

Frankenstein's Game Dev: A Strategic Monster

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This is a quick-start guide to breathing life into your game development career, one limb at a time—crafted by Queensland’s very own mad scientist.

In this talk, Dr. Frankenstein (Finley) will guide the audience through the twisted, electrifying process of transforming from just a lone developer into a full-fledged monster of the industry.

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Introduction:

In 1816, Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*, a novel that follows Victor Frankenstein—a scientist who creates a sentient creature from assembled body parts. Spoiler warning... (in my defense, you've had 209 years to read it). The story ends with the creature taking revenge on Victor and his loved ones, ultimately leading to his demise.

Well, it's been over two centuries, and I think it's time we tried again.

@basicallyfin

FINLEY CAMERON

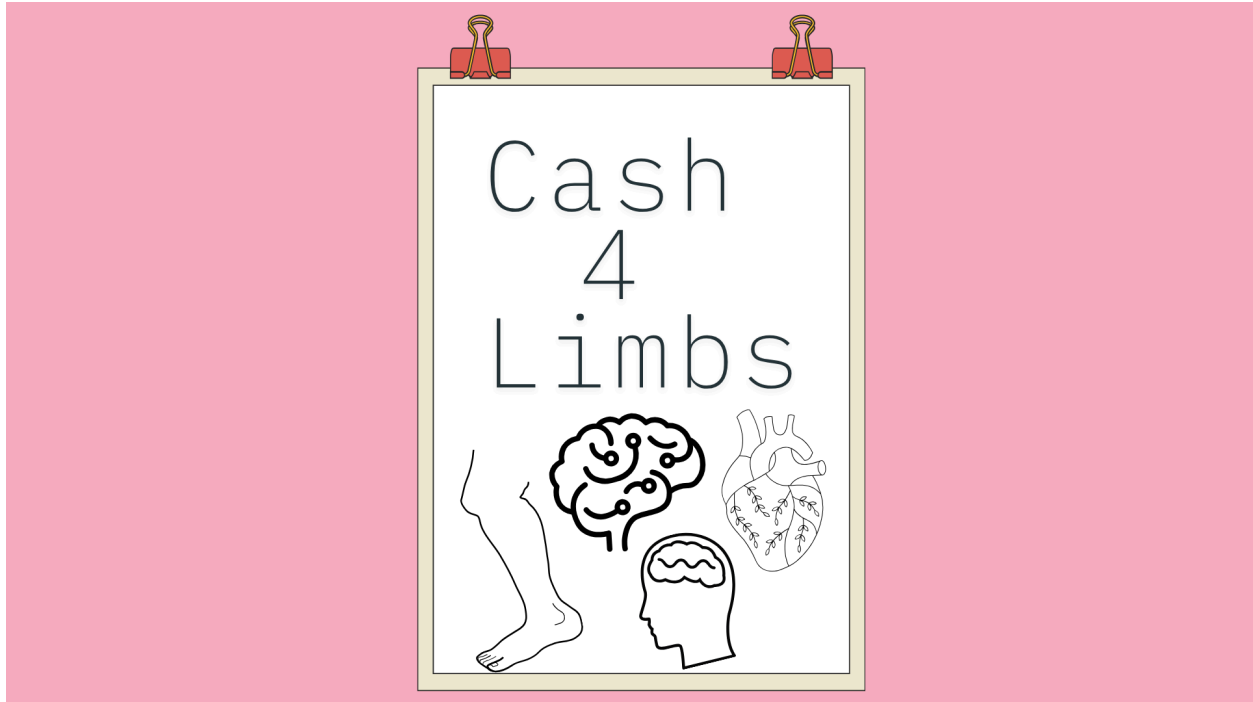
My name is Finléy Cameron,
I am the **Games Coordinator at Screen Queensland**. I have also been a Lecturer for Videogame Design at **The University of the Sunshine Coast**. I previously was a Producer at **Toast VR, MAX MUSTARD (Top Selling & 5 stars on Meta)**. Previously an **Operational Manger at Zero Latency**.

I have previously completed a bachelor of serious games Design with a minor in marketing and interactive narrative. Additionally, an honours in games design. I have **published research** "Establishing a conceptual framework for the creation of an open-source independent video games." As a part of the Proceedings of the Inaugural Experimental Game Design Conference 2021.

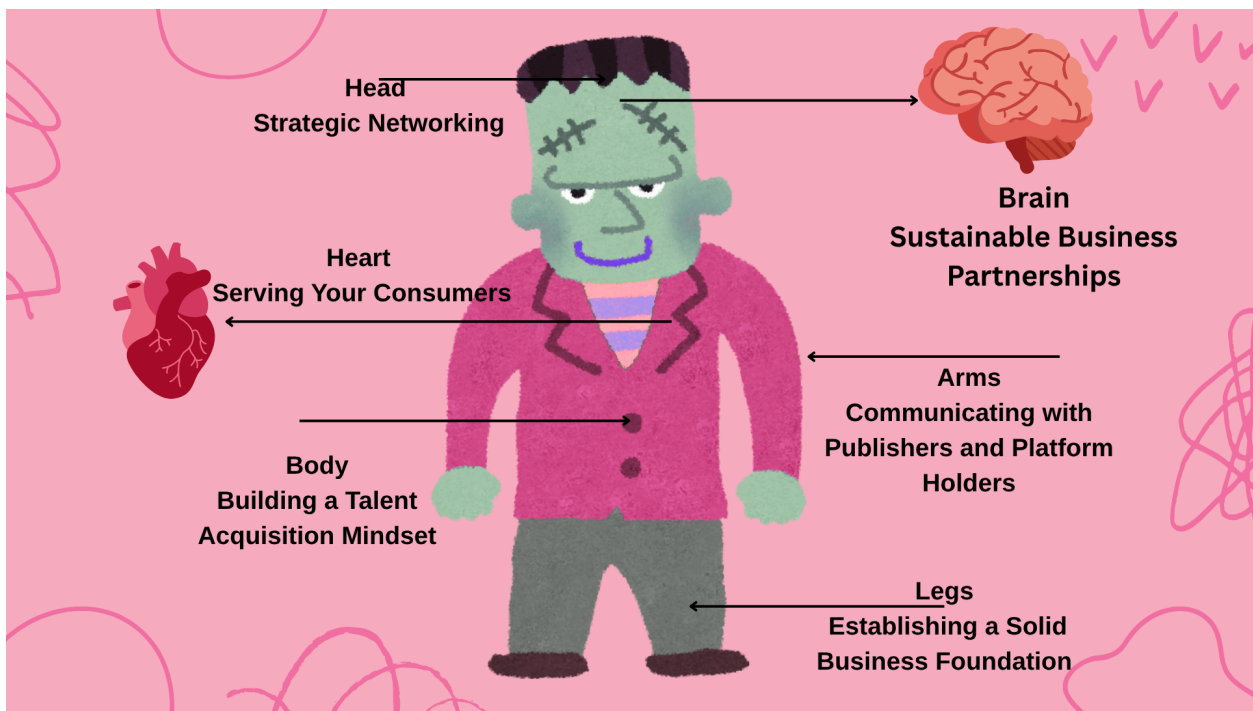
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Website

My name is Finley Cameron. I'm an experienced game producer, manager, and academic. I've been making games since I was sixteen and have collaborated with over a hundred game studios throughout my career.



And now, I've decided to create my own monster—a monster of the game industry! Looking around this room, I've decided that you all can be my first volunteers. I'll need a head, a brain, some arms, a torso, a heart, and a pair of legs. Any takers? No? Alright, maybe if I explain my vision, you'll reconsider.



