Arcade offices, as in the Penny Arcade Expo, just an example of that thriving Seattle creative community collaborating in unexpected ways, a lot like you'd see in Los Angeles. Jen McLean is co founder and CEO of Dragon snacks games, best known for being the former executive director of the International Game Developers Association. And Jennifer Yi is a former director of eSports for turn 10 studios at Microsoft and strategic advisor for the women in games International that we heard about in episode one of this season two. That's just a few of the 11 people who helped out with the organization of SLICE, and you can learn more about them at Seattle slice.org

**Tim Cullings** 42:34

Super influential in how SLICE came out and sort of from their wisdom and experience of you know, 20 to 30 years in the industry, each sort of were like, "here are the things that I wish I had asked or knew about when I was starting my company." And, you know, we were seeing this trend of all these people starting new companies here in Seattle from wreckage of AAA layoffs, people that, you know, didn't want to give up and leave the industry, stayed and started their own company. And that's what I was saying about the double a sort of resurgence is coming out of that. And like I said, we brought on our advisors, and they had a, you know, vast network of people to draw from for speakers. So we were able to get, like, top quality speaking talent for slice from like, all different parts of the industry, and a lot of people. We tried to focus it on Seattle based people to really sort of drive home that, you know, Seattle is a great place to make games, and there's like, a wealth of talent here and knowledge, and that's worth hanging on to and fighting for and making it known that it's a thing which outside of here, it doesn't seem to be as well known, that how much influence this part of the world had on the modern industry in the last 25-30 years. So we were doing what we could to both celebrate that and try to, like, carry it forward and give the next generation of Indies and studio leads who are starting, you know, the new the new chapter, a chance to start from a place with a lot of knowledge and wisdom as the people who started the industry late 90s, early 2000s are looking to retire or become more like consultants. And so it was just like a perfect timing to do that. And you know, we heard all the people saying, I don't want to go to San Francisco, or I can afford to go to Germany or wherever the big conferences are. So, you know, we wanted to create something here that people don't have to travel for, or that people will travel here for -- and they can afford to go.

**Cheryl Platz** 44:25

Thank you for that and congratulations. It's exciting to see a new event born post pandemic, knowing what current conditions are,

**Enduring Play Computer** 44:34

launching podcast level 10 business co-opetition for gaming entrepreneurs

**Cheryl Platz** 44:41

you mentioned some of the events that primed the pump for Seattle SLICE - can you talk a little bit more about that?

**T** Tim Cullings  44:48

The founders club events that we started last year focused on studio and company founders having frank and open discussions about the business of making video games, which is something that Indies don't really talk about ever like they just want to talk about the cool game they're working on, and that's understandable. It's their art, it's their passion. But you know, business is a part of it, too, if you're trying to make this your living. So we have a lot of great people with a lot of great experience here in Seattle that are very willing to generously give their time and wisdom to share, to try to help other people do the same thing. We kind of have, like, co opetition, I call it here. It's like, you know, everybody's wants to be the best, but they also want to see everybody else do well too, because, like, the rising tide kind of lifts all the boats around here. So that's, that's how I see it. And so those events went really well.

**C** Cheryl Platz  45:36

You know, you're talking about the business of gaming. And it's interesting, because when I was trying to do research for my book. And I tried to talk to people about monetization. Or I tried, you know, I teach an MBA class to people who want to lead video game companies, often similar response, right? There's like, this allergic reaction to talking about monetization of games, and it makes me sad at some point, because I'm like, you understand that the money is what pays for the salaries. Yes, like, I understand that we don't want to be fully pay to win. I get that, but like, we have to name the evil to defeat it, right? We have to have like, those concrete conversations, which is why I spent so much time in like, chapters 10-11, in my book. Like, how can we just plot everything in the industry, even if we don't like it? So we could talk about the way it is and then, and how to move things

**E** Enduring Play Computer  46:21

tutorial level: live service games.

