

Mobile Game Design

**(How to Start Your Own Mobile
Game Company)**

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Why Start a Mobile Game Company

Game Developer's Dream

Game developers are the new rock stars...except the stakes are higher, revenues bigger, and impact greater.

While music is listened to mainly in the background, games are the primary way people will interact, communicate, and do work in the future.

There is a huge shift in the industry and society at large: from the industrial age, to the digital age. This paradigm shift, just as other paradigm shifts, offers numerous opportunities to young and motivated people. In fact, in a paradigm shift, experience may be detrimental.

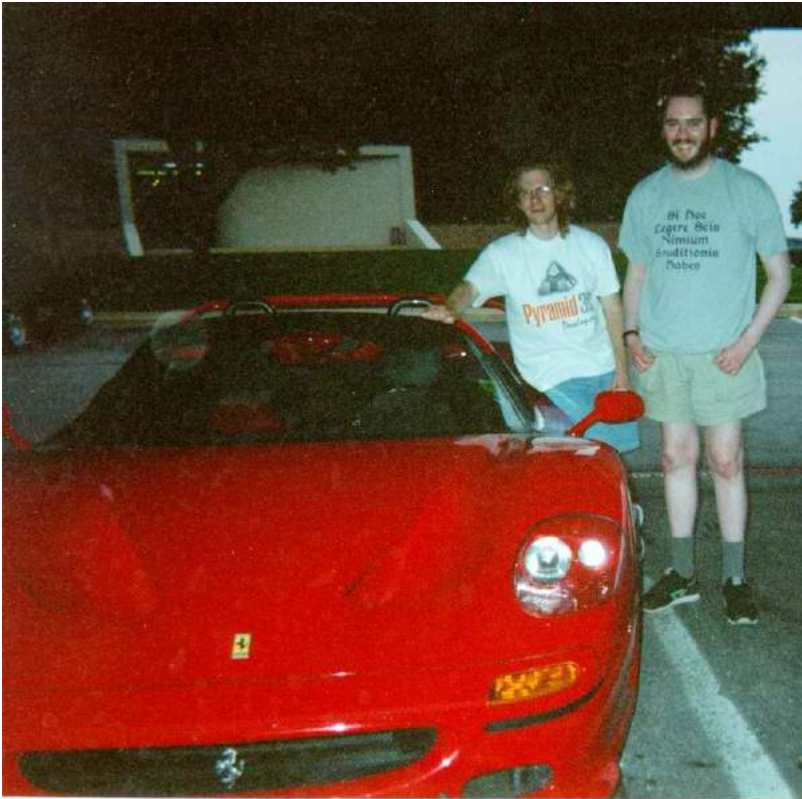
As a motivated person, you have nothing to lose, so you have everything to gain. You are not tied down by old ways of thinking, acting, and doing things. There is a green field ahead of you, and this is your chance.

There is another paradigm shift happening in computer usage: the shift from personal computers to mobile devices. Most people used personal computers mainly to work and to communicate with friends and family, and now smartphones are increasingly allowing for all these activities to the point at which some people are running their businesses from their phone.

This shift has already taken place in Japan, where social networks now see over 90% of their visitors coming from mobile phones.

As more people spend their time on mobile phones, there is a huge opportunity for student game developers to start their own mobile game companies.

You can develop an app, game, and community that you will be passionate about and that will keep a lot of people happy. As this book is written, there are numerous teams of one or two persons making thousands of dollars each day working on games they love.



John Carmack and his friend standing next to their Ferrari earned from their games.

The distribution, game design, and business models have changed drastically over the past few years. As long as you are current on these

trends, you can run a successful game/app company and retire in a few years.

Imagine a life where you get up around 2 pm, work on your game, make some money, chill for a while, and then interact with your community. People are already doing this and you can too.

Why You are Perfect for Starting a Mobile Game Company

The great thing about the mobile revolution is that it is perfect for individuals and small teams of 2 to 5 people. It's not about having a perfect game from the start. It is about iteration, learning, and changing habits, and these are much easier for individuals and small teams.

Additionally, people who play these games enjoy the community aspect of the games. If you can make a social space in your game, that can be more valuable than being a traditional, well-known brand.

Of course quality matters, but it can be achieved over time, and people are interested in responsiveness more than they are in quality or tradition. As long as you respond and adapt to your community's requests, your players will be willing to play.

Unlike previously popular games that had high-quality 3D graphics, games that are now succeeding on mobile devices are fun, engaging, and usually have a social aspect. In these new games, communication matters more than graphics. If people can play with others in your game, that's more important than having super 3D models.

Whereas development of previous games may have required hundreds of people, these new games only require a small team. A lot of artwork and sound is available cheaply online.

In fact, in case with game and app development, too many people on your team can be counterproductive. Having to coordinate too many people can slow you down and you may not be able to maintain the speed of change that is needed to inspire your community. The less people you have on the team, the easier it is to change and adapt.

Finally, even if you don't want to run your mobile game company long term, you will still get an awesome experience that will make you way more likely to get an internship or a job in the game industry.

Running your own mobile app/game company will look great on your resume and will help you stand out from the crowd.

It's Possible

If you're willing to learn and iterate on your game concept, you can succeed. Keep in mind that some of the most famous mobile games came from companies that did many other, not so successful games, before they finally succeeded.

Angry Birds was Rovio's 52nd game. Doodle Jump was Lima Sky's 12th game.

The important thing is that they kept at it. They learned from their previous games and were getting ready to create a game that became a hit.

But it all starts with your first game; it will get your company's name out there, and you'll be able to learn from your players' feedback.

Designing Your Company's First Game

Now let's talk about creating your first game. The main goal is to create something innovative. Sure, clones can have some success, but the goal is to make a name for your company, to stand out from the crowd, and to inspire fans to create a conference around your game. Sure, borrow some inspiration, but create something unique and compelling that will get people passionate about your game company.



World of Warcraft fans dressed up for a fan conference

Blizzard has its own conference, where World of Warcraft players meet. Make a game that will inspire your players to meet on their own conference :)

The success of your game is going to require 3 important aspects:

- a) Theme
- b) Style
- c) Gameplay

Choosing the right theme is very important as it can attract a lot more players to your game. You can have the same gameplay, but a different theme and you'll get 5 to 10 times more players.

For example, let's say you have some core game mechanics for a game. Then you take that game and wrap a theme around it. You make one variation of the game with a theme of wizards and then you make another variation of the game with a farm theme. The farm theme may outperform the wizard theme 25 to 1, even if they have exactly the same gameplay.

Choose a universal theme that works.

An important aspect of game development is to create your own style, that is, to infuse your/team's personality into the game. Having a sense of humor, or whatever else you are passionate about, fused into the game will give your game a sense of unique identity. It will help your game stand out, and this is very important.

Gameplay is important as it can help structure new and compelling experiences. Those are experiences that keep players coming back, that inspire them to share your game with friends, and that make people's lives better.

Creating awesome gameplay requires a solid understanding of the game design for mobile devices, so let's jump into the game design next :)

Getting Started

Before we get into game design, we need to take a quick detour. The goal of this book is to inspire you and your friends to make an awesome mobile game/app company.

Whereas most other books focus on concepts, the goal of this book is to show you how to execute and implement those concepts. The strategy is to get a game up and running as quickly as possible and then iterate on the design based on feedback.

There is a relatively new tool that allows for cross-platform mobile development. It accelerates the development dramatically and is called the Corona SDK.

Whereas previously, one would have to spend a few minutes to compile a mobile app and then test it out to make changes, Corona instantly runs the code so you can make changes and iterate quickly. The simulator is a breakthrough in terms of rapid application development. This breakthrough allows you to focus more on gameplay rather than on code.

You can download the SDK here:

<http://www.anscamobile.com>

Corona SDK

The Corona SDK uses the Lua scripting language to make mobile games. It is very simple and easy to pick up. If you have experience with Java or Flash AS3, it will feel very familiar.



To learn more about Corona, go to <http://learningcorona.com>

Additionally, to get a better idea of the power of Corona, check out the YouTube Video called “Corona Game Edition – Physics in 5 Lines”.

Java SDK

You may also need to download the Java SDK.

You can download it here:

<http://www.oracle.com/technetwork/java/javase/downloads/index.html>

First Mobile Game

There are a lot of nice and easy video tutorials on using Corona.

Here are some popular links:

Corona SDK: 01 Getting Started

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1DcMVSXzBE>)

Corona Physics Engine in 5 Lines

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMZ7R92glQ4>)

Make a game in 8 minutes, Part 1

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEMGcy-mizM>)

Make a game in 8 minutes, Part 2

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldrug4vHSgg>)

After you review these, you may use the “first game code” to make a simple game.

You can download the code here:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/firstgame.zip>

This is a very simple game that focuses getting a monkey to catch bananas. The player can tilt the phone to move the monkey.

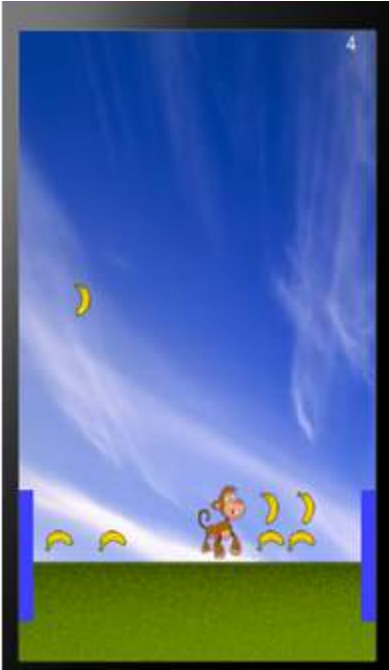


Figure 1 First Game Where Monkey Catches Bananas

You can also check the Chroma Coders site for Lua code modules to implement many of the hidden mechanics mentioned earlier in this book.

Publish to Android App Store

Once you are done with the application, you can easily build the app for Android devices.

To do so, you need to specify a special keystore for your app, using the keytool.

You can find out more about creating your own keystore here:

<http://developer.android.com/guide/publishing/app-signing.html>

Publish to iPhone

Publishing to iPhone requires a bit more time. First, you need to get approved as an Apple Developer; once you are approved, review the instructions on how you can build for your iPhone/iPad device on Corona website.

<http://developer.anscamobile.com/content/building-devices-iphoneipad>

Traditional Mobile Game Design Mechanics

Now that you are familiar with the practical tools for mobile game development, let's focus on the game design mechanics needed to succeed. When the iPhone was first released, game developers were excited about the opportunities for games on this device. Specifically, about certain special features of these smartphones that allowed for new, fun, and interesting types of games.

Let's discuss these mobile-centric mechanics to get a better understanding of the games we can make.

Touch Mechanic

Previous game systems required strong use of a joystick to play the game. As time progressed, these joystick games became more and more complicated, to the point where only hard-core gamers could pick up those games.

Touch makes games and apps much more accessible to a broader audience, including casual gamers and kids. Touch is simple, direct, and intuitive. Instead of having to click A and B and C, and toggle the joystick to the left, you can tap the item on the screen to move it.

It is also important to avoid the tendency of some developers to port over their PC games to mobile devices and then use the touch system to emulate the joystick controller. The touch interface allows for new, interesting, and simple interaction styles. Find simple and fun ways for your players to use touch in your games.



Zoo Club (<http://bit.ly/ZooClub>) is a game in which players build their own zoo. One of the activities in the game is cleaning the animals, using the touch interface to scrub the animal until the dirt gets removed from the animal.

In this case, the scrubbing gesture allows players to feel as if they are cleaning a real animal. The touch interface allows for all sorts of gestures that can help games simulate real-life movements and experiences.

For example, with pet games – like Zoo Club – the touch gesture is used to simulate the real life gesture of petting and cleaning an animal.

Vibration Mechanic

Another great thing about smartphones is that they offer feedback in the form of vibration. This is something you can integrate into your games to give people a sense of physical feedback as they succeed in the game. This vibration also can be entertaining to kids.

Designing games that vibrate as a reward for success in a game gives people a sense of additional fun.



The potential of vibration was that it would allow developers to simulate the force feedback joysticks popular on console devices.

Many mobile games use vibration to help provide feedback for a variety of gameplay events from items colliding in a game to cars hitting street corners, from slicing food to cleaning animals. Vibration is a fun way to provide feedback.

Accelerometer Mechanic

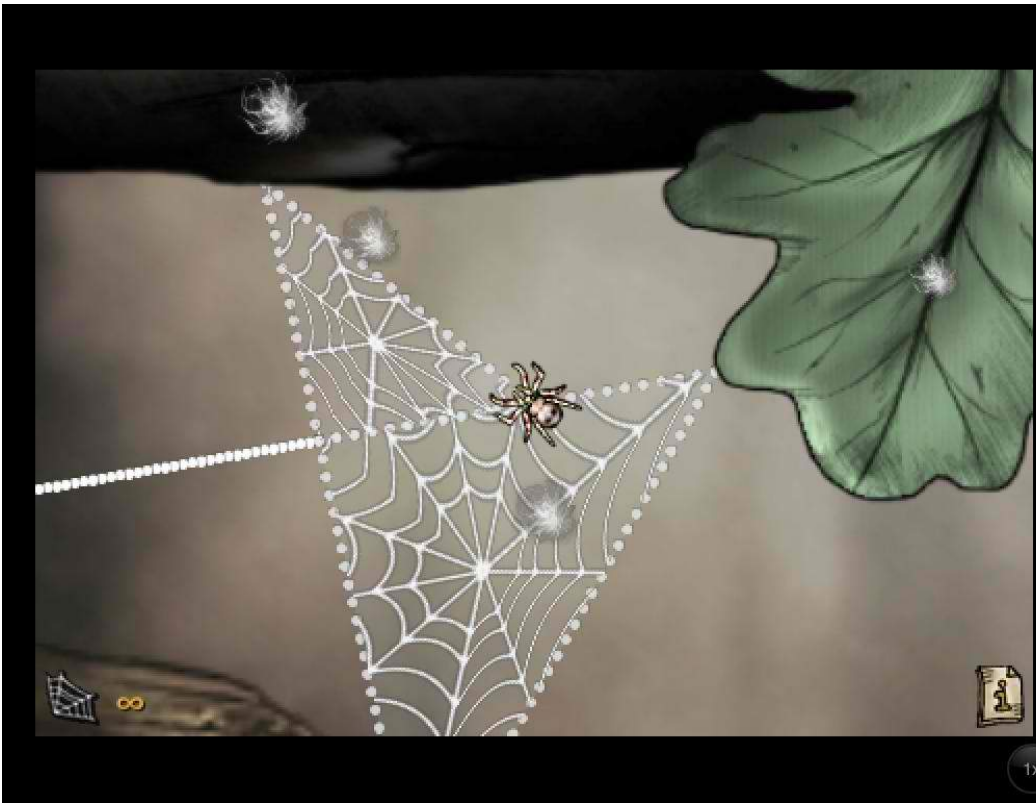
Another interesting aspect of smartphones is the accelerometer. It allows players to tilt the phone around easily to move through a game. This is another intuitive way for players to interact with a game. Instead of having to move a joystick around and press a lot of buttons, they can tilt the phone intuitively to the left or right to move accordingly in the game.



Real Racing is an iPhone game that makes powerful use of the accelerometer. Players feel as if they are in a car, and they can tilt the phone left or right to move the car around. Accelerometer allows simulation of a steering wheel and makes the interface of this racing game more intuitive.

Interview: IGF Mobile Game Of The Year -- Spider: Secret of Bryce Manor (Game Mechanics: Touch)

Here is an interview with IGF Mobile Game of The Year Winners on their use of the touch mechanic to make a compelling mobile game.



Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/spider-iphone-gdc-2010-interview.mp3>

Interviewer: I'm here at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco and with me today is a special guest. How about you introduce yourself?

David: How ya doing? My name is David Kalina.

Interviewer: What game did you work on?

David: I worked on Spider: The Secret of Bryce Manor.

Interviewer: And it won some kind of award?

David: Yeah. We won the Independent Games Festival Mobile Game of the Year Award.

Interviewer: Awesome. And what inspired the game?

David: What about Spider?

Interviewer: What inspired it?

David: Oh, what inspired it? We actually had an open concept solicitation process where we asked all of our friends in the group to just give us their ideas. This was just one of maybe a couple hundred little concepts we had. We really liked it because it was really interesting thematic material. Like spiders are really cool insects and play a really interesting role in the world. We felt like nobody had really explored them from the perspective we tried to.

Interviewer: So, you decided on spiders. How did you come up with that game mechanic? There's some interesting game mechanics in here. Can you talk about that some more?

David: Sure. Originally, it was supposed to be an accelerometer driven game. We were thinking about designing for the iPhone, and it was originally intended to be kind of a more slow-paced spider simulator, where you would slowly build your webs by spinning the device around, and your friends would fall in different directions, based on the orientation of the device.

But we kind of found that it wasn't really a very fun prototype, and so we started experimenting with a mechanic that was touch based. In the game as it is now, you basically touch on a surface to move there and the

spider can stick to any surface, and you swipe through the spider to jump. So, we really worked hard on those mechanics to feel really natural and powerful, and we're pretty happy with the way that it came out.

Interviewer: How long did it take to prototype the game mechanics?

David: Just the prototyping was real – it's hard to say. Just to get a basic – we had to swipe the jump off in a couple of days, but it was hard to control. It wasn't very predictable. There were lots of little problems that kind of needed to be worked out. That one came together pretty quickly, but the touch-to-walk mechanic actually required iteration over the lifetime of the project which was eight months.

Interviewer: What was the issue with the touch-to-walk?

David: So, touch-to-walk, initially we were trying to do something where you touch the screen would drive the spider relative to the spider's orientation, but that would be kind of confusing because the spider could stick to any surface so he could be upside down or hanging on a weird angle. And so, eventually we finally came up with a system where, when you touch the screen, it figures out where the nearest surface is and it basically pathfinds to that surface. And then the spider moves in that direction. That's kind of more intuitive mapping between what the user's trying to do and what actually happens in the software.

Interviewer: Who did you test this on as you were prototyping? Was it mainly just game developers, or did you call in other people to see what they thought?

David: We actually started play testing the game, maybe, three months into the process and went through a number of simulated play tests, and we were always looking for friends or, you know, fellow game developers to get into the program. We would do play test builds and get it on their

devices. We had something like 50 people play test the game and give us useful feedback. So, that was a really important part of us making it good.

Interviewer: Did you try to test it equally among men and women, or was it just mainly whoever the friends were?

David: It was kind of whoever we could find, but one of the great things about the iPhone is that we have a lot of friends and family who use the iPhone or have an iPod Touch, and it doesn't really break down along gender lines the way like, let's say, Xbox 360 probably does.

Interviewer: The theme was appealing to both genders, or was there any kind of...

David: Yeah. I think so. We've actually gotten a lot of really positive feedback from female friends of ours and just generally from the community. Some of our top players on the leaderboards that we post on our forums are women. So, we're getting great feedback from women and great feedback from parents, like, a lot of young kids seem to really enjoy playing the game.

Interviewer: Yeah. Can we talk about the surprises you encountered as you were doing play testing? What was the biggest thing that you had to change? I know you were talking about iterating on these mechanics, but did anything blow your mind when you were doing it?

David: It's been a while. The game came out over seven months ago. I don't remember any major surprises. I'm sort of the lead engineer. For me, the things that kind of stand out were just technical nightmares, a crash that was really hard to debug but nothing really that exciting.

Interviewer: Did you use any engine as you were developing this, or was it just straight Apple APIs and C?

David: It's a home grown engine. We built it from scratch for the iPhone. So, we actually started with sample code that was provided by Apple and kind of started building that out into a real game engine. We used Open GL to do all the graphics and built a collision system and an animation system. And just kind of piece by piece based on what we needed for the game, we built everything out.

Interviewer: You mentioned leader boards and stuff like that. What other social elements have you added to this game, and how important is it?

David: So, we did a Facebook Connect integration about halfway through development, and I think it was really important to our success in a lot of ways. There aren't a lot of built-in ways for people to communicate about the game with their friends, but our attitude toward Facebook Connect was if you are a fan of Facebook and a fan of our game, you would be willing to log in and share information with your friends about it.

So, since we have online leader boards where you can compete globally with a bunch of strangers around the world, if you log into Facebook you can also see all the scores of your friends in the game and you see the faces in the app and that's really cool. It just makes you feel more interested in life. You might have a conversation with your friend about how they're playing the game. We were really happy with the Facebook integration. I think that was important.

Interviewer: Any other marketing techniques you've used to promote your game by Twitter and stuff like that?

David: You know, we kind of used Twitter after the fact just for a company to push news out into the stream, but we don't really have like a big personality on Twitter. So, I think it makes us less interesting there. We never integrated into the software, but Twitter was actually very useful for us to monitor the game's attention in the press because Twitter searches were very useful for figuring out people and what

people were talking about the game. It was a good way to track people's interest outside of just the sales and the revenues in the Apps Store.

Interviewer: Once you released the game, were there any other surprises, or what happened then?

David: It was sort of incredibly smooth sailing for us after release. We had it approved in 10 days, and Apple was interested in featuring us a couple of days later. We had great response from the community. The thing that was really kind of surprising or challenging for us after release was that we had completely failed to push any pre-release information into the media.

So, nobody knew our game existed until the day it came out, almost nobody. There were a couple of people in the press that were let on in, people that we were connected with, but gamers had no idea that the game was coming. So, all the promotion and excitement that happened was just after the fact. I think, maybe, in some way that contributed to the success because people felt like it was a surprise. They weren't expecting it.

Interviewer: What's next in store?

David: We're hard at work trying to prototype new concepts, and we haven't settled on a final direction for our next game. But we're working on and trying to do another game for the iPhone and iPod Touch.

Interviewer: What suggestions do you have for other game developers who want to develop for the iPhone and iPod Touch and want to be innovative?

David: Well, my biggest suggestion is to really pay attention to what it means to design for the device. It's a really incredible piece of hardware with a really powerful touch screen and accelerometer. These are really

interesting input devices for games, but I feel like a lot of developers are trying to make games that are very similar to games on other platforms, and they resort to doing things like virtual key pads. And if I was encouraging somebody to start a game from scratch, I would say, like, think about using what's there, you know, and design for the platform.

Interviewer: So, you won the best mobile game. Why do you think that is?

David: I think that there's a few main reasons. I think one of them is kind of what I was just talking about which is it's a very native iPhone game. As an experience, it sort of feels like you can only have it on the iPhone. I don't know if that's true, but I think specifically this game resonates with people because it's fresh. There really isn't anything quite like it, and I think the fiction actually matters a lot to fans. It's a very passive story. It's a very human story. And when it's not in your face, there's not a lot of text, essentially no text. It's all just something in the background. I think it has an interesting art style that pulls you into that world.

Interviewer: Can you talk about the story more? Exactly, what is it and how does it inspire? It's interesting that you have very little or no text.

David: Right. So, the story just kind of came out of when we were building the spider game and prototyping it and thinking about what it meant to observe the world from the perspective of a spider. A spider doesn't really have any interest in the human world or what's going on in our space, but what spiders do is leave their space covered in cobwebs and go about their business eating bugs.

That's kind of what you do in the game. You're not an active participant in the fiction. The story is just told in the background. As you move through this house, you're just completely abandoned. There is no humans there, but the humans that used to live there left behind all kinds

of clues and information about their lives, the way people would do if they were leaving an environment.

So, if you are interested in the story as you are playing the game, what you do is you kind of pay attention to the pictures on the wall and the secret areas that you uncover and the wedding ring that went down the drain. You know, you can kind of get a perspective on these people's lives that, maybe, you wouldn't even if you were a human in that space.

Interviewer: Have your players picked up on the story much, or is it just too subtle enough for just only the game designers?

David: That's a really interesting question. I think it is very subtle. I think people mostly appreciate the fact that there is a story and, therefore, the environment has a kind of feeling and a tone but probably don't actually piece together all the components. We do have some fans who have gotten really into it on our forums and on the Touch Arcade forums. Like, give-and-take extended discussions about what the story means, trying to piece it all together.

So, I think it's for a very small group of people who are very excited about that, so really unraveled the mystery and understand it, but for those people it's very satisfying.

Interviewer: Where can listeners download the game?

David: It's available on the Apps Store right now. You can download it for your iPhone or iPhone Touch and it's \$2.99.

Interviewer: And do you have a website?

David: Yes, tigerstylegames.com.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Hidden Mobile Game Mechanics

While the traditional mechanics for mobile inspired developers to make games for the platform, the unexpected mechanics are the ones that provide the most fun and engagement for players.

These are the mechanics that make players passionate about your game, that make developers rich, and that help to create innovative games.

These are the “hidden game mechanics” for mobile game design. Use “hidden game mechanics” to make your game a compelling experience that inspires millions of players.

Quick Play Session Mechanic

Mobile phones are usually used on the go. Initially, these games were designed for people to play a quick game in between making calls or texting messages. Many successful games were designed with short play sessions in mind, ensuring that players can easily and quickly pick up the game.

Games that are designed for quick 60 to 90 second intervals are ideal for people who seek quick entertainment, for example, those waiting in line at the store or in the car.

When designing your game, use the 30 to 90 second time frame as the basic time frame needed to achieve certain progress. What can your players do in 30-90 seconds? Can they have fun within this time interval? If you have a game where people interact with each other, are those 30 to 90 seconds sufficient to give at least some sort of social experience?

Can they send gifts within that time? Can they share photos or make a comment within that short period of time?

In fact, designing your interface so that some of these fun interactions in the game are streamlined to be done within a quick play session would be great. Figure out a way to make each quick play session as fun, progressive, and entertaining as possible.





Blast Monkeys is a physics-puzzle game where you shoot a monkey out of cannon into a goal. It is a very simple game that is very accessible and easy to play. A player can easily open the app and play one session of the game by shooting the monkey into the goal within the 60 to 90 seconds. It is a good example of the game that offers quick-play sessions within the context of a larger goal of completing all the levels in the world.

Additionally, it gives an option for players to quickly play a level or spend additional time to “master” the level by getting all the bananas on the way to the goal.

Web-Based Backend, MMO Capabilities

Smartphones are data devices that are connected to the Internet. The connection can be used to add MMO persistence characteristics to your game, allowing you to save data and create social leaderboards.

You can also save data so that players can interact with each other in a persistent manner. For example, you can allow players to visit another player's farm, city, or restaurant.

You can combine this with quick-play sessions to allow your players use quick play sessions to build their persistent profile in the game over time.



Players want to feel some sort of progress in a game; it helps them feel like they are doing things and are being productive. For many players, the ability to build stats that would allow them do more things later in the game is very important.

At the same time, in a social environment, people want to show off their stats, socialize and cooperate with each other. Having a web-based backend that leverages the Internet to store data and allows players to load and view other player's data easily is compelling. It adds a huge social layer to the game.



Zoo Club is a game that allows players to build their own Zoo. A web-based backend that stores the layout and details of a player's zoo allows players to compete and help each other build their zoos. A player can visit other people's zoos and rate those zoos or help other people with their zoos. Additionally, players can send gifts to each other.

This level of persistence adds a deeper level of fun.

