

May 2nd 2013 - That's almost two years ago and that's when it all started... with this simple one-line email query to a company named Shephertz:

“Does your technology help with two-player turn-based async games?”

The Shephertz sales team responded that same day that what I was asking was indeed possible with their technology. The same day I sent a few more emails specifying that I was using Unity to create an online multiplayer game for iOS and OSX. And again, on that very same day, the sales team assured me that what I wanted to do was all possible. And they gave me URLs to sections on their excellent website that addressed all my needs. They even had a Unity SDK. YES!

Since it has been a good while, I forget how I first found out about Shephertz, but after this unusually quick response to my email questions, the breadth and depth of the services listed on Shephertz's website, I was very happy that I found Shephertz.

I was very happy that I did find Shephertz because it was about two years ago that I decided to add online multiplayer to my game so I started looking for a solution and there were a lot of companies offering various services. But none of them offered exactly what I needed. Some services offered social aspects like leader boards, posting high scores to Facebook. Others offered pure networking, but no matchmaking. Apple's GameCenter service came the closest to what I needed but the most important thing was lacking: cross-platform on-line multiplayer. I wanted to get my game on all platforms: web, iOS, Mac, Android, etc. and I wanted players on any device or any system to be able to play online multiplayer games. Shephertz was the only company that offered everything that I needed.

Browsing the Shephertz website I was amazed at what I saw. There was a broad selection of services. Everything was covered! Networking, real-time gaming services, turn-based gaming services, database services, social services, matchmaking, email services. SDKs for every platform. EVERYTHING! I could not find anything that was not covered. Also the website had a massive number of in-depth tutorials, how-tos, advice. etc. A developer with no experience developing online multiplayer games could learn all he or she needed without ever leaving the Shephertz website.

I was amazed... and a bit worried. Was this too good to be true?

No! It was all true. And even with all that good stuff, there is still something better... Shephertz's SERVICE! Through the two years I've been developing my game I feel like the whole Shephertz organization was by my side... helping me, mentoring me, teaching me the basics of developing an online multiplayer game. They always responded promptly, with details. No canned responses to support questions here. Nope! I could tell that they really READ and gave a lot of THOUGHT to my questions. And over the many months of development sometimes I'd lose track of what I was doing and ask the same questions again. And the Shephertz team would always kindly answer. These guys are great!

Also a few times early on I had some problems with the SDK not being able to do what I needed it to do, and almost overnight they'd either fix the problem (if it was a problem) or make a custom dll for me. What other company, without charge, will customize a dll to meet a customer's needs? None that I ever had any experience with. They even went as far as amending a few API calls and rewording the explanations of some APIs to make them more clear.

Well here it is two years later. My game The Octagon Theory 3 is on both the iOS and Mac app stores and I doubt that it'd be there without

Shephertz. And you know what else. Shephertz has never asked for any payment for any support. Thank all of you at Shephertz so much.

Now maybe you are wondering why it took so long for me to get my game on the App Stores (about 2.5 years). Well, for one thing. I never made an online multiplayer game before. Another thing is that the basic mechanics and game play was 99% complete and designed without online multiplayer in mind.

(If I can offer any advice, even if you are designing a single-player game, design it from the start with online multiplayer in mind because you never know what the future may bring...you may change your mind and want to add online multiplayer.)

A few of the most time consuming and toughest and things I dealt with were:

1. Handling various unexpected events. e.g. Since The Octagon Theory 3 supports 2 to 4-player matches, what should I do if one or more players loses connectivity or leaves the game before it finishes. Shephertz's AppWarp service covered every conceivable eventuality.
2. In-app purchases. Actual purchasing and billing have nothing to do with Shephertz but The Octagon Theory 3 uses Apple's store and its non-renewing subscription model (pay a few bucks for two months of online multiplayer service), and Apple has certain requirements when using such a model. One is not requiring a user to give out any personal information, and not requiring a user to register on any server. Another requirement is giving users the ability to restore purchases in case they lose their mobile device and need to re-enable multiplayer on their new device. So I had to figure out a way to allow users who bought the online multiplayer service, but didn't register, to play online games. And I had to figure out a way to

handle the users who decided to register when buying, and how to handle users who decided to register later. And since registering enabled the restore purchase ability. I had to deal with valid and expired subscriptions. Shephertz's App42 service enabled me to handle it all.

And the good people at Shephertz were always there, going out of their way to help me solve these issues, even when such issues were not really part of the services that Shephertz offered.

So to sum it all up: Shephertz provides every online game service that anyone could ever need. Shephertz is one the best technical services companies I have ever dealt with. And Shephertz's customer service is the BEST of ANY company I have dealt with... EVER!