

FACT SHEET

Company Name

Fireside Games

Motto

Bring fun home!

Company Snapshot

Fireside Games is a U.S.-based board game publishing company owned and operated by Justin and Anne-Marie De Witt. The company, based in Austin, Texas, published their first game, *Castle Panic*, in 2009. Since then, several *Panic* expansions and variations as well as other titles have won numerous toy and game industry awards in the U.S. and France.



Company Values

Like sitting by a cozy fireplace, folks all over the world have shared how Fireside Games helps them reconnect with friends and family, even in this hectic, digital world. The game publisher is committed to bringing joy and shared experiences anywhere and everywhere through board, card and dice games. The De Witts are proud of the experiences they create through their category of fun, innovative, accessible games for everyone.

Products

Castle Panic 2nd Edition	Castle Panic: The Wizard's Tower
Castle Panic: Engines of War	Castle Panic: Crowns and Quests
Castle Panic: The Dark Titan	My First Castle Panic
Bears! Dice Game	Bears! Trail Mix'd
Dastardly Dirigibles	Grackles
Here, Kitty Kitty!	Stringamajig

Key Retail Categories

Educational, specialty, cooperative games, board games, card games, dice games, family games, strategy games, toys

Target Audience

Casual board game hobbyists and kitchen table players: families, preschoolers, tweens, teens, young adults, grandparents

Awards

Mom's Choice, Tillywig Awards, The Dice Tower, Hot Diggity, Origins Award Nominee and As d'Or Cannes 2022 Nominee

News Clip

Castle Panic Is A Gateway To Co-Op Board Games, Now It's Even Better
In a time before crowdfunding, one couple rolled the dice on an unproven concept
www.polygon.com/23484664/castle-panic-second-edition-preview-interview-release-date-price

Fun Factor

Goblins, Trolls, Orcs, Bears and Cats are waiting to come to family game night or a slumber party! Fireside Games serves up wholesome fun for everyone in the home with the most unusual board game guests. Example: Here, Kitty Kitty! announces your neighborhood has a cat problem. The problem is they don't all belong to YOU! Everyone in the 'hood wants to claim those adorable felines for themselves. Outwit your friends as you lure cats onto your property, into your house or steal cats from next-door. Meow!

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BACKGROUNDER

Ever wonder who thinks up board games like *Castle Panic* where players must work together to defend their castle from endless waves of attacking goblins and trolls? The husband-and-wife duo, Justin and Anne-Marie De Witt have been dreaming up scenarios and then publishing beloved tabletop games since 2009.

“When I earned my MFA in creative writing, I imagined myself writing short stories and teaching literature,” revealed Anne-Marie. “Instead, it’s been a pleasure to constantly be hearing stories of families enchanted by our games.” Likewise, Justin dreamed of working for Disney and yet, his imaginative game characters are found in households everywhere.

Their Austin, Texas-based company, Fireside Games, launched *Castle Panic* 14 years ago and is now considered a classic in the toy and game world. This award-winning boxed game is hard to keep in stock. Their very first print run of 3,500 games sold out in just 10 weeks!

Now in its Second Edition, *Castle Panic* has been refreshed with new characters and visual and graphic upgrades. Towers are being destroyed, monsters are coming out of the forest and players are given quests to complete before an orc or goblins gets to the castle walls. All of this fantasy is exactly why *Castle Panic* and its many expansion forms – *Castle Panic: Wizard’s Tower*; *Castle Panic: The Dark Titan*; *Castle Panic: Engines of War*; *Castle Panic: Crowns and Quests* are so universal, whether the player is 8 years old or 80 years old!

“When designing a game, I start with either a game mechanic that I’m interested in or a theme that appeals to me,” Justin explained to *Mom’s Choice Award* judges, having received top honors for its preschool coop game, *My First Panic Castle*. “I meld an initial mechanic and theme together pretty early since each one informs the other in the development of the game. I work on it independently until I feel like I’m ready for additional input. Then, the first person I share my design with is Anne-Marie, who has gone on to design a few games for our company catalog as well. When we both agree on how the game design feels, I reach out to a community of board gamers to get outside feedback.”

“For *My First Castle Panic*, that meant going to local daycare centers as well as asking non-local parents to print and play the game with their kids. We knew the game was going to be a hit when the kids played the game for hours on end and called out to each other to teach them without any input from us beyond the first turn.”