Real-Time Data Streams; Transient Data Streams

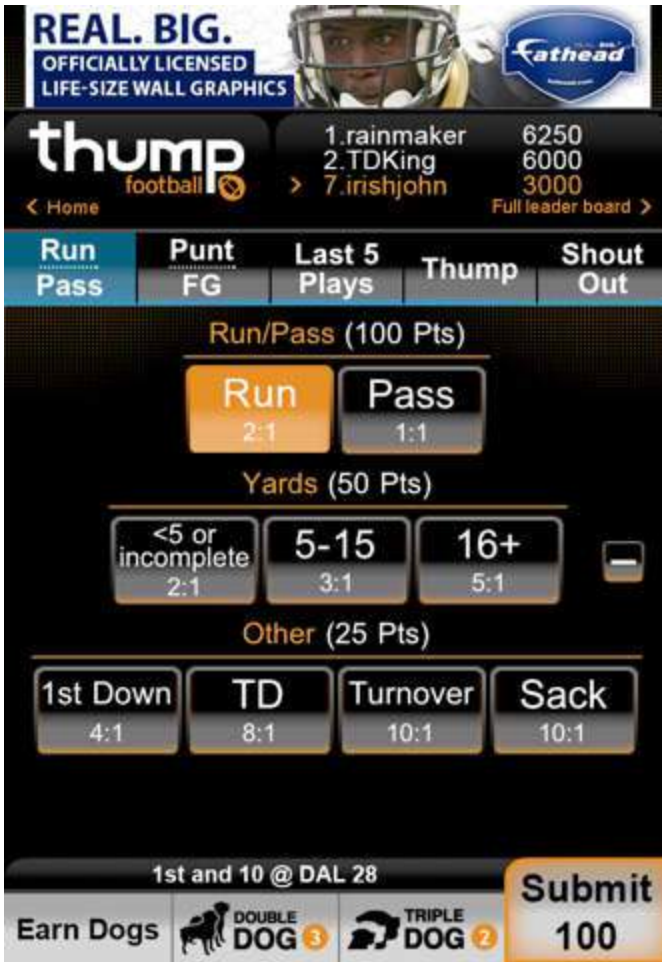
Since the smartphones are connected to the Internet, they can save data, and they can grab data. The Internet has a variety of services that can be grabbed and displayed.

A simple example would be to grab stock market data and use that data to drive a game.

A good game designer can use this real-time information and design multiplayer games around it. People love to guess and predict what will happen next. You can use real-time data to make a prediction game and reward players that predict accurately.

For example, Thump Football does this. Thump Football is a game that takes in real-time data from live football games and asks players to predict the next play. Players earn points by making accurate predictions, and compete with other players on the accuracy of their predictions for each play in a bar or at a party. You can find an interview with one of the founders of this game at the end of this section.

Prediction is a simple use of games based on real-time data streams. You can use real-time data to make a real-life cooperative game. For example, finding parking around campus can be challenging. You can turn campus parking into a game in which players let the game know when they enter or leave a spot and then the game helps direct players to locations and open places. In a way, the game helps to mediate traffic. This would be an application of real-time play to improve community's daily experience.



Game as a Service

The old paradigm of ship a game and forget about it no longer applies. Modern games are live services that need to be updated constantly. In fact, it is these updates that will help bring more people into the game.

These updates can be content as well as gameplay updates. For example, releasing new themes and content in the game to celebrate an upcoming holiday or festival helps to keep the players engaged with the app.

Alternatively, you can roll out new gameplay features that provide new interactions and play in the game.

Another important part of running a service is figuring out what content and/or mechanics should be phased out over time. Trimming out things is as important as adding new features.

Even if you have a game like Tetris or Bejeweled, resetting the leaderboards each week will help to make the game feel as if it has changed.

View your game as a plant. If you keep watering it with new content, it will grow and stay alive. Neglecting new content, updates, and mechanics will dry out the game to the point at which players will no longer be interested in it.

Make sure each update gets out in a timely manner; be sure to make each update focus on one major new thing. Doing too many new things in an update may lead to delays and quality issues. Focus on one good thing in each update :)

Zoo Club is a zoo simulator game found on various tablet and smartphone platforms. While the basics of the game are done, the developers try to release new updates each week. These updates may include new content such as new decorations or animals as well as new game mechanics and features in the game. These updates may also fix bugs found in previous versions of the game.



Zoo Club releases an update each week to keep the game new and fresh

These updates allowed to achieve loyalty amongst existing players and to improve the game for new players. Players who play this game know that the game and content will always be updated. This strategy has set Zoo Club apart from other games on the market.

Analytics

These hidden game mechanics can turn your game into a live and continuously changing service. Every time players open a game and interact with it, they provide certain feedback about your game.

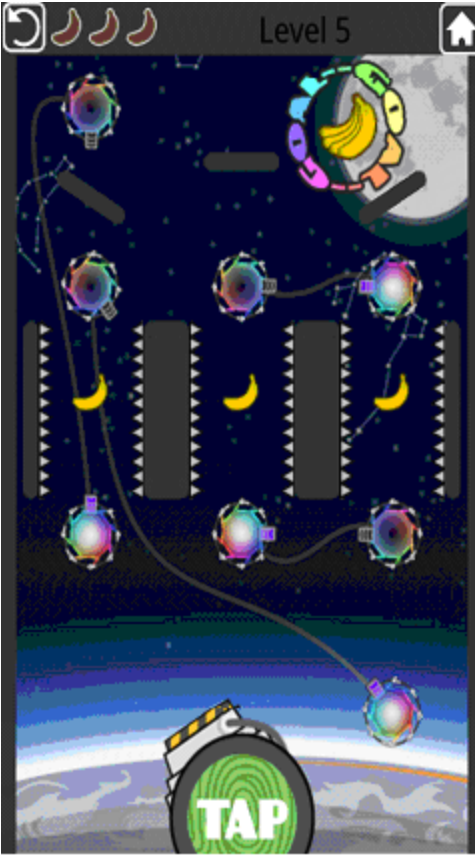
An astute game designer can analyze such information to get a sense of what people like and don't like in the game. Information such as the number of times a person opens the game or the amount of time a person spends in the game each day, as well as other stats, can help you get a better sense of your game's value.

These analytics can then serve as a basis for experiments in game design. For example, what can you change to make people spend an extra 5 minutes in the game each day? What can you change so that players open the game 5 times instead of 2 times each day?

Analytics are an important part of the feedback that can help enhance your game. Since successful games in the mobile space are services, it is important to keep track of the features and content that inspire your players and keep them coming back to your game. You can use this analytics data to help optimize retention rate of your game, to find the features to enhance and the features to phase out.



Blast Monkeys is a multilevel game in which players solve simple physics puzzles. To keep track of how players enjoy the game, there is a built-in analytics system that tells what game levels get played the most, what levels cause the most frustration amongst players, and how long players are playing the game. All of these stats help the Blast Monkeys team to improve their game.



Blast Monkeys team uses analytics to make sure their game is fun

Data-Informed/Data-Driven Play

As people play your game, they are creating data. This data can be used to capture metrics about the game itself, but these metrics can also be used to help drive play and quest sequences in the game. Such information helps to tailor the game to individuals and teams in a way that provides and amplifies fun for them.

For example, this data can be used to suggest new friends to meet within the game, or to focus the quests on gameplay that works with their sub-interests within the game.

Persistent GPS

People use GPS on phones for navigation, but GPS can also be used to power games.

Location is a large part of the mobile experience. Smartphones have built in GPS and allow game designers to have a sense of places players visit, distances they travel, and other fun location-based information.

A mobile game designer can use GPS and let folks check into different locations or events. A designer can also make games based on distances players travel, or use GPS to validate social interactions within a game. For example, if a game requires players to meet in real life, GPS can be used to confirm that the players did meet in person, and then the game can credit them the rewards associated with players meeting in person.

FourSquare and other location-based services use GPS to make people's visits to stores and other places more fun. They add lightweight game mechanics on top of the GPS to give players a sense of progress and persistence. With FourSquare, players can visit a place and "check in" to the place. The player may get in-game rewards like points and badges for checking into these places. Sometimes, these game rewards are tied into real-world rewards like a restaurant may give a person that received the "Mayor Badge" for the location a free order of fries every time he or she visits. These games are designed to amplify players' daily activities by adding a layer of fun to places they were going to visit anyway.



Places

Starbucks - University...

Starbucks - University Village

4634 26th Avenue NE

Check in

People

Details

Tips

OK! We've got you @ Starbucks - University Village. This is your 1st checkin here!

YOUR SCORE



First time @ Starbucks - University Village! (+5)



Travel bonus: 3 stops (+3)

Total: 8 points



Jeff S. is The Mayor of



Friends



Places



Tips



Badges



More

5



As a game designer, ask yourself how you can use GPS to design games around a player's everyday travels.

Persistent Audio + User-generated Audio

Phone calls involve audio, and in case with phone calls, people communicate using real-time audio.

But expanding the application and understanding of audio's potential can be used for many aspects of a game. For example, you can develop an

application that includes games and toys that can record a player's voice message and then apply audio processing to make it sound funny. This is a kind of content that a player can share with friends or other people in the game. Games like Talking Tom the Cat used to get millions of downloads. The brilliant part of the design is that the audio content is created by players. This means, that the designers only need to create the audio processing to make the voice recordings sound funny.



User-generated audio content can also be used in multiplayer games. People like to hear the sounds and words of other people. As a game designer, you can allow players to exchange audio messages. Note that these voice exchanges do not need to be in real-time. Like SMS, they can be asynchronous. That means, one person can create a message and

send it to another player's inbox; the other player can listen to it when visiting the game later in the day.



Talking Tom the Cat is a very popular game on iPhone and Android that lets players interact with a cartoon character. A player can talk to the cat and then the cat will replay the audio in a revised pitch. Such games are especially fun for kids; they get to talk to the game and then hear their own words back in a way that is fun and entertaining to them. You can watch some of these kids enjoying the game on YouTube.

Physics

People love to watch physics simulations. Success of classic games like Incredible Contraptions and new games like Angry Birds proves this.

You can create quick play physics simulations: simulations that require a very simple touch from a player to trigger a fun simulation to watch.

Part of the fun of physics games is to watch the physics simulations, but you can also design a game in which a player will have to solve physics puzzles.

Angry Birds has used this mechanic successfully to make a fun game that has gained worldwide recognition.

Another game, Blast Monkeys, used the concept of physics to make a simple and fun game. The player taps on a moving canon which then blasts a monkey into a physics puzzle. These puzzles are short and simple, and leverage the quick play mechanic to give people a fun way to spend their time in a shopping line or on a bus stop.



Isometric View

The point of view in a game seems to give the players a different perspective, feeling, and sense of control in the game.

While a 2D view can communicate the same information as an isometric view, it seems that an isometric viewpoint makes the player feel a better control and power over the game.

Adding an isometric viewpoint to your game will help your players have a better sense of control in the game.

Zoo Club is a game that allows players to start and run their own zoo. Initially, it was done as a 2D game; however, the developers decided to change the perspective, and, together with some other game changes, this improved the reviews and enthusiasm from the game.

After the isometric view was added, players were more likely to rate the game positively.

Before:



After:



Short-Play Learning

Short-play sessions are an important part of the mobile experience. While more and more people are getting into games, there is still a large portion of people that consider games “a waste of time.”

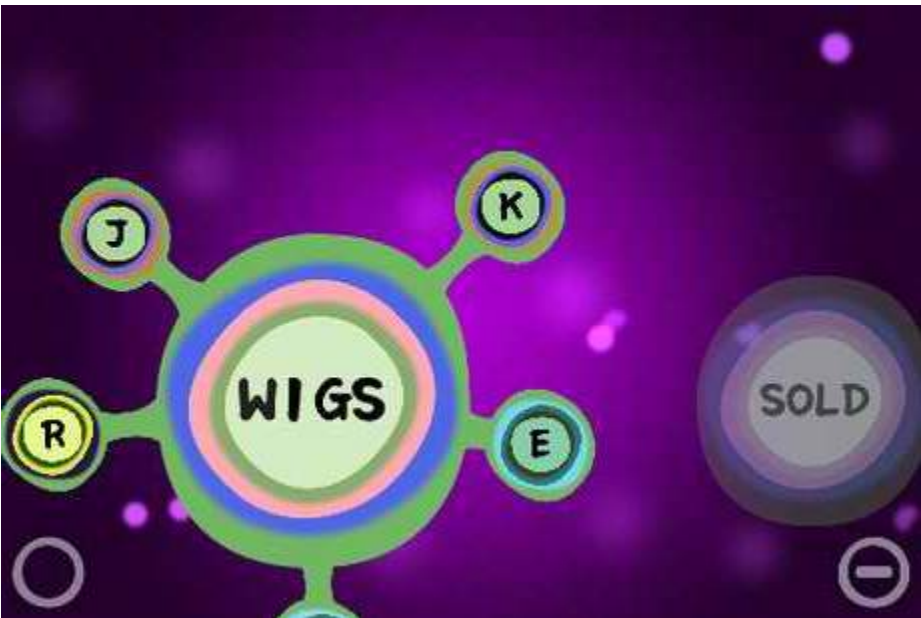
However, these same people will be willing to use apps and games that help them learn or improve their mind. Games like Brain Age have inspired non-gamers to try out games that will help them age more gracefully.

Any game that helps people improve their health, keep their mind alert, or prevent diseases associated with old age can capture the attention of non-traditional gamers.

Short-play learning mechanics have the potential to make games more accessible to a broader audience as these games help to make people’s learning time more fun.

These short-play learning games can help people obtain new skills such as speaking a foreign language.

Lingumation Studios used this mechanic to make a fun game that helps people learn English. The game they made is called Four-Letter Words and a player is given a word and is required to convert it to the final word by changing one letter at a time. Each time a letter is changed, the new word has to be a valid word. It is a simple and fun way to learn new English words.



Photos

As smartphones become more powerful, they get equipped with increasingly powerful cameras. In fact, for many people, their phone is their primary photo-taking device.

Photos are a powerful way for players to communicate with other players in a game. Additionally, web services like “Hot or Not” show that people like to view and rate photos of other people.

A designer can design mechanics around photo interactions. These mechanics include rating, buying and selling photos using in-game coins, enhancing photos, and player-to-player communication.

The great thing about photo games is that the content comes from players. In this type of games, designers can focus on the interaction rather than on the content.

Additionally, designers can integrate photo filters and editing into the gameplay so that players can have fun doing something they were going to do anyway – enhancing their photos.

Fun Friends is a game that is driven by user-generated photos. The main focus of this game is to allow players interact with each other. There is a section in the game called “Favors” that depends on social exchanges such as “Send a Photo Gift”, “Send Me a Cool Photo”, and many more.

Fun Friends

Energy 100%

Coins: 10

Points: 10

Favors

Post Favor



Photo Gift

\$ 15 Favors Left: 36

Player

Take



Cool Photo

\$ 30 Favors Left: 5

Player

Take



Cool Photo

\$ 30 Favors Left: 5

Player

Take



Cool Photo

\$ 100 Favors Left: 100

Player

Take



The “Send a Photo Gift” favor allows players to send photos to other people in the game, and by doing so they earn in-game coins and points. In a game that depends on social interaction, photos of other players are a compelling part of the game. It also frees the designers from having to think about developing new content; players provide all content for the game.

Camera Vision

People take photos, and there are plenty of cool things that can be done with those photos. One thing is that images can be processed and items can be isolated. Not only can images be added to photos to make them more interesting but computer vision can be used to process text in an image and create games based on, or related to, the processed words.

A game designer can use this functionality to create fun games and toys that recognize a person's face and overlay fun or funny images over it, like a clown hat. If your game relies on the submission of player photos, you can use computer vision to process those photos to do something interesting, for example, gather stats on the types of faces, etc.

Word Lens uses real-time computer vision processing to translate words from one language to another. While it is not a game, the concept can be applied to games that do augmented reality. Imagine a situation where the game processes the video stream and then overlays game data based on computer vision processing.



In addition to real-time computer vision processing, asynchronous processing may be used. A game can take in photos from a player's photo gallery and then apply visual effects based on objects recognized in the photo.

For example, a game can isolate a face in photos and then apply interesting special effects around the face.



Persistent Accelerometer

The accelerometer was supposed to be a critical part of the mobile game experience. For the most part, it is difficult for casual players to use the accelerometer for controlling real-time fast interactions, but there are many passive uses of accelerometer that can lead to interesting and fun games.

For example, accelerometers can be used to measure vibration in cars, keep track of walking and running, capture motion input, and can even contribute to collaborative projects such as the Quake-Catcher Network. The Quake-Catcher Network depends on laptops with accelerometers to catch earthquake data.

Additionally, accelerometers with the persistence mechanic can be used to create interesting and compelling social games.

For example, the game Hang Time uses the accelerometer to keep track of how long people can keep their iPhone up in the air. A player has to throw his or her phone in the air, and the app keeps track of the time that the phone is in “free fall”. Once the phone “lands”, the elapsed time is recorded and becomes a score. This score is then saved to give the players a sense of their best throw.



This game also has a social element to it as there is an online leaderboard. Scores are uploaded to the leaderboard, and people with the highest scores move to the top of the leaderboard. The leaderboard adds a competitive element to the game, inspiring players to keep improving their score so that they can beat other people in the game. In fact, one player went sky diving with the app on just to get the highest score as the freefall lasted for a long time after jumping off the plane.

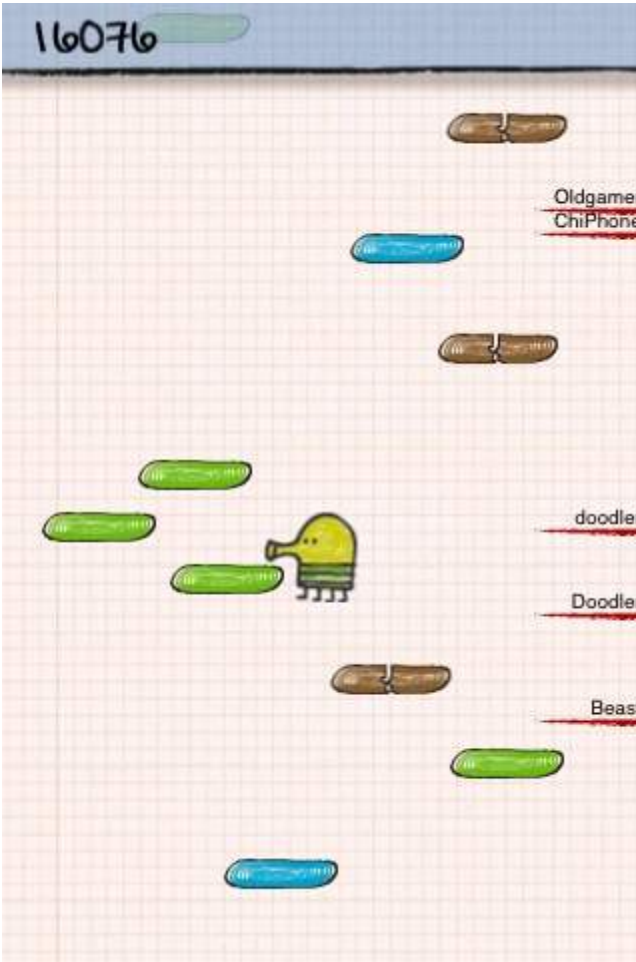
Accelerometer Physics

Another, yet again different, experience for your players to enjoy may be achieved by combining accelerometer with physics to create another form of fun gameplay.

Accelerometer can be combined with different physics game genres to get interesting and new gameplay experiences.

This is implemented in games such as Doodle Jump and Animal Ball, which combine the accelerometer with various physics game genres to create fun games.

Doodle Jump combined the accelerometer with the physics adventure/platformer genre to create a simple and fun game experience for players.



Animal Ball combined the accelerometer with the physics puzzle genre to create a fun and novel gameplay experience. In this game, players have to tilt the phone the right way to get an animal to the goal.



Barcode Scanner

Another great thing about the camera on the phone is that it can be used to scan and process barcodes. Barcodes are the gateway to a lot of interesting information related to products. Most people consume things that have barcodes on them. A game designer can design games that require the scanning of different barcodes. The designer can then leverage product information associated with the barcode.

Such data can later be used to create multiplayer social games and contests. You can have contests in which players scan certain categories of items or try to scan the same item in all the different stores. Barcodes can bring up a lot of information on a product and you can even display that information to players so that they also get a useful benefit from the game.

Barcode Hero builds a game application around barcodes. A player can go into a store and scan a barcode of an item. The application will look up the information associated with the barcode along with relevant recommendations and comments made by other players in the community. The goal of Barcode Hero is to make shopping more fun and informative.



Asynchronous Communication

Mobile phones are considered communication devices; people call and talk to each other using these devices. Relative to voice, SMS is a new but very powerful form of communication. It is asynchronous, meaning that you can send a message and the person does not need to be available at the moment to eventually receive it.

A game designer can borrow the SMS concept and apply it to games. People may not want to do real-time gaming with others on their phone. Of course, with a large platform like smartphones, there will be quite a few people who want to do real-time gaming, but real-time gaming

Games like Words with Friends use this concept to make a fun scrabble-like game. When a player starts a game with another player, he makes a move. He can then close the app and will be notified when the other player makes a move. This way, players can play the game over a series of days at their convenience, and there is no need for both players to be on at the same time. Such games are more accessible as players can make their moves when they have a minute.

Asynchronous play is the game design equivalent of SMS. Like SMS, it is a powerful communication mechanic that leads to new types of interaction and play.

In addition to new types of play, asynchronous play also allows to implement traditional board-game play in a way that is more accessible to players because of the added ability to play board games with their friends anywhere in the world during any time of the day.

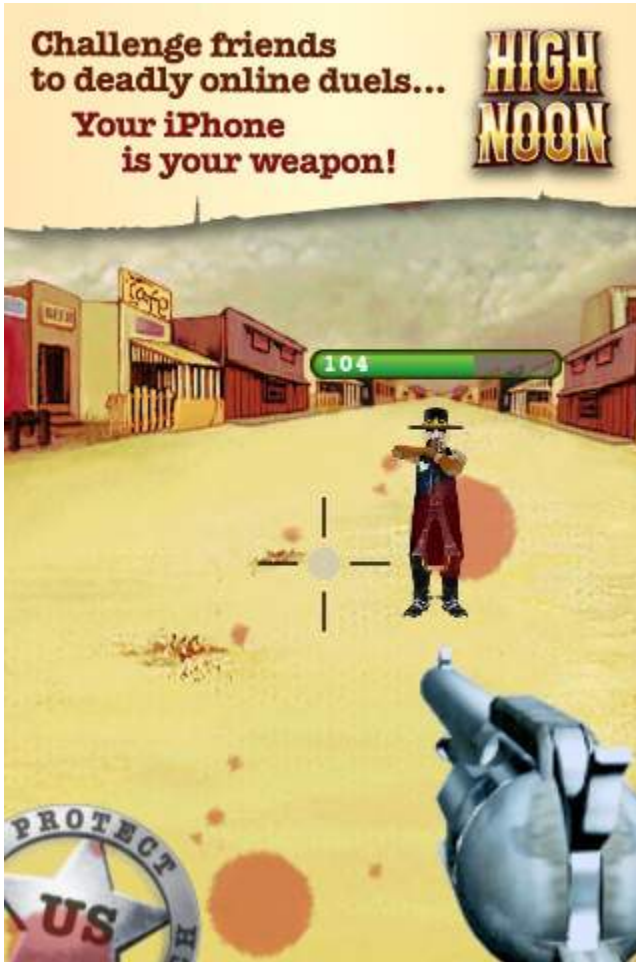
Real-Time Play

In addition to asynchronous play there is real-time play. You can have games in which you have real-time challenges with other players in the game.

As more and more people get smartphones, there will be large enough audience of other players that can play with you at the same time. Of course, there will be an even larger audience that can do asynchronous play, but if your game is popular enough, you'll have enough players for at least some of them to be able to play at the same time.

While PC games used real-time play to have long, drawn-out play sessions, a wise mobile game designer may consider combining real-time

play with the quick-time play hidden mechanic to make short real-time play sessions that are both fun and synchronous.



High Noon is a game that combines real-time gaming with quick-time play mechanics to make a fun game

High Noon is a game in which you challenge other players to a shooting duel in real-time. Each player has a “bounty” on his head, and the better the player, the higher the bounty, so beating a stronger player earns you a better reward. This game combines real-time interaction with the fun of making in-game profit of your skill in the game. Additionally, these duels

happen very quickly, and may last around a minute. The real-time play works with the play opportunities of the casual mobile gamer – a few minutes here and there.

Skill-Based Casual Play

People like to compete. Allowing to compete against their friends and other people can make a game more fun. Even a more compelling mechanic are games that help to foster competition by allowing people to develop/act upon their skill to raise their ranking and success among friends and other players.

Words with Friends does this well; it combines asynchronous play with the competition of a scrabble board game. The skill required – understanding and use of words – is broad enough to attract a wide audience. People use words everyday, and this game helps people take their word skill and challenge their friends.



It should be noted that High Noon also has a skill-based component that makes the game fun. The longer players engage with the game, potentially the better their ability in the game is, so they can do more and compete better. There is an implicit sense of achievement and progress as they develop their skill. Note that the skill itself is fun and resonates with a theme that many people are used to, namely, doing an “Old Western” shootout.

Party Game Play

While there are many games that allow for player-to-player interaction over the Internet, many mobile devices allow for multi-touch interaction on the screen, meaning multiple people can play the game on the same device at the same time.

This allows for interactive party games that can be played at parties.

Two Player Reactor is a very innovative game that implements this party game mechanic to create a very fun game for two players to play in person. In this game, there are questions presented and each player is looking at his side of the screen. The first to answer the question correctly wins the round. The questions are fun and are a fun way to have light-weight competition amongst friends.

Player 1

Hit when text color = color name!

GREEN

GREEN

Hit when text color = color name!

Player 2

Player 2

Hit when equation is correct!

$$13 - 18 = 5$$

$$13 - 18 = 5$$

Hit when equation is correct!

Mini-Games

Players are looking for many quick and fun activities to do in their game. Because of the touch interface, phones and tablets allow for a natural interface that makes it fun to play mini-games. You can combine the web-based MMO with shorter-reward experiences like mini-games to keep players engaged.

Mini-games can be a fun way to progress through an MMO. For example, players can get access to extended versions of the mini-game when they move up in levels.

Zoo Club is a zoo MMO that allows players to build their own zoo, but it also has mini-games presented to players as they work to improve and take care of the animals in their zoo.

Every animal in the Zoo Club game can do “zoo shows”, and these shows help the zoo earn more coins from virtual visitors. When players decide to do a zoo show with an animal, they are taken to a separate section of the game in which they have to play a physics puzzle mini-game. This mini-game requires the player to fling the animal towards the fruit.

The players can also earn bonus tips in the zoo show depending on the number of stars their animal collects while doing a zoo show.



Another simple mini-game in the Zoo Club game is cleaning the animals. Each animal in a zoo needs to be cleaned every few hours, and every time this happens, the player has to scrub the dirt of the animal's fur.



These simple mini-games help to provide a more fun and realistic experience to players that enjoy building a zoo.

Tycoon Mechanic

Players love to feel as if they are making money in a game. If they can use that money to express themselves better or gain a better social status in the game, that's even better. The goal is to add a tycoon mechanic so that people can earn profit in the game and then be able to reinvest that profit back into the game to gain more fun, expression, or status.