**Cheryl Platz** 46:26

What exactly is a live service game? That's one of the reasons I wrote the game development strategy guide in the first place, was I couldn't find books that talked about that, even though, when you looked at the industry, games industry, dot biz was reporting that 95% of game developers were reporting working on a live service title, but we couldn't define what it was. The main thing about a live service game is that it is internet connected, and that it frequently releases content to players. It establishes a norm that there will be a constant supply of new content. It does not so much have an ending as it is, something intended to go on forever. If it has a level cap, it will probably go up over time. If it has a certain set of content when it launches, it will probably get more content as it goes. It is not fixed. It is continuous. Because it is continuous, it requires an internet connection. It requires a team to support. It requires content pipelines. It's fundamentally different from the traditional fixed mindset of a game where you have a beginning, middle and end, and you exchange money for that product. The problem is, many of the live service games that have shipped in the last few years fail to establish the content pipelines that are needed to keep those games thriving over time, and that's why it's so risky, especially for studios who are not experienced at building tools

**Enduring Play Computer** 47:48

podcast level 11, supporting an evolving indie business.

**Cheryl Platz** 47:53

The other thing that's interesting to me, when I was doing research for my book, and I don't know if this comes up in the founders club, is, of course, live services, and the proliferation of them, there were some bonkers numbers about like, I think a couple years ago, it was like 95% of developers were working on one. Do you find that indies are being more grounded about that and not chasing that rabbit? Or is are we still in heady days where we think that's going to solve all our problems?

**T** Tim Cullings  48:20

Yeah, I mean, I think we've seen the big, big headline failures in that area. So I think most, most small indies, at least, are really not ever going to try to do something like that. I mean, some of the people who have bigger ambitions might try it, and that's what they want to do. Then I think that's what they should do. Like I'm not really here trying to tell people what kind of games they should make, but yeah, I mean, we've definitely seen, there's a lot of trends, obviously, in in games. And you know, one of our biggest success stories was Slay the Spire local here in Seattle. And they, they went through our process of, like, going to our events and working on the game and showing it and getting feedback. And, you know, bringing it to six Seattle Indies Expo and demoing it there, when it got rejected at PAX. And, you know, other shows didn't, didn't see the value in it, and we had it first at six. And you know, just to see the process could work for somebody on that level was really inspiring to me as an organizer, to try to work harder to give those opportunities to other people

**E** Enduring Play Computer  49:25

loading narrative cutscene roguelikes and save the spire.

**C** Cheryl Platz  49:31

Roguelike is a term you'll hear a lot when talking to game developers. This genre of game design focuses on games that boast randomized level design and are typically characterized by some sort of dungeon crawl with a fairly high difficulty, where character death resets your progress, aka "permadeath", according to IGN in 2022: "This is a genre with a hotly contested definition. We're going to simplify the definition to be a game that features both procedural generation and permadeath as core elements of gameplay." The term rogue comes from the 1980 Unix freeware game rogue, which was a turn based, text based dungeon crawler. The broad availability as freeware made rogue the Kleenex of procedurally generated, challenging games for a generation of game devs just discovering their craft. Slay the spire is a 2019, 19 roguelike game that is also a deck builder. Many games function as card games, where you collect cards as you progress through the game, making choices about what cards to collect or key and slay the spire a single player game eventually available on pretty much every platform in its era. Players choose a starting deck and make their way through procedurally generated maps, choosing nodes based on whether or not they want to risk combat or seek out things like shops or chance events. Periodically bosses are encountered. Each battle ends with a new card to add to your deck, increasing your complexity of play. But when you die, that's the end of that deck. You're back to square one. However, there is a meta game, and you'll eventually unlock new characters or options that help you feel like even death is not a total loss. Slay the spire was eventually named one of the best 25 PC games of its decade by PC Gamer and one of the 10 Best roguelikes of all time by IGN in 2022 its sequel, entered early access on March 5, 2026 and they expect to stay there for a year or two.

**Cheryl Platz** 51:11

You've mentioned a lot of sub initiatives like six the Seattle Indies Expo and slice. What motivates you to run all of those initiatives, what role do they play?

