

# Revenue Sharing Model for Plugin Creators: How Marketplaces' Monopoly Hinders Revenue Share

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# Revenue Sharing Model for Plugin Creators: How Marketplaces' Monopoly Hinders Revenue Share



This research attempts to reveal whether **creators of technical plugins are willing to distribute their products via revenue share and equity monetization models.**



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4-6

The revenue share model is an effective distribution tool **mainly for the B2B segment** where large companies are interested in custom integrations and have the resources to use the system. 80.lv's Instagram poll shows that **69% of plugin creators consider revenue share as an effective distribution tool.** The concept of revenue sharing allows software developers to participate in narrowly-focused projects from enterprise companies and avoid the risk of working for nothing while a big company makes "millions of euros" using a paid plugin as the core of their product. The **interviewees consider the possibility of using the revenue share system, but none of them have fully implemented this model.**

The **crucial conditions of using the revenue share model** if the plugin provides unique and technically attractive mechanics and features that could be the core part of the future game, long-term trusting relationships with partners, willingness to receive money later, and the possibility of performers to manage their budget. From a legal side, the customer and contractor should agree on the revenue share percentage and the profit threshold at which point payments would start. They should also have a clear reporting structure.



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7-8

Interviewees point out the **roadblocks** of working with the revenue share model: the main problem is that **making a profit depends on the success of other people.** There is no guarantee that the project will be successful and won't be canceled before its release. The second significant problem is the **profit calculation and financial transparency** when it comes to percentage-based payments. Checking and verifying profits requires **a lot of extra paperwork,** which overloads small development teams.



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9

**The majority of interviewees aren't familiar with the equity model** due to using other distribution systems that match the policies of platforms and marketplaces. Interviewees noticed that even if a company doesn't have funds, but offers an attractive project, they will consider the concept of receiving a share of equity instead of cash.



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9-11

Currently, most software plugins are distributed through marketplaces: the Unity Asset Store, Unreal Engine Marketplace, and several alternative ones such as Gumroad, Blender Market, and ArtStation. **Marketplaces have strict EULAs** and significantly **limit developers in a variety of monetization models.** For developers, only a fixed payment or subscription model is available. To be able to work with revenue share or equity distribution models, developers need to distribute plugins on their websites or small marketplaces without strict EULAs.

## Whom did we interview?



**Alex Petrenko**  
CEO  
ZIBRA.AI



**Alexander Puchka**  
Technical Director  
ZIBRA.AI



**Kostyantyn Tymoschuk**  
Head of Growth  
ZIBRA.AI



**Sergey Tyapkin**  
3D Artist & Concept Designer



**Pavel Klymentenko**  
CBDO & Co-Founder  
STAN'S ASSETS FROM KAPPS



**Alexey Yaremenko**  
CTO & Co-Founder  
STAN'S ASSETS FROM KAPPS



**Matteo Scappin**  
Founder & CTO  
MACHINA INFINITUM



**Roderick Kennedy**  
Founder & CEO  
SIMUL SOFTWARE



**Jens Bahr**  
Founder & Managing Director  
OFF THE BEATEN TRACK



**Vladimir Alyamkin**  
Deputy Director  
PUSHKIN STUDIO (MY.GAMES)



**Tomasz Bentkowski**  
Senior Lighting Artist  
RESPAWN ENTERTAINMENT



**Sarah Scialli**  
Game Director  
TINTED STARDUST

## Table of contents

**Advantages & Conditions of Revenue Share**

4-6

**Roadblocks**

7-8

**Marketplaces Restrictions**

9-11

## Key Takeaway #1: Advantages & Conditions of Revenue Share



The revenue share model is an effective distribution tool mainly for the B2B segment where large companies are interested in custom integrations and have the resources to use the system. 80.lv's Instagram poll shows that **69% of plugin creators consider revenue share as an effective distribution tool**. The concept of revenue sharing allows software developers to participate in narrowly-focused projects from enterprise companies and avoid the risk of working for nothing while a big company makes "millions of euros" using a paid plugin as the core of their product. The interviewees consider the possibility of using the revenue share system, but none of them have fully implemented this model.

The crucial conditions of using the revenue share model if the plugin provides unique and technically attractive mechanics and features that could be the core part of the future game, long-term trusting relationships with partners, willingness to receive money later, and the possibility of performers to manage their budget. From a legal side, the customer and contractor should agree on the revenue share percentage and the profit threshold at which point payments would start. They should also have a clear reporting structure.