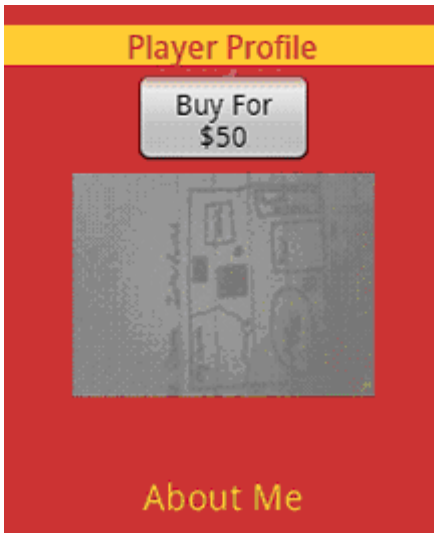
Zoo Club uses the tycoon mechanic to make the game more fun; a player can take care of the animal by cleaning, participating in zoo shows, and feeding. The more care player takes of the animal, the higher the price of the animal. The system is set up so that the animal can be sold for 10 to 20% more money than its purchase price, if the player takes proper care of the animal as it grows from baby to adult.

The profit earned can then be used to buy more animals or improve the zoo with additional decoration items.



Fun Friends uses the tycoon mechanic to socialize. In Fun Friends, each player has a fun cage, which should be filled with other people. To fill the

cage with other people, a player has to buy other players, and each player has a bid value associated with him. The more you play in the game and get bought by other players, the higher your bid price gets. The game has an incentive to buy someone popular, because if someone buys a popular player off you, you will earn a profit from the purchase. This buy/sell mechanic creates a fun market economy, and players can earn a lot of profit if they buy and sell the right players.



Augmented Reality

Augmented Reality deals with overlaying data on top of the real world. Since smartphones now have the ability to grab live videos and process them, game designers can overlay compelling information or data over live video to create a game.

Right now, designers are focused on real-time augmented reality.

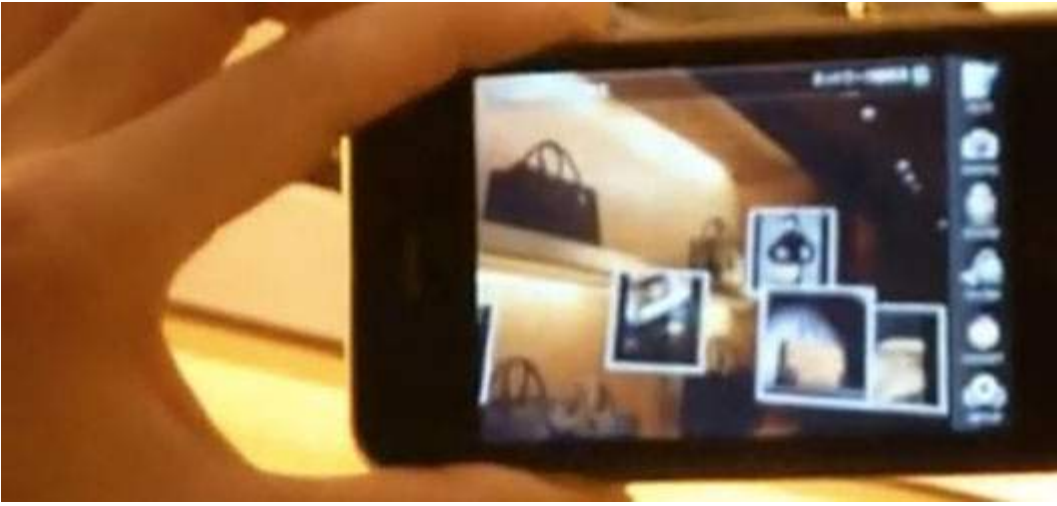
Many game designers associate augmented reality with holding the phone up and then overlaying data on top of the live video stream. While that is one use of augmented reality, game designers may come up with a better and more fun design if they view augmented reality as something that is meant to augment an experience. Meaning that overlaying on top of a live video stream may be one way, but another way is to find information and interactions that augment a player's experience. This experience may relate to shopping, traveling, or something entirely different.

The augmented gameplay does not have to be real-time either.

Some companies are mixing the Augmented Reality mechanics with social and location to make asynchronous casual augmented reality games.

Sekai Camera created a mobile service that allows people to place air tags and photos around any place in the world. Then, when other people use the Sekai Camera app in a location, they can hold the camera up and see the tags and photos placed in that location. This example demonstrates a use of GPS and Augmented Reality to give a casual augmented reality experience.

Augmented Reality play does not have to be about traditional game mechanics. Expression and social networking mechanics like photos and comments can make your augmented reality game accessible to a broader audience.



Complementary Play

The concept of everyone on their smartphone is interesting, but there seems to be a proliferation of multiple computing platforms from the PC to smartphones to tablets. Complementary Play involves designing player roles in the game based on the platform used by each player. For example, in a pet MMO, the core interaction may take place on an online game, but there is a “walk the pet” component that allows players to take a virtual pet around the city by putting it on their smartphones.

This can also be extended to handle the different play session types of the players in your game. For example, some of your players might want to play the game while they are at work in front of the computer; another segment of your audience may play your game on their smartphones while they are traveling around the town or waiting in line. You can design longer play sessions for the workers to complement with the short play sessions for people on their smartphones.

Another example of Complementary Play is Facebook. Their web service allows for easy interaction with friends, using apps, and playing games, while their mobile app serves as a nice way to update communication and share mobile photos. The web app serves a certain set of interactions while the mobile app helps to complement the web service and offers additional interactions.

A designer from Playfish, a division of EA, once discussed using complementary play for their popular game, Pet Society.



While the Facebook version of Pet Society allows players to take care of their pets, the mobile version of the app complements the Facebook version of the game. For example, the mobile version allows players to take some of their pets in the game outside for a walk. This is a way to work with the different interaction opportunities of players; while players are on their PC, they can interact with their pets in a full capacity, while on mobile -- they can build up more experience that works well with a mobile theme.

Sporadic Play

Sporadic Play is a game mechanic that helps to control player's interaction with the game. Sporadic Play segments play sessions into intervals. One of the design goals of Sporadic Play is to give people bite-size experiences in the game. With Sporadic Play, players are only able to make a certain number of moves in the game, and then they run out of energy. They then have to wait a certain amount of time until they regain

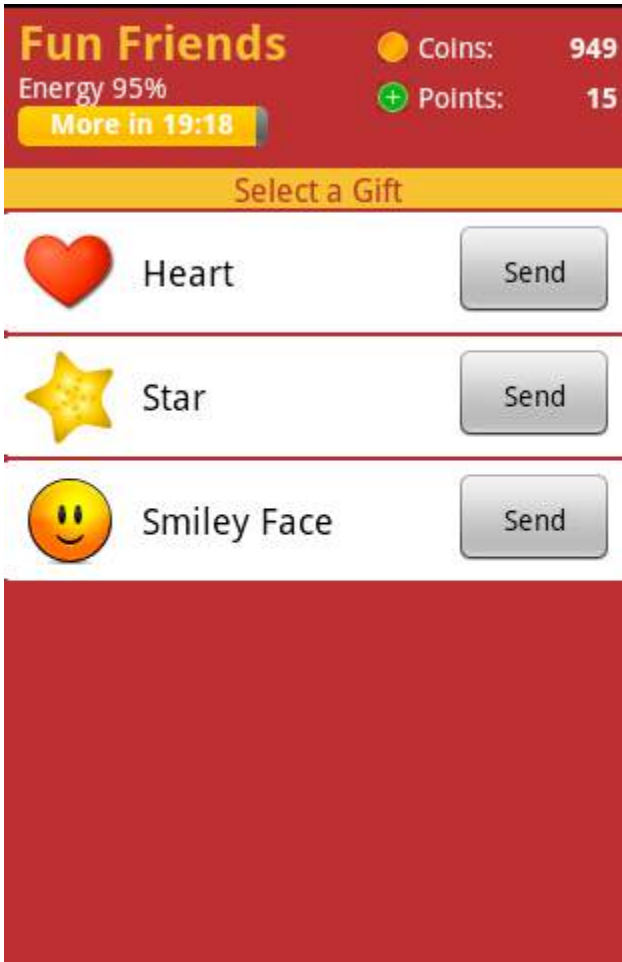
their energy in the game and can make more moves. This regulation of gameplay helps to build a desire among players, making them want more of the game.

Sporadic Play is perfect for mobile games where users are looking for short play sessions. This design also allows the casual players to be on par with the hard core players as players are only able to use a certain amount of moves in any given time interval.

Fun Friends is a mobile game in which the main goal is to interact with other people, do social exchanges, and earn fun points so that you can reach the rank of “Fun Guru”. A central part of the game design is to do actions to other players in the game. These actions include kissing, hugging, and sending various gifts, and every action costs a certain amount of energy.

There is also a timer bar that lets players know when they’ll have more energy and will be able to perform more actions.

Fun Friends also uses Sporadic Play as part of the game’s revenue model. If a player runs out of energy, he can wait until he regains more energy in about 20 minutes or he can buy in-game virtual currency to instantly recharge the energy.



Re-Engagement Mechanics

Re-engagement mechanics help to ensure that players keep coming back to the game.

These mechanics can be daily random rewards for visiting the game, loyalty bonuses for visiting the game for 5 or more consecutive days, or random gifts each day.

Additionally, you can turn the loyalty bonuses into status symbols. To do this, offer something special that is not purchasable. It can only be earned by visiting the game 10 days in a row, 20 days in a row, etc.

Tap Fish, one of the top grossing apps as of November 2011, offers a free jackpot spin to win a special reward if you come back for 5 days in a row. If you miss at least a day, you will have to start over. That is an incentive to keep visiting the game for a week.



Narrative Story

Stories can help bring players close to a game by humanizing it. Angry Birds did this by making a funny story that was woven in into the gameplay. They created a short funny video clip that lasted about 90 seconds and put it on YouTube. It has received over 45 million views.

This simple story was cute, funny, and helped Angry Birds get their name out there. While many game developers do not think to add a story to their game, having a story can help your game stand out from the other mobile games.

The story should ideally be something that people would want to share with others, humor may help. Having a fun and universal theme can also be useful.

As the game gets developed, an astute game designer can create a story an a short video clip to introduce the gameplay. In fact, each new release of the game should be accompanied by an update or enhancement to the story.

Games like Pocket God that have sold millions of copies also release little story updates and cartoons to help keep the audience engaged with the game. These stories give the players some more fun in their lives.

These story narratives can be integrated directly into the game via an in-game storyline. Additionally, they can be stories outside the game to set up the context of the game via YouTube videos or books.



Emergent Storytelling

While narrative can be created by the game designers, there is another opportunity for designers to make stories that are personal and meaningful to the players. This involves emergent storytelling where designers create interaction/feedback/multiplayer mechanics that allow players to create stories with each other.

Emergent Storytelling requires solid communication mechanics within the game so that players are allowed to express themselves with other players in the game. This open expression along with strong goals within the game can create player-driven stories.

Fun Friends is a game that allows players to buy and sell other players in the game. There are communication channels such as comment boards, social exchange areas, and inboxes. The combination of these communication channels along with the ability to buy, sell, and do social

exchanges creates an interesting way for players to set their own goals and stories. These stories are dynamic as there are many participants and not all players act as expected.

The screenshot shows a game interface for a group named "Fun Friends". At the top, there is a red header with the group name in yellow. Below the name, it shows "Energy 100%" with a yellow progress bar. To the right, it displays "Coins: 10" with a yellow coin icon and "Points: 10" with a green plus icon. A yellow bar below the header is labeled "Favors". Below this is a grey button labeled "Post Favor".

Below the header, there is a list of four favor items, each with a small square icon on the left and a "Take" button on the right. The items are:

- Photo Gift**: \$ 15 Favors Left: 36
- Cool Photo**: \$ 30 Favors Left: 5
- Cool Photo**: \$ 30 Favors Left: 5
- Cool Photo**: \$ 100 Favors Left: 100

Each item also has the word "Player" written below the icon.



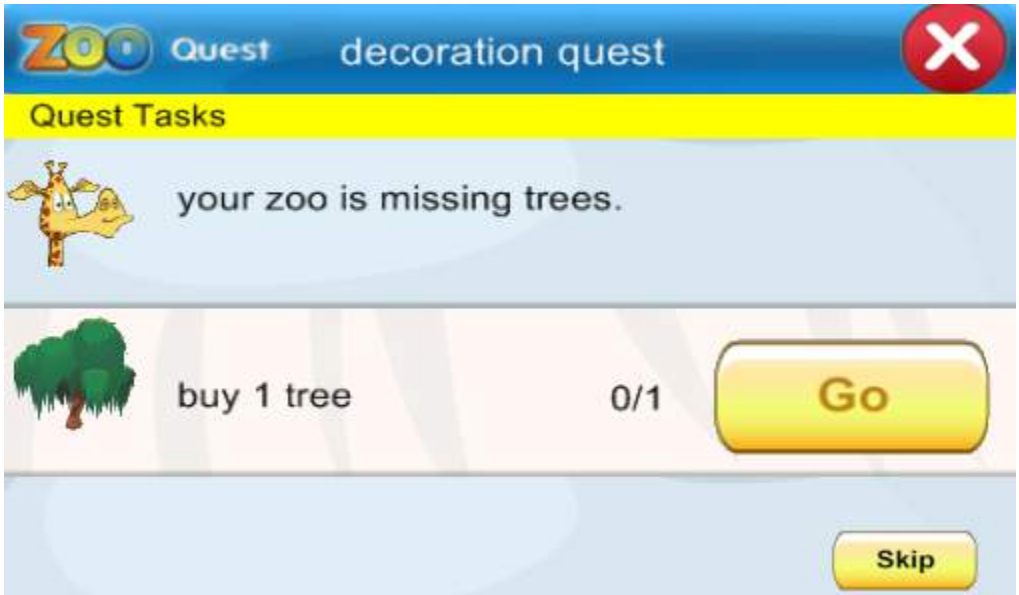
Quests

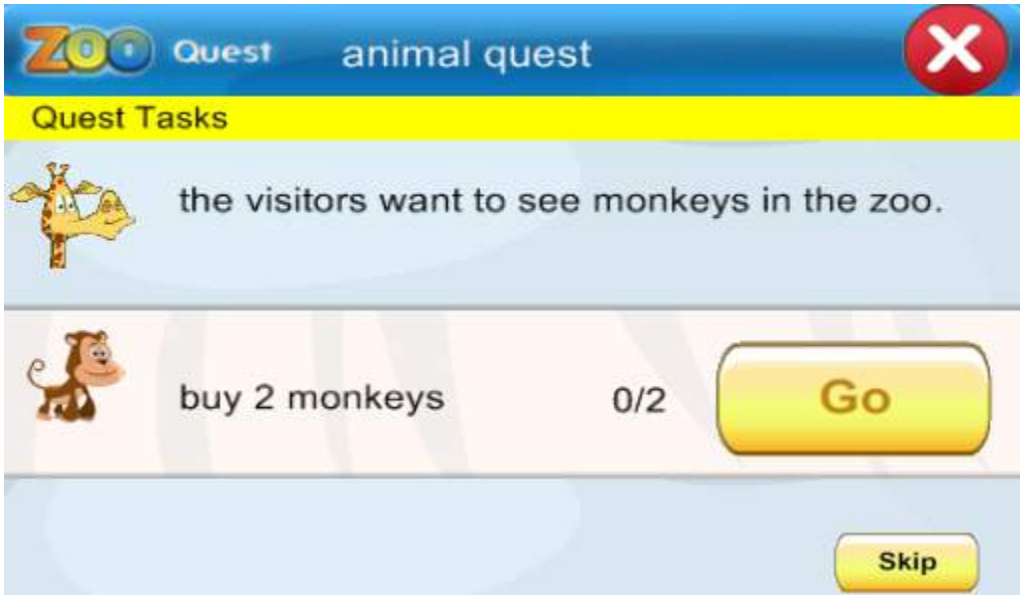
Quests are bite-sized tasks that players can do to progress in the game. Designing quests that allow players to progress in the game within the quick-play intervals can help raise engagement. The quests can have a narrative story tied to them so that there is a sense of story as players progress through the quests and the game.

Zoo Club is a game where players build their zoo. While building a zoo sounds fine in theory, too many decorations and animals sometimes make it hard to decide on how to proceed.

To make it easier for players to understand what to do next, there is a quest system added to the game. The quest system gives players bite-sized zoo-building tasks. Additionally, the quests have a narrative story element at the top of each quest, so players have a context and a story for every set of quests.

The quests themselves are broken into mini-tasks. Each task has a counter for it, and players know how close they are to completing the task.





Drawing Mechanic

Smartphones have touch screens that offer the ability to naturally draw with a finger. Whereas traditional computers required a mouse for input, making it very difficult to draw naturally, touch screens offer an interface that is both fun and easy for players to use for drawing.

These touch screens can be used for drawing games, games in which drawing drives expression, communication, and/or progress in the game. Games such as Pictionary can be more accessible on phone devices. Combine this mechanic with the asynchronous mechanic to make your game accessible to more people.

Additionally, the drawing mechanic can be used to make expression toys. Many kids love to draw. A toy that allows kids to draw and express themselves can become really engaging for them.

Kids Doodle is a simple drawing app that allows players to draw whatever they want and then share it with others. To keep things fun and interesting, the line might change color while the player is drawing it.



Moron Mechanic

This is a new genre of game where players engage in a game that is a test of sorts. It relies on people's reflexes, judgments, and sense of humor. It works well, in part, because smartphones allow for natural input by touch. These moron games require people to use sense of timing, touch the screen at certain times, touch certain colors, and do other tests.

These challenges, presented in a funny way, get players involved. The tests are challenging but fun, and give people a sense of achievement while at the same time entertaining them.

Players earn a score as they progress through the test. This score can be compared with that of other players around the world or with friends' scores.

Moron Test is a game that uses this mechanic really well. It is a series of simple and funny quiz questions that you have to answer. The test is a mental test that offers entertainment as well as a sense of achievement. By using puns and other humor mechanics, these tests provide fun and addicting experience to players.





Game Utility

This is a relatively new design space for game designers. Once again, the benefit of this new design space is that it makes games accessible to a broader audience. The game utility space involves the combination of play/fun with people/team's utilitarian functions.

This can be applied to people's utilitarian activities like dating, shopping, or going to restaurants. The game is built on top of normal everyday life activities that people and groups of people normally do. A game designer can use game mechanics to make these activities more fun, social, and engaging.

Epic Win is a game that makes a daily to-do list more fun. Players make their daily to-do lists and then earn points for every task they complete in the list. It is a fun way to finish things people were going to do anyway. Basically, Epic Win adds RPG mechanics to a person's daily to-do list.



Social Distribution/Communication

This is leveraging current social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others for viral distribution and communication.

For example, Words with Friends allows players to share their score and other items with their friends on Facebook.

Additionally, apps like Talking Tom the Cat allow you to create videos that you can share on YouTube and in other places. Once again, these are fun game stats and content that a person can share in other social and communication services they use.

As a game developer, you can incentivize posts to various social networks by giving players in-game currency and rewards for sharing.

Even the game itself can allow for screenshots or other content creation that can be shared with friends on social networks such as Facebook or Twitter.

Blast Monkeys is a multilevel game where players play simple physics puzzles. Once you play through the initial set of levels, you can buy in-game coins to unlock more levels.

Additionally, players are incentivized to share their score and other stats with friends on Twitter and/or Facebook by getting in-game virtual currency when they do share. This currency can then be used to unlock more levels and items in the game.



Emotional Distribution

Emotional distribution is creating memes, stories, and quick humor that can be shared with other people in and outside the game.

Your game can help create mobile/user generated content that can then be shared with friends to create awareness about your game. Help people create funny content so that they share it with their friends and others in the game.

For example, you can create a photo app that allows players to take photos of themselves or friends and then add special effects such as being fat, a vampire, zombie, pirate, or something else worth sharing with friends. Such fun content gives your players something funny to share with their friends and family at the same time promoting the fun of your app.

As long as the generated content is something worth sharing, players will be willing to share it with friends and others because it builds their social capital. Looking like a silly pirate in a photo helps to create some laughter when viewed by friends.



Social Networking Mechanics

Social games have gained large audiences. The basic model is for game designers to build their games on top of social networks, but what if game designers use their games as bases for social networks?

Using lightweight social networking mechanics like gifts, inbox messages, comment boards, status updates, profiles, e-mail/sms notifications/updates, and friends/neighbors can help to raise the engagement of your game.

People are looking to connect with other people, and those other people do not necessarily need to be their real-life friends. They can be “game friends” or other social relationships.

These social network mechanics allow for communication amongst players, and the game itself often becomes secondary. Players may no longer want to play the game, but they visit your game daily just to say hello to their in-game friends.

Fun Friends is a game that allows players do each other social favors to earn points and, eventually, reach the level of “Fun Guru”. The game mechanics include buying and selling other players in the game as well as social exchanges.

In addition to the game mechanics, there is a solid layer of social network mechanics. These mechanics allow players to express and communicate with others in the game and include a comment wall in each player’s profile, a community wall where players can broadcast themselves, a photo system for players to share photos with each others, and a gifting system for players to send gifts to each other.

Some of these social network mechanics are tied into the game system so that players also further themselves in the game as they communicate with others. These social network mechanics provide a level of stickiness to the game and raise the level of engagement.

Fun Friends

Energy 95%

More in 16:26

● Coins: 949

+ Points: 15

Player Profile

Player

\$ 300



About Me

Age: -

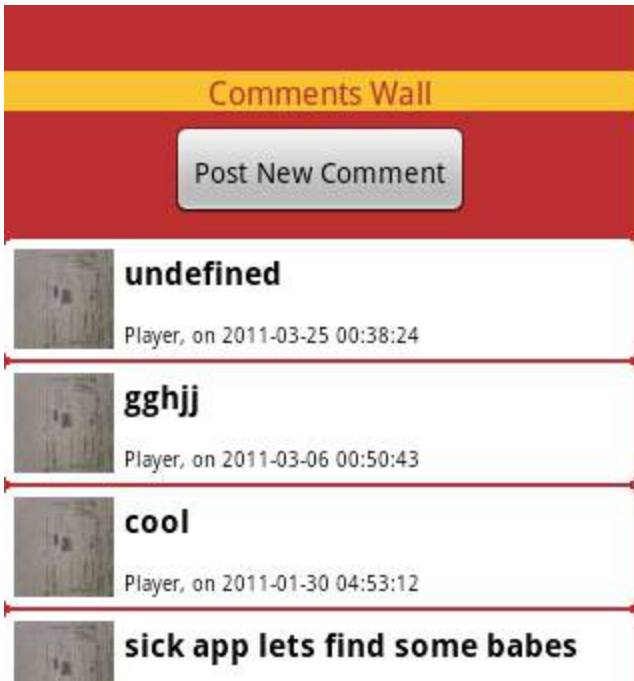
Location: -

● Coins: 10

+ Points: 39

Fun Photos (2)

Message



Asymmetric/Multiplayer Communication

This is a relatively new area of game design that hinges on creating games that center on specific types of relationships. While social games are designed for symmetric relationships such as normal friendships, there are opportunities for games around other types of roles and relationships.

The goal of multiplayer communication mechanics is to design fun around these types of relationships. You can design mobile games that allow people to role-play certain types of asymmetric relationships.

For example, a dating game in which there is a pet-owner relationship offers a different type of experience than a game in which players have a symmetric game relationship.

In such games, the fun comes in the interactions around these types of asymmetric relationships. Often each role in such a relationship will have different “interaction” and “communication” permissions. For example, in the dating game, only the master/mistress can send the pet a message to the inbox.

Traditionally, communication on the phone is a one-to-one system. However, games can help to coordinate and facilitate multiplayer communication. This is a new type of communication style and it allows for new types of communication opportunities. It is important that this is even different from a multiplayer MMO. In a multiplayer MMO, people are interacting with more than one person at a time, but the communication exchanges are one-to-one.

With multiplayer communication, you can have situations and messages where different people in the game help to build the message and the final message gets sent to another person -- or group of people -- in the game.

A simple example would be a greeting card. This can be an interaction event in a game in which multiple people in a team/guild have to add their own messages to a card and that card gets sent to someone else in the game. This requires use of asynchronous communication and asymmetric design in order to create interesting messages and content in the system.

Use these concepts to create unique social interactions that help inspire players to keep coming back to the game.

Humans are social creatures. Many emotions that humans feel are only accessible and attainable by interacting or thinking about other people. The great thing about multiplayer games is that they can direct and

coordinate multiple people to interact with each other in a way that creates compelling emotions. Your MMO, then, is an emotion generator with players as part of the structure for the emotion creation. Multiplayer communication can help to facilitate this communication.

Fun Friends is a game that allows for players to buy other players in the game as pets to add to their “Fun Cage”. Once a player is a pet in a fun cage, the owner can then do certain things to the pet such as kiss it, spank it, or play with it. This asymmetric relationship adds to the fun of the game as a player who likes another player in the game and wants to be his or her owner has to find a way to buy him or her.



Game Localization/Globalization

As smartphones become ubiquitous, the number of players from many different cultures and countries increases. Localizing your game for different languages helps to amplify the network effect needed by social/MMO games. It also helps your game stand out from the many games that are only designed for one language.

While “localization” helps, there is also another concept – globalization. Globalization involves making sure your mechanics, concepts, and story are universal. Look at the Angry Birds video on YouTube. It uses pure visuals to communicate the story, and there is no specific language or dialog in the storyline, yet it has received over 10 million views. Globalization and finding universal themes for humor help to draw more people into your game.

Additionally, there are universal themes that seem to translate across many different cultures. Designing a game around these themes can help to make it universal. Here is a sample list of themes that transcend any one specific culture:

- a) Relationships
- b) Food
- c) Pets/Animals

Blast Monkeys is a game that uses both localization and globalization to get a broader audience. In terms of localization, Blast Monkeys has translated most of its program description as well as in-game text into several different languages including Chinese and Italian.

As for globalization, Blast Monkeys was designed in a way that it would have a universal appeal. Specifically, there is very little text and the game itself has only one way to interact with the puzzle – a simple tap button. This tap button makes the game accessible to people from all countries.

Additionally, the game is physics based and a lot of the fun is visual; the fun of watching the monkey bounce around each puzzle level as it gets into the goal makes the game globally accessible. Visual comedy not only spans multiple cultures, but also attracts different age groups.



Simplicity

At this point of smartphone game design, most people play the games in short play sessions. Sure, they may play those short play sessions multiple times to build up their character in an MMO game, but most individual play sessions are short.

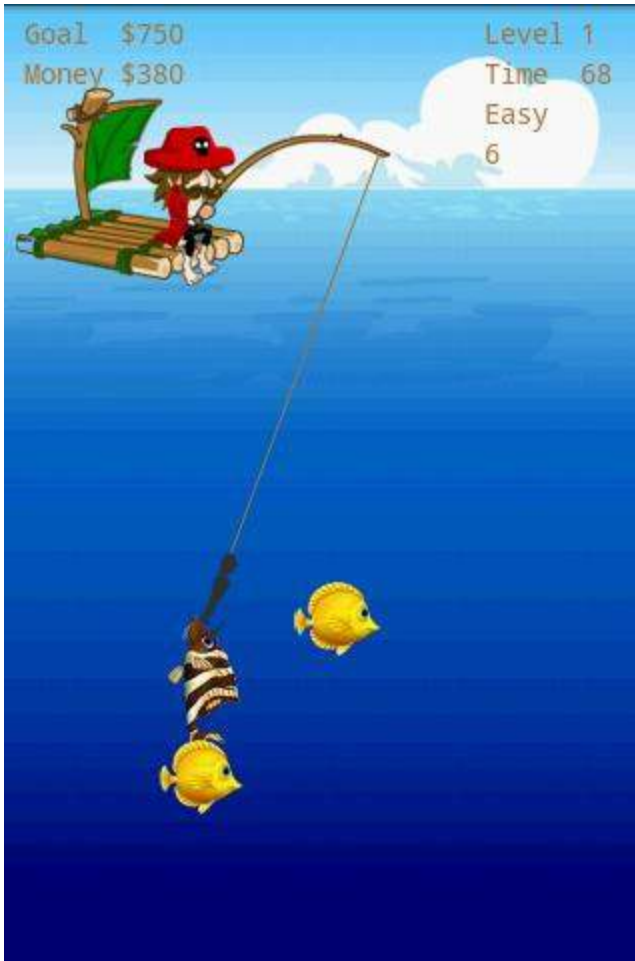
To make things simple, be sure to make the actual game interaction quick and simple. Techniques like easy stat displays and very easy ways to interact with the game help to make the game more fun and accessible. This inspires players to pick up the game and keep playing it.