In this session, Dr. Frankenstein (that's me) will guide you through the twisted, electrifying process of transforming from a lone developer into a full-fledged monster of the industry—by stitching together these vital parts:

1. The Head — Strategic Networking

Cultivate a sharp, calculating mind. Don't just take from the community—contribute to it. Like any brilliant (or mad) scientist, you must think ahead, forge meaningful alliances, and pursue long-term strategic goals.

2. The Brain — Sustainable Business Partnerships

No monster functions without a well-wired brain. Learn how to create a steady funding pipeline—not just from screen agencies, but also through entrepreneurship grants, innovation programs, and strategic business deals that keep your creation alive.

3. The Arms — Communicating with Publishers and Platform Holders

Your monster must reach out! Extend your arms and connect with publishers, investors, and platform holders. Pick up your phone like it's an electrode surging with energy—and start that relationship!

4. The Body — Building a Talent Acquisition Mindset

No monster is stitched together alone. Discover how to recruit, support, and manage the people who will share your creative lab. Build a team that functions like a well-reanimated corpse—uh, I mean, a cohesive unit.

5. The Heart — Serving Your Consumers

Once your monster is alive, it must connect with the world. Who are your players, and what do they want? A true creator builds experiences that resonate with audiences—rather than creatures that send them running in fear.

6. The Legs — Establishing a Solid Business Foundation

Every monster needs a stable stance. Without a strong foundation of policies, legal protections, and sound accounting, your creation risks collapsing into a heap of discarded limbs. Always read your contracts—or risk facing the angry mob.

The Head:



Strategic Networking

When building your monster's head, it's important to cultivate a keen and calculating mind—one that not only takes from the community but also offers value in return. Like any brilliant (or mad) scientist, you must think ahead, forge alliances, and maintain long-term strategic social goals.

I often find that game developers aren't always sure how to approach strategic networking. Where do I go? Who do I talk to? How do I form meaningful connections? It doesn't have to be complicated. Let's start simple by answering a few questions:

- What is my purpose for networking?
- Do I want to...
- Forge new connections?
- Hire or be hired by someone?
- Make a friend?
- Learn something or share knowledge?
- Gain a mentor?
- Be a mentor?

THE HEAD:



S	Specific	Make your goal specific and narrow for more effective planning	
M	Measurable	Make sure your goal and progress are measurable	
A	Achievable	Make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a certain time frame	
R	Relevant	Your goal should align with your values and long-term objectives	
T	Time-based	Set a realistic but ambitious end date to clarify task prioritization and increase motivation	



Once you understand your purpose, it's time to define your strategy. One of the best ways to do that is by creating strategic social goals using the SMART framework.

S	Specific	Make your goal specific and narrow for more effective planning	
M	Measurable	Make sure your goal and progress are measurable	
A	Achievable	Make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a certain time frame	
R	Relevant	Your goal should align with your values and long-term objectives	
T	Time-based	Set a realistic but ambitious end date to clarify task prioritization and increase motivation	



SMART goals are:

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based.

This method helps make your networking both satisfying and structured. Let's build an example together:

THE HEAD:

- S Specific**
- M Measurable**
- A Achievable**
- R Relevant**
- T Time-based**

SPECIFIC: SCOPE YOUR GOAL DOWN.
"I WANT TO MAKE FIVE NEW CONNECTIONS."

MEASURABLE: PROGRESS SHOULD BE TRACKABLE.
"I'LL MEASURE PROGRESS BY EXCHANGING LINKEDIN REQUESTS."

ACHIEVABLE: ENSURE YOUR GOAL IS REALISTIC.
"I'M ALREADY ATTENDING SXSW AND COMFORTABLE MEETING NEW PEOPLE—I USE LINKEDIN OFTEN AND HAVE PRIOR NETWORKING EXPERIENCE."

RELEVANT: IT SHOULD ALIGN WITH YOUR PURPOSE.
"I'M AT SXSW SYDNEY AND FOCUSED ON THE GAMES INDUSTRY."

TIME-BASED : SET A CLEAR TIMEFRAME.
"BY THE END OF SXSW, I'LL HAVE MADE FIVE NEW LINKEDIN CONNECTIONS."



SMART Element	Description	Exsample
Specific	Scope your goal down.	"I want to make five new connections."
Measurable	Progress should be trackable.	"I'll measure progress by exchanging LinkedIn requests."
Achievable	Ensure your goal is realistic	"I'm already attending SXSW and comfortable meeting new people—I use LinkedIn often and have prior networking experience."

Relevant	It should align with your purpose.	"I'm at SXSW Sydney and focused on the games industry."
Time-based	Set a clear timeframe.	"By the end of SXSW, I'll have made five new LinkedIn connections."
Final SMART Goal Example: "I will make five new LinkedIn connections by the end of SXSW Sydney."		

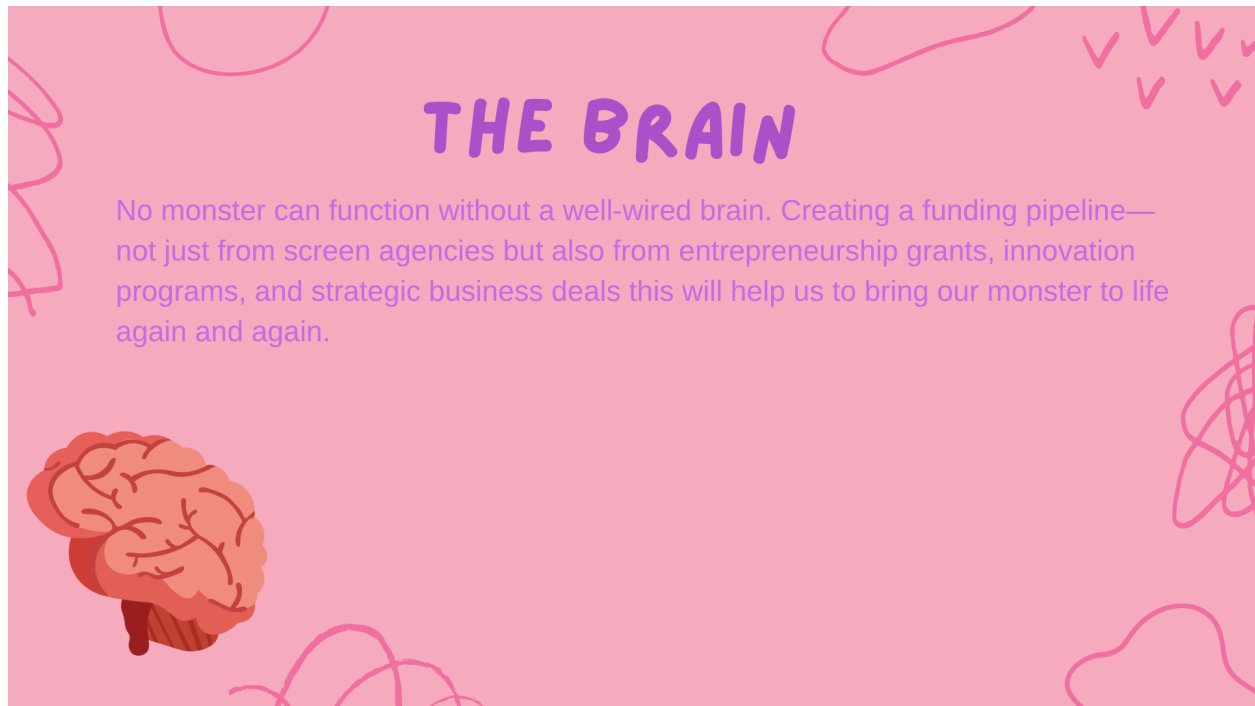
Other SMART Goal Examples:

Schedule and attend at least five one-on-one meetings with potential collaborators, publishers, or platform representatives during SXSW, and follow up with each within one week after the event.