“Sometimes great ideas come from spontaneous play,” explained Justin. “One of the preschoolers came up with the idea of having a dungeon to throw the monsters into, and I decided the bottom of the box could be repurposed well for that. The nice side-effect of having the dungeon in the box is that you actually put the game away as you play!”

In addition to strategic board games, Fireside publishes dice and card games. The dice game *Bears!* offers a 20-minute round of escapism where you and your friends have gone camping, and bears attack the campsite. Then *Bears!* becomes a frantic dice-pairing frenzy! Everyone pairs dice at the same time to shoot bears or run away for low, sure points or to try to sleep through the attack for big points. But if bears are left unpaired, those sleepers are eaten!

A round of *Grackles* is for the birds – literally! In this lightly themed abstract strategy game, you’ll line up as many of your birds on the telephone wire to score as many points as possible. Each turn, players choose between drawing and placing a tile, connecting 2 spots on the telephone wire with their birds, extending a line of birds, or rotating an empty tile. After the board has been built to 5 tiles by 5 tiles and all available pairs of spots on the telephone wire have birds on them, the player with the most birds on the telephone wire is the winner.

Fireside Games hit that sweet spot of fun, intrigue and old-fashion tabletop adventure.

Families can find the assortment of Fireside Games on their website, at Walmart.com and Target.com plus select Barnes & Noble locations. Neighborhood specialty toy and game retailers from Manchester, NH to San Diego, CA have been carrying their games for over a decade. Their website also boasts a global map -- <https://firesidegames.com/where-to-buy/> -- that showcases their impressive fanbase from the U.S. to Canada, Mexico, Central America, South America, and Europe!



**fireside
games**

BIOGRAPHIES

Anne-Marie De Witt

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

This CEO's early career path did not have Board Game Publisher on her bingo card! But publishing was definitely in her future. The Alpha Phi Omega coed earned an M.A. in Communication Disorders Sciences and Services from Abilene Christian University and became a speech-language pathologist in Renton, Washington where she met her future husband, Justin. A few years later she graduated with an MFA in Creative Writing from Texas State University. In the Lone Star State, she made stops as Senior Editor, Executive Editor, and VP of Product Development at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) and PCI Educational Publishing.



Being married to a game designer eventually brought her to being co-owner and chief executive of Fireside Games in Austin, Texas. As a jack-of-all-trades professional in the board game industry, she utilizes her skills in business, marketing and editorial. Her focus is on finances and she guides the company's strategy development. She also, as she says, "pitches in wherever necessary."

If she could have any superpower, it would be regeneration. Then again, having spent many years with her award-winning board game *Castle Panic* with its orcs, trolls and goblins, she reveals that she wouldn't say no to fire-breathing either! On a personal note, she loves short stories, '70s music, camping, and high ROI.

Justin De Witt

Chief Creative Officer (CCO)

Some parents joke that they hope their kid will grow up to be a rocket scientist but for this CCO, he already lived with one – his dad! He spent his youth in Los Alamos, NM and Seattle, WA. In Washington, he met his future wife, Anne-Marie, when they were both working at Valley Medical Center in Renton. She was a speech-language pathologist, and he was training staff on new software to schedule patients.

But once he earned his dual degrees in graphic design and illustration at Western Washington University, he went on to pursue animation and made the move to Texas. The soon-to-be game designer made his first career stop at the Austin, Texas-based maker of multimedia games and business applications, Human Code Inc. He stayed in Austin but jumped to Steve Jackson Games where themes of dungeons, battles, wars and even world domination played out on board game tables. He packed up his design skills and served as Senior Visual Designer at Fusion Learning Systems before starting his own board game company, Fireside Games.

For someone that designs games every day, it makes sense that this CCO spends a lot of his time rolling dice and as he admits, "mumbling to himself." As the primary game designer, graphic designer, and production artist, he wears many hats – although strangely enough, he never wears actual hats. His love of giant robots, monsters, and spaceships are transformed into board games and card games for every age and ability.

His skills in Game Design, Art Direction, Graphic Design, Product Development, and Adobe products have earned Fireside Games national and global recognition. In Cannes, France last year his *My First Panic Castle* coop game for preschoolers was nominated for the 2022 As d'Or – France's game of the year award. Magnifique!