Challenging controls or trying to emulate a joystick controller on the smartphone can make a game inaccessible to many people. People are used to tapping or sliding, and working with these known gestures can help to make the game more fun for the casual gaming audience.

Blast Monkeys is a simple puzzle game in which players simply press a button on a moving canon to blast a monkey towards the goal. The interface for the main game is a simple button. Combining that button with physics effects once the monkey is blasted helps to create a simple experience that is very fun.



Fishing is a very simple game that has a simple moving fishing hook. A player only has to tap when it's ready, and it'll extend down into the ocean and grab a fish, if there is one available. A very simple mechanic that is also very fun.



Game Delight

This is a very subtle, but important mechanic that includes the visual and audio feedback that makes a game attractive and gives it its own distinct style. It is also the visual and audio effects that provide a player with an extra layer of feedback from the game.

Delight can be broken down into a few categories:

- a) Sound
- b) Visual effects

As for the sound, little audio effects help to get the player engaged in the game, making the game feel more engaging.

As for visual effects, this is the little stuff such as fireworks or other animations that can keep players engaged and provides entertainment to their visual senses. The fireworks can happen when a player reaches a milestone in the game, for example, reaches a new level.

This is especially important for games that are targeted at kids. Little sparkle effects or animations help to keep them entertained in the app. These effects can happen while they are interacting with the game. For example, a drawing game that gives off sparkle effects or sounds while a player draws adds another level of interactivity that helps make the experience more fun and unique.

Tap Fish does this by having an explosion of fun stars when a player returns back to the game. The simple explosion effect helps to add some visual candy for players; this visual candy can also come in a form of constant random things in the game. For example, in a zoo game, there are funny random animation effects for the little avatar characters walking around in the zoo. For instance, one of the zoo visitors in the game can start to break dance randomly in front of an animal habitat.

Input/Activity Signals

Smartphones can make phone calls, but they also have a variety of other sensor/data systems including GPS, camera, accelerometer, and gyroscope.

These can be input into a game to help amplify real life or other things. The important concept here is that traditional game consoles only had a player's joystick moves as input, and in case with the smartphones, there

is a whole lot of other inputs that can feed into the game system in different ways.

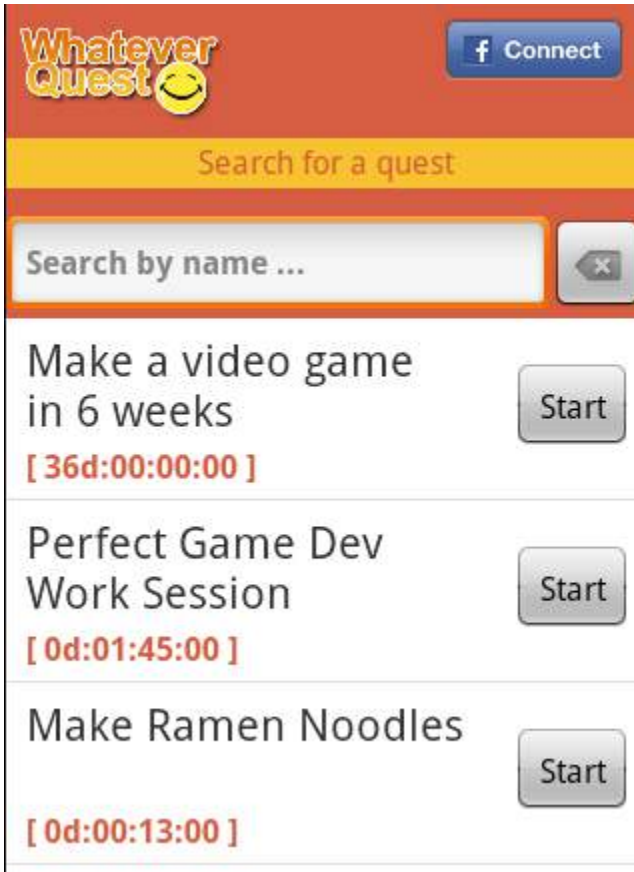
Whereas a traditional console required a player to actively engage with the joystick to interact with the game, the GPS, camera, and accelerometer data can come into a game system in a passive manner or can be used later on in the game.

In a traditional game console, the joystick input was usually immediately fed into the game system. The delayed and passive use of these new input streams can lead to more interesting game designs and systems. Imagine a situation in which a person's GPS data is passively stored in a game and then is analyzed at the end of the day to keep track of how many miles that person have traveled for the day. That then gets compared to the number of miles traveled by other people in the game and a leaderboard is displayed.

Additionally, these sensors can serve as the input for new types of games that revolve around activities. Whereas traditional social networks focus on friend interaction and communication, these sensor devices can help to power "activity networks" – social networks built around various activities.

These activities can include exercising, photo-taking, traveling, and many more.

Whatever Quest is a game that turns everyday life activities into a quest. It uses the different sensors of your phone to determine whether a player has finished a part of a quest. For example, "Making Pasta" is a quest and that is broken up into various stages. Each stage may require the player to use the camera to confirm the completion of the step, this may mean, for example, taking a photo of the pasta as it is being cooked.



Community Interactions/Contests

Community helps to obtain passionate users. Ways to encourage and build your community can involve simple things such as responding to players' mail, sharing news and updates with your community, and/or having a development blog or section of the game where developers can share news and updates about the game.

While that covers developer-to-community relations, there is also another fun way to keep the community engaged: to foster player-to-

player relations and competitions in the form of weekly challenges or contests.

One important aspect of this is to reset contests and challenges each week so that players can re-engage and have a chance to win again. Imagine a physics puzzle game that has a weekly contest/challenge section in which several players who beat the 5 challenge puzzles in the quickest time win a prize. This would be a fun way to keep players engaged with the game.

A developer can add an in-app blog. The blog should be easy to visit and should hold daily posts that show images of upcoming features and items in the game and describe fun daily and weekly contests. If it becomes a fun news source, some players will visit it each day to get a sense of the next updates for the game.

Pocket God has a blog that helps to build a community around the game. The posts on the blog can be contests, fun answers to funny questions, as well as previews of upcoming game updates. They use ample doses of humor to make sure players enjoy themselves while reading the blog posts.



Friday, March 18, 2011

[Everything you ever wanted to know about Pygmies but were afraid to ask...](#)



Play-Testing

This involves playing your own game AND having other people play your game. You must observe them, and see how they play your game. You'll be surprised at what you'll find. Keep doing this and you will enhance the flow of the game and resolve many UI/gameplay issues that you overlooked because you've been looking at the game for too long.

Have your friends play the game in front of you, or get on craigslist or in various classes and ask random folks to check out your game.

Mix and Match Mechanics

Success in mobile game design involves many of these mechanics. As you and your team design your game, mix and match mechanics as needed, find ways to use the hidden mechanics to make your game a unique and compelling experience.

Interview: Pocket God (Hidden Mechanics: Games as a Service, Story, Community Interactions)



Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/pocket-god-gdc-2010-interview-final.mp3>

Interviewer: I'm here at the San Francisco Game Developers Conference and with me today is a special guest. How about you introduce yourself?

Dave: How you doing? My name is Dave Castelnuovo, and I made a game called Pocket God. We were number one in the Apps Store for a while and sold over 2.3 million units. It's a little game where you take these little pygmy guys and drown them and skewer them with spears and light them on fire and do all kinds of really fun, mean things.

Interviewer: What inspired you to make the game?

Dave: Basically, we were just trying to get into the market in any way that we could. We wanted to do these short little projects. Pocket God was never meant to be a huge success. It was just meant to be a short little weakling project that we could have run with, that we could entertain ourselves by doing really extreme, kind of funny things. It just ended up that there's lots of people, like me, that like that same kind of extreme fun.

Interviewer: So, while you're developing it, you were having a lot of fun during the process then.

Dave: Right. Exactly. And I think that's an important part of it is, you know, I think companies and people that go out there to try and capture the market, that doesn't really work. You try and second guess. You're not going to get as big of an emotional reaction out of just entertaining yourself. You should be your primary customer, and if you can entertain yourself during the development process, then chances are there's going to be a lot of people like you that will also get into it.

Interviewer: How long did the development process take to get it done?

Dave: Well, the first iteration was only a week. So, we did it between Christmas and New Years of 2008, but then we've been putting in almost a year and a half of just straight seven day a week of 12 to 16 hour day work sessions since then.

Interviewer: So, after the first iteration then, what did you go about doing? Did you submit it to the Apps Store? Did you test it on people? How did that work?

Dave: Well, we just put it out there, and quite frankly my goal was to not really get bogged down in terms of trying second guessing people and waiting on stuff and trying to figure out: will this work; will this not work? Our strategy was just put it out there and get through it. See what happens and then just iterate and try something else.

Interviewer: So, you were thinking about doing other games, too?

Dave: No, no. Pocket God was originally meant to just be a stepping stone onto a more sophisticated game, a traditional game, and we're kind of lucky that it took off because our traditional game probably wouldn't have done nearly as well.

Interviewer: So, you released the game on the Apps Store. What happens?

Dave: So, when it came out, we were really hoped that it would do well. We hoped that it would sell, maybe, 200 copies a day. We kind of felt like, well what if nobody wanted it?

Interviewer: That's ambitious.

Dave: Yeah, I know. That's ambitious. That's decent. If you can get, like, a 200 unit a day hit, you're doing pretty well. I mean, that's really decent. And then, we just started seeing it grow from there. A lot of people were giving us some negative feedback at first, and it really forced us to get out there and get into the community building and talk to people. And that was actually the best thing that could have happened.

I'm a developer. I don't really spend a lot of time with social media, like Facebook or Twitter or anything like that. But Pocket God kind of forced me to get out there and forced me to put myself out there, my personality out there and to be kind of genuine with people. And that's, I think, what made the biggest impact with Pocket God.

Interviewer: Can you talk about what kind of negative feedback were you getting? Was it just on the game play itself or just some of the issues, like sometimes it wasn't as polished?

Dave: Well, before I did Pocket God I did a couple of other projects just to test the market and learn the SDK. The first one I spent 10 hours on. The second one I spent about two days on, and so granted they weren't the most sophisticated apps in the world, but when people looked at Pocket God they looked at these other apps and they said, "Well, the creator probably doesn't have a very good reputation. They're probably not going to support this. I wouldn't buy it, you know. It looks like one of those games that they are trying to sell you on the promise of future updates and most likely they're not going to follow through on it."

So, it was kind of like a turning point for us where this dream of being able to work out of our homes and work on our own creative was at risk.

Interviewer: And so, you put yourself out there. That's pretty different. Did you do that before, or is that the first time you did it? What were some of the challenges and just being comfortable with that?

Dave: Well, I mean, I consider myself kind of an introvert, and quite honestly it was challenging to put myself out there like that. But I'm a fan of real, genuine comedy and real, genuine personality. I'm a fan of Howard Stern, and he is about as open as you can possibly get. I've talked to him about all of his personal life, so I really felt like I didn't want to be a marketer. I didn't want to try and sell people. I think people are resistant to that anyway, so I just wanted to put myself out there and let

people decide and just be more interesting rather than try to tell people to buy the game.

Interviewer: And so, you had a Twitter account and you just tweeted to that, or what were some of the things that you mentioned?

Dave: Well, originally we got on Touch Arcade, and we just started really working with that, developing one-on-one relationships with people, you know, making friends. My thought is if you know somebody, if your friend is in a band or something, you're going to go see him and you're going to try to tell everybody about him.

So, we wanted to try and go in public places, public forums like Touch Arcade, meet as many people as we could, get them to know us as people rather than a company and allow that to build this grass roots movement. So, we really worked the forums for a long time. I would put a developer diary on the forums. Then, it evolved more into a blog. We started doing a blog. I think the way that we market our application is a little bit different in the fact that we put more of a spotlight on our community and what they're doing than what we're doing.

We don't send people to a website that has screen shots and videos and marketing language. We basically show them, here's some kid that did this really crazy video because he loves Pocket God so much. Here's this mom that created a stuffed animal pygmy for her kid because they just can't get enough. Here's this parent that's watching their one-year-old know how to open up the iPhone and get into Pocket God, and they're proud of the fact that she's drowning pygmies and tossing them in the volcano. So, we want to basically show how crazy our fans are about the game, so don't take our word for it take their word for it. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Some of the stories you mentioned; it sounds like parents are playing with their kids. Is that a big part of it, or is it mainly adults?

Dave: We're a pretty wide range. I would say the strongest demo for us is probably junior high school-high school getting into college. Some adults love it as well. They can't get enough of it. Then, there's what I call the edgy parents, parents that give their \$500 device to their three-year-old and they're like, "I don't know if I should be worried that my kid loves to skewer pygmies."

Interviewer: Aside from that, were you also updating the game itself, or were you focusing more on the community aspects?

Dave: I would say it's about 50-50, you know. Community is definitely a big part of what we do, but for the first 14 updates – we did weekly updates – our schedule would go like, Tuesday sleep in, Wednesday start thinking about what are we going to do this week; what kind of wacky idea do we have. Thursday, Friday start investigating technology, all day Saturday pump it out, Sunday do bug fixes in cement and Monday get back to our client work.

Keep in mind, for the first 14 updates we were releasing real functionality not just bug fixes and text changes but real functionality every single week. At the same time I had 60 hour or plus a week client work. Allen, my partner, had his clients that he was working on. So, we were just really, really busy. We saw that we had a little of a wave. We weren't secure enough yet where we wanted to quit our jobs, so we just put everything that we had behind this. And we really tried to just build that wave as big as we could.

Interviewer: You also worked with the new trend of games as a service; well not you, but games as a service thing even for the iPhone.

Dave: Yeah. I guess so. At first, we called it episodic micro game. It's just these little touches of interactivity, like part of a sandbox and we evolved it to the point where we have mini games and different types of things where we're starting to put in purchases where we offer them skin packs.

But, yeah, it's kind of like an extended development process. It's like there is no end. As long as Pocket God does well, we'll still be adding content and it's for your original 99 cent price point.

Interviewer: So, a lot of indies are working on their game on the side, and they got their main job. When did you decide to just go all the way with Pocket God?

Dave: Well, basically it just kept on getting harder and harder in order to do my client work. And a lot at the beginning we were able to do updates every single week. At first, it was like, an update took me a day. Then, all of a sudden, it started taking two days. Then, all of a sudden, it took a week. Then, all of a sudden, it took a week and a half. So, I had to start pulling back days from my consulting work, and finally it was at the point where there was just no way I could do anything but Pocket God. And now, we're completely wrapped up in it.

Interviewer: Were you number one before you decided to go all the way with Pocket God, or how did that work?

Dave: Yeah. We were actually number one for a while before we started to go all the way, and to be fair it wasn't just the financial thing. The client side work was for worldgolftour.com. They're really great people, and I was there since the very beginning. I really wanted to stick around and help them out as much as I possibly could. So, I really made an effort to, at least, spend a couple days a week even after we were number one, at least, spend one day a week. But then finally it just got too much, and I left them in a good position. They totally understood. So, it just ended up being the right time to split off from them.

Interviewer: Once you became number one, what were your thoughts? Were you a little concerned that it might just peak and then go down, or how were you going to keep that going?

Dave: I think that happens the entire way. So, when we actually got into the top 100, we were like, “Oh wow. I can’t believe this happened. When’s the other shoe going to drop? When are we going to fall right out?” And then, we got up to 55 and we were like, “Wow, this is awesome.” Then, we slipped back down to 60. Then, we were like, “OK, that’s it. Our reign is done.”

And then, all of a sudden, we hit 50, and we jumped up to number two. The whole process, until we were in the top 25 for four months or so, it was continuously checking the Apps Store, continuously checking our ranking, just like every five seconds, kind of a paranoia that is hard to get over with.

Interviewer: So, now you’re working on this full-time. Are you thinking about doing another game on top of this while you’re working on this game? You know, that’s the strategy that some companies have followed and then some companies have just gone on all the way with one game.

Dave: Well, the whole thing with our strategy is I don’t want to create a company out of it. I don’t want to take all the revenue that we made and spill it into another game that could possibly fail, and then, all of a sudden, we’re out of the industry. We want to be really careful about the growth. I’m actually not much of a company builder. I like working in my home. I like peace and quiet. I like keeping things small, so we’re really going to focus on that.

Instead of creating a new game ourselves, what we’re looking at is licensing, finding existing teams that may have expertise in the console industry and Facebook and different things. And going with them, creating a partnership and then assisting them in the development of a Pocket God game on another platform, or on another iPhone game with a different genre.

We think that the game lends itself to all kinds of games. The big hook with it is the cute characters and the humor, the mean humor aspect of it. So, we think that it could be a full puzzle platform, or it could be a cool collection of mini games. It could be an animal type game. So, it's really a question of finding somebody that really believes in the game, believes in the characters and wants to do a good job and handle the management of that piece.

We don't make as much money in that way in the long run, but it's really a lifestyle choice for us that we want to keep things small and we want to keep things quiet and we don't want to blow up fast and then explode like a firecracker.

Interviewer: What suggestions do you have then for other indie game developers who are trying to do their own game, their own either indie game, either on Facebook or iPhone or mobile or something else?

Dave: My advice is to really stay true to yourself. Try and please yourself. If you can get an emotional impact out of yourself and create a game that causes you to laugh or causes you to say, "Wow, that's awesome", that's going to be the strongest kind of reaction that you can get. Keep on looking for that. Keep on looking for things that move you and chances are people that like you are going to be moved as well.

At the end of the day there is a big luck factor. There is a certain aspect of being in the right place at the right time, and the only way that you manage that is by being in it long-term. Don't iterate like crazy. Don't sit there and agonize about what color a button needs to be. Get stuff out there quick. See what it does in the real marketplace and then iterate with a new game or with updates, but focus on trying to do things quick. Get out there. Test stuff. Don't take it too seriously because you might be wrong in terms of what you think the audience's reaction is going to be but just stay in it long-term.

Interviewer: And so, do you keep trying to make the development still fun at all? Do you still try to keep laughing while you're developing adding features, or how does that work? Is it now more serious now that you've already done all the creative work?

Dave: Well, it's up and down. To be quite honest, there's a lot of burnout in terms of working a half and a half for seven days a week, 16 hour days. So, sometimes we're so tired that we think like, "God, what are we going to do this week? What are we going to do for this next update?" But, there are a lot of things that we laugh at. We just had a dance pack update where we offer seven different dances for the pygmies and we did the "pants on the ground" thing like a week after the viral video went out. That was hilarious.

We just did a story mode, and Allen came up with these really awesome story ideas. There's one story that he played called "Dancing with the Ars" and another called "Gas Who", these pygmies doing these cute little things. So, we still find ways of making it fun, but it's hard. With anything that you're working on for a year or so, it's difficult to have that all the time. So, you just have to be realistic with your stuff.

Interviewer: I mean, how do you feel then just waking up every day, working on a project that you've done yourself that you're creating. It's not really for another client. It's for your own customers and stuff like that.

Dave: It's the most satisfying thing that I've ever done. I really felt that I had a lot of ideas that I wanted to work on something that would move people. Being in charge of your own destiny, working out of your home, I get to see my wife all day long because I don't have to work late nights in an office. It's really, really rewarding and it's really great.

I would have to stay to anybody out there if they have that inside of them, if they feel like they would want to be an independent developer

and want to do the same kind of thing, I would do it. Stop what you're doing and find some way to do it. The way that I did it was, and I recognize that I have a problem finishing my own projects, was just to set up a little spread. Just say what can I do in 10 hours. I was going to do 10 hours. I'm going to start it and finish it and just get it out of the way.

It doesn't have to be earth shattering. It doesn't have to be the first time that anyone's ever done what you're thinking about. Just do something. Get it out there, and then when you're done, try and do something else. But just try and find a way to get out there and do something and finish it and move on to something new. If you can do that, eventually something will hit.

Interviewer: You also had a partner though. A lot of indies will do it alone. Even for your previous projects, have you had partners or was this the first time that you decided to work with someone else?

Dave: Well, in my previous projects, the two that I did were just my own type thing. There's all kind of different models for success. Some people actually find working with a partner really easy and with a game, especially. Typically, the lines are drawn as programmer and artist.

So, at the minimum you need that kind of configuration, but there's plenty of projects out there that are just programmers, a programmer that has a decent creative streak. Maybe, you're a fan of an 8-bit style, an old Atari 2600 type game. You can be a programmer and do a game like that and have a retro feel and end up doing something cool.

There's a potential for success for anything that you want to do. You don't know. If people knew what was going to hit, then they would do it, you know what I mean. Go out there and try something. Just try what you believe in. Figure out what your strengths are. If there's a partner that you feel like you can work with really well, you might want to go the partner route. If you want to do something on your own that's going to

be really worthwhile, do that. It's just a matter of getting out there and just trying things.

Interviewer: Where can folks find out more information about your game?

Dave: Pocketgod.blogspot.com.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Interview: Thump Football (Hidden Mechanics: Real-Time Data Streams)



Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/gdco-thump.mp3>

Interviewer: I'm here at the Game Developers Conference online in Austin, Texas and with me today is a special guest. How about you introduce yourself?

Chip: I'm Chip Overstreet, CEO of Thump Games.

Interviewer: And what's Thump Games about?

Chip: And so, we're all about making the viewing of live sporting events more fun, by getting the fans engaged in the game. We've developed our first game called Thump Football which allows you to pull out your Smart Phone and predict what's going to happen next in the live football game. And we score you in real time, based on what actually happens.

Interviewer: So, can you give the audience more detail exactly how this works? This is almost like overlaid on top of a normal football game. This isn't its own football game. You're actually taking live data from the football game to process this.

Chip: Exactly right. So, while you're watching the game, you can be at home. You can be in a sports bar. You can be at the stadium watching the game. What most sports guys do and it's typically guys, we boast about our knowledge of the game, and we let each other know what's going to happen next. So, we just basically wrap the game around that.

And we give you the ability to select whether it's going to be a run or a pass. You can predict the yardage, less than 5, 5 to 15, or 16 plus. You can pick whether it's going to be a first down or a touchdown.

Provided you get your picks in before the ball is snapped, you're eligible for that play, and you get scored in real time. We've got a partnership with a company called Stats Inc. that has people in the stadium recording the data, and we've got a real time feed from them into our back end. And it gets pumped back out to all the gamers.

Interviewer: So, to clarify, the game starts and, maybe, for the first play or a second play or something, a player who's playing this Thump football game busts out their iPhone. They have the app running. They've chosen

that game from the Thump interface and they just say, “OK. What’s going to happen is they’re going to run 10 yards.”

They put in that guess, and the play has to happen after that. And then, they get the results of whether they earned points based on whether they were accurate on that play or not.

Chip: Exactly.

Interviewer: So, they’re kind of, almost in a way, playing coach. Well, not really coach, but they’re predicting what will happen.

Chip: Offensive coordinator or even defensive coordinator.

Interviewer: OK.

Chip: You’re looking at the game situation. You’re looking who’s in the game. You’re looking at the formation, and you’re saying, “This is clearly going to be a pass.” You know what? It’s not always clearly a pass even when you think it is, and that’s what makes it fun. The content is always fresh. The games are live.

Interviewer: What inspired the idea then?

Chip: About ten years ago I was running a company called RTIME. We developed technology for massively multiplayer online games. We licensed the technology to game developers and publishers, and everyone that licensed our tech was building Twitch Games. I’m not a Twitch gamer. I never have been, and I spent a lot of time thinking about what are games for the rest of us, the non-hard core gamers.

I thought it would be great if I were sitting in my living room, watching a game, and I could predict what would happen next in a football game. As a consumer, I’ve just been waiting for someone to come with this. And

last summer sat down with actually the same team at RTIME, and we built a prototype.

We had it up and running midway through last football season. Then we had eight weeks to test, and we had a group of about 30 people that got together every Sunday night for Sunday Night Football, and people calling in and people in my living room. And we'd play the game and I got the feedback and spent the week iterating and building out new capabilities and fixed the stuff that just wasn't working. By the end of the season, I had something that was really fun. Yeah, go ahead.

Interviewer: Let's talk about that testing process. When you first had that prototype out, what were some of the issues that you ran into? What were some of the surprises that you ran into while you were testing this out? And did people play for the full game, or was it for a quarter, or what was the attention span?

Chip: Good questions. So, after the very first time that we played this, I was depressed. I thought, this is just not fun. The game had been in my brain for ten years, and I thought, how could this not be fun? But, we made it way too complicated.

Now, you've got about 30 seconds, 30 to 40 seconds in between plays, and that seems like a lot of time. And so, we gave people a lot of options. What we learned very quickly was make it simple, just make it really simple, and the game has to augment the football game.

When you get together with friends, you're not doing it to play Thump football. You're doing it because you want to watch the game. You want to socialize. This has to be something that augments that and makes that experience more fun.

Interviewer: Yeah. And that's what different about this game versus even other games is that this is really taking a real world experience and

augmenting that real world experience versus choosing between, oh, do I play this video game, or do I watch this other game?

Chip: Exactly, exactly. You know, it's interesting. One of the primary use cases we found is people playing this when they don't care about the actual game. So, ESPN's got games every night of the week now, even Tuesday night this year. They started televising football games, and a lot of times they're games that just are not that interesting to a wide audience.

So, when you're playing Thump alongside, it makes the game interesting. If the game's a blow out, a lot of people lose interest. But if you're playing Thump, you're still interested. So, it makes the experience even more fun.

Interviewer: So, moving back to when you were testing it, so you were depressed the first time. What are you thinking at that point? How do you turn from this kind of perceived, "OK, I thought this was going to be fun. It isn't working" to actually making it fun and provocative.

Chip: Well, we just had eight weeks and we spent each week in between those Sundays making changes and coming up with new ideas and new approaches. And we got the feedback the following week, and we just kept narrowing our focus and making it more and more simple.

Interviewer: What were you seeing from the testers or from the users throughout those eight weeks? Can you, maybe, talk about the response the first week and then the response the fourth week and the eighth week?

Chip: Yeah. I would say that their interest and excitement just got greater and greater.

Interviewer: OK.

Chip: You know what was really interesting is the game tests really well. It tests really well with kids which was not our thinking, but we had a couple of guys that are in their 40s, maybe, early 50s with 8, 10, 12 year old boys. We even had a 13 year old girl that was in the beta test group. We had about 30 people in the whole group.

They were calling in. You could just hear them squealing every time the ball was snapped because they'd just made their picks, and they're excited about what's happening. It's fun to watch.