Join and actively contribute to one professional game development community (e.g., IGEA, Women in Games, or an Unreal Meetup group) by November 30, 2025, attending at least one in-person event to build visibility and strengthen professional relationships.

Using this strategy will help transform networking from a vague, overwhelming concept into a focused, achievable process. With SMART goals, you'll approach every event with clarity, purpose, and confidence—an essential first step in building your monster's head.

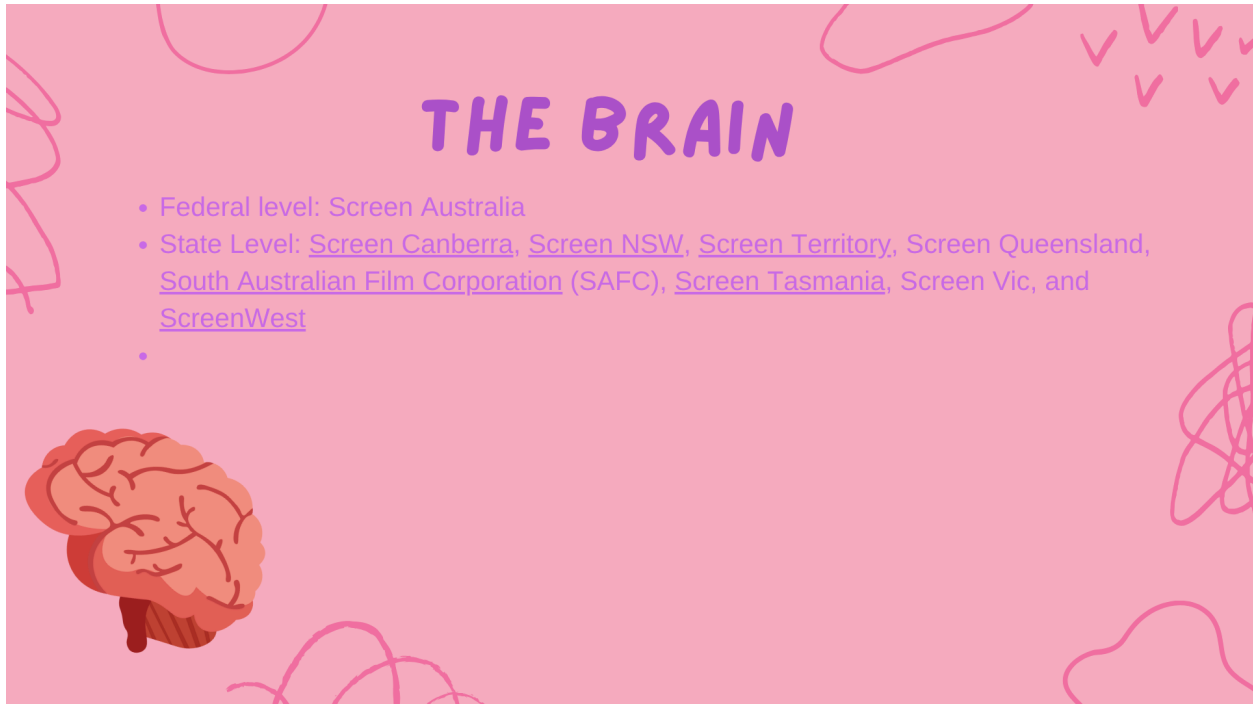
The Brain:



No monster can function without a well-wired brain. Creating a funding pipeline—not just from screen agencies but also from entrepreneurship grants, innovation programs, and strategic business deals this will help us to bring our monster to life again and again.

Federal and State Funding

Throughout the life of your game development journey, needing funding and acquiring funding will be inevitable. Being knowledgeable about your local, state and federal funding agency (Screen Australia - federal , Screen NSW state - in Sydney etc) and their offerings is important.



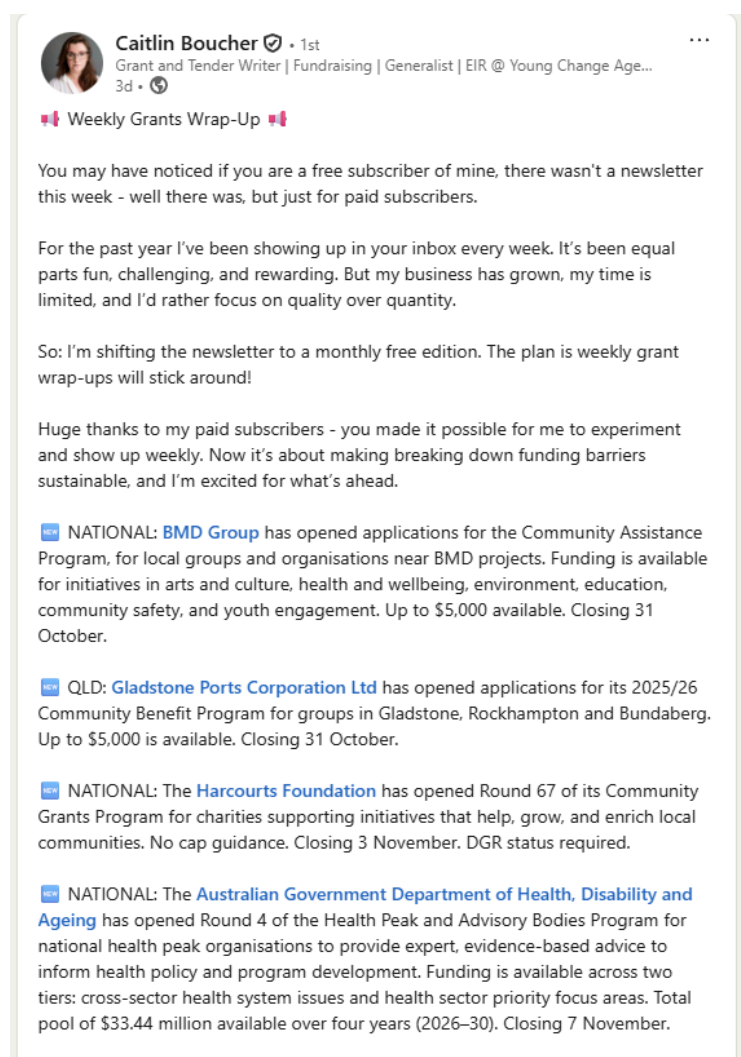
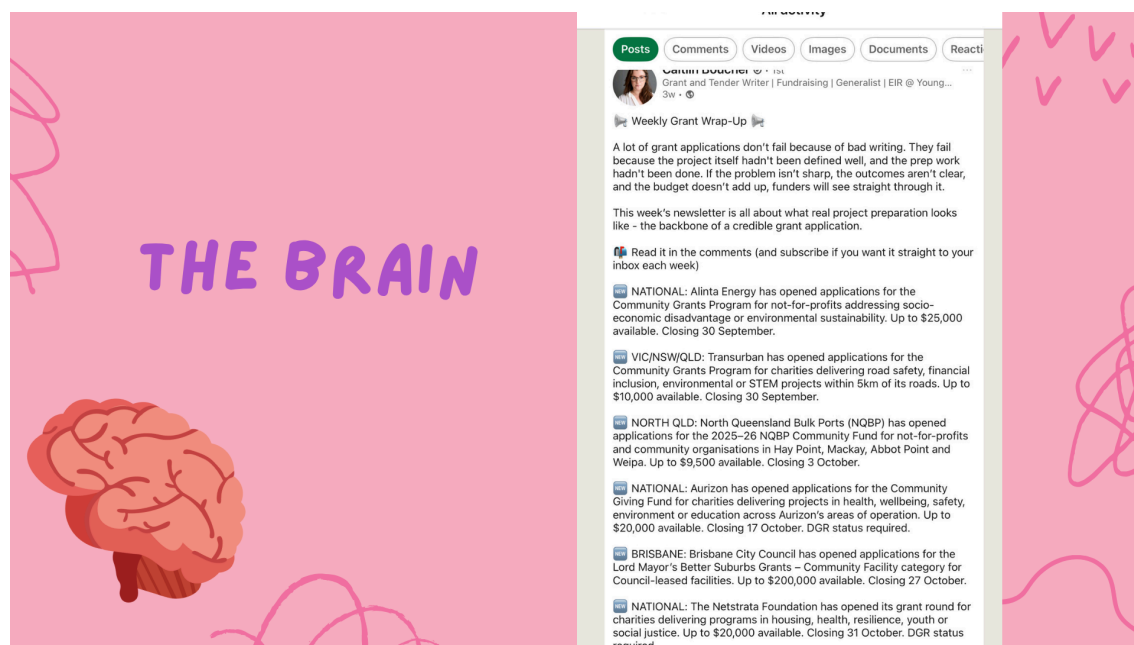
A lot of devs aren't aware that there are a multitude of grants available all around australia.