**Alex Petrenko**

Zibra.AI  
CEO



**Alexander Puchka**

Zibra.AI  
Technical Director



**Kostyantyn Tymoschuk**

Zibra.AI  
Head of Growth

*The company was considering a model where a tool's developer receives royalties every time it is used in a game. For Zibra.AI, this model seems interesting, but it has a number of difficulties.*

*Revenue share may be interesting for large companies that will require custom integrations. Revenue share is attractive when a tool is part of the game's core mechanics, as well as when the studio itself can manage its own budget and isn't just sponsored by the publisher. When a developer agrees to revenue share, it is usually a B2B deal.*

*For Zibra.AI, a revenue share is an option that allows it to have more flexibility regarding the pricing of its products. Nevertheless, it is not the primary monetization model, and the specifics of each deal depend on the client and its project.*

**Sergey Tyapkin**

3D Artist &amp; Concept Designer

*Receiving profit from a big company through the revenue share system can be possible for the team because there can be more projects with a narrow profile.*

*The revenue share system is effective when a developer doesn't need money right now. If a person believes in his project and trusts partners, there will be high profit in the future.*

*Sergey thinks that there can be cases where small companies can trust the revenue share system. However, an external team that works on a project with a company should know about internal development processes.*

**Pavel Klymentenko**Stan's Assets from KAPPS  
CBDO & Co-Founder**Alexey Yaremenko**Stan's Assets from KAPPS  
CTO & Co-Founder

*For Stan's Assets from KAPPS, the terms of collaboration depend on the number of plugin tasks and the developer that makes an offer. The company would agree to the revenue share model if the task was technically interesting for them and there was a connection between them and the customer.*

**Matteo Scappin**Machina Infinitum  
Founder & CTO

*When the fractal plugin was released, the team was worried that some big studios could just buy it for €100 and then, by adding some small features and just investing a little time in it, they could sell a AAA game made primarily with this plugin. They could make millions of euros, but Machina Infinitum would get nothing. In this case, the company needs the revenue share model, but they can't do it legally because of marketplace policies.*



**Roderick Kennedy**

Simul Software  
Founder & CEO

*Revenue share is interesting, and it's something that Simul Software considered. They've investigated it since there is possibly a way to make things cheaper for indies. It's certainly something they would consider in the future*

*Roderick thinks that revenue share will work more effectively for larger companies that have the manpower and resources to do it.*

*To make revenue share more attractive, Simul Software would need a clear, set-out reporting structure.*



**Vladimir Alyamkin**

Pushkin Studio (MY.GAMES)  
Deputy Director

*The important aspect is the legal side: determining the share of income or profit from which a 5% commission will be withheld. This can be income from either a single project or the entire company.*



**Tomasz Bentkowski**

Respawn Entertainment  
Senior Lighting Artist

*Thomasz thinks the revenue share model can work with the condition that payment only begins at a certain level of profit (like the Unreal Engine).*

## Key Takeaway #2: Roadblocks



Interviewees point out the **roadblocks** of working with the revenue share model: the main problem is that **making a profit depends on the success of other people**. There is no guarantee that the project will be successful and won't be canceled before its release. The second significant problem is the **profit calculation and financial transparency** when it comes to percentage-based payments. Checking and verifying profits requires a lot of extra paperwork, which overloads small development teams.



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Head of Growth

*One problem of the revenue share monetization model is the difficulty of predicting a constant revenue flow. It is impossible to determine in advance whether a game will sell, and tools are sold at the content creation stage, which also makes it difficult to predict.*

*A huge number of different factors influence whether the project will succeed. Using advanced tools can save time, which can be focused on solving other issues; or improve performance in scenes, making it possible to add more content to a game, expand the installation base, or reduce the development costs. All of this increases the chances of success but does not guarantee it.*



**Sergey Tyapkin**  
3D Artist & Concept Designer

*Sergey noticed that being a freelancer and using the revenue share system is a risk because the product may not even be released.*



**Matteo Scappin**  
Machina Infinitum  
Founder & CTO

*Matteo supposes that the revenue share system doesn't work because, in the end, a platform gives away plugins for free and doesn't hear back from a user.*

*Sometimes, big YouTube channels can ask for a plugin for free in exchange for a video about it. In this case, each part has earned something.*

**Roderick Kennedy**Simul Software  
Founder & CEO

*The only challenge with revenue share is that it involves extra paperwork on the back end. You've got to be able to audit what the revenue is. As a small company, we don't really want that.*

*Revenue share is something that you need to track to be able to verify the revenue. So, that incurs an overhead by having to verify numbers from the customer.*

**Jens Bahr**Off The Beaten Track  
Founder & Managing Director

*At Off The Beaten Track, we are very hesitant to consider revenue shares. For example, one of the main reasons we're using Unity is that it has a fixed price - this makes calculations easy and predictable, whereas the price for the software would be a variable in our financial planning if it was based on revenue share, which makes it harder for us to calculate and track out expenses.*

**Vladimir Alyamkin**Pushkin Studio (MY.GAMES)  
Deputy Director

*Ready-made complex solutions using revenue share are easier to use than to create yourself. However, the larger the company, the less it wants to depend on third-party developers and payments.*

*The gaming market on mobile devices, starting from the middle level, is not interested in using revenue share due to the large volume of monetary transactions in this area. It is convenient for companies to buy either upfront or via a subscription.*

**Sarah Scialli**Tinted Stardust  
Game Director

*As an indie developer, Sarah thinks that using the revenue share model for plugins is unnecessarily complicated. It would be one more accounting section that seems like more trouble than it's worth. She would rather make a one-time payment for any turnkey solution.*




**Key Takeaway #4: Marketplaces restrictions**




Currently, most software plugins are distributed through marketplaces: the Unity Asset Store, Unreal Engine Marketplace, and several alternative ones such as Gumroad, Blender Market, and ArtStation. **Marketplaces have strict EULAs and significantly limit developers in a variety of monetization models.** For developers, only a fixed payment or subscription model is available. To be able to work with revenue share or equity distribution models, developers need to distribute plugins on their websites or small marketplaces without strict EULAs.