Interviewer: So, by the end of the season you find something that's more fun. What was the next step after that?

Chip: So, about eight of the people that were in the test group came forward and threw about \$150,000 into the company. They said, "Look, you can do this on nights and weekends. But why don't you get the people that can really put their heads down and focus on this?" So, I brought in the two guys that really were the core engineering team at RTIME, and they've been heads down focused since February.

Interviewer: Were there any challenges while you were developing this? How do you coordinate all this real time data? How do you make sure that... What are the other design challenges because this is a bit different, you're actually requiring real world data in terms of those football plays actually process the results of the game.

Chip: That's certainly one of the challenges is dealing with the real time feeds and the inconsistencies of those feeds because we're relying on a third party partner for that.

Another challenge is we had to design a system that could scale to support a million people hitting submit at the same time. The third challenge is we want this game to be ubiquitous. We want it to run on

any device. So, we built a whap cline [sp] and then basically put a wrapper on that for the iPhone. We're doing the same with Android.

The game will soon be playable on five Blackberry devices, and it's available on PCs and laptops. And soon it'll be running as a game inside of Facebook.

So, we want to meet people where they are. We're big believers that social games, particularly multiplayer social games, can't be effective if you require everybody to be on the same device. It's just not real world. I should be able to play on my Android against you on your iPhone and my wife playing on Facebook.

Interviewer: I met you through the Joyent booth. So, is that why you chose Joyent then versus other systems because of the scaling? You're right. The one thing about this game is that literally if it grows to scale people are going to have to be hitting the submit button at the same time.

Chip: Right, right. That's exactly right. So, we're working with Joyent because they're like EC2 but for scaling, for serious back end engines. They've got dedicated hardware. It's newer hardware. You've got access right down the middle. They've got big Ethernet pipes connecting the boxes.

Interviewer: Were you able to actually test out or do mock tests to make sure that this thing could scale really large or really highly on these systems?

Chip: Oh, yeah, yeah. Absolutely. And we did a lot of AV testing on Joyent, on EC2 and a couple of other providers. Joyent has got a great solution and great customer support as well which is important to a small company. You need a partner.

Interviewer: And so, what's next in store then? So now, you have this game ready to go and football season is starting up.

Chip: Well, we're just cranking up the marketing engine now, and we've got more games in store. The relationship we have with Stats Inc. covers major league baseball as well. Baseball is going to start a couple weeks early next year in mid-March. So, there'll be a small gap between football and baseball, but we're looking at other sports. We're thinking about Thump Golf and Thump NASCAR and Thump Cricket and Thump Soccer.

We designed the engine to be... It's a real time prediction platform, and it's been designed so that we can very easily support just any sport. We're still on the fence about Thump Curling, but we're going to hit all the major sports.

Interviewer: Have you tried it, or have you tested it out on baseball because baseball is a slower sport? So, I don't know. It seems like it would make it way more fun.

Chip: I couldn't agree with you more. Sitting in the outfield on a hot summer day, drinking a beer, just being able to predict whether the next pitch is going to be a ball or a strike or whether the player's going to get on base or steal. I think it's going to add a lot of fun to the game, particularly for those people who are at the game.

Interviewer: Where can people find out more about your game or even start playing your game for their favorite football team?

Chip: Well, if you've got an iPhone, iPod Touch or iPad, you can go to the App Store and download it. If you're on an Android or just a PC or laptop, just open your Safari browser, your IE browser, your Firefox browser and go to thump.com.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Interview: Sekai Camera (Hidden Mechanics: Augmented Reality, Social Networking, Persistent GPS)



Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/cc-arg-solar.mp3>

Interviewer: I'm here at the Casual Connect Conference in Seattle, and with me today is a special guest. How about you introduce yourself?

Takahito: I'm Takahito Iguchi, CEO. We released our first AR game. It's called Kaboom, and it's a social bombing game.

Interviewer: Sure. So, you guys have a social platform based on augmented reality in Japan, right?

Takahito: We are the first company to provide a social gaming platform. Right now it's the only one available.

Interpreter: So, basically what he's saying is that it's an AR social platform. It's not just in Japan, so we're the first in the world.

Interviewer: So, to clarify to the audience, basically, there is also a translator here. So, if anything's confusing, it may take just a little time to clarify things. So, this is the first social augmented reality platform. What inspired you guys to come up with this idea?

Takahito: Right now Augmented Reality is like navigation, but we think augmented reality can be used in another dimension. We call it "beyond reality". We hope to provide a new experience that you can get from the iPhone. This is how we see it, and gaming is a core function of our augmented reality platform.

Interviewer: How do people get started with this platform? It seems like you need an iPhone or an Android. Can you talk about how people can actually download and use this application?

Takahito: We cover iPhone platform and Android. Right now, our game is available only for iPhone. The application is free, and you need only to download it. After downloading it, it's easy to access.

Interpreter: This gaming icon is within the Sekai camera application, and there's easy access to the games category or the catalog.

Interviewer: So, let's just talk now in detail about the game, the first game that you came out with, and this augmented reality platform. It's

called Kaboom. Can you give a little description on what it is and how people play it.

Interpreter: OK. Kaboom is a bomb defusing game. The goal of the game is to defuse as many bombs as you can and win more points. Basically, you can team up with your friends in the social part of the game and make more powerful bombs, or you can choose to run away. But the social aspect of this bombing game is what makes it very interesting. This is so awesome. It also works with Twitter. When you defuse a bomb or when you run away, and the action's complete, you can notify your friends what you're doing within the game.

Interviewer: What's been surprising about making this game, releasing this game and just seeing people playing it? What's actually been surprising in terms of interaction, and has it reached the engagement that you guys were hoping to achieve when you introduced these augmented reality games?

Interpreter: So, basically, right after lunch we saw several thousand bombs planted across the country and many active users. Moving forward, we are planning on adding new features, stronger bombs, better ways to defuse, trophies, medals, or what have you, increasing the social aspect as well as making the game more viral.

So, I think we're on the right track, and there's been a lot of good feedback.

Interviewer: Great. And, you know, can you talk about, I guess, the mobile game experience in Japan and in the U.S. Most of the listeners are in the U.S., and the mobile usage here is not as prevalent as it is in Japan. Based on your experiences in Japan, where are the games going? Where will the mobile games be?

Takahito: It's, like, a smartphone that has a broadband connection and GPS and touch panel and good sound. Those are very common in Japan, so mobile games are selling better in Japan. Ultimately, our game is very new. It's like sci-fi. It's beyond the mobile gaming experience. We are constantly releasing new games, about 10 each year, like a fishing game, a gardening game, etc. We hope our real environment, real world, is becoming a gaming field.

Interviewer: And do you see a concern with actually having to hold up the phone to use augmented reality as something that might get in the way of people actually using it? Normal use of the phone is just placing it down, just looking at it. Holding it up might be challenging.

Takahito: That is true, that is true. We need to change the way people use smartphones, but I have to say...

Interpreter: So, actually you don't have to have the users hold up the smartphone to view the surrounding environment. It's just sort of like an intro into the virtual world except, for example, when you're looking for a bomb, then you need to hold it up. But once you encounter a bomb and when you're defusing it, you don't have to. When you're working on the bomb, defusing a bomb, it works like a regular game. It's not necessary to hold the phone up all the time.

Interviewer: You know, what's interesting is that in the pre-interview you guys were mentioning that you are really kind of co-developing these games with the users. Can you talk about how they provide you feedback? You know, there's not really... I don't know if they can even access the forum through their mobile phone. How are you co-developing these games with your users? So, your players will communicate and give you feedback via Twitter.

Takahito: We are looking at how people react, every time we are tweeting about our game play, every time.

Interviewer: Can you talk about some of the other social aspects of your platform itself? I mean, so you have this game. But, what are other things that people are doing with your augmented reality platform that you find useful and interesting?

Takahito: We make the game very easy for our users. We make it easy to add and find comments, to catch the action of the attack, and we have a social function.

Interpreter: All of the actions, for instance, your friends within your social graph can show up as time lines so you can follow people. You can, for instance, put people in certain places so you can archives in time lines. You can also filter comments so that only some of them show up. There's a variety of surroundings, so you can filter those, too. There are a lot of social aspects.

Interviewer: So, these tabs, a lot of them are used to generate. In Japan, is there a lot of use of user generated content in games and in the social platform? Forums are for reference for professional content. Does it even matter?

Interpreter: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, in terms of games, is there any such thing, like user generated content in Japan?

Interpreter: So, in terms of user generated content in the game itself, we don't think there is a game that is user generated; however, in the Sekai camera game platform we are currently working on integrating the user generated tags that are already used in the world, and there are millions and millions of those. We are currently integrating those user tags with the game play itself. So, that is the direction we are heading, and we will have several games in the future, in the next few months or so.

Interviewer: Can you guys talk about how does this augmented reality work with women versus men? Is the uptake the same with men versus women, or is it a different...

Takahito: Maybe, right now there are more male iPhone users in Japan...

Interpreter: The majority of those who use smartphones in Japan are men right now, yeah.

Interviewer: You know, when you talk about some of these other mobile games, these mobile social games in Japan, is it fairly balanced, 50-50 men-women because that's something that's kind of intriguing that we've seen in the U. S.

Interpreter: So, this all depends on the platform. So, for example, on other mobile social platforms, like GREE or Mobage, the vast majority are males whereas with Mixie the majority is 57 percent female. So, the female population is slightly larger than male, so it all depends on the platform itself. In terms of Sekai eye camera, the tendency reflects that of the iPhone which is used mostly by males. However, we are expecting this to change in future.

Interviewer: Where do you see smartphones and where are they going to be in terms of, like, one or two years in Japan? Is it going to be all smartphones, or is it going to be still traditional phones and then a smaller population of smartphones?

Takahito: Right now, smartphone market is growing fast. iPhone 4 is a big hit. This year Japanese mobile carriers will have many types of Android phones and they'll become more popular. So, maybe, in two years the market share will change significantly.

Interviewer: And so, are you guys doing anything for Android? Is that something that people in Japan are taking seriously, or is it iPhone all the

way? And is iPhone on all the carriers in Japan, or is it only on one carrier, kind of like in the U. S.?

Interpreter: iPhone is carried by the third largest operator which has roughly around 20 percent of the pie. But the Sekai camera is also on the Android camera, too. So, we've launched on the iPhone. We've had 100,000 downloads in just four days, and we reached one million downloads in seven months. We've moved to the Android this month, but we're also on the iPad. So, we're on multiple devices now.

Interviewer: You know, you guys may have heard about this social gaming thing that's happened on Facebook. Is that something that already happened in Japan before it happened in the U. S., or is there something that surprised you guys in terms of... What are you guys learning from this social games that you're seeing working on Facebook and stuff like that?

Interpreter: The social gaming has been very big, very early on in Japan because the mobile devices were there and the capabilities were there, the features were there.

Takahito: Young Japanese people are allowed to play games and watch animation. It's very common. So, social gaming activity is not special in Tokyo.

Interpreter: But it also serves to reflect elsewhere, too. So, it really wasn't a big surprise for, for instance, like Zynga and Facebook to come up with the same kind of trend.

Interviewer: Where do you guys then see the whole mobile, social augmented reality game thing going in the next two to three years?

Interpreter: So, mobile social gaming will become more connected to our daily lives. So, nowadays, if we talk about mobile augmented reality

games, we have to switch it on. We see mobile AR gaming sort of like connected to our daily lives, so we just pick up the phone, scan the vicinity and then we see a pet because we're running a nurturing game called Why We Live, while the phone is on and so forth. We feel it will become more integrated into our daily lives. That's where we see it going.

Takahito: Maybe, children have imagination about dragons and ghosts. It's very usual gaming activity. We provide some kind of imagination. Maybe, you can find the ghost everywhere in the platform.

Interviewer: Can you guys then talk about... You mentioned solar.

Interpreter: Yes.

Interviewer: What is that exactly? I know that's an acronym for you guys. Can you discuss that and let the audience know what that means?

Takahito: Social game is very popular, and social location game is popular, too.

Interviewer: What about augmented reality?

Takahito: Social + Location + Augmented Reality is very Powerful.

Interviewer: That makes up solar, then?

Takahito: Yeah, yeah. That is solar.

Interpreter: So, these other acronyms for solar, social, location-based, AR, augmented reality. We think that this combination sells, mobile, social, higher engagement, higher revenue in Japan, location. Social and mobile location are also very popular in Japan. We believe the AR interface is an intersection between two dimensional games and three dimensional games. And also, it's the intersection between reality and

virtual. So, this combination itself enhances the whole experience which, at the end, will create a higher engagement which will also leads to higher average revenue per user as well.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you very much. Do you guys have a website that people can check out to find out more about your service and your game? So, it's S-E-K-A-I-C-A-M-E-R-A.com, SekaiCamera.com.

Takahito: We will have new information as soon as possible.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

How to Make Money

Part of having a successful company is making it sustainable so that you can work on your passion full time. Most game designers are financially literate, but it is important to understand the financial aspect of development so that you can make better games and gain enough revenue to reinvest in your company and game.

The financial benefit of a game is increasingly tied to the game design, so game design mechanics can have a financial component to them.

While some designers may be allergic to money, other may get angry when players are unwilling to pay more than a dollar for a game.

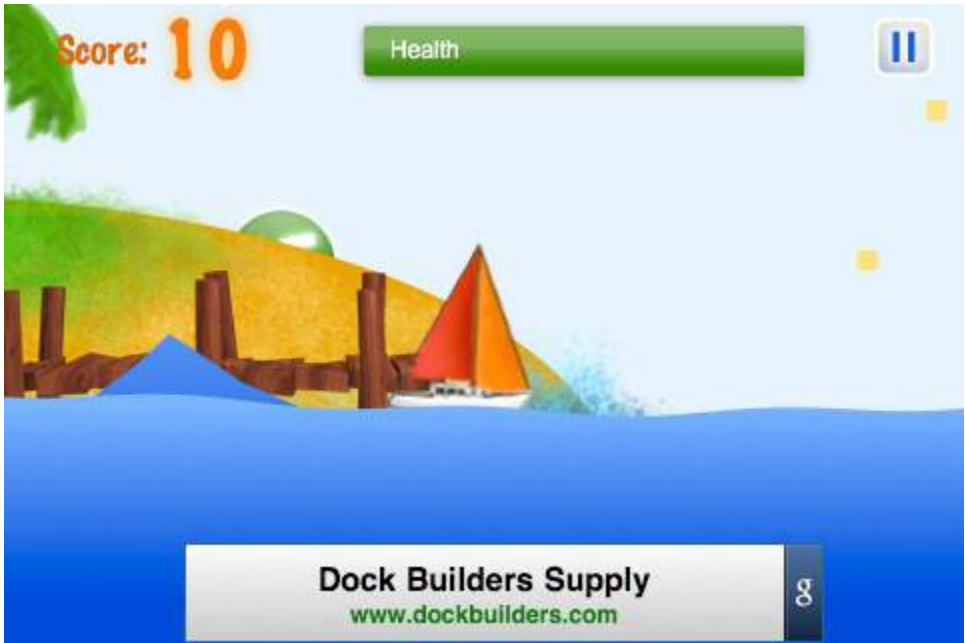
Keep a couple things in mind. Most people, including game designers, want the most value for the least cost. Additionally, people want to make worthwhile purchases; once they see the value and fun, they are more likely and happy to pay you money for your game.

The goal is to provide the maximum value to players while also making sure your company is enjoying itself.

Advertising

One way to generate revenue from players who always desire free things is to put ads in your game. You can put them in strategic places such as menus so that they do not get in the way of the gameplay. The benefit of placing ads is that the more people play your game, the more you make.

So it's in the best interest of your company to make a game that people want to keep playing and playing.



Sponsorship

Companies were willing to sponsor games in the Flash space and that is also a possibility in the mobile space. You can make a game or an app that appeals to a certain demographic group and then line up a sponsor willing to pay for the placement of their logo in the app.

Pay for Game

Another approach is to charge directly for the app. Sure, there are companies that successfully do this, but keep in mind that one can catch more flies with honey. So even if your company decides to directly charge, be sure to put out a lite version to give players a feel for the game, and then offer 10 times more content in the paid version.

For example, if you decide to do a physics puzzle game, you can offer 10 puzzles in the free version and then 200 puzzles in the paid version.

Once again, this is not recommended for students. When people pay for an app, they are expecting something as polished as Infinity Blade. People are willing to pay for unpolished things mostly if there is already a free version that people can check out and see whether it gives them fun.



Incentivized Offers

Another business model popular in the social gaming space is the use of incentivized offers. Many users will never pay for a game, but they are open to filling out offers in exchange for in-game rewards and currency.

These offers include but are not limited to signing up for Netflix, getting a credit card, or shopping at their favorite places.



Surveys

Many game developers do not necessarily like the concept of having their players sign up for offers to get virtual currency, because some of the offers may not always be in the best interest of the player. Another option is to have players fill out surveys. A lot of these surveys are created for Fortune 500 companies that are mainly looking for feedback and input from certain demographics for their user-research department.

While these surveys may pay less than incentivized offers, they may be a better experience for players to fill out.



Watch Video Ads

Another up-and-coming way for developers to make money from players without having them fill out personal information is to have them watch a short video ad about a movie or something else. There are many big companies that are willing to pay if you can have a player watch their ad.

This is a simple and non-intrusive way to generate revenue from players that do not have the ability to pay.

Virtual Currency

Another business model is using virtual currency in your app. The goal here is to offer your game/app for free and then offer in-game coins. These coins allow players to purchase items in the game such as new farm items, fish, or other items. Virtual currency works best in social/multi-player games in which people can show off their purchases to others.

So far, this business model is the “killer business model” in the industry. Most developers that replace the ad revenue model with this model get a 10x increase in revenue.



It is also important to consider a model that is used in the popular freemium games on iPhone and Android, the so-called “Play/Pay/Share” model. The game is designed so that people can play the game for free, but there are time intervals they need to wait to progress in the game. Such games usually offer players to accelerate progress in the game by either paying to accelerate gameplay or sharing content with friends and other people. In a way, these players become marketers for the game in exchange for getting more progress in the game.

Social Networking + Social Gaming + Virtual Currency

This is another business model that is subtle and requires a deeper understanding of game design. Social games are a hybrid of MMOs and Social Networks. This hybrid model has enabled companies such as DeNA to have high Average Revenue Per User. Even though they have about 25 million customers, they are able to generate over one billion dollars in revenue each year.

In this model, instead of just developing a game, the developer creates a social network and builds social games on top of this social network. The developer creates the lightweight social mechanics to drive a social utility that makes players come back to the app. The primary purpose of the service is for players to communicate via comments/pokes/etc. Then the developer adds mini social games on top of it, allowing players to engage in the social network at a deeper level.

Once these games are developed, the game company can introduce virtual currency. These systems have shown to monetize significantly better than just social networks alone.



Interview: Super Rewards (Virtual Currency, Incentivized Offers)



Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/super-rewards-iphone-podcast.mp3>

Interviewer: I'm here at the Game Developers Conference and with me today is a special guest. How about you introduce yourself?

Adam: Hi, I'm Adam Caplan. I'm the President at Super Rewards.

Interviewer: We already talked about how you monetize MMOs, but you also have a special offering for iPhone developers and mobile developers. Can you talk about that more?

Adam: Yeah, sure. We have a solution that iPhone developers can use today. It's a SDK where they can implement cross promotion advertising

offers into their iPhone games as a way to make additional revenue in addition to what they are getting through the App Store.

Interviewer: The thing about iPhone is that they announced their own virtual items platform. How does this either compliment it or compete with it?

Adam: So, we are really excited about that. I think it's going to be fantastic for developers when it's up and running. We're an advertising platform, so we're very different to hang directly for virtual [?] on the iPhone specifically. On the iPhone and the social media market we do allow people to pay, but it's just the advertising offers we present on the iPhone. But, it's a way people could allow users to level up or pay for additional items that is within the game and through completing advertising actions through us.

Interviewer: Do you have any companies or games already using this?

Adam: The two that are using this at the moment are Luke Wars. It's a role playing game around item collection and another Papaya Pro, which is a multi-game platform where there's a credit system. The most amazing thing we are seeing here is the CPMs for the advertising are about triple of what we see in the social media space.

Interviewer: Wow.

Adam: Users are absolutely passionate about these games. The click through rates are five times as high as we were seeing on the social media space. So, we think this is going to be a tremendous opportunity in the future for developers to make incremental revenue above what they are making for selling their games or selling their credits through the App Store.

Interviewer: If people want to get started then in putting this in their iPhone game, how would they do that?

Adam: They can come to srpoint.com, s for super, r for rewards, and you can download our SDK there. It's a very simple process. Most folks who have implemented it have done so within a day. It's a way to make money tomorrow.

We pay out every two weeks, and there are iPhone developers who are certainly doing hundreds and hundreds of dollars a day with us today and they're very, very engaged. We're very, very excited.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Interview: Jumptap (Advertising)

Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/jumptap-podcast.mp3>

Interviewer: I'm here at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco and with me today is a special guest. How about you introduce yourself?

Adam: Hi. My name's Adam Towvim, and I run the business development group at JumpTap. We are a mobile ad network.

Interviewer: OK. And so, you guys are targeting... What types of people would use your service?

Adam: OK. That's a great way to start. So, we're here at the GDC, the Game Developer Conference, and in particular we're talking a lot to game developers today. There's a great opportunity to work with us and take

the ads, especially the brand ads that JumpTap is selling and have those run inside your app. We see game developers doing this a lot where they're able to offer up a free version of their game, take our ads, they get ad revenue from that. They're able to fund their road map through the ad revenue and less about having a reuser of their games have to pay a price just to use the game.

Interviewer: And, you know, based on what you're seeing, what suggestions do you have for developers who are trying to monetize their apps or who are trying to make money off their free apps?

Adam: That's a really good question. We get that a lot, and I think it's really helpful to think about advertising early on as you're designing a game, not because it should get in the way of the game but precisely because it should blend in seamlessly. So, maybe, there's an opportunity to create what we call an interstitial unit at the time your game is starting up. You can run that once in a while. You can frequency cap it per day or once per user, and it's a great way to get a high value ad unit in there, and most people don't necessarily think about that. Also, just finding a place for your ad.

Most people aren't necessarily aware that placing an ad at the top of an iPhone app will generate sometimes about a 10X quick through rate or ten times more revenue for the same priced ad unit as if you placed it at the bottom of the iPhone app.

Interviewer: What about Android? Are you focused on just iPhone at this point? What about Android, people who are looking, developers who are making Android apps?

Adam: That's also a good question. We're actually very excited about the growth of Android. If you look at last year, the GDC called it the iPhone gaming summit, and already then we were seeing explosive growth in

Android. I'm glad they expanded it to now be the SmartPhone summit. And we've probably seen Android apps and Android ad requests as a percentage of all the other ad requests in our network increase a good 15 to 20X since the beginning of last year at this time.

So it's really a very exciting time to be an Android developer and a iPhone developer, really any SmartPhone developer because you're giving your users a great experience, you're able to power a rich media ad experience that's very engaging so the users respond accordingly. As a game developer you get much higher monetization, sometimes 15+ dollars CPM for that, and for an advertiser it's a great return on their ad spent.

Interviewer: You offer another service. Can you talk about that service in terms of developers who are looking to actually promote their app, trying to get downloads?

Adam: Yes. So what I've been talking about so far when we're allowing game developers to monetize ads and let's be honest, we send them a check at the end of every month. They're happy about that, but a lot of them come to us and say, "Well, I'm not necessarily there yet. I'm just starting out, or I'm releasing a new version. How do I get into the top 50? How do I get into the top 25?"

And we have a lot of specialists who are very experienced in that, and it's essentially a paid media buy. And we steer you through either cost per click, cost per download and advise you on doing burst buys so you can increase the rankings of your app or your game. What that ultimately allows users to do is to discover you more easily. And so, you get what we call the SEO snowball effect where more and more people are discovering your game, and then they're coming and downloading your game and using your game even though they weren't necessarily part of your paid media buy.

Interviewer: There are a lot of competitors in this space. What would you say differentiates you from the other ad networks on mobile phones?

Adam: We try to be smart and simple. That's what we do. And so, the smart is really about the targeting. We give our advertisers more targeting parameters, and that allows them to generate a higher return on their ad spend. And it means for the game developer, for the app developer, they're able to see a higher effect of CPM. And for those who aren't aware of what an effective CPM is, if you're just starting out with advertising, think of just a thousand times you might show an ad inside of your various users game experience.

What could you do with those thousand ad spots? You could show ads that are paid per impression, per click or per download. We all measure it by effective CPM, and we see time and time again with game developers that we generate the highest effective CPM of anyone out there, and that's great for everybody. The simple part is just making it self-served. You can sign up and monetize with us within minutes. You can create the ad spots and get them loaded into your app, especially if you're doing things service side.

That's another piece of advice I would give to game developers. Anything you can do to add different ad networks on the server is great because then you don't have to take another trip to the app store. That's it.

Interviewer: So from your perspective, where do you see the mobile market and even the mobile ad market going in the next 12 to 24 months?

Adam: I think in the next 12 to 24 months you're going to see more and more rich media which means higher effective CPMs.

Interviewer: And by rich media, do you mean like video plays and stuff?

Adam: Not necessarily. Think of rich media as anything that has an interaction or animation immersive component to it. You know, there's a standard 300 pixels by 50 pixels ad that appears at the top of most Smartphones. The user clicks on that with their just, you know, their finger and something drops down. It's expandable. It's a full screen, whatever it is, but the important thing as a game developer you should know you're relying on the user to click on that and they're initiating with the ad unit. And then, we're very, very focused on allowing the user to return back to the gaming experience. So our iPhone SDK, our Android SDK, we make sure that people are going to be able to return back to the user experience.

Interviewer: Where can developers go to get started with your service?

Adam: Jumptap.com. That's J-U-M-P-T-A-P, like jumping over a fence, tap someone on the shoulder. So [jumptap.com](http://Jumptap.com). There's a sign up button right there, and people can get started, like I said, within minutes. We have a self-serve advertiser and self-serve publisher interface. We try to make things smart and simple for our app developer partners every day we can.

Interviewer: And do you have any last words or suggestions for game developers who are looking to make successful apps or monetize apps successfully?

Adam: Yeah. I would think about your monetization strategy in a holistic sense. So, like I said, when you're starting out and designing it, think about getting the ads in there right away in the ad units. You build in the hooks. Maybe, you don't use them right away, right? Maybe, you automatically collapse the area for the time being, and then as you're ready to bring in the ads, at least, you already have the ad units in there, and you can add an ad network that way.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Interview: Appy Entertainment (Free-to-Play Games, Virtual Currency)

Interviewer: Ok I am here at the game developers' conference online in Austin, Texas and with me today is a special guest how about you introduce yourself.

Chris: Hi I am Chris Ulm I am the CEO of Appy entertainment. We are a Carlsbad-based social mobile games company.

Interviewer: What types of games do you make there? Can you talk about the specific platforms and the specific games you've done?

Chris: Sure, right now we are focused primarily on the iOS platform although we do have one android game as well. We've done five original games. The two strongest games that we've done in terms of downloads are one called Trucks & Skulls Nitro and the other one is called face fighter.

Interviewer: Can you talk about the number of downloads for those.

Chris: Our total number of downloads since we started the company is ten million downloads. We have over hundred million play sessions for our games since we started the company three years ago.