- Federal level: Screen Australia
- State Level: [Screen Canberra](#), [Screen NSW](#), [Screen Territory](#), Screen Queensland, [South Australian Film Corporation](#) (SAFC), [Screen Tasmania](#), Screen Vic, and [ScreenWest](#)

Grants and Tenders

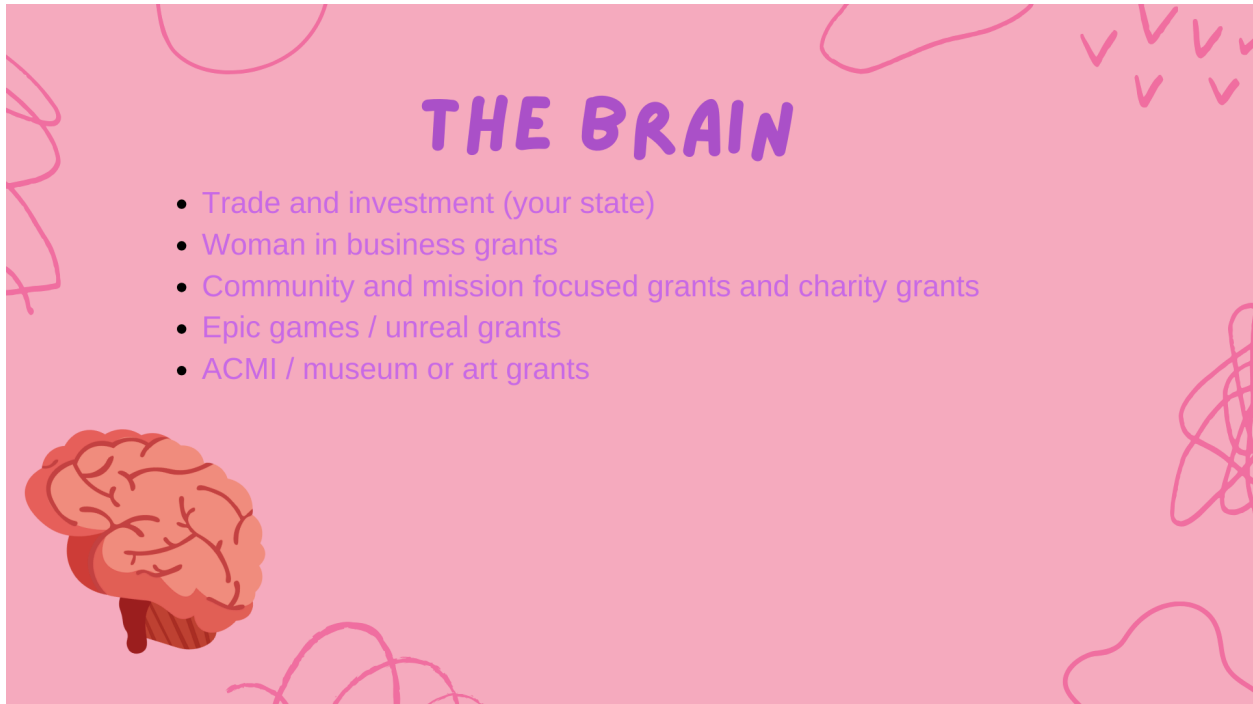
I keep in touch with Grant and Tender Writers within australia on places like linkedin and email lists.. People like this will often share or post about available grants.

Caitlin Boucher on linkedin she does a great weekly grant wrap up on linkedin.



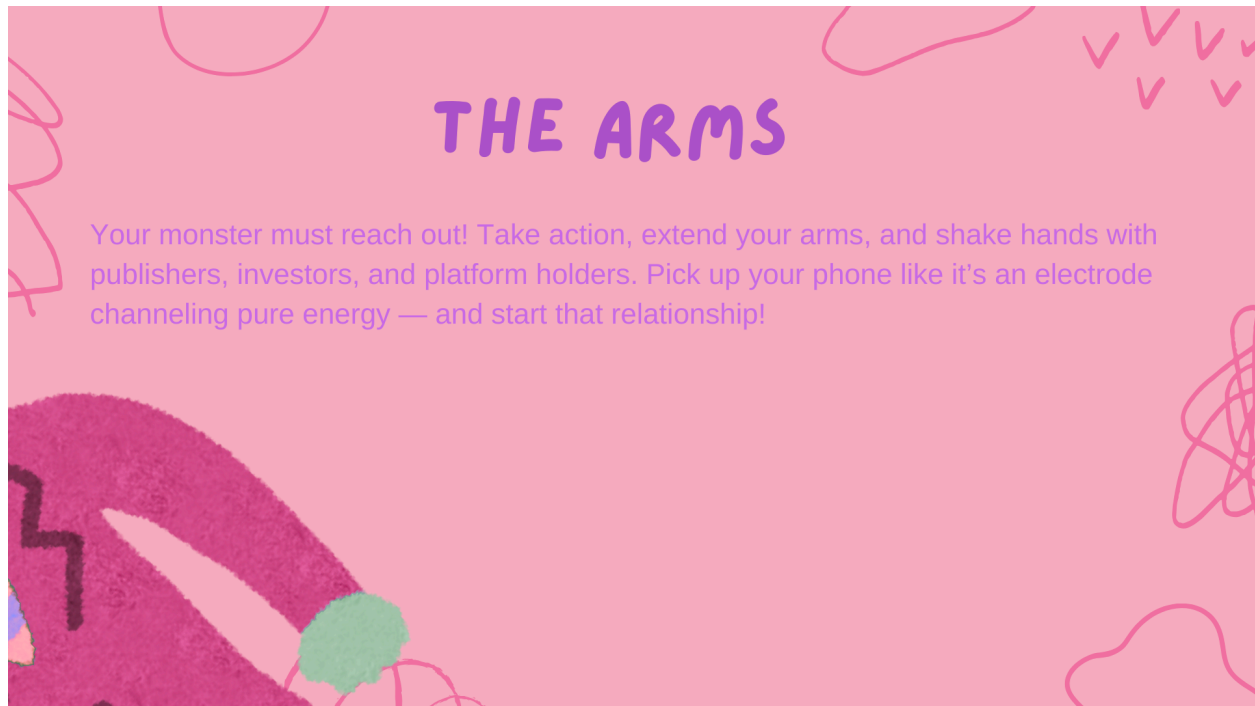
- Trade and investment
- Woman in business grants
- Community and mission focused grants and charity grants
- Epic games / unreal grants
- ACMI / museum or art grants

And I could go on!