**Xsolla can help developers with analytics and profit calculation, as well as secure payments. Also, Xsolla could provide marketing support for promoting and distributing plugins through developers' own websites.**



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Zibra.AI  
CEO



**Alexander Puchka**  
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Technical Director




**Kostyantyn Tymoschuk**  
Zibra.AI  
Head of Growth

*The Zibra Liquids solution is currently distributed on the Unity Asset Store, and will soon be available on the Unreal Marketplace as well. The purchase of a tool is carried out by fixed price due to marketplace restrictions (only developers or publishers who join the Unity VSP Program can sell goods on a subscription basis , they use their own infrastructure for this).*

*The next step will be joining the VSP program, transferring the products to the company's website, and selling technologies and solutions on a subscription model. For example, the newest version of Zibra Liquids, Zibra Liquids PRO, which has much more powerful functionality and broader platform support, will be sold on a subscription basis. Besides that, ZibraAI is also focused on custom B2B integrations. It's an additional business stream that deals with unique features creation and integration of ZibraAI solutions to other custom engines.*

*Most developers want to buy assets for a fixed price. Indie developers try to find free assets. All large companies resort to the use and integration of external tools. For example, for cutscenes, everyone buys video codecs. As a rule, such companies buy resources on a subscription model.*

*All large companies resort to the use and integration of external tools. For example, for cutscenes, everyone buys video codecs. As a general rule, they buy resources on a subscription model.*



**Sergey Tyapkin**  
3D Artist & Concept Designer

*Plugins are sold on platforms such as Gumroad and Blender Market. Gumroad pays money directly to the account, whereas Blender Market allows you to distribute income between several participants.*



**Pavel Klymentenko**  
Stan's Assets from KAPPS  
CBDO & Co-Founder



**Alexey Yaremenko**  
Stan's Assets from KAPPS  
CTO & Co-Founder

*Stan's Assets creates plugins, and some of them are in the Unity Asset Store. Alexey and Pavel rethought the business concept in terms of plugins and decided to make them open-source.*

*Users can download free plugins from the company's GitHub account, OpenUPM, and npmjs.com. Only npmjs.com offers analytics on the number of downloads.*

*Stan's Assets have open source plugins as well as paid plugins, which are available on the Unity Asset Store (fixed payment model). Paid plugins implement native functionality.*

*Compared to paid plugins in the Unity Asset Store, which offer minimal support, creating open-source plugins leads to mutually beneficial cooperation between the company and developers around the world. If the company takes the needs of the market into account and gives users the opportunity to try interesting plugins, they will give the studio feedback. Also, people cannot expect free plugins to be released frequently, and the company cannot ask for quick feedback.*



**Matteo Scappin**  
Machina Infinitum  
Founder & CTO

*Machina Infinitum uses the Unreal Engine Marketplace hosted by Epic Games because it can bring the company more exposure than other platforms like Gumroad or ArtStation.*

*At the moment, the Unreal Engine Marketplace doesn't allow the company to use the subscription model. However, Matteo and his colleague had an idea of making such a system. For example, someone could publish a product and, for €100 euros, only allow it to be used non-commercially; for €200 euros, it could be used commercially, and if the buyer's business brings in more than, say, a million euros in a year, the price would go up to €400 euros. Many companies use this model but, for now, Machina Infinitum has to stay under the terms of the Unreal Engine Marketplace.*

*The company just started to promote plugins through another marketplace — Gumroad. They are also going to do this away from marketplaces, but they have to keep the same features on all the platforms.*

*The only difference now is that a user can choose between Gumroad or the Unreal Engine Marketplace. However, one of these platforms can change the license terms. So, in the next update, the company will roll out plugins on Gumroad first and the Unreal Engine Marketplace later.*

**Roderick Kennedy**

Simul Software  
Founder & CEO

*The company doesn't prefer to use marketplaces like the Unity Asset Store and the Unreal Engine Marketplace because they are based on a standard license agreement. Roderick's company sells software that should be integrated into a final product, so the studio doesn't offer such a basic IP license.*

*The studio did experiment with the Unity Asset Store, but the system was difficult to use because it was slower to get updates to people. The store was also automated so, if something went wrong with the distribution process on the store, it was very hard to get support. For these reasons, the company decided to build their own distribution channel. It allows them to make more sales directly on their website.*

## 80 Level Team:

Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.



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