Interviewer: When you first started out I guess the whole app store was pretty new and stuff. What has changed since then and what have you learned since you started? What inspired you actually going into mobile at that point? You know it wasn't clear that iPhone was going to be that huge.

Chris: Well it was a little clear to us because we are, originally all of the partners in Appy came from the video game space. We started a company called High Moon Studios and we did high end games for Vivendi and the later, Activision. So we really understand, we've had ten years of video game experience. We really understand those big console-based games. But when we saw the iPhone and when we saw the app store it blew us away. We looked at it and said look, five and half billion people are going to be buying these types of phones whether it is going to be apple phones or Google phones or whatever it is going to be, and all software is going to be distributed this way even to TVs. We knew that right away and so we formed the company only a few months after we saw the first demonstration and started working on our games.

Interviewer: Now the thing is though, when it first started out people are like you cannot make money out of these games no one is going to buy it, even ninety nine cents buying price was really controversial at that time. What convinced you guys that this would actually be a platform where people would be able to make a lot of money and make a sustainable games business?

Chris: Well the first thing is that we thought originally before we got on the store that prices were going to be around the five dollar four ninety nine level and that is what we based our initial games based around. So we didnt really understand how these games were going to evolve, how the prices were going to evolve, and we never thought there was going to be this much competition. So right now you are looking at over, according to apple, over five hundred thousand apps right now. Of which roughly half of them are Appy entertainment games. So that means we are competing against two hundred and fifty thousand other games out there. So we quickly realized we had to drop our prices but we were still doing premium games. So we were still doing ninety nine cent premium games. And then recently we've made a complete switch for all our

games going forward are freemium based. So we have free games that you play now and you pay later on. And that has been actually very successful for us.

Interviewer: Can you talk about the first freemium game you've done?

Chris: The very first freemium game we did was we took Trucks & Skulls nitro which is originally a premium game and we basically did some work to it, we added some new features and then we added a currency goal to the game. And our goal was to make a better game and make it free so we have a lot more people playing it and also that we ended up having it be so compelling that we actually increased our revenue. And we accomplished all three of those goals.

Interviewer: Is it a multi player game or is it single player?

Chris: Trucks & Skulls is a single player game but if you buy the iPad version you can actually make levels and send them to your friends. So we have a great level maker within the iPad version.

Interviewer: So that freemium model, do you feel that is where the whole industry is going to go now I mean there is a huge difference in revenue usually when you talk about add revenue versus you know virtual currency model

Chris: Yeah I think that developers are going to continue to look at all free other models depending on the kind of game they do. For us we are looking at some add based but mostly it going to be freemium and add purchase based revenue model. And the reason that we are going to view it that way is because that is how we are going to reach the largest possible audience, because as these phones explode they are going to be exploding in China and India and other places and people are not going to be willing to try something then play first, they are going to want to play first

and see if they like then later they are going to put their hard earned money into it if they really like it. And we feel confident that we can compete for that share of revenue.

Interviewer: Let's talk about that targeting your app, are you now translating it to other languages and stuff like that, are you? Because you mentioned that iPhone and these smartphones are going to take off in other countries, what is your strategy there?

Chris: All of our apps are localized and we, we know, we've been on the iOS platform game for three years so we sell all over the world. In fact, china right now is our second biggest market and I think that-----

Interviewer: In terms of revenue or in terms of---

Chris: ---- in terms of the installs is our second biggest, in terms of revenue it is roughly even between Asia, Europe and North America. But surprisingly the Middle East a huge market for us in terms of percentages of our revenue; so we've done very very well around the world and we've tried to make games for the whole world, we are not making games just for north American audiences.

Interviewer: How do you balance that because when I look at the Asian country games, games that are popular in Asia, their art style is so different than the art style in the USA. Have you had to do anything in terms of style to make your game accessible to many different people?

Chris: I think for us is about being our self, is about doing things that we think are great and that we think a certain number of people around the world will love, right? And I think just like movies, movies are popular, American movies are popular all over the world but so is animated right? Animated are among the movies. So there is room for all sorts of different kinds of styles. And we really are focused on doing original IP

and having our own style for our games. We hope enough people will like what we do rather than us trying to conform to other expectations of another culture.

Interviewer: What do you think about, now that everyone has kind of realized that the freemium model is so powerful, a lot of companies are trying to do that. How are you standing out, what are doing in terms of marketing to make sure your company stands out as more people get these smartphones and they look for your app?

Chris: That is a great question. We'd like to say that we are adopting the mind of a student all of us at Appy and the most important way that we can market our products is to satisfied players. So we try to get the players the tools within the games to tell their friends about our games. That is actually our most important focus.

Then the other thing is we want to make sure that apple likes our games. We do everything we can to make sure that our games have visibility to apple and they recognize that is a good game. And so far every one of our games has been featured by apple on the store. So we try to do, basically our first focus is quality second focus is on the players and the third focus is working with other developers that have also similar types of audiences and try to make sure that we are promoting our games within those games.

Interviewer: Are you also looking at some of these offer wall companies and some of these other marketing companies that go like, "we'll guarantee you in the top twenty five if you advertise through us" and stuff like that? It seems to be popular with freemium games.

Chris: Yeah I think the way to look at is that people like offer walls because they can get something free that they can use in the game and they also get something because they can download another game. So I think that the concept of doing offer walls is fine and good. And so what

we always are trying to do is work with other companies for example we work with a company called W3i to make sure that we are given the best possible reach for our games and that and that we are given the best possible consumers for playing the games long term.

Interviewer: What is your perspective on android versus iphone, is iphone be still a viable platform or should it be, any developer should they just focus on android now?

Chris: That is an interesting one.

Interviewer: Hey! You started iphone when it wasn't clear, right? To get in you have to get in early?

Chris: I think both platforms are viable platforms. So I am going to speak from my point of view, we are very focused on iOS. We built all of our core technology around Cocoa Touch and Objective-C. We are big believers in the apple hardware and their platform, big believers in the apple store, we like the simplicity of fewer devices. That being said, we have done a game on android we have some limited success with that and we are going to pursuing Android over time. For somebody new coming into the market my suggestion would be to make sure that your game fits the market that you are trying to be in. So if you are planning on going for Android, you are building an Android game, it has to be free. And you've got to find a way to make sure you know how to monetize free. And you need to do a game that people are going to like on android. And understand that if you don't do it free and do a premium version you may have a large piracy problem.

Interviewer: Where do you see then the future of mobile gaming and mobile games going? May be in the next year or two; do you feel that majority of your revenue is not going to outside North America? The

North America area do you feel that you are going to attract more players outside of North America? What are your thoughts?

Chris: Well no market yet has reached fifty percent of smartphone penetration. No country on earth including the USA. That is probably going to happen sometime in the next year. So we are going to continue to see rapid growth in terms of the number of the people that are adopting app phones, smartphones that can handle apps. So specifically Google's Android, and apples' iOS are the ones that are going to be leading that charge and converting people. Looking at a country like China that has almost a billion subscribers by itself for cell phones is also going to be converting to smartphones; India is going to be converting to smartphones. So overtime the number of people that are going to be potential audience is going to grow exponentially. So that part is great and we are really looking forward to that. And we think that eventually every cell phone is going to end up being a smartphone. And most people are going to access the internet through their cell phones or pads, tablets.

Interviewer: Do you think it is going to be the apps that are going to dominate or is it going to be HTML 5 eventually that dominates? Because people are talking about, they are like "oh! it is going to be HTML 5 you know apps are just kind of a temporally thing" but hey! apps are the things that are working.

Chris: Well for one I think anyone who pretends to know the future user they've been wrong. And sometimes catastrophically so if you see each one of the reaction say apples new product announcement and they are very negative and then oops! May be that iPad thing is real, right? So my view point on it is; I think the web apps are going to be incredibly important. For web apps can do things that hardware bases apps can do. So if you want to really tap into the power of the phone say the camera, a web hardware doest really give you the trick, doesn't give you that same

trick. So I think there is going to be a mixture, as far as we are concerned I look forward to doing HTML 5 apps and I also look forward to doing linkages between hardware based apps or downloadable apps and HTML 5. And having that, we already have a mix of that in our apps as well. I see that there is going to be a really nice stew of things that are happening over time between how the web, how social networks how mobile game and then eventually how TV games, TV based games all mixing together.

Interviewer: What do you feel about tablet games; do you feel that is going to be something that is going to be very powerful? Do you feel that people are going to stop playing console and web based games are going to be fading out in preference of mobile games?

Chris: I think it is going to be a mixture. I think that people are going to start gaming where they find the games and when they find compelling experiences and console game, console experiences are very compelling but the financial mechanism behind building console game are really tough right now and requires huge budgets and all the fleet platform holders that make console games today are going to be making them in the future and at least want to curve out their niche or will it be just one in the future who knows. So a lot of these, the people that owns the platforms Apple, Google, Microsoft, and Sony are going to help determine how big those platforms get and how much of the opportunity it is for developers to make a great game.

Interviewer: Throughout your whole experience now running your studio what have been the top three lessons that you have learned? That you wish you would have known or that now you know that makes it more effective and allows you guys to be way more successful?

Chris: Well the first one is what I said earlier keep the mind of a student, don't think you know. We came onto this market a little arrogant because we came from the console business doing twenty million dollar

projects and we thought we knew everything, and you know what we didn't and we got slapped around a little bit by people, by monsters that were coming in and building games that were doing better than ours. And so that is the first one keep the mind of a student. The second one is build a great team, build a really great team that knows how to work together because a great team will beat a single individual almost every time. And keep working with your teams all the time. And the last thing is really focus on the end player, ultimately if it is bad for the end player try not to do it and it is a really simple thing but as you get bigger and as you start thinking about revenue and you start thinking about monetization and metrics, you can lose sight of the player. And for us it is a real, we want to make sure that our company is always focused ultimately on why we are in business which is to please those people.

Interviewer: Where can listeners find out more about your games check them out and potentially play them?

Chris: Well on the web we are at www.appyentertainment.com you can always find anything that you want to know

Interviewer: And that is Appy a-p-p-y right?

Chris: a-p-p just like happy without the H. You can find us on the web, just type in Google if you can't find that on the app store you can also type in you can look at Face Fighter you can look at Trucks & Skulls, so lots of ways to find us we are all over the place and we want you, so please find us.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

How to Get Noticed

A fun game that is free will help inspire some people to try it out, but we need to find other ways to increase exposure and the probability of success. Getting exposure and, therefore, more players is an important step for any successful company.

Sure, a very fun game helps to increase exposure, but there are other things that also can accelerate success.

Even with the suggestions listed below, keep in mind that **experimentation is the key component of success.**

Cross-Promotion

This is a technique that some other small indie mobile game companies use. Specifically, there are services that require you to embed their toolbar in your game. The toolbar will promote other company's games and every time one of your players clicks on a link, your company gets the opportunity to gain exposure in other people's games.

This is a solid way to get your game out there.

Blast Monkeys and Zoo Club also use this to help promote each other's game. Specifically, players earn in-game coins in Zoo Club if they download the Blast Monkeys game.

Blast Monkeys offers players in-game coins if players download Zoo Club.



Complementary Promotion

This involves working more closely with another mobile game company. You tightly integrate their IP into your game and vice versa. You borrow artwork and concepts from the other company's game and integrate it into your game in a meaningful, interesting, and engaging way.

For example, Zoo Club and Blast Monkeys are operated by two separate companies. To help promote each others game, they created a complementary promotion that has a "Blast Monkeys" banana in the feeding options. The banana feeds animals twice as long as any other food item in the game, and can only be unlocked if the player downloads the Blast Monkeys game.

Blast Monkeys, a physics puzzle game, has different worlds in the game, and each world consists of about 30 physics puzzles. Blast Monkeys created a special world called the "Zoo World" that uses animals and artwork from the Zoo Club game. As players complete the world, a link to download Zoo Club is offered.

← 2 of 2 ✕

 **Chicken**
Feeds for 8 hours.
 **\$75** Buy

 **Fish**
Feeds for 8 hours.
 **\$75** Buy

 **Blast Monkeys Bananas**
Feeds for 16 hours.
Special... Earn By Downloading Blast Monkeys Get Now

Screenshot of Zoo Club feeding option. Players get bonus food when they download Blast Monkeys



Screenshot of Zoo World in Blast Monkeys. The world promotes the Zoo Club game

Incentivized Sharing

This involves giving players in-game currency or unlocking new features as they share the app or game content on their social networks.

Additionally, players can earn rewards if they convince other friends to download the app. For players who are passionate about the game, this is an additional way they can benefit from their passion.

Sharing can include options to send a message about the game to friends via e-mail, sms, etc. Make sure you have a compelling marketing message and give players coins for sharing this message with their friends.



Zoo Club uses incentivized sharing to inspire players to post their zoo updates and progress on Twitter and Facebook.

Advertising

Advertising is another way to gain exposure. The challenge is that it can be expensive to advertise your game since the prices for ads on mobile devices are going up. Still, if your company is already making money from your games and you've done the math to see whether the advertising

expenditures bring in more revenue, then go for it. Check out mobile cpm and offer-based services as potential venues to promote your game.

You may also want to look into web/social networking advertising. Some students have advertised their games on Facebook, so if you can find cheap cost-per-click rates, it is worth experimenting with this method of advertising.

App Store

Another important way that has helped games to get more exposure is being featured by the App Store. This isn't guaranteed, but you can increase your chances by making a fun game.



Because most people may check the app store for the top apps at the moment, it is worthwhile to find ways to be visible on the app and game charts for a smartphone.

Keyword Optimization

The title and description of your app are important. The words in the description and title get indexed in search engines, so when a user is doing a search and your title or description have those search words, your application will have a better chance of showing up. This gives you more exposure.

As you release your game, focus on specific keywords that will help your target demographic find your game.

Review Sites

Another important thing is to let review sites know about your game. Even if they don't cover you the first time around, be sure to keep them informed on updates and changes to the game. Places like TouchArcade and 148apps are looking to review new games. They have large audiences and a favorable review can go a long way towards getting more people to download your games.



Zoo Club and Blast Monkeys have submitted press releases to many different iPhone and Android review sites. Each review helps to create more exposure momentum for the games.

Video Reviews

In addition to review sites, having reviews on YouTube can help drive more exposure. These reviews can be done by your team or by other people who already have a YouTube audience. Contact some other people who have already reviewed mobile games and ask whether they will review yours. A simple walkthrough and rating of your game in video format can reach a lot of people.

Some players, when they hear about a game, go to YouTube and look for video reviews of the game. Having some positive ones there for your game can help convince these players to download your app.

Zoo Club has reached out to get reviewed by various YouTube-based reviewers.



Zoo Club Android game review by Playandroid.com

Game review of the Android game "Zoo Club" If you like our Videos visit us at www.Playandroid.com! Read the full review at <http://www.Playandroid.com> You can download ...

by Playandroidcom | 3 months ago | 400 views

HD



Android App Review: Zoo Club by Chroma Club

Zoo Club is an extremely addicting game for Android phones. Ninja Pig Studios highly recommends this game for young kids! Download Here: [market ...](#)

by ninjapig123 | 1 month ago | 129 views

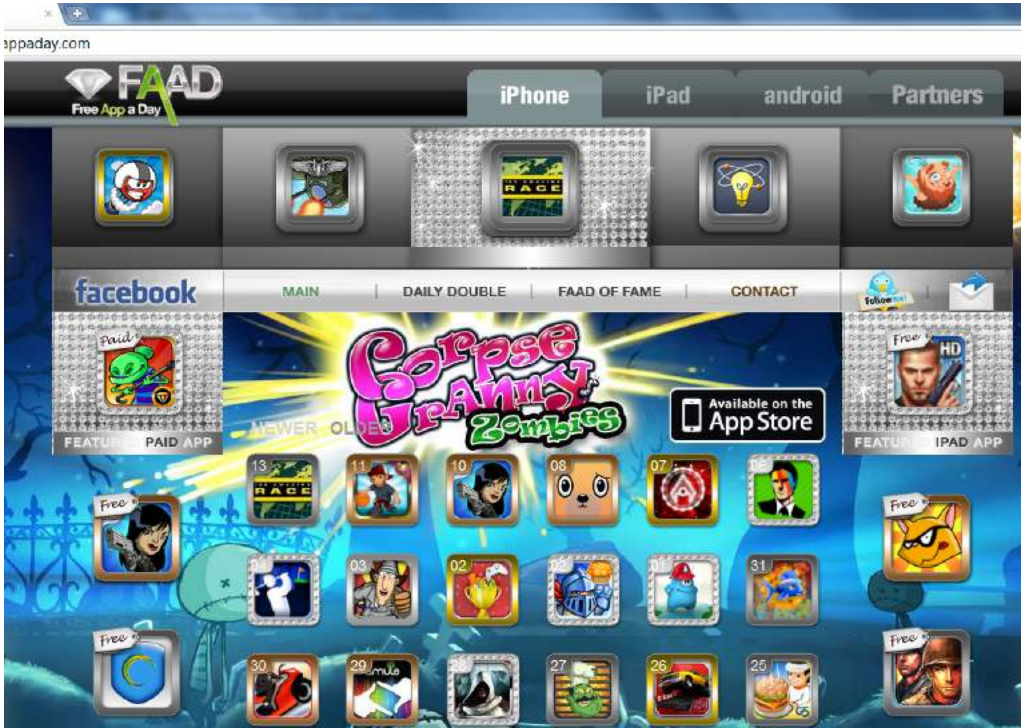
Free App of the Day

Another technique is to promote your game through the Free App of the Day sites. There are a few of them out there, and they post games that normally have a price but are made free for one day. This significant discount can help inspire a lot of people to check out the app. It feels as if they are getting an awesome deal.

Some of the bigger sites do require a fee to promote your app on their site. It's best to test out your game and make sure the economics are there before you go for the bigger promotion sites.

The economics of these Free App of the Day promotions work well for successful MMOs. If you have an MMO that is converting well, buying time on one of these Free App of the Day sites may be worthwhile.

Games like Top Girl, from Crowdstar, and Tiny Zoo from TinyCo have successfully used Free App of the Day promotions to get more players.



Dev Blog

Another way to get exposure is to have a development blog that discusses the development and success of your game. Posts that provide statistics on your game's number of downloads or revenue made help to draw attention. Granted, most of the people will be developers, but they'll be more sympathetic to your cause and potentially will offer you new opportunities and tips that will help you improve.

It may be worthwhile to have your dev blog in mobile format so that it is easier for your fans to access it via their phones. It is also for them to grab links to your latest game build.

Post on Forums

There are many mobile game/app forums that have special sections for developers to post about their latest apps. This is a place to reach the early adopters and other people who actively look for apps, etc. Find as many of these forums as possible, and post about your game/app.

If you have time, ask for feedback from people in the forum. If they post some suggestions, respond to them. Develop a conversation with members of various forums. This will help you stand out from other developers and build a potential fan base.

App Updates

When you update your app, it may be placed in the "Just In" category. That helps you get more exposure and drive more downloads. Aim to update your app once a week and that will also help you get exposure.

Press Releases

Press releases are another way to get the word out. You can write up stories related to updates or milestones for your game. Send them out to places that cover games such as TouchArcade, etc.

For example, you can write a press release about when the app was first released. Even if no site publishes it, keep sending them. The goal here is to communicate to the press and let them know that you're constantly improving and updating your games/apps. When you do an update for your game, send out a press release highlighting the new features. When you reach a certain number of users like 10,000 users – send out a press release letting the press know.

To get started with press releases, do a research for press release templates on the web.



Zoo Club and Blast Monkeys have written and submitted press releases to many online review sites. It is important to note that while your first press release may get ignored by the site, you may get a favorable coverage or review on their site if you keep submitting more press releases as you update and improve your game.

Other App Stores

GetJar is the second biggest app store in the world after the Apple iTunes App Store. It is an independent app store and it is another way to get more exposure for your app. It is not a silver bullet, but it does help gain more publicity.

Amazon has also recently released an app store for the Android that can serve as a secondary channel for distributing your games.

You can also check out the mobihand and androidpit app stores.

Additionally, as more custom devices get released, more niche app stores will come out. You can get better exposure by having an app in these smaller app stores. They may not offer the volume of the iPhone or Android app stores, but these niche/device-specific app stores have less competition and it may be easier to get noticed.

App Store Ratings

App store ratings can help to inspire more people to check out the game. It may also help with the positioning of your app in the Apple App Store and Android Market.

One way to get positive ratings is to get them from people that enjoy the game. One option is to have a button or prompt pop up after a player hits a certain level in the game or has played for a certain time. Ask such players to rate your app. Chances are, that if they have played for a while, they will be willing to offer your game a favorable rating. You can also incentivize these players to rate your app by giving them more in-game coins.

Interview: Virtual Girlfriend



Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/virtualgirlfriend-podcast.mp3>

Interviewer: I'm here at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco at the Touch Arcade Party. With me today is a special guest. How about you introduce yourself?

Mike: I'm Mike Amerson. I'm creator of My Virtual Girlfriend for iPhone.

Interviewer: What inspired that game? That game is actually... I've heard about it. Hasn't it been like number one at the app store? What happened?

Mike: It has. It's been number one in a few different countries. It hasn't been number one in the U. S., but it's been number one in Norway, Lithuania and some more European countries. It's currently number 45 in the U. S. app store under entertainment category.

Interviewer: What inspired you to do the game?

Mike: We were working on an all female fighting game, and then we realized at one point that Apple probably wouldn't approve of such a game. So we started kind of heading into a different direction that we thought would still be kind of female related targeting men but not necessarily too controversial that they would not allow it.

Interviewer: OK. So you come out with My Virtual Girlfriend, and what was the response? Did you do it in Unity, or was it in Objective-C?

Mike: Yeah. We did it in Unity.

Interviewer: That's a good use of Unity. It's different whereas most people are trying to make battle games and stuff like that. You took it in a different direction.

Mike: We liked the idea of mixing a flirty fun app that's a dating simulation game, and we wanted to inject a little bit of humor into it to make it really funny for any guy that has a girlfriend or a wife. They can kind of relate with the different stereotypes of women that are in the game. We made it kind of targeting men in that area.

Interviewer: So you release it. What was the response? And did you have a light version and then a paid version?

Mike: Yes. We released it, and the response has been mixed all across the board. A lot of professional reviewers don't regard it as a game although

it has game mechanics. It's more of an entertainment app. I'm sorry.
What was the second question?

Interviewer: Oh yeah, what's been the response? That's pretty much it.

Mike: So it was mixed.

Interviewer: What did you decide to do after that? How long ago did you release it, and then what did you decide to do after that?

Mike: We released it in May of last year.

Interviewer: So 2010.

Mike: Yeah, 2010. And then, it didn't really start taking off in sales until December of last year. And then, George Lopez did a spot on it for Lopez Tonight.

Interviewer: Awesome. Congratulations.

Mike: And so, that was like a big kickoff for the game. After that, it gained some notoriety, and then shortly after that MSNBC caught it, a review by MSNBC, Winda, her name is Winda, that was rebroadcast through Protako [sp].

Interviewer: During all this time when you released it in May to December, did you change it any? Were you updating it, like, what did you do to actually get it to that because most app developers are releasing and then it falls off the cliff? How do you combat that?

Mike: You really have to plan for updates. You have to have a dedicated amount of time to continually improve the game and make it a better user experience. When we first released it, it was getting negative

reviews because it was deserving of negative reviews. There wasn't too much game plan. It ended at level four.

So we kept building on the core experience and trying to elaborate on it and offer more with each update. We ended up doing four updates by the time December rolls around, and with the fourth update we included a light version which will allow people to download it for free. So they can see what they're playing, and they're not just making a random guess if the game is going to be something they're interested in or not. So we really like that.

Interviewer: Awesome. How would you attribute your breaks with getting exposure in the media and stuff like that? Just serendipity or...

Mike: Yeah. I would say that a lot of the media exposure came from press releases and the controversial nature of the game.

Interviewer: So basically, it's controversial and that's what gave you exposure.

Mike: Yes. Press releases gave us a lot of exposure. That's what made it onto the George Lopez Show. I think their writers probably read a press release, picked it up and then wrote about it that night.

Interviewer: Did it really give you a... because something like the George Lopez Show is something like offline and non-digital. Did it really kick start your app sale?

Mike: It didn't boost us directly into the top 100, but it was the trifecta of George Lopez and getting onto MSNBC and then the free version. All of these things conglomerating into one pushed us into the top 100, and then once we were in the top 100 we had some visibility. That's the goal

of a lot of IOS developers is to get that visibility of being in the app store itself because people tend to make purchases on the device.

Interviewer: Did you buy any ads to promote your app or any cross promotion or stuff like that?

Mike: Yes. We do have a budget of about 15% of the previous month's revenues go towards next month's advertisements. A lot of it is spent on the actual expedited reviews, more so than banner ads. We found banner ads to be not that great of a return on investment, but I have a few key websites that I have learned that are OK. And they give us a decent amount of return on our investment, but for the most part banner ads are really a gamble.

We spent a lot on the reviewers who will rebuttal and then resell us on the idea of charging for a quicker review. If we were to do a video review or something, it costs a few hundred dollars. There are different methods of exposure where you actually have to pay for the ad, but they didn't guarantee a good review with those either. So you pay for something, and then you're kind of taking a gamble out of it.

Interviewer: What suggestions do you have then for other game developers who are looking to do mobile apps?

Mike: I would say for us, for one it's partly the controversial nature of the game. It gets good exposure. So I couldn't tell every developer to do something like that, but it's whatever they choose to develop.

The other part is make a light version of the game. It doesn't cannibalize the sales of your paid version of your game, and it actually helped us out a lot.

Interviewer: Do you think that humor... Do you have, like, humor in your app? You mentioned that you play off the stereotypes. Do you feel that that actually prevents people from taking the app seriously and wanting to buy it, or does it help?

Mike: We feel that that helps. The idea was to inject humor into it from the beginning and just kind of play off different stereotypes and just kind of be fun about it. It doesn't have a real strong game mechanic. It's supposed to be more of a casual, light entertainment game app. So we felt that humor had to be a game component of that.

Interviewer: Are you going to do an Android release or what's next in store then that you can talk about for your company, like, Virtual Boyfriend or whatever?

Mike: Yes. That's exactly what we're doing. So it's just me and one other coder. My wife works part-time as a producer on it and helps market it, too. Basically, we're working on a boyfriend game right now, and my coder, Sir Williams, I call him Sir Williams, will be bringing it over to the Mac App Store while I'm working on the boyfriend version.

Interviewer: Where can listeners get their own Virtual Girlfriend? Where can they check it out? Where can they find out more information, maybe, buy the app?

Mike: OK. We have plenty of information at www.MyVirtualGirlfriendGame.com.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Interview: Offermobi

Note: This interview was edited to focus on the portion of the interview related to marketing

Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/offermobi-podcast.mp3>

Interviewer: OK. I'm here at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco and with me today is a special guest. How about you introduce yourself?

Howie: Hi. My name is Howie Schwartz, and I'm the chairman and co-founder of OfferMobi.

Interviewer: What is OfferMobi about?

Howie: OfferMobi is the first U. S. based mobile affiliate network. We've been running for about 12 months. We have 9,000 publishers, and we focus on helping developers and mobile web publishers, in addition to app publishers, monetize their traffic with mobile offers.

We're actually just releasing at the Game Developers Conference here today our app discovery network which is the first pure play, non-incentivized CPI, so cost per install network. And we've talked a little bit about cost per install, how it works and why it makes a lot of sense for small independent developers and why the non-incentivization, non-incentivized points is real important.