The point is at the start of every year or financial year create a list of grants and due dates and focus on incorporating these funding opportunities into your development pipeline. Funding shouldn't be an after thought it should be a key development decision. Your first idea or dream project isn't always going to be fundable .

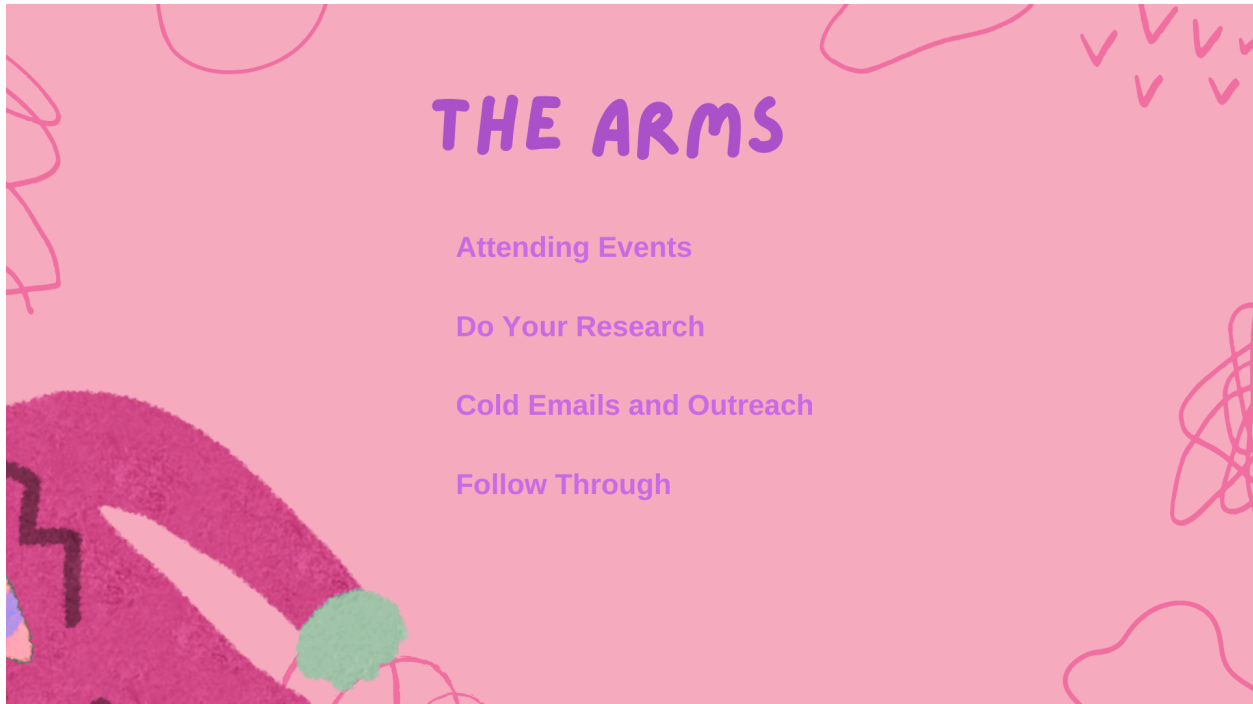
The Arms



Communicating with Platform Holders and Publishers

Your monster must reach out! Take action, extend your arms, and shake hands with publishers, investors, and platform holders. Pick up your phone like it's an electrode channeling pure energy — and start that relationship!

Knowing who your *local* publishers, investors, and platform holders are is crucial. To build these connections effectively, here are my three key steps:



1. Attending Events

Attending investment-focused or “Play Now” style events will help you understand who’s out there and how these companies operate. These events are your opportunity to meet key players face-to-face, make first impressions, and begin forming relationships that can grow over time.

2. Do Your Research

Before approaching any publisher or platform holder, it’s essential to do your homework. Publishers and platform holders rarely engage with developers who don’t understand their brand, catalogue, or audience.

Imagine approaching a publisher known for cosy games with your gritty first-person shooter. It immediately signals that you don’t understand your own business case, their business case, or your target markets — making your project appear risky.

How to Research Effectively:

- Review their website, Steam pages, and previous releases.
- Identify studios and games they’ve supported that are similar to your own.
- If possible, reach out to those studios for insight into their experience with that publisher or investor.

Create a shortlist or visual map (even a simple Venn diagram) of publishers, investors, and studios that align with your project's goals and audience. By the end of this process, you should have **at least five well-matched publishers, platform holders, or investors**.

When your research is strong, your targets should agree that your project fits their portfolio — making your pitch far easier and far less risky.

3. Cold Emails and Outreach

Don't be afraid to send cold emails or LinkedIn messages! At the end of the day, the purpose of a publisher, platform holder, or investor is to find great games to publish — and to make money.

As long as your outreach includes a strong business case, clear pitch materials, and strategic reasoning, there's a good chance you'll get:

- A reply or follow-up email
- Access to a dev kit
- An invitation to chat further

Always be **polite, punctual, and professional**. If it's clear that a company doesn't engage with cold outreach, respect that and instead approach them at events where they're actively scouting for projects.

4. Follow Through

Building relationships takes time — often through multiple meetings and events. Always include a **call to action** and **follow up** consistently.

Here are a few best practices:

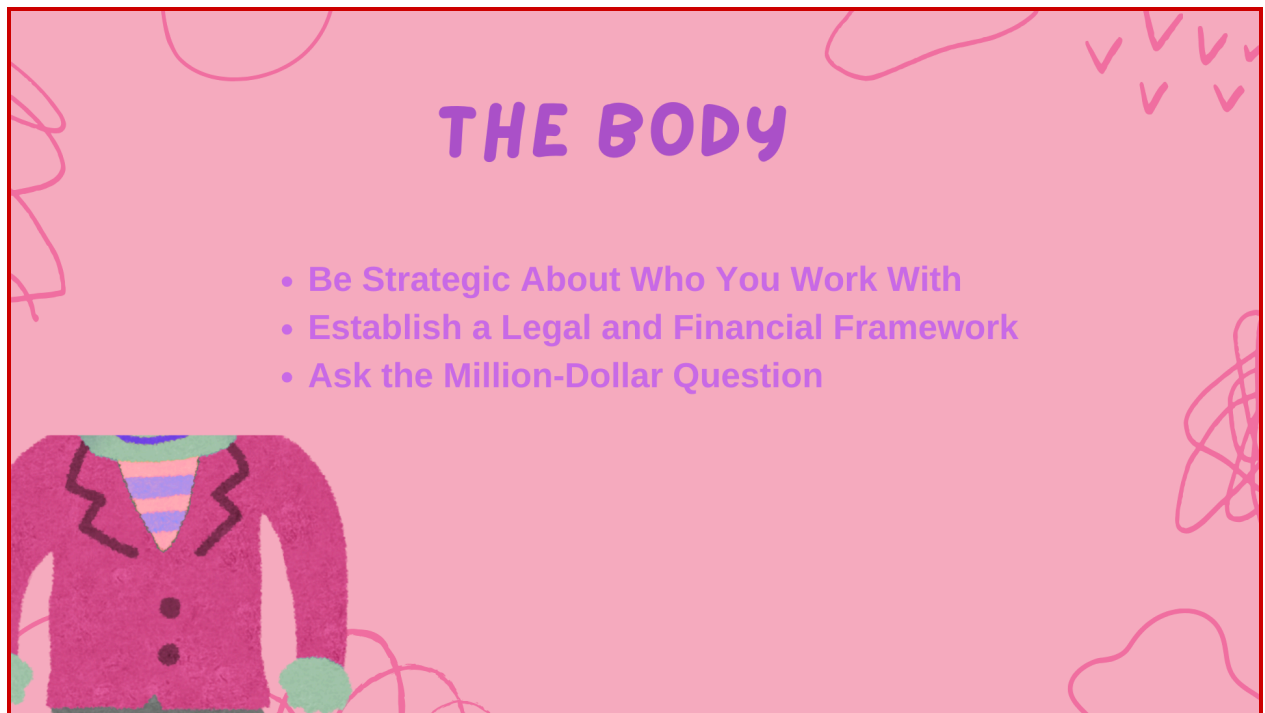
- Keep business cards and collect contact details for everyone you speak with.
- Take thorough notes of feedback or advice and incorporate it into your next approach.
- End meetings with a clear next step, such as:
 - "Let's chat again in a few months so I can show you my progress."
 - "Here's a Steam demo key — I'd love your feedback and to catch up again soon."
- Maintain contact after major milestones or game updates to keep yourself on their radar.

