

PLAYDAWN

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Short Contracts and Missing Budgets: What an Indie Game Community's Job Boards Show About Hiring in India

Summary

We read every job post shared in the job channels of one large Indian indie game developer community that our founder belongs to, from late October 2025 to early November 2026. After removing repeats and posts that had nothing to do with games or interactive tech, about 50 posts came from people hiring and about 45 came from people looking for work.

about 50

hiring posts read, October 2025 to November 2026

over 20

asked for contract, freelance or project work

1

company posted a salary range

Four things stood out

01 Short work is the most common kind. Over 20 of the hiring posts asked for contract, freelance or single project work, often for one to three months or one deliverable. Only about 10 said full time.

02 Pay is almost never stated. Only one company posted a salary range.

03 Unity and Unreal are asked for in about equal measure, but for different jobs. Unity posts were mostly gameplay programming. Unreal posts were mostly UI, HUD, environments and VFX.

04 A new kind of role has arrived. At least 5 posts were for generative AI production work: AI film pipelines, prompt work and tool building.

This paper explains each finding, what it means for studios that hire and for people looking for work, and the limits of the data.

Where the data comes from

The community has separate job channels by discipline. We read what they held for one member, from October 2025 to November 2026. We counted posts, not people, and treated the same post shared in two channels as one. We did not count replies, greetings or event notices.

No names, company details, numbers, links or quotes from the posts appear here, and we do not name the community. Where a group is smaller than 5 posts we do not give a number.

This is one community, so it shows indie and small studio hiring more than large studio hiring. Large studios mostly hire through their own careers pages and recruiters.

Finding 1: most work is short and scoped

Of about 50 hiring posts, over 20 described contract, freelance or project work. Typically a post asked for one game feature, one set of art, one environment or a month of work, with a chance of more later. Only about 10 posts said full time. The rest did not say.

What this means for studios: many people in these channels already work this way, so a short, clearly scoped job is normal to them. Name the deliverable, the length and the tool.

What this means for people looking: a portfolio that shows finished, scoped pieces (a level, a character set, a VFX pack) matches how these jobs are written.

Finding 2: budgets are missing

Only one company stated pay. Everyone else left it out, and when someone asked about budget in a thread, they were usually told to wait for the interview or send a private message.

Our own candidate conversations show the cost of this. Pay is one of the first two questions candidates ask a recruiter (see our separate report on candidate questions). A post without a range pushes that question into private messages and slows everything down.

What this means for studios: a range, even a wide one, saves a round of messages with every applicant.

Finding 3: Unity and Unreal, used for different work

Unity was named in about 8 hiring posts, most of them gameplay or mobile programming. Unreal was named in about 7, most of them UI and HUD implementation, environments, VFX and testing.

People looking for work were mostly Unity developers. Of the seeking posts that named an engine, Unity came up far more often than Unreal. That gap suggests Unreal UI and environment skills are harder to find in this community than Unity programming.

Finding 4: generative AI production roles

At least 5 posts asked for generative AI production work, for artists using AI image and video tools and for developers building pipelines around them. These came mostly from film and video teams, and they appeared from December 2025 onward.

Studios hiring for these roles should expect candidates to ask about the tool stack and how the work will be credited.

Finding 5: people looking for work

About 45 posts came from people looking for work or posting for a friend. Common patterns:

- Mid level developers asking for referrals.
- People affected by layoffs, and former colleagues trying to help them.
- Career changers asking for feedback on a CV. The usual advice was to make dates and titles match and to prove claims with numbers.

What studios can take from this

01	Put the scope, the length and the engine in the first line.
02	Give a pay range.
03	Say where the work happens: remote, hybrid or a named city.
04	Ask for one portfolio link that opens on a phone.

What people looking for work can take from this

01	Lead with the one thing you have shipped or finished.
02	Show scoped pieces that look like the jobs being posted.
03	If you work in Unreal UI, environments or VFX, say so plainly. Fewer people offer it.
04	Ask for the budget early and politely. Most posts will not give it.

Limits

One community, one member's message history, about 95 posts in total. The counts are rough because many posts did not state the work type or the pay. Treat the numbers as a picture of indie hiring, not of the whole Indian games industry.

Playdawn was founded in 2016 and recruits for games, interactive tech and robotics.

About Playdawn

Playdawn hires for games, interactive tech and robotics, and has done so since 2016. We find, assess and place specialists for studios in India and abroad.

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