**Tim Cullings** 51:22

Slice and founders club were somewhat self serving for the organization, because seeing all these big studios have massive layoffs and budgets cut, and those are the, you know, our bread and butter of how we run our events as corporate sponsorships. And when I see that starting to dry up and jobs shrinking, I just wanted to do what I could to support the people who were creating new businesses and new job opportunities to help make them successful, so that they can help sustain us as an organization and also our community by providing them job opportunities to so they don't have to move to another city or country or state. They can, you know, stay here as people who are valuable members of our community and have helped to make make it what it is today. So we're not going to replace 10,000 jobs at Microsoft as indies like that's just not a thing we can sustainably do. But you know, we can work to try to create a new vision of what the industry looks like, and create opportunities for people who might not have had them otherwise showcase the talent that we have in our community to people who are looking to hire people to work on their games and make great games like we have some of the best talent in the world here in Seattle, and we want to make sure that they all have as many opportunities to keep working here on the thing that they love in The games industry. So that was a huge part motivating factor for us to be more focused on the business side. Because prior to that, we really were more of like a unofficial incubator for people's careers. To take them from being students or hobbyists or, you know, people who sort of left AAA to try their hand at Indie we could get them started on that path, give people their first job in the industry, or help them release their first game, and we have a really good pipeline to help make that happen. But we've had people with us for the whole time. You know, the org has existed from 15 years now who are senior level people in the industry, and we didn't really have a lot of programming for them, so we started, I made like I created the speaker series and founders club and a few other events. And now we have business of games events that are happening on the east side, and like Bellevue and Redmond to try to support those people in our mentorship program, where a lot of people who want to give back, we have over 100 plus mentors in our totally free mentorship program that have created a lot of good opportunities for people. So you know, we did our as the org was maturing, we tried to mature our programming to keep up with that as well.

**Cheryl Platz** 53:50

So I love the Slay the Spire story, such a great game and such a great success story, and such a good reminder that rejection is not a barometer of your value, and sometimes it's a signal that you're on the right path and that you've hit on something new that people don't understand yet. And it's so wonderful that Seattle Indies was was around to give them that support.

**E** Enduring Play Computer  54:12

Podcast level 12, your Seattle Indies call to adventure.


**C** Cheryl Platz  54:18

You mentioned a lot of different ways to be a member of the community. What's a good time or way for someone to approach Seattle Indies as a member? Like, are there different points in a career? Is it just like anybody can be a member? Because I remember suggesting to someone recently who was like, Oh, I don't know what I'm going to do if I get laid off. Like, "why don't you go over to Seattle Indies and go mentor," and they're like, "Well, I'm not an indie." Like, well, "you're a game professional. You can interact with people who are games professionals." What's your take on how you want people to interact with Seattle Indies? And is involvement limited to people who are physically in the Seattle region?

**Tim Cullings** 54:53

That's a great question and insight into something we think about a lot. Because, just because Indies is in the name of the group, doesn't. Necessarily mean it's for indies only. Like our mission is to support, support anyone who wants to try to be pursue the, you know, game development as a hobby or a profession. We, you know, we're skewed more towards supporting indies because that's in our DNA and how we how we begin. But really, we're open for anybody. And there's always people can get involved as mentors, as event coordinators, volunteers, you know, just hands on help at at the bigger events that we do, we always need help. Judges and mentors at game jams is another way that I've brought in a lot of like, veterans who maybe don't have 24 hours or 48 hours to sit and make a game on a weekend, but they have like, you know, two or three hours to come in and give some advice or be a judge at the end. And that's always been a good way to sort of get people into the community. Like I said, we have our big social events that happen every month, and now they're basically everywhere. Like, we have one here. Our big main one is in Seattle, but we have them in Redmond, Auburn, Olympia, Tacoma, Bremerton. So basically, anywhere you are, there should be at least a smallish group of Indies getting together every month, or game developers doesn't have to be Indies. It's pretty much open. It's definitely open to anybody who wants to come check it out and just go to our Discord, which has over 8000 people on it. Now, it's a little daunting at first, because there's a ton of channels and categories and but really, the people there are super welcoming, super open, sharing their time and knowledge with anybody who stops by. And you don't even have to be in Seattle to join the discord. Anybody is welcome to hop in there and chat with game developers who just want to help and want to share their knowledge. And that's kind of a good place to get started, if maybe in person. Things are a little intimidating for you, but you know, the socials are probably the best way to meet, start meeting people, and then the Saturday co working sessions are really good if you're maybe new or you're looking for a team to join. We have people there who can help you get set up with tutorials and get started if you're just at the very basic ground level. Or, you know, there's always somebody in there working on their latest game, and maybe you can offer something that they're looking for to join as a volunteer, or eventually, an employee of the company. And you know, we have our show and tells that run semi regularly, where people bring their demos out. And if you just want to show up and play some indie games that are in very early stages of development, you can go to those and play games and give feedback a ton of different ways that anybody who has any kind of games experience, even you don't really even need any games experience. Like, we're open to everybody, regardless of your experience level, with any kind of technical knowledge. Like, we're really here to just help people who want to make games

**Enduring Play Computer** 57:56

podcast level 13, the collision of video games and education.