Remember: persistence, professionalism, and preparation are key. The more consistent and considerate your follow-up, the stronger your industry connections — and your monster's arms — will become.

The Body:

No monster is stitched together alone. You must recruit and manage the people who will be trapped in the lab with you — ensuring your team functions like a well-reanimated corpse... I mean, a *cohesive unit*.

The body is the backbone of your game development monster. It's made up of the people who will breathe life into your project, so it's vital to choose wisely and build with care.



1. Be Strategic About Who You Work With

When you begin your game development journey or form a new project, be thoughtful about who you partner with. These aren't just your co-workers or your friends — they're your business partners. In the future, you may be sharing millions of dollars in funding or investment decisions with them.

Before committing, have *realistic and honest conversations* about:

- Each person's goals and expectations
- Their skills and professional experience
- The time and energy they can realistically commit

These early discussions will help set boundaries, align priorities, and prevent tension later on — keeping your monster's body running smoothly and sustainably for years to come.

2. Establish a Legal and Financial Framework

Every strong team needs structure. Having a clear **legal and financial framework** in place ensures everyone knows their rights, responsibilities, and rewards.

Here's what to prioritise:

- **Contracts early, check-ins often.** Put agreements in writing before starting work.
- **Ownership clarity.** Define who owns what — IP, revenue, creative direction — from day one.
- **Financial transparency.** Be open about budgets, milestones, and payouts.

This framework not only prevents misunderstandings but also builds trust, stability, and accountability within the team.

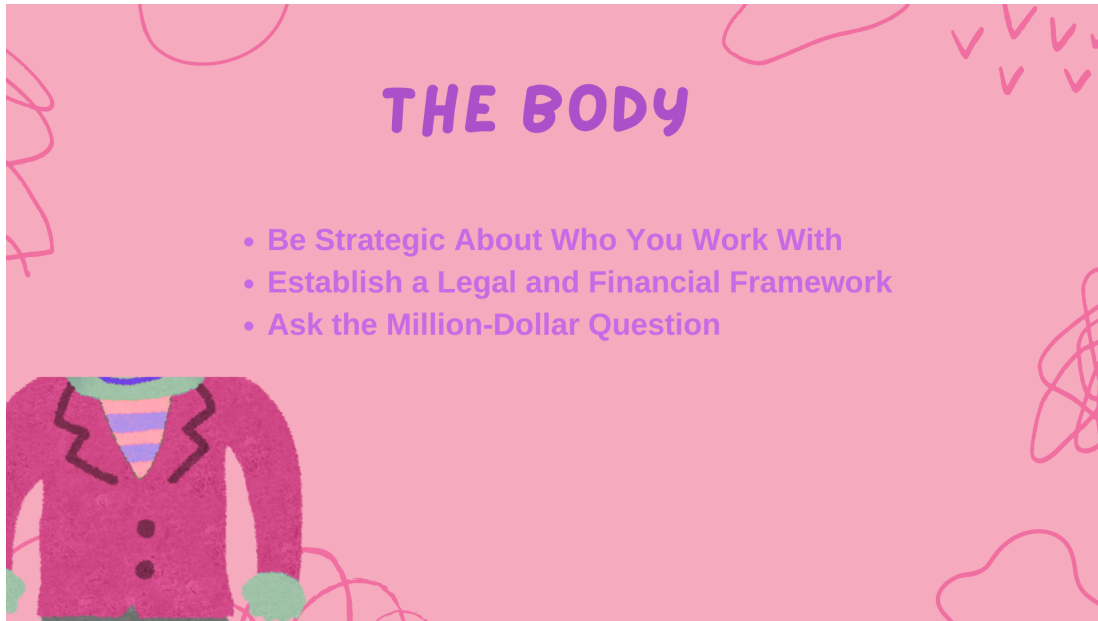
3. Ask the Million-Dollar Question

Before diving into a new project, ask yourself and your team:

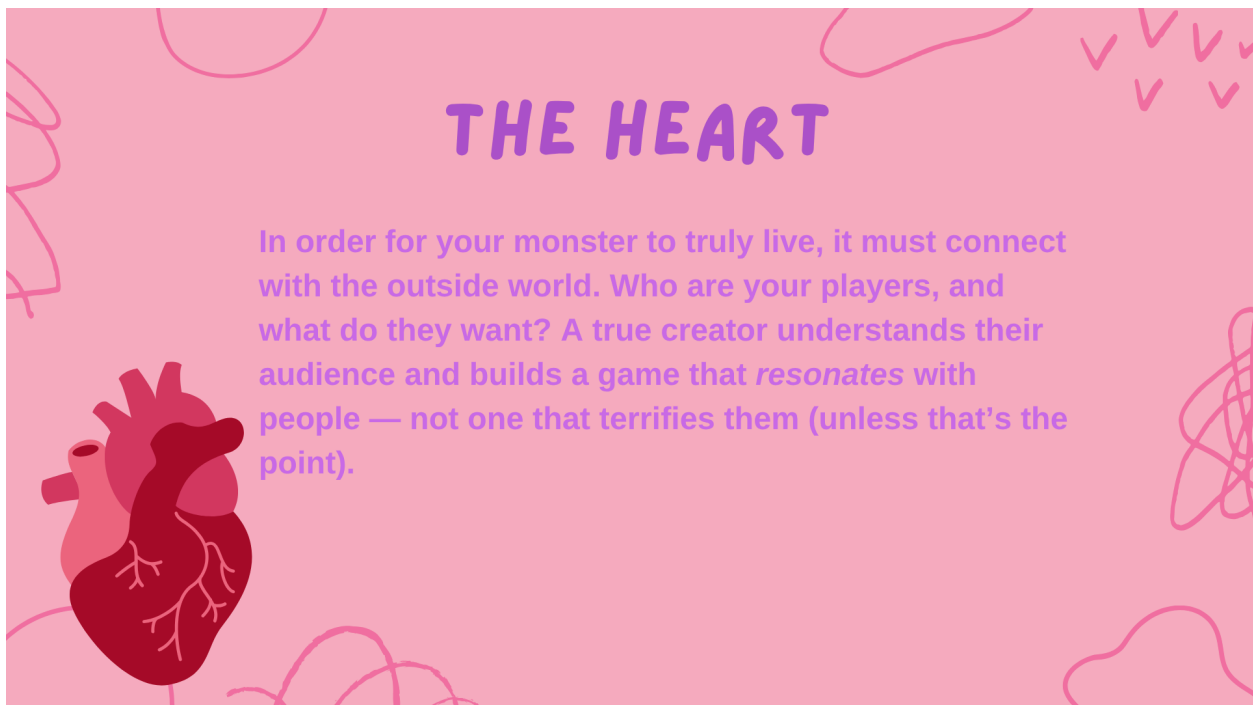
“If we were given a million dollars tomorrow, would we be able to handle it — and would we be the right people for the job?”

