

Chicago-based LyteShot wants to take mobile gaming off the tiny screen

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The kind of mobile gaming Mark Ladd and Tom Ketola have dreamed of for years is a lot more physical than twiddling with Candy Crush.

That's why the Chicago-based gaming industry veterans have launched LyteShot, a [gaming platform](#) that will use smartphones for high-tech versions of live-action play, in which participants take on the roles of game characters and often vie against other participants.

The company's recently launched Kickstarter campaign, aims to raise \$168,534 for its first round of hardware sets. The basic set, which costs \$125 or \$150, includes a handheld device and receiver set that use Infrared and Bluetooth technologies to communicate with smartphones and other hardware.

Ketola said: "If you went back to (2001) and told people, 'I'm going to give you a device that you can stick in your hand that has more rendering power than you've got on your console, and it's got GPS, and it's got Internet speeds better than what you get at home - what kind of games are you going to play with it?' They probably would not answer, 'Puzzle games while I wait in line.'"

LyteShot's first game is a version of Assassin, a live-action game in which participants aim to eliminate each other, which is available as an app on Google Play and iTunes. The company has also worked with Chris Weed and Joe Sklover, part of the team that created live-action tag [game](#) Humans vs. Zombies, to create Invasion, in which players will

battle a swarm of viruses taking over the planet.

Sklover said LyteShot opens the door for new types of live-action games.

"It kind of brings a new level of fantasy and things that are not physically available in the real world," Sklover said. "You can bridge the gap between reality and fantasy. How else would you depict a viral invasion?"

Ladd and Ketola have built an open-source software platform as a way to draw other developers to create games. The hardware side of the platform will also be open-source, allowing makers to design and 3D-print wands or swords that can integrate with games.

"We're trying to fashion a new segment in the gaming market," Ladd said. "Taking alternate reality games and really bringing them to the forefront and allowing people - because it is open source - to develop whatever games they want."

Initially, LyteShot's business will come from hardware sales, but eventually the company will charge a [subscription fee](#) to developers hosting successful games through the platform. The company also hopes to monetize the platform with in-app purchases, like the ability to buy new skills or a clue about an opponent's location, the founders said.

"We will help people get up and running, and help them get their games out there onto iTunes and Google Play," Ladd said. "And only after they start getting traction will there be a subscription fee. The more successful they get, the more bandwidth required for servers."

Sets should ship in August and September, the founders said.

Tom Eastman, president of Chicago indie gaming developer Trinket

Studios, said he could see people embracing LyteShot as a return to physical real-life gaming.

"We've kind of transitioned from always playing outside or reading books to staring at screens for most of our entertainment," Eastman said. "I think if LyteShot can remind people of that nostalgic time in their lives when they did play outside - selling a future (with) the good parts of the past but better with computers - that's where (LyteShot) could really succeed."

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