Interviewer: So you guys are kind of like an offers network then for mobile games.

Howie: Correct but it's non-incentivized which is key. So it's different than the other players in the market where they're dealing with virtual currency and you'll get five gold coins or an ax or a new level if someone installs your app. For us, it's based on the intent, so they'll actually review the material and say, wow, this is something I actually want. They'll download it, so the goal is to try to get higher quality, long-term customers to really increase daily active usage in the lifetime value of the customers versus someone who just installs an app for the five gold coins and never actually opens it or never actually uses it. So that's really the main difference.

Interviewer: Where do you see the marketing going? You're seeing all these publishers. You're seeing all these iPhone developers. Where do you see the market going? And yeah, what are some of the surprises or things that developers should keep in mind when they're trying to monetize their app and get exposure?

Howie: Yeah. I think we can split it between monetization and the exposure and discoverability. I mean, the monetization part, it's a little bit easier today. There's a lot of great mediation layers, AdWorld, which AdMon and Google own, is probably the easiest one because it's open source to work with and lots of other partners. And then, you can plug in networks, such as us or run a new AdMon or Jumptap app and you can choose the allocation percentage and really try to get the best revenue per action, revenue per user.

On the discoverability side, I think that's a bigger challenge for developers. At this point it's... You know, my background is in console gaming and development of games, so it's hard for me to say that marketing is the most important thing because a younger version of myself 15 years ago I'd probably kick myself because it's something I would have never said. I remember I used to be sitting across the table on the publishing side and fighting with our marketing team all the time. I

was talking about the features and how the game play was so much more important.

Now, I realize that the reality is that if you want to treat it like a business, the marketing is just as important, if not, sometimes, slightly more important. So the discoverability factor is very important, so things like reviews on the web based and also some of the mobile based app review sites really help distribution through social networking and word of mouth really helps. But the key is that you need to get the attention and cut through the noise and just to buy clicks to run mobile app installs has been very, very expensive as far as the testing that we've seen. So that's why we try to do it on a performance basis.

So we recommend that developers look at a mix of strategies, so you can try some incentivized installs, some of the non-incentivized installs that we're doing, some public relations app reviews, and you have to treat it with the same care and same amounts of effort that you treat your initial game development with. And even if you have no budget and you're one or two guys sitting in your bedroom, ***if you're going to spend three months after hours working on this game and doing the graphics and programming and getting it approved by Apple and all those fun things that you need to do, you need to think about that same exact amount of effort starting the day that it's approved in the app store.***

I think most developers release their game and think they're done, and the unfortunate reality for the small developers is you actually haven't even begun. Just because it's out there doesn't get you where you need to go, so I think everyone needs to manage expectations and realize that, wow, even if you're not going to spend any money or a lot of money on this, you need to spend the time and really go through the PR exercises and the app review sites and really focus on discoverability. If it's not budget when we're talking about independent developers it's time and it's focus.

So I think the biggest mistake that I see indie developers make in mobile is that they don't put any time or effort into thinking about how are they going to market if they want to build the best game they can and just hope people will magically find it and tell all of their friends about it. There's just too much noise no matter how good the game is.

Interviewer: Do you feel that Android is going to overtake iPhone in terms of just revenue and also user base? I know we talk about... Everyone says that Android is getting more installs, but it just seems like their market is really hard to even do stuff. How is the Android business for you guys?

Howie: It's different than the iPhone. So as far as usage statistics, I mean, in Q4 of last year Android passed iPhone IOS and Impressions on networks like Millennial which is a company that we buy a lot of media from. So the Android's growing. It's outselling in new activations beyond iPhone, but the challenge is that the iPhone has two things going for it. One, the top charts which is a great way if you can get there which is one of the reasons why we do cost per install to try to get towards that goal.

But also, they have a curated future, and if you can actually get featured and noticed by Apple in the category that you're dealing with, whether it's games or any other category, you can get tremendous amounts of activity and organic growth from that. So I think it's a different way of looking and also I think for us the monetization and the way the games are presented is very different, so Android is really almost... I don't want to say purely ad supported, but I don't really see a ton of paid models and also in that purchasing that will come to Android which is obviously dominance on the iPhones.

So that's another big difference. You see freemium on iPhone really kind of taking all the attention from everybody, and people are distributing games for free and then doing very well on a net purchasing that you just don't see on Android yet, but that's going to come in the next two quarters. Things are going to be interesting, and I think the key is that as an independent developer I think Android is obviously easier to work with because you don't have to go through all the approvals. But in some ways you have to think about being on both platforms. I think it's really important.

You start with one. If you pick one, I think Android might be a little bit easier just to deal with, and then very quickly think about going across platform and think about, you really do need to think about iPhone.

Interviewer: And so, once again, where can developers find out more information about the services that you offer?

Howie: Sure. So it's OfferMobi.com, O-F-F-E-R-M-O-B-I, if I could spell today. It's getting loud in here, long day, too. OfferMobi.com/developer, and you can register for free. And you can have our SDK that you can monetize your games with our apps, and we're giving all developers who register for iPhone and Android 50 free installs for their app just for showing up and participating in our beta. Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interview: Glu Mobile

Interviewer: I am here at casual connecting with me today is a special guest, how about you introduce yourself.

Giancarlo: My name is Giancarlo Mori and I am the chief creative officer at Glu mobile.

Interviewer: What does Glu mobile do?

Giancarlo: Well glue mobile is a global publisher and developer of social mobile games. We've been around for about ten years. Started initially with feature phones moved into the smart phone space about three years ago when the iPhone came out and we have quickly in the last year turned towards future playing games on android and iOS

Interviewer: What games have you guys done that may be people have heard of?

Giancarlo: Most games and many that I hope gamers will be very familiar with. Gun Bros is an all time classic it was launched in the fall, has several hundred daily active users and has been growing very steadily. It's been up and down the charts, very very strong performer. We launched a couple of games in the spring; a mix of more family oriented games like Bug Village, and a couple of action games like Big Time Gangster, and Contract Killer. And recently about two weeks ago we launched Eternity Warriors which is MLA combat fantasy game which doing very well and climbing the charts quite safely in the app store.

Interviewer: Are you selling on iPhone or on android?

Giancarlo: Both. We are supporting both. The initial effort was on iOS specifically simply because the free to play model was and particularly lacked support on Android. But with the introduction of IAP on android as well I think that will change quite considerably. We have already launched a few games including Gun Bros and Contract Killer on Android. They've been doing very very well, so the trend will certainly continue.

Interviewer: So what are your thoughts then in the future of the mobile game development market, do you feel that it is all going to shift towards Android, is iPhone a dying platform for small developers?

Giancarlo: I don't think so at all. Frankly I think definitely there is a little bit of erosion in terms of overall market share from on part of Google. But definitely iOS is a very strong contender at this point it is still the, at least in terms of opportunity, quality of the offering and just at the landscape is probably still the leading platform. but Google is right behind and we support them in the same way. We have a great relationship with Google. We get great support from them so definitely it is a partner and is going to be a partner for the long run.

Interviewer: You guys released different types of games, it isn't just family oriented you have more serious games and stuff like that. For the audience for these players on these phones what do you feel is more effective? Are casual types of games or some or some of these more serious for iPhone?

Giancarlo: There are two different types of audiences, so I think each game has proven themselves quite well with respective audiences. So obviously you tend to have a skill, a game like contract killers geared toward to kind of young to adult males' traditional action audience. Games like back village seem to be much more female and kids oriented. But in their respective audiences both games have done extremely well. So I would say that kind of a dual focus on what we call emerging audiences and core audiences will continue too.

Interviewer: Is there any audience that has a higher retention rate or is easier to satisfy them is it just pretty dynamic.

Giancarlo: Well we see some differences in terms of patterns usually cars games tend to play longer sessions but in terms of retentions and

genre. I would say that if the game they tend to perform the same way. So it a much more sanction over the way the game is designed how much friction or frictionless the game is rather than on a genre. I would say that one thing stood in general from that observation, car games tend to romp up much faster probably because the car game is a much more active in seeking out and exchanging information about car game that for example a game like Bug Village **XXX04:28** the cloud is much more kind of viral and a little slower for games that are more casual on average. Obviously you can have games that do extremely well in that case as well.

Interviewer: Okay, so I heard about you guys because you guys have a new partnership program that is kind of geared at small developers can you talk more about that.

Giancarlo: Well one of the challenges of free to play even for an organization like Glue that has about **XXX 04:54** size of the company worldwide is for android people. We have about three hundred of them actually hands on developers in the studios around the four locations that we own. But one of the problems is you are in the free to play persistence space you will live to be a victim of your own success. If the game does well you don't walk away you continue to support the game. So for example Gun Bros the initial team that was on that game is still working on that game.

So if we want to take that game, that team and move them to a different game it's just another opportunity. So the only way for us to acquire additional talent, acquire additional skill get specific talents and specific skills for example we don't have anybody internally who has experience with some type of genres like for example racing and sports and so on. If we were interested in moving in that space we would have to acquire new talent from the outside. And finally I would say specific knowledge of certain markets like Asia; and we've published in these areas before with a presence in these markets but the games we've published there were

very much North American games and as you know a game that is successful in North America won't be successful in Japan. So acquiring specific talent that has keen and deep understanding of these specific taste of that market is critical.

So that drove us to putting of the G partners program in the fall we started with few developers a very small set of developers in north America with a little quite well established with proving the model , we have had some initial successes we continue to get interest from developers . So definitely is proving out for us as a successful model. So we will definitely continue to pursue the model in the future.

Interviewer: What is the benefit to developers? I mean if they are interested why would they want to join you versus, because I have see a lot of new developers even at this talks where they're, just using iPhone directly for distribution Android directly for distribution.

Giancarlo: They certainly can I mean it is a very viable opportunity. They would get form larger developer; a larger publisher especially if they have not made the transition from premium to freemium, is the knowledge of freemium model. How tricky it is to design games for freemium , how trick it is to support the post launch both from a technical as well as a marketing stand point. We have a reach in for example add networks we have deals with OEMs, we have deals with carriers and so on. So what they get is the advantage of a publisher that has already done the heavy lifting and knows very well the development challenges as well as the deeper marketing muscles and expertise we bring to the table.

Interviewer: And what is the right share model for such a deal?

Giancarlo: It varies depending on whether it is or our IP their IP. We tend to use well established models though. Obviously if the IP originates with us and is more worked for higher model we tend to obviously

continue to wanting to own the IP. If the IP is generated with them obviously we are flexible. We are very reasonable, we work with talent and we want to have a long term relationship with talent we are not in the business to say just to strangle a developer and kind of squeeze the same talent out of them. So we want to partner with the best talent out there. We want this to be a win win situation for both of us.

Interviewer: Now, can developers say publish on iPhone and then may be go through you for Android or are you looking for actually just doing all of it the whole distribution.

Giancarlo: Well we'd love to both because you create the synergies that otherwise you wouldn't have. If it is a great game and it's really an opportunity that we just can't wait to publish obviously we would probably go through the compensation any way.

Interviewer: You talked about internationalization, different other markets; where do you feel that is going, do you feel that the opportunity right now is in North America? Or is it in Asia and these other markets in terms of Android and iPhone?

Giancarlo: It depends on a market by market but the penetration isn't bad for us. So for example in a market like Korea definitely the opportunity is present today. In Japan there is still a lot of feature phones and i mode phones that is definitely that is still under very very strong market share but in Japan for example smart phones and I mean iOS specifically and Android are growing very fast. So there is increased interest in those markets. In China obviously is a boom waiting to happen, we are seeing the early kind of signs of that taking place. So we are very excited to see the Chinese market become alive and very active. We have a presence in china we have a studio in Beijing so we have followed their market very closely. We'd love to hear from the small studios in China specifically for content that is tailored from china. The

big market that is still a little behind is India so hopefully that will come to fruition really quickly as well. We are big fans of those emerging markets.

Interviewer: Where do you feel the future of mobile gaming is going to go? Is it going to disrupt the social games on Facebook is it going to replace all the gaming on all these other platforms? What is the opportunity and are there going to be new types of genres that are actually sticky because what is happening is that people are taking the model that has worked on the web and just applying it to mobile.

Giancarlo: I would say that probably my answer is yes to all of those questions. I think it will disrupt Facebook, it will disrupt console, it is already disrupting console if you see that graphs of gaming both in terms of revenue growth in terms of downloads percentage of games in the app store, just in terms of the year to year sometimes month to month growth of the audience of mobile is definitely obscuring anything that console has been doing. Console is fundamentally in decline. We are seeing kind of explosive drop.

So there is absolutely no doubt that is going to happen. We are seeing a robust increase of presence of Facebook is still in the top charts is the end of Facebook app on iOS and Android. We are very excited about this pattern project which that was leaked a few weeks ago, released a few weeks ago. So definitely we think that because of access because of these views, because of proximity and because of the just penetration social is more social on mobile I would say than on desktop.

So will it replace these genres? No. But will it be a primary way that people will access other, their friends and games in the future? I would venture to say that is definitely the case. That is our bet as a company that is where we are going to be and that is one of the reasons why for example we've invested much more in mobile social development and not on Facebook. But Facebook is an amazing reality definitely we have

an interest we continue to follow that with an interest but I don't have any doubts that it is mobile and social or mobile is a very destructive force in the market today.

Interviewer: Where can listeners who do have a small studio that are focused of freemium games for the mobile space where can they find more information about this G-partners program?

Giancarlo: Well they can call us, I mean on our website there is plenty of information we have there.

Interviewer: Is that in glumobile.com?

Giancarlo: Is actually glu.com

Interviewer: g-l-u dot com?

Giancarlo: g-l-u dot com. We have set someone and you can find our email and a lot of literature that you can get that we can give you so you could publish your information and people have been interested in contacting her she is our point person for the G-partners program and we'd love to hear from anybody who has a great idea.

And by the way to your answer specifically and I said we from that to your last question about how people get in contact with us about new ideas I think there will be new types of games that we haven't seen before that take advantage of just the connectivity and location based services which we haven't seen on desktop and console which will be a reality on these platforms for sure.

Interviewer: So you are open to different genres of games, you aren't just looking specifically for may be emerging audiences or hard core audiences?

Giancarlo: No we look at anything that we think has a competitive advantage and potentially kind of a very strong reality **XXX13:38** we are a public company so we are in business to make money. But if there is something which can establish a new genre we will definitely love to take a look at that game.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Company Challenges

Don't Have Enough Time

A lot of students mention their current coursework and commitments as things that prevent them from starting their own company.

The benefits of finishing a game in the company are great. Not only your chances of getting an internship go up by a factor of a thousand, but you also stand out from the crowd and get an awesome experience that makes classes a lot easier to do.

Finally, the tools out there allow you to make a mobile game in about one hour. Now you can make a game within a quick coding session with another friend in the evening. Contrast this with previous platforms that would require months or years to finish a project.

For an hour or two of work, you can have something on your resume that helps you stand out and increases your chances of getting a job or internship.

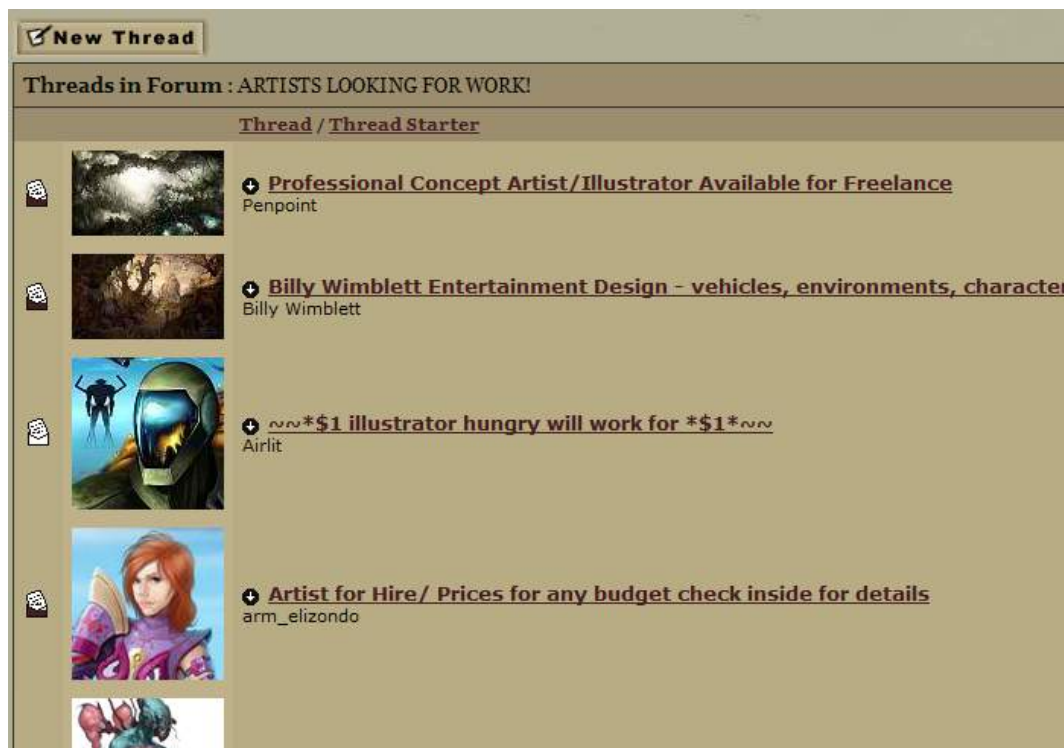
Where to Get Artwork

Another issue that students mention is that they don't have access to the artwork needed to make a game. There are a few ways to resolve this issue. First, there is a lot of royalty free artwork you can use for your game; you can find these items on the Internet.

Second, there are a lot of forums where artists hang out and are looking to add something to your (and their) portfolio, even if you're not able to pay them.

The important thing is to have the game in a fun and almost-done state so that the artists know that the project will be finished and that they'll have something solid to add to their portfolio.

You can find potential artists on sites like DeviantArt.com and ConceptArt.org



If you can pay them, that's even better. Make sure you're clear about the ownership and payments for the work before you get them to do it.

Another option is to find some artists in school looking to add something to their portfolio. Show them an almost-finished game and let them know that they'll receive recognition for their artwork in the game.

Where to Get Audio

Keep in mind that many people play mobile games with the audio off. They don't want to play music and sounds while waiting in line at the grocery store.

Still, sound effects can sometimes add to a game.

There are a lot of sites on the Internet that offer free sounds, so do a simple search for royalty free sound effects, and you will get plenty of those. One example of a free sound resource is Freesound.org, a project that offers many different sound effects for free.



Additionally, you can go to soundrangers.com. They have a great selection of professional sound effects at an awesome price.

Takes a Long Time

With the tools like Corona out there, you can develop a game in under 10 minutes. In fact, there are tutorials on YouTube that show you how to develop a physics game in under 8 minutes using the Corona SDK.



I'm Lazy

A lot of students may get excited about doing a mobile game, but then it becomes difficult to maintain momentum. Laziness creeps in and it's not always fun to polish up a game. There are a lot of tedious details.

This is where having a partner or a small team can help keep things moving. There is certain magic in having other people that help fill in the details you don't want to do. Each person in the team picks up the parts that other people may find annoying.

Working with other people can also keep things fun. The important thing is to keep the team small so that you don't have to think about management issues. Having a small team of 2 to 5 people can help resolve the laziness issue.

It Only Counts If I Use the Hardest API/Language

This is a subtle and challenging issue. A lot of students that get into mobile game design feel that they have done mobile game design only when they have used the hardest APIs. They are not open to using tools that help to accelerate game development.

In fact, some students feel that they have cheated if they did not spend long time making the game.

The important part of starting a successful game company is understanding that your customers and players care about fun more than about actual APIs used for the game. Focus on play first, make a fun game, and only then, while you are improving your game, spend some time to find out the details of the harder API.

A hard API alone does not make you elite. Focus on getting things done. That is the most important thing for a successful company.

Trying to Make Sure Everything is Perfect before Release

Another issue some students have is that they are trying to make sure everything is perfect before they release the game. The core thing is to have the basic fun game ready and then iterate on the release.

Release, learn, and then improve the game based on the feedback.

Making sure everything is perfect before a release prevents you from learning other elements of business that will be needed to have your game succeed.

Re-Imagine Reality

Have you heard the story about the fleas and the jar. When fleas go into a flea circus, they are put in a jar with the lid on it. Fleas can normally jump out of the jar, but with the lid on it, they always hit it. After a while, fleas learn about the lid and no longer try to jump out of the jar. Then people can remove the lid from the jar because fleas will no longer try to jump out of the jar. There is an imaginary lid in the mind of those fleas.

Similarly, as game designers make games, they sometimes inherit assumptions about the time it takes to make a game, the money they can make from a game, or the team size needed to make the game. It is hard for these game designers to imagine making an MMO in 60 minutes or having a 2-person team that makes \$20,000 a day from its games.

Don't be that flea. Always challenge and push assumptions. Can you make an MMO in 1 day? How can you get to 1 million users in 3 days? How can you make \$50,000 a day from your game? Keep challenging and pushing assumptions.

Don't Know How to Drive a Ferrari

You can always have one of your players teach you :) In fact, you can use the Community Mechanic listed above and turn it into a contest. The person with the best score/result gets to hang out with the developer for a day and help you drive the Ferrari :)

Good Luck

Now it's time to win. We've showed you why you and your friends are perfect for the impending mobile app revolution. We've given you powerful game mechanics you can use to make games that change and empower the world. We've shown you business models you can use to make money of your games and ways to promote your app.

Finally, we've shown you a powerful tool called Corona that allows you to develop your games in only a few hours. You can even visit the Chroma Coders community and get implementations of many of the hidden game mechanics specifically designed to work with the Corona engine.

This is your time. We hope you use our suggestions and succeed with your own mobile game company.

We know that many of you are focused on internships, but those can always wait. What if you were to make 500 dollars a day from your own mobile games. Would you still go for an internship? Would you still look for a job? This is your chance; we hope you make the most of it.

We leave you with some interviews from successful game developers that have used Corona SDK along with their other passions to create fun games.

Interview: How A 14 Year Old Used Corona To Make the #1 App on iPhone



Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/naygames-podcast-final.mp3>

Kari: Hello.

Interviewer: Hi. Welcome to the show. How about you folks introduce yourselves?

Kari: My name is Kari Nay.

Robert: And I'm Robert Nay.

Interviewer: Great. Now, you folks did a game called... Yeah. Can you talk about the game that you folks did?

Robert: So our game is called Bubble Ball. It's a physics puzzle game where you have to get the bubble from point A to point B. And so, you have pieces and power ups you can place to help it get there.

Interviewer: What's interesting about the team is that it's a mom and son team. So can you talk more about that, and how that worked out?

Kari: Yeah. Well, my son is really into computers. He's always been really good with them, like, he helps people fix their computers or help them with software issues. And he shows me how to do shortcut keys and things like that. And so, learning how to program on a computer was a natural development for him. One of his friends' parents, who knew that he was really good at computers, suggested to him, hey, why don't you make an iPod game? And so, that gave him the idea to get started.

And then, I'm kind of a support person for him. I do things like, you know, read the Apple developer license and pay the fee and kind of be the grown-up who does the adult stuff for it. But he's the real genius, and he's the programmer behind this.

Interviewer: How old is your son then?

Kari: He's 14. I'll let you talk to him here.

Interviewer: Sure. OK. So you know you heard the suggestion on making the game for the iPod Touch. What types of games did you play before you started development for iPods and Androids?

Robert: I like Wii games like Mario Kart, sports and stuff. And then, I also like iPod Touch games and Flash games and stuff.

Interviewer: What iPod games did you play before you decided to make your own game?

Robert: I like platform games, and I like Angry Birds and Doodle Jump.

Interviewer: In your school, do a lot of people play iPod Touch games? Is that pretty popular?

Robert: I'd say yeah. A lot of kids have iPod Touches that they play games on in their spare time.

Interviewer: Is that even more popular now than the online Flash games and Wii games and all that other stuff?

Robert: I don't know.

Interviewer: OK. So you decide to make this iPod Touch game. When you heard that suggestion, hey, make a game, did you think of just focusing on iPod Touch, or were you also thinking, maybe I should just do it for the web or for Wii or something else that you're also used to?

Robert: I don't know, probably just thought of doing it for iPod Touch.

Interviewer: OK. And so, what was the first step then to actually get started to develop for the iPod Touch?

Robert: I think I went and checked out a book from the library about developing for iOS.

Interviewer: Most of those books are about C and C++, and it seems kind of a little overwhelming. So how did you deal with that?

Robert: I tried learning Objective-C which is the native iOS 1. I tried doing that for a couple of weeks, and then I didn't really like it. The learning curve was too steep.

Interviewer: Yeah. So then, OK, well, that's awesome. So it was too steep. Then, what did you decide to do, like, what was it that actually got you to keep going because I think a lot of people, they would have just tried to read the book and said, this just takes too much time. What kept you going?

Robert: I didn't really doing anything with it for a while, and then I found Game Solid where you can just basically make your own games by dragging and dropping stuff.

Interviewer: OK. How did you hear about Game Solid?

Robert: I don't remember how I found out about it.

Interviewer: When you actually started playing with it, how fast were you able to make a game?

Robert: It took me a little bit to get used to it. Then I thought, this is pretty cool, but there were some things that I didn't like about it,

Interviewer: Were you able to complete a game in Game Solid, or was that just a stepping stone for whatever?

Robert: Actually, I didn't complete a game in there. I started a couple but...

Interviewer: Well, after that point what did think, like, were you getting more excited about developing for iPod Touch, or, yeah, what were your thoughts at that point?

Robert: I thought, wow, maybe, I can actually do this and make an iPhone game. And so, eventually I found Corona and then I really liked it. And so, I stuck with it.

Interviewer: How did you find Corona?

Robert: People on the Game Solid forums, they would say Corona has all these cool features, and I was like, I wonder what that is. So I investigated it, and so there were a lot of things that I liked about it.

Interviewer: How long ago was that? When did you get into Corona?

Robert: Probably early November.

Interviewer: OK. So, you get into Corona. What are your thoughts at that point? So you experiment with Corona. You like it. What was the next step, like, what were you thinking? Were you thinking about, hey, I should just now make a game in Corona, or did you have a game idea in mind, or how did that work?

Robert: I spent a week or so learning Corona and Lou and stuff. And then, after that I got my game idea for Bubble Ball and then started on it.

Interviewer: How did you come up with the idea for Bubble Ball?

Robert: Well, I played a game on the iPad with a similar idea, so I took away from that and other things, yeah.

Interviewer: For the audience out there, can you explain the game play or the game behind Bubble Ball? What's it exactly about?

Kari: I want to talk about it for a minute.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure.

Kari: The thing that I like about Bubble Ball is it's something you can solve yourself. And so, you're presented with a puzzle. You have to get the ball from one place to the goal, and there are some pieces that are already in place, and then there are some pieces you get to use. And so, you get to take those pieces and put them in certain ways so that you can get the ball to the goal.

And so, the fun thing is that you can sit there and play around it, and the physics rules that are happening there are just entertaining to watch. So you hit start and then the ball rolls and you see if it ends up where you want. And then, you can just make minor adjustments to it or try something new. But I like to play this kind of game, and so I was really excited when he picked this one because it's something where you can solve itself and you really feel a sense of accomplishment.

Interviewer: Well, do you play a lot of iPod Touch games, or do you play a lot of online or Wii games or anything like that?