If the answer isn't a confident “yes,” it may be time to pause and re-evaluate. Every project should be approached seriously, with the long-term mindset that your game *could* become the next big success.

The people who make up your team are the true foundation of your monster. Choose them with care — because once the lightning strikes, there's no turning back.



The Heart:



In order for your monster to truly live, it must connect with the outside world. Who are your players, and what do they want? A true creator understands their audience and builds a game that *resonates* with people — not one that terrifies them (unless that's the point).

At the end of the day, *that* is the heart of game development: creating experiences that connect, engage, and evoke emotion. Ensuring your game development monster has a true and meaningful heart is vital — because players can always tell when it doesn't.

Know Who You're Creating For

As you develop your game, constantly ask yourself:

“Who is this for — and what does that person want?”

At a previous studio I worked at, we used *personas* to help define and empathise with our audience. A persona turns your *target market* or *target audience* into a believable, detailed person.

Give them:

- A name and job
- Hobbies and spending habits
- An idea of where they hang out and what games they play

By shaping your audience into a tangible person you could imagine meeting in real life, you'll better understand what motivates them — and how to make a game that speaks to their needs and interests.

Adopt a Player-First Mindset

Remember: the game you're making isn't necessarily for you. It's for the person who will *play* it.

If players can't find your game, relate to it, or enjoy it, then what's the point of making it? The reason we do what we do is to create experiences people love.

A **consumer-first mindset** keeps your development grounded and focused. It encourages you to tailor gameplay, narrative, and design choices to the needs and desires of your audience — the lifeblood that keeps your monster's heart beating.

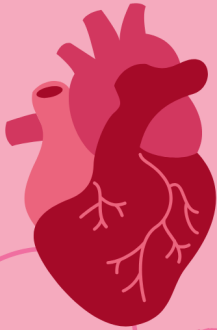
So as you develop and design, keep asking yourself:

“What would *my persona* prefer?”

THE HEART

Know Who You're Creating For

As you develop your game, constantly ask yourself:
"Who is this for — and what does that person want?"



Adopt a Player-First Mindset

Remember: the game you're making isn't necessarily
for you. It's for the person who will play it.

The Legs:

THE LEGS

Every monster needs a strong stance. Without a solid
foundation of policies, legal protections, and financial structure,
your entire creation risks collapsing into a heap of discarded
limbs.



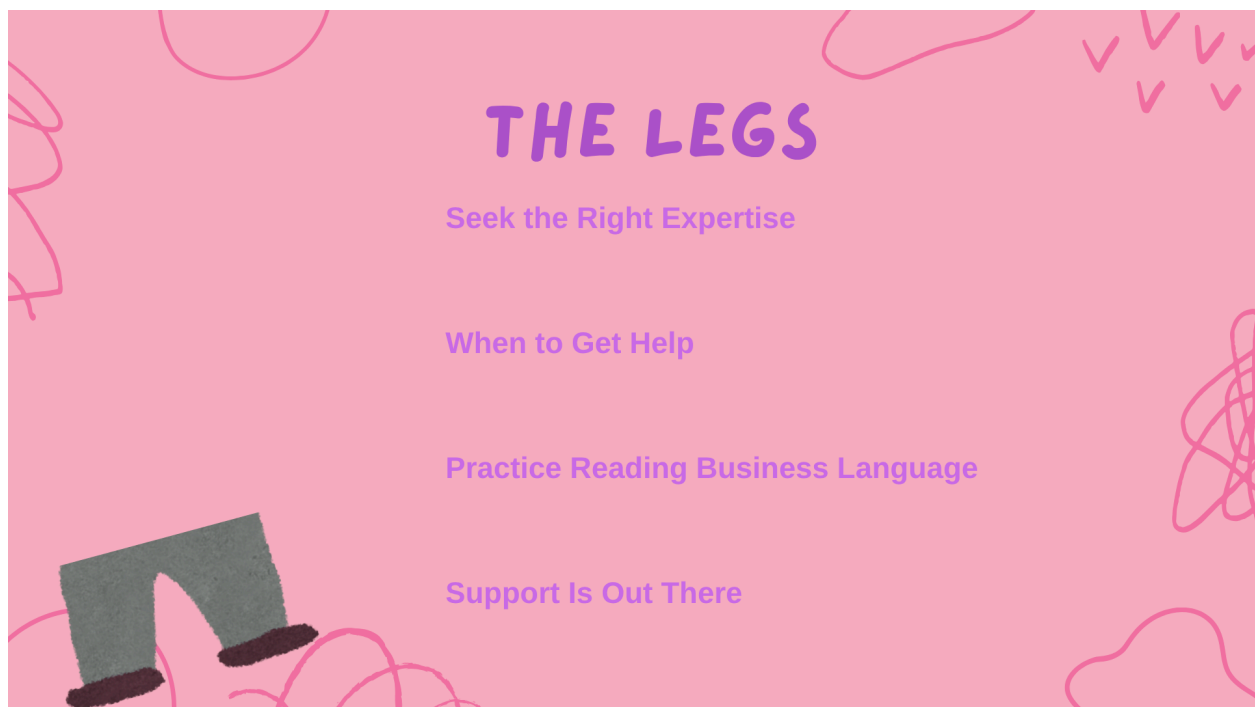
Building a Solid Foundation

Every monster needs a strong stance. Without a solid foundation of policies, legal protections, and financial structure, your entire creation risks collapsing into a heap of discarded limbs.

Establishing this foundation early in your project's life is essential — it gives your game development monster stability, direction, and the strength to stand tall under pressure.

And remember: always read your contracts — or risk being torched by an angry mob later.

> ⚠️ Disclaimer: I cannot give legal or financial advice. However, here are some publicly available resources and considerations to help guide you as you begin your journey.



Seek the Right Expertise!

Do your research. Look for publicly listed or community-recommended lawyers, accountants, and advisors who specialise in the games industry. These professionals can help you navigate everything from intellectual property to tax and funding obligations.

Be strategic about when and how you bring them on board. If you're unsure when to consult someone, ask your peers:

- When did they first engage legal or financial professionals?

- How much did it cost?
- What did they learn from the process?

You'll often find that talking to those who've already gone through it can save you time, money, and a lot of confusion.

When to Get Help

If you're looking for funding, negotiating a publishing deal, or have just received financial support — that's the time to ask questions.

Never be afraid to seek clarification. When someone shares a document, policy, or contract, you have every right to ask:

- "What does this mean?"
- "How does this affect me?"
- "Can you explain this in simpler terms?"

This isn't just acceptable — it's expected. Understanding what you're signing is a mark of professionalism, not inexperience.

Practice Reading Business Language

If you're not quite at that stage yet, here's a practical tip: practice reading and interpreting contracts in your everyday life.

This is what I do.

The next time you renew your phone plan or electricity contract, take a few minutes to actually read through it. Notice how clauses are worded, how responsibilities are framed, and how conditions are listed.