**Cheryl Platz** 58:01

I wanted to touch briefly, too on the education element, because you do a lot of work with local schools. You had the really great games in education collider, which I got to attend this past week. And the energy was great. There were students there, there were educators there, there were people who wanted to work with education there. There were the panels. I was really struck with the curiosity and energy of the people who came up to my booth where we were talking about my book. But what is your perspective on the role that your work with the education community plays with Seattle Indies?

**Tim Cullings** 58:32

Yeah, I think it's vital. Like, we're pretty much a bridge from the academic world to the professional world, where you know in school you're gonna get taught all the things, like technically that you need to know how to make a game, but there's also a lot of interpersonal and social things and being on a team, and all those things that you maybe don't get to experience as much as a student, that we're here to sort of help people with those soft skills that they need to sort to thrive in this industry. The games and education collider was just one of those ideas that was born out of wanting to do something with, you know, related to games and education. And we thought about just happy hour, basically, of putting teachers and game devs in a room together and see what happens. But, you know, that didn't seem like it was intentional enough to really produce any kind of results that we were looking for just to see more play based learning actually make its way into the classrooms here in Washington state and beyond. So the collider was born with the Seattle ed tech meetup, foundry 10 as like our main supporting partner, sort of all like with the intention of trying to sort of demystify the process on both sides of making games for the educators and getting games into a classroom, and what, what that process is for the game developers who are interested in that. So we've been doing that for almost 10 years now. Pretty decent results, at least in terms of connecting people and making that knowledge more available like it's there's a lot. Of things that game devs don't know about, the processes of getting their games to be usable in schools. So like I said, we've tried to make that process a little more transparent. And then, you know, the teachers, educators don't really have any understanding of how to make a game, so think the events have helped with that as well. So that's sort of been the demo there for us, working with more like K through 12 Level, it's all to try to sort of feed the ecosystem, to keep the community growing with new people, and getting them to know more about Seattle Indies and what we do at an earlier age, so they're aware that we exist once they are out in the real world.

**Cheryl Platz** 1:00:39

What's one thing that usually surprises game developers about getting their games into an educational context.

**T**  Tim Cullings  1:00:45

I mean, there's a lot like, we all went to school at one point in our lives, or at least most of us did. And there's a lot of things you forget about. Like, I didn't even think when Jessica is one of our main organizers, was like, if I can't pause this to the game, I can't use it, because there might be like, a fire drill or random, like assembly that we have to go or, you know, some kind of thing that interrupts the flow of the class, where you have to pause the game. Yeah, that's like, that was one thing that stood out to me. And then there's just all kinds of very tight standards of what you can have younger people, underage people engage with in a classroom setting that like, won't get the school in trouble or worse, and have a lawsuit or something against them, or something that a student experience that traumatized them or something so yeah, there's just a lot to navigate, and the bureaucracy of the different administration levels at work that run A school and how they even can buy the games. And you can't really have students having Steam accounts on school computers. Like, it has to be a pretty locked down account that only has access to certain things. And there's so many like logistics to think of that. Like, just don't apply. If it's just a random person in their house buying playing a game than like structured or environment, like in a school setting.


**C**  Cheryl Platz  1:02:07

It's great context. Thank you.


**E**  Enduring Play Computer  1:02:10

Loading final boss level, launching your own game dev community.


**C**  Cheryl Platz  1:02:15

We've had a really great tour of what Seattle Indies is and offers for listeners who may not be in the Seattle area, but may be inspired by what Seattle Indies has become, and might be in the position to create communities of their own. What advice would you have for those potential community organizers?