Becoming comfortable with the tone and rhythm of business or legal writing will make you far more confident when it's time to read real publishing or funding agreements.

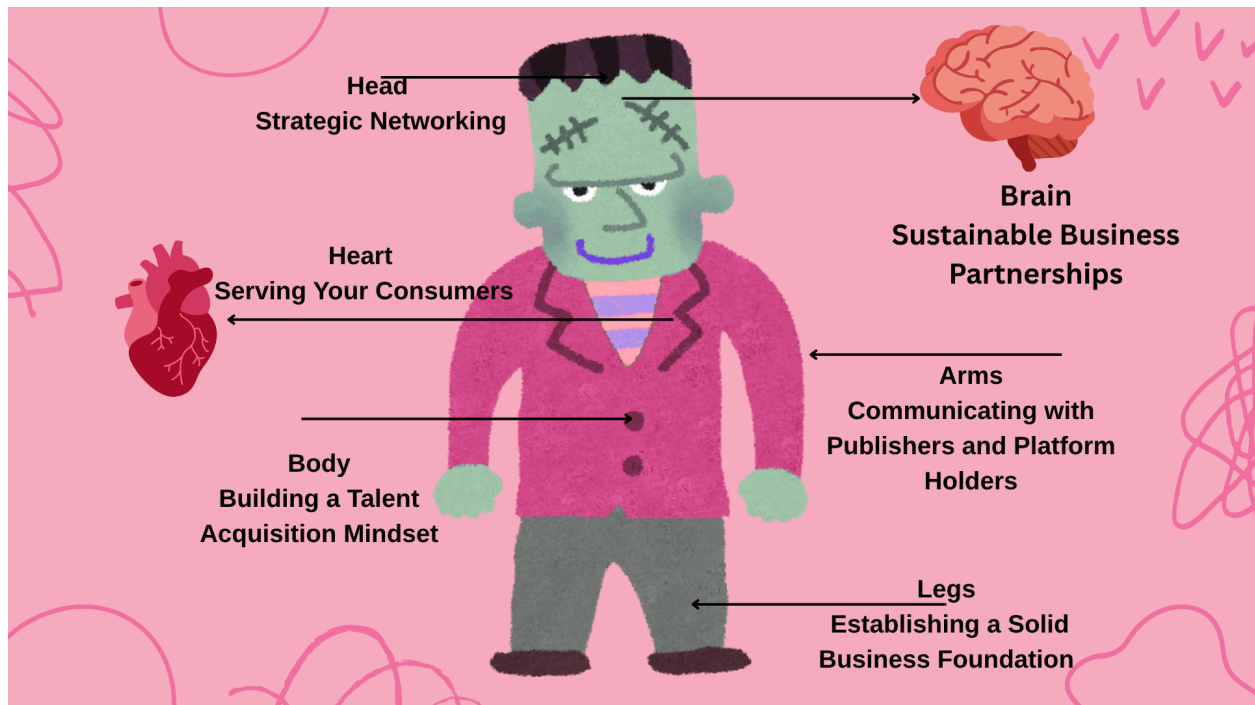
For example, I once reviewed a family member's car loan agreement and spotted a balloon payment — a large final payment they hadn't realised was part of their deal. They didn't catch it simply because they weren't used to business-style language. These documents aren't written in another language, but they do require practice to understand their cadence and structure.

So don't hesitate to ask questions and seek clarification — it's how you learn and protect yourself.

Support Is Out There

If you need free or low-cost advice, there are many public and not-for-profit organisations that can help. For instance, in Queensland, the Women's Legal Service and similar community legal centres often provide general guidance for creatives and small business owners.

⚡ IT'S ALIVE!! ⚡ Conclusion:



Conclusion: It's Alive!

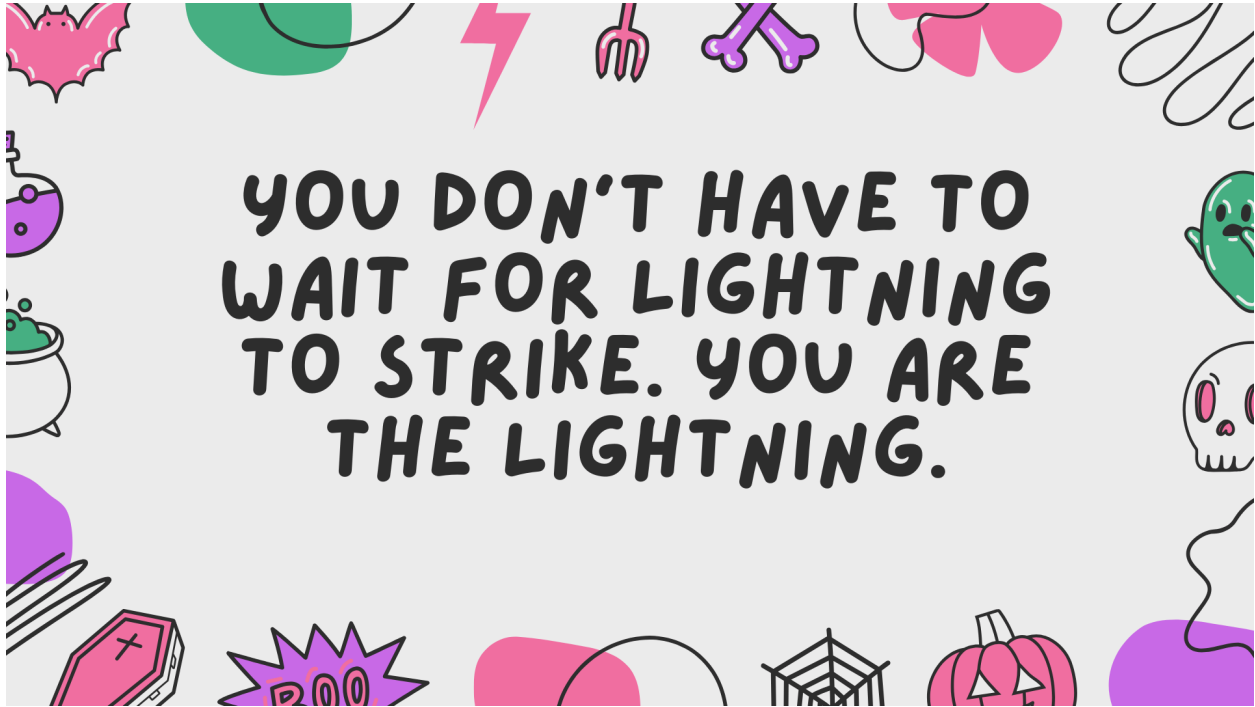
So, we've stitched together our monster — piece by piece. A head for strategy, a brain for business, arms that reach out to the world, a body made of collaboration, a heart that beats for players, and legs strong enough to stand on their own.

Like Victor Frankenstein, we've channelled lightning into our creation — but unlike him, we're not going to abandon it. The game development “monster” we build deserves care, structure, and vision. It's a living, evolving being made from our experiences, partnerships, and passions.

Becoming a true “monster of the industry” isn't about chaos or destruction — it's about creation. It's about taking the many fragmented parts of your career — networking, funding, publishing, teamwork, audience understanding, and business foundations — and stitching them into something that truly lives and lasts.

And remember:

“you don’t have to wait for lightning to strike. You are the lightning.”



So step into your lab, gather your parts, and get to work. Because the industry doesn’t need another Victor — it needs more monsters brave enough to come alive.



@basicallyfin



Linktree



Website

THANK YOU!



FINLEY CAMERON