**T** Tim Cullings  1:02:36

start talking to people like us who have been doing it for a while and give feedback. I mean, that's what led to what is now in seven or eight years, of us co hosting the community organizers roundtable at GDC every year, which we'll be doing in a couple weeks. There was a group out in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was just kind of starting their journey growing their community. They sought us out at GDC one year, and a bunch of other organizers were asking questions, and that sort of made me think, well, there's got to be other people out there that are asking these same questions. Why don't we tell GDC, like, let's start this roundtable, since we're all here, get us all in the same room talking to each other, talking about all the pain points that we've had over the years, and wisdom that we've learned and been really a great thing that I look forward to every year is just getting, like, 100 of us who are so who love organizing, in a room talking about organizing, it's like, super, you know, deep down the rabbit hole, nerdy of it's really great. And then there's also IGDA, which I'm also on the board there the International Game Developers Association. They have chapters all over the world. If you don't have the time or resources to start your own nonprofit like we did, or it's just like not the time to do that. Yet, you can start an IGDA chapter. They have a whole infrastructure built to support people who are just starting a community, and it gives a little bit of legitimacy to it, to have that name attached to it. And they have a whole handbook for a Chapter lead to run and there's regional organizers who can help you connect to the main HQ. So that is what I would probably suggest that people who are just in the early phases of starting community, is to look at IGDA and consider that as a good option to help you get off the ground. And then there's other events, like Global Game Jam. Like, I also used to be the executive director there that happened annually. Like, if you don't want to start a whole entire community, you can at least just apply to run a Global Game Jam site. Every year, they make it super easy. I had never really even been to a game jam before when I first hosted our first site here in Seattle, back in 2016 and I just followed all of the documentation that they sent me, and it went great. Eventually I ended up running the whole organization. I don't know that would happen for everybody, but that was how it happened for me. Yeah, that's another way you can get involved. This end of January every year, most college campuses have their own sites, and it's super easy to start your own. So that is another great way to just kickstart a community is a big event like that that people know about. Just do it, I guess, you know, tell people you're gonna get together at a at a bar or restaurant, and people usually start showing up. And the consistency for us was, what really helped the growth was just sort of always have it at the same place, at the same time, same day, every month of the or however often you want to do it, just people understand the cadence and the word of mouth just gets out there that, you know, people are getting together at this time and place every month, and take it from there. We just sort of grew our our stuff organically. To me, that was the best way to do it.

**C** Cheryl Platz  1:05:38

Such great examples and you know, for students or people just starting out, you made a point earlier about the fact that, like, you don't always get to do the collaborative stuff in class, or maybe you're or maybe you were part of a big company, and you didn't really get that collaborative vibe that you might need to work at an indie or do stuff on your own. All these opportunities give you a chance to build that collaborative muscle that is so critical to build the best interactive art. It's such a hard thing that we do. It's movie plus cloud service plus and it takes so many different types of people, but it's amazing how many communities you just seamlessly helped run over the years. So thank you for sharing all of these experiences and sharing how you got into them. I hope, I'm certain it will inspire many folks to take steps of their own.

**T** Tim Cullings  1:06:33

I'd tell people to show up too, like that was more or less how I got involved, is I just kept showing up at the meetups and offer to help in any way that you can. If you want to get involved as an organizer, just be consistent and keep showing up and keep helping. And people will take notice of that, and that'll be can be helpful in your career in ways that you don't expect.

**C** Cheryl Platz  1:06:57

So it's the little connections. It doesn't have to be a big thing at first. It's building trust and build your community before you need it, which is a big lesson a lot of us learn through layoffs, one way or another. Well, thank you for for lifting up the communities around you.

**E** Enduring Play Computer  1:07:15

loading final podcast level links and follow up.

**C** Cheryl Platz  1:07:19

How would you advise people to follow your own journey. Are there socials they should follow you on? What are your favorite sites for people to look up Seattle Indies and the work of your organizations?

**Tim Cullings** 1:07:29

I mean, I probably post the most on LinkedIn these days, just because of the reach that platform has for me and for the organization. So that's probably the best place to follow me personally. In this context, Seattle indies.org, is our website. That's where you can find links to all of our socials. Our meetup page is the main place to find out about our events. If you ever like really want to know when events are, then just go to meetup.com Seattle Indies, and you'll find everything there. And then our Discord is where you can actively engage with the community, and that's open for anybody to join, and you can find a link to that on our website as well. So that's, yeah, that's those are the best ways to find us.

**Cheryl Platz** 1:08:13

Thank you so much, Tim for the time today, it's been an honor to get to explore your background and to share the story of Seattle Indies with more folks, and I look forward to participating in more of your events over my time out here in Seattle again.

**Tim Cullings** 1:08:27

Yeah, it's great. Great having you at our events. We really appreciate it.

**Cheryl Platz** 1:08:31

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**Cheryl Platz** 1:08:57

check out season one of this podcast for the interviews that helped inspire the book or tune in next time for interviews that help expand our understanding of what it takes to create games that don't just survive but thrive. I'm your host. Cheryl Platz, until next time, keep thriving,

**Enduring Play Computer** 1:09:15

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