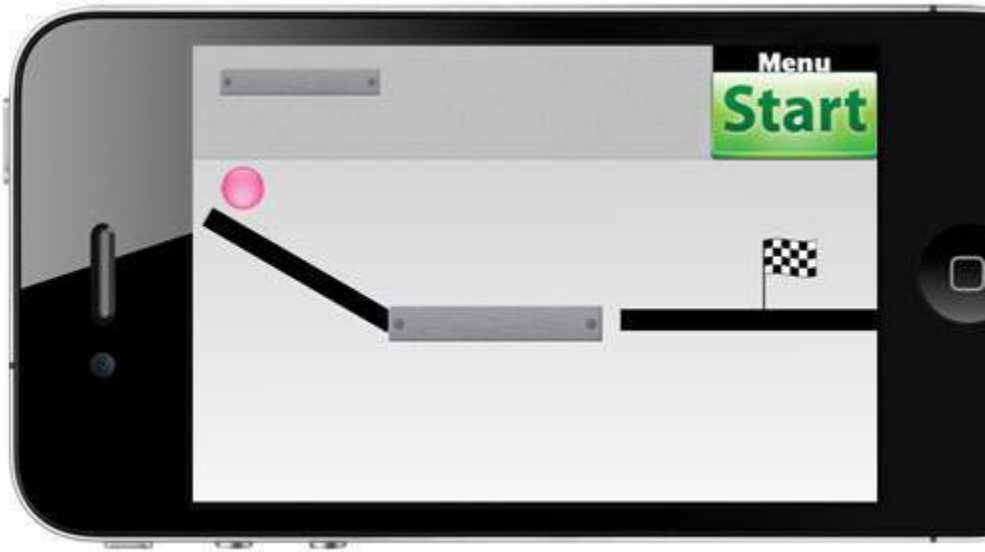
Kari: Well, I don't have too much time for games. I have played a few Wii games. We like the Wii sports games, like bowling and ping pong, that kind of thing. But I have played a few games on the iPod, and so I have played games similar to this where you solve things. Actually, my favorite one is a word game, which has nothing to do with this one.

Interviewer: Oh OK.

Kari: What's it called? Book Worm or something. That's my absolute favorite. But I do live games like this. And so, when I do have a few spare minutes, I like to play games like that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kari: Where you solve a puzzle.



Interviewer: When your son first started getting into iPod Touch development, I guess, when did you realize this game was actually going to be made? So your son mentioned that he kind of got into it. He read a book. It was, kind of, a little too hard. Then he picked up Game Solid, and then he found out about Corona. Corona has an awesome physics engine. That's one thing that I've seen that's really awesome.

When did you come to the point where you're like, wow, this is going to actually happen.

Kari: I didn't know that he would actually finish a game and send it in, but I saw him working on it. So whenever he had a spare moment... Well,

actually he spent hours and hours on this, so he'd get the laptop out, and he's just working on it every spare minute he has.

He always does his school work, and he practices music, and he gets his other things done, but when he has free time, he's on the computer, and he's doing the programming. And so, I can look on the screen and I can see... I don't program myself, but I know what it looks like now, and he works really hard on it. And he just kept working. It was a few days before Christmas. He was like, hey, mom, I've got this all ready to send in. Let's go send it in. I was like, wow, really?

And so, he sent it in to the Apple App Store, and then we waited because they were on vacation.

Interviewer: When was the first time you played the completed game or even got a sense of the game play behind the game?

Kari: Well, of course, we've been testing it. We have iPod Touch, and we also have an iPad. And then, of course, there's a simulator on the computer. And so, I've actually tried playing the different levels on there and done a lot of testing. Of course, Robert tests it a lot, too. So we could see how it was going to work before he actually sent it in.

Interviewer: How was the testing working between you two? Was it just a daily kind of testing, or was it, like, how did that work? What kind of feedback were you giving to the game and stuff like that?

Kari: Well, one thing I noticed that it's hard for me to pick up some of the pieces. I think it's because I have grownup fingers. His fingers are smaller than mine. So I'd tell him, hey, those pieces are kind of hard to pick up, but on the iPad I didn't have any trouble. We're actually not sure how to fix that right now, how to make the pieces easier to pick up. Some of the

really thin boards is what I'm talking about. I would give him feedback like that because he had no trouble picking up the pieces himself.

But we also had a lot of other interaction, like, I was talking to him about, maybe, having some sort of reward sound when they complete a level. He plays a trumpet, among other things, and I said, why don't you make some sort of a trumpet fanfare sound? And so, he got on the Mac. We have Garage Band software on there, and he got some notes together. And so, he made that wonderful fanfare that you hear at the end of it.

I just wanted to tell you how it works to put the levels together. Since I don't program myself, I would draw the levels on a piece of paper. So I'm just writing on paper, and then he would take the idea, and he would do the programming, and he would make it real. And he would make it show up on the iPod, and that was what was absolutely fabulous to me, that he could take something that was written on a piece of paper and turn it into the actual game that you could play.

And so, he'd give me basic things to work with. He said, now, OK, these are the pieces that I have. We've got a right triangle that's wood, and we have metal pieces, and we have the things that change gravity and so forth. He'd tell me, now, this is what's easy for me to make. This is what's hard for me to make, and so can you work around that? And so, we would work together on the levels to come up with it.

Interviewer: So were you discussing this every day, or how did that work?

Kari: Well, I probably didn't discuss things every day, but I think he probably has been working on the game probably, at least, five days a week. So I think his efforts are pretty much continuous. He's just so interested in it.

Interviewer: While you're playing the game, how did you deal with the art work? Was that something that you tried to find other artists to make art work for the game, or did you need any art work for the game, or how did that work?

Robert: Well, the game had a budget of zero dollars, so I just took my hand at doing the art and did all of the art work myself.

Interviewer: Awesome. What were some of the other challenges that happened while you were developing the game, like, were there any surprises or anything else that you had to deal with to actually get the game done?

Robert: Well, having to do all of the graphics at twice the resolution for the hi-res iPhone 4 screen, that was kind of annoying at times.

Interviewer: So how does that work? You had to make a separate graphic set for the hi-res screen, or could you just use the same graphics throughout?

Robert: So you just have the two files and one is the normal resolution and one's twice the resolution. Then Corona has the function where you can just specify one image, and it'll automatically put in the image for which screen it's on.

Interviewer: Were there any other challenges besides that, that you had to address while you're developing the game?

Robert: Laying out the levels would kind of get annoying because you'd have to estimate the coordinates, like, where they were on the screen and how wide and tall each object was.

Interviewer: While you were developing this game, did you show it to your friends? Did you have other people outside of the immediate family actually test it out?

Robert: I probably had one or two, yeah.

Interviewer: What was their response? How did they feel that... And what did they say when they saw, like, hey, this is someone that I know is actually making a game for iPad and iPod and Android and stuff like that?

Robert: Yeah. They thought it was pretty cool, and they were like, did you really, seriously make this? I'm like, yeah. And so, they thought it was pretty cool.

Interviewer: Was that motivating, or did that even help in terms of speeding up development, or how did that feel?

Robert: Yeah. It probably helped speed it up some, like, well, people are actually going to like this. And so, it gave me some motivation.

Interviewer: That's a good point. So the people that you did show it to, did they enjoy the game, like, what was the response?

Robert: Yeah. They thought it was pretty fun.

Interviewer: Well, that's good because it's not always easy to make a fun game. OK. So, you make this game, and you submit it to Apple. They were on vacation, so what happens next?

Robert: So it took a week to get approved and to get into the app store.

Interviewer: Once it was on the app store, what happened? And did you decide to just release it for free? Did you decide to charge anything for the app or put ads in or...

Robert: Since it was my first game, I just decided I'd put it out for free and see what the reaction is. So there aren't any ads or anything.

Interviewer: Were there any issues with convincing your mom to pay for the... because you have to pay for a Corona license to release it, right? Or is that...

Robert: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is there an educational license or a student license, or did you have to actually purchase a full license?

Robert: I think they do have an educational license, but we got the standard one.

Interviewer: OK. Because I've talked to some other people who develop games for various platforms, and that's something that holds them back. Was that something that was a concern, like, hey, you've made a game. You can actually test it on your own system. Why even release it to the Apple store? What was the motivation for that?

Robert: Well, I just wanted to have the satisfaction of, hey, that's my app on the app store.

Interviewer: Awesome. It's on the app store. Did you tell your friends about it, or was that during winter break and so you didn't get to see your friends or whatever?

Robert: Well, I emailed a bunch of my friends. It was over winter break and then told family, yeah.

Interviewer: And what was the response like?

Robert: A bunch of people left good reviews on the first day and people liked it, I think.

Interviewer: Were there any other surprises when you released the game, like, how did it go?

Robert: It got a ton more downloads than I thought it would.

Interviewer: Yeah. How many downloads has it gotten so far?

Robert: So it's been on the app store for two weeks right now. So far it's gotten 1,026,000 downloads.

Interviewer: That is awesome. That's really awesome. Congratulations.

To the mom, how did you feel about your son getting... I mean, there are a lot of professional developers who try their hardest, and they've done game after game, and that's nowhere even close to a million downloads.

Kari: Is that right? I don't know. It's just been so fun for us. Every morning we go check and see how many more downloads, and then he adds them up on his calculator to get the total. So I personally have just been astonished, but I've been so happy for him because this is something that he really wanted to do. He wants to share this free game with people and let them have a good time with it, and I think he's really succeeded.

Interviewer: Yeah. So then, are you getting emails, like, how is that working? Are the people who play the game, are they able to email you

and give you feedback? And are you improving the app because I know one thing that some developers do is once they get the initial release they'll actually release, not a daily but a weekly or monthly update, maybe, with more puzzle levels and stuff like that?

Robert: Yeah. We're planning on releasing an update later this month with more levels and stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah. How many...

Robert: In the...

Interviewer: Yeah. Go ahead.

Robert: In the app, there's a "contact us" button that goes to a form I set up. And so, we've gotten a bunch of comments through that.

Interviewer: Yeah. What have been the comments like?

Robert: Most of them say fun game, and they're asking for more levels, most of them.

Interviewer: How many levels did you have in the initial version?

Robert: 21.

Interviewer: OK. What's in the next release? How many more levels are you going to add to it?

Robert: Probably 10 or 15.

Interviewer: Shouldn't you add like, 50 more or something? It just seems like... How long does a level take to finish?

Robert: I don't know.

Interviewer: OK.

Robert: Half an hour, maybe.

Interviewer: Oh well.

Kari: My husband has started making levels, too, so this should speed things up for us.

Interviewer: Great. Are people, I guess, around you, are they helping out in some way, like, what's the consensus or what's the feeling now among the other kids and families who... They play iPod Touch games, and now they know someone who's actually developed an iPod Touch game, a kid who's done it? Are they trying to figure out how their kids can make their own game, or how has this motivated them?

Kari: Well, I think it's going to be fun for him. I know his older brother and sister are really excited about it and really happy for him, that this is working out for him. I hope that other parents realize that if their kid is interested in this, that this is something that you can actually do. It's just been wonderful. I've been so excited for him because this is something... He loves working on the computer, and so for this to actually work for him has just been wonderful to watch.

Interviewer: Are you folks going to put up a community forum or build a community website around the game?

Robert: Maybe.

Interviewer: OK.

Robert: I'm not sure yet.

Interviewer: So let's talk about the next phase of this. You're going to upgrade the levels. Are you going to turn this into an actual business? What are your thoughts on that because that wasn't the goal of the project in the first place, but is that something that you're considering doing just to get the experience?

Robert: With Bubble Ball, probably not. We're probably just going to release free updates. We're probably going to release a game in the future that'll cost money.

Interviewer: Can't you just even... Even if Bubble Ball is going to be free, can't you put ads in it or something else like that?

Kari: We want to keep Bubble Ball free. We want to keep that one free. It's kind of his gift to the world.

Interviewer: Sure.

Kari: But we do plan on, hopefully, coming out with apps that you would pay for. And being a mom, I guess, my goal is eventually to come out with educational games, you know, games that would be fun for kids to learn from. My son over here, he's giving me the look. I think he wants to just make the games that are fun to play. I'm interested in making educational games.

Interviewer: It's always funny because I'll talk to people and they'll be like, yeah, I want to make educational games for kids. And those are the games that are never fun. I guess, that's the concern because you have a hit, and that's awesome. Isn't physics educational? Aren't these puzzle games educational? What are your thoughts on that, and when you say

educational games, what did you have in mind, like, learning the numbers or ABCs or what?

Kari: Well, I actually am gravitating towards, maybe, the older kids. And so, maybe, putting some sort of... Personally, I like to play geography games where they give you a question, and then the answers are structured so even if you, maybe, don't know exactly what the right answer is, you can make a good guess. And so, as you're playing the game, you learn from it. And so, that's what I personally like.

Interviewer: OK. Are you going to focus on updates now, or are you going to start focusing on these other types of games?

Kari: Well, we're going to do more updates for Bubble Ball. We really want to get a lot of levels onto it so people can just download it and it'll be ready to go. And the people who already have it can get more levels, but Robert's also working on some ideas for some new games.

Interviewer: How are you going about developing new ideas? What's the process to come up with a new type of game?

Kari: Well, personally I think you just kind of think about what kind of games that you like to play and, maybe, perhaps, what kind of games you like to play that aren't out there. So you look at the ones that you do play and the ones that, maybe, you wish that were out there. And then, from there you can do some brainstorming and come up with some ideas.

I hope that everybody who's out there listening, go ahead and make those games. The world will welcome them, and we'll be glad to pay them. Get your ideas out there.

Interviewer: Developing a game and releasing it to the app store is an awesome learning experience, so do you feel that running a business off

of your apps, is that a learning experience also, maybe encourage your son or is that something...

So my question is sometimes when it's just for learning, it's like, oh, if we turn it into a business it kind of kills that feel. But at the same time the fact of just getting that whole experience of developing an app, learning how to sell it or market it and stuff like that, is that even an experience that you feel could be important for your son?

Kari: Well, yes. I think I have been considering turning it into a business where he could make money from his games, and then he could save it for college and other things that he needs. So yes, I have considered that that might be a useful spin-off.

Interviewer: What steps are you going to do to make that happen?

Kari: Well, I think marketing would be an important step, so I'll have to learn more about that.

Interviewer: OK. It's not the highest priority at this time. The highest priority might be just to release more levels and to develop new types of games.

Kari: Yeah. Right now it is a learning experience, as you say. But we're not going to rule out having it be a business that earns money.

Interviewer: Yeah. What's next for you? Do you have a name for your little studio, your family app studio?

Kari: Yeah. We're called Nay Games.

Interviewer: OK.

Kari: So since there's more than one of us Nay here that are working on it, we call it Nay Games.

Interviewer: What's next in store then for the Nay studio, for the Nay Games studio?

Kari: Well, like I mentioned, Robert is working on some new apps, and my educational games are still in the formulating stage because I have a lot of other things that I'm working on. But, yeah, I think it's a wonderful outlet for people to have these games, and so we're just excited to be a part of it.

Interviewer: How fast or when are you going to release your next product? Is it going to be in the next month or two because it seems like, this game was started in late November, it sounds like or something like that?

Robert: Yeah.

Interviewer: It was done relatively quickly, so what's the cycle? What's the time line for these upcoming projects?

Robert: I'll probably release one in two or three months, maybe.

Interviewer: OK. That seems pretty long. Why is it going to take longer this time?

Robert: Well, the idea that I have now is a bit more complex and will take longer, but we'll see how long it really does take.

Interviewer: OK. How are you improving or keeping your skills up? Are you checking out other games on iPhone and Android? Are you participating in the forum, and what are your goals with the games that

you're doing? What would be awesome, or what's the next... Where do you want to take this?

Kari: Well, he handed the mike over to me.

Interviewer: Sure.

Kari: Well, I just bought him Angry Birds because it was rated number one, and I thought well, he should go play this game, and let's see what's in it. He likes it, and we know a lot of people that do. And so, we do try out different games. I will go and look on the app store. It sounds funny, but I figure it's kind of part of the homework to make the game to actually plays the games. It's fun homework though.

Interviewer: Yeah. So let's talk about that concept of homework. What are other things that you're doing to make sure that you make awesome and fun games that people enjoy?

Robert: Keep learning new features in Corona that I want to check out.

Interviewer: What's the latest feature that you've learned in Corona?

Robert: Well, there's a guy making a thing called Lime where you can basically import tile maps into your Corona game.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Robert: So I've been playing around with that.

Interviewer: Is your game going to be an isometric or tile map game?

Robert: Possibly.

Interviewer: Are you looking into... You know, some of these games if you play them on mobile, it's kind of like a little online MMO or something else like that where it's kind of like, hey, you can play with other people. They have their own iPod Touch and you have your own iPod Touch or whatever, and you can play with them online. Is that something you're looking into, or is that... What directions do you want to take your games into?

Robert: I'm probably not so much interested in MMO games.

Interviewer: What are the games that you're really interested in, like what types of games?

Robert: I like little adventure puzzle games.

Interviewer: Yeah. What other homework do you have to do then to make that you're making fun games that people enjoy?

Robert: Just keep improving my skills and get the latest Corona updates and read the documentation and stuff.

Interviewer: Every day do you just read the documentation on Corona or yeah, like, how much time are you spending then, each day or each week just improving your skills? And I'm just understanding the whole iPhone and Android space.

Robert: I don't know because when new features come out I'll look at the documentation, like, if I'm developing a game and I wonder, how do I do this. Then I'll go look at the documentation, and sometimes I'll see other things that I study in there, too.

Interviewer: OK. Are any of your friends now looking to get into Corona to develop their own games, or how is that working out?

Robert: One of my friends seemed interested in it when I told him about it the other day.

Interviewer: Great. Are you getting feedback from your friends in school about, hey, you should fix this or improve this in your latest game, in your Bubble Ball game?

Robert: Uh-uh.

Interviewer: And what suggestions have they offered?

Robert: One kid said that the pieces are too small to pick up, and he also suggested better menu system.

Interviewer: OK. And so, what did you do with that feedback? Are you actually going to implement that in the next update, or what are your thoughts on that?

Robert: It probably depends on how much work it would be and how useful it would actually be in the end results.

Interviewer: Great. And so, any suggestions from both of you for other parents and kids looking to develop games or looking to create stuff to share with other people in the world?

Kari: Well, I think the Internet is a wonderful resource. If you even just do a Google search on something, you can pull up informational articles, and the parents can go check out the different types of software that make it easier to formulate the games. And yeah, I just think the Internet is a wonderful resource, and your podcast show is a wonderful resource, too.

Interviewer: Do you have a YouTube video of your game? I was going to mention that because I think I looked for one, and I couldn't find it.

Kari: We don't have one, but I wanted to do one. I saw the little train one on there, so we would like to do that. Maybe, you can give us some suggestions later on, on how to put that on the web.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, you mentioned Angry Birds. I don't know. Did you see the YouTube video for Angry Birds where it's like this little story around the whole Angry Birds concept?

Kari: That the pigs, they come and steal the eggs?

Interviewer: Yeah. Exactly.

Kari: I think I saw that. I think it was in the game itself.

Interviewer: Oh right. OK.

Kari: In the beginning. But, yeah, that's a good idea.

Interviewer: So, I mean, are you looking into... because you have a game that people are, obviously, liking. We did discuss marketing a little earlier. Are you looking into things like this to enhance the marketing and also be educational, creating a little movie or even a little story around your game. I mean, that requires some skills that are definitely educational. Is your studio looking into that?

Kari: Well, we are open to suggestions, and I think that's a wonderful one. When people do give us suggestions like, yes, thank you, because we want to improve it and make it better. And yeah, that would be fun to have a little opening video to kind of, maybe, add a little more purpose to the whole thing.

Interviewer: OK. Now, we primarily talked about iPod Touch. Have you released it to Android, or is that something that's going to happen in the future for some listeners out there who just don't have an iPhone. Because I have an Android and I was trying to play the game, but I couldn't find it on Android Market.

Robert: I have released it to Android Market.

Interviewer: Oh OK. When did you do that?

Robert: Some time...

Kari: Last week.

Robert: Yeah, some time last week, I think.

Interviewer: Maybe, it's just... Did you release it for Android 2.0? I think for Corona you actually need to release it for Android 2.1, right? Like, you couldn't have done it for 1.6 or some of the older ones.

Robert: I think the option was like, 2.0 or higher.

Interviewer: Awesome.

Robert: So I think I released it for that one.

Interviewer: OK. So then, any other last suggestions for students and kids out there wanting to make their own game because it takes a lot from just seeing a game that you play, conceptually anyways, to just being in the position of normally playing games to actually creating a game? So yeah, any last words or suggestions for that?

Robert: I would say just try it because if you want to, then try it because you never know. You might end up with some number one game.

Interviewer: And also find the tools that make it easy to make them, right?

Robert: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: OK.

Robert: Because Corona helped a lot with developing Bubble Ball.

Interviewer: Yeah. Where can listeners out there find out more about your game and potentially download the game?

Robert: You can check out our website at NayGames.com.

Interviewer: OK. And for the audience out there, if they want to get it on their iPhone or iPad or Android, what should they look for in the app store?

Robert: Just search for Bubble Ball.

Interviewer: OK. Is that one word or two words?

Robert: Two words with a space in between.

Interviewer: Great. Thanks again for your time. So we're talking with some of the founders of Nay Games. Thanks again.

Kari: Thank you.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Take care.

Kari: Bye.

Interview: Float by Crawl Space Games with over 1 Million Downloads



Audio version of interview:

<http://www.chromacoders.org/float-podcast.mp3>

Interviewer: Hi. Welcome to the show. How about you introduce yourself?

Brock: Hi. I'm Brock Henderson with Crawl Space Games.

Interviewer: And what's Crawl Space Games about?

Brock: We make kind of fun, sometimes offbeat games for mobile, iPhone, and Android.

Interviewer: What inspired you to get into mobile games?

Brock: Well, a lot of my game ideas for a long time have kind of been smaller games, and that works out perfect for the mobile platform. Right now, the mobile platform's the most interesting space, I think.

Interviewer: Yeah. When did you start developing for mobile games?

Brock: Sure. Let's see, we started the company like a year and a half ago. Our first game that we did was in Unity 3D, and then the last two games that we've done have both been done using Corona SDK.

Interviewer: Now, when you started the company... It sounds like you have multiple people with the company. How did you decide to start this company? A lot of people will be with their friends and just talk about, oh, let's do a game for mobile. What finally put you guys over the edge to actually decide and to develop a game?

Brock: Sure. Well, we're pretty entrepreneurial. We have a design studio called Paper Tower that we do a lot of web work and some Flash games. And then, we just always wanted to do our own products and our own games. I wanted to be a game designer as long as I can remember. So when the mobile, the iPhone came out, when they added the games, the app store and everything and things started taking off, it just seemed like the perfect time to get into mobile.

Interviewer: When you started it, Flash was also pretty hot. So why not develop online games instead of mobile games?

Brock: Sure. We have done some on the client side. The mobile just seemed like a better opportunity to us at the moment.

Interviewer: So you started a year and a half ago. So you decide to use Unity 3D. What was the first game you made?

Brock: The first game we made was called Knife Toss. It was just a simple kind of arcade title where there's this clown is strapped to a wheel and there's balloons, and you're throwing knives and axes trying to pop the balloons.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Brock: As in...

Interviewer: Oh. Go ahead.

Brock: So it was just a real small scope game. We wanted to just get our feet wet and not bite off more than we could chew.

Interviewer: Yeah. How long did it take to make that first game?

Brock: I think it took, I want to say, three months because we were completely new to Unity, and we spent some time, at least, a month getting familiar with Unity. And then, we ended up building the game a couple times because the first time we built it, it just wasn't optimized and just didn't run well. So we ended up having to learn a lot about optimizing things for mobile and the Unity platform. So we ended up building it a couple time before we were actually able to submit it.

Interviewer: And so, you submit it. What happened next?

Brock: For Knife Toss, pretty quickly after we submitted that we participated in Open Feint's free app of the day. That got us some exposure. Apple picked us up, and we were on the New and Noteworthy list.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Brock: It did pretty well, and it's still getting sales now.

Interviewer: Yeah. Did you guys decide to do a free version, or how much did you decide to charge for it? And did you decide to have a light version or something else like that?

Brock: Sure. It was a 99 cent game. Like I said before, it was kind of small in scope so we didn't think we could charge anything more than that. Later on, we released an ad supported version, and that's actually kind of helped sales as well. When we put out the ad supported version, we noticed a little boost to our regular sales.

Interviewer: Was that game the first product you've sold because it sounds like you've done contract work before?

Brock: Yeah. That was our first, our own product, yeah.

Interviewer: What were you guys feeling at that point? So you release a game. You're making some sales. What's the perspective like? How did your studio feel, and what did you decide to do next?

Brock: We were feeling pretty good. It was pretty awesome to get on the New and Noteworthy list. We didn't necessarily know what to expect on sales but for our first title we got pretty good reviews, and we were pretty happy with it. The next game that we decided to do is a game

called Zombies Ala Mode. We started it in Unity, but we weren't happy with the performance. So we switched to Corona SDK.

Interviewer: OK. How long ago was this, this Zombies Ala Mode game?

Brock: That came out in November, I think.

Interviewer: OK. What inspired you? Usually, people don't want to change their tools. They're usually happy with what they have, so that's pretty provocative that you decided to change your tools. What exactly inspired it, because everyone talks about performance issues, but you know what, Unity 3D sounds a lot better than just doing Objective-C.

Brock: Yeah. No, it definitely is. The thing is that most of our ideas right now are kind of more 2D based.

Interviewer: Gotcha. Gotcha.

Brock: Unity 3D is awesome for 3D games, and I highly recommend it for that. But if you're doing a 2D based game, it doesn't make sense to be doing it in a 3D engine and kind of faking the 2D.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Brock: So we looked at Cocos 2D, and we looked at some other frameworks and stuff, but we ultimately decided on Corona because we could do cross platform development on it. It doesn't make sense to us to be locked into a single platform.

Interviewer: Yeah. So with Corona, how long did it take to do Zombies Ala Mode?

Brock: Yeah. The funny thing about that is that we submitted it to the app store using Unity, and it took a couple months to build that. And then, literally we posted it and during the time that Apple reviewed it, we basically rebuilt the game in like a week, a week and a half.

Interviewer: Yeah. So what were you guys feeling then, recognizing that you could use Corona to develop your games a lot faster?

Brock: We come from, like I said, a Flash background so Corona felt a lot better to us. We can use TextMate, and it uses Lua programming language. Moving from AS3 to Lua wasn't much of a jump. It just felt like a much better fit for our studio with our backgrounds.

Interviewer: And for the audience out there, can you describe the game play for Zombies Ala Mode?

Brock: Sure. It's a casual game, and it's makes a couple different genres. If you're familiar with Scoops, it's kind of like that, and it's also kind of like a Diner Dash where you're a zombie and you're working at an ice cream stand, and you're trying to fill orders and avoid obstacles.

Interviewer: OK. Is it kind of like Diner Dash then?

Brock: Kind of, yeah. It's a little bit more action because you're tilting the device back and forth to avoid obstacles. But yeah, it has a lot of those time management aspects to it, and you're trying to get tips and stuff.

Interviewer: So you mentioned tilting in the game. How did the user testing play out with that? Do people actually want to use the accelerometer type features, or do they just want a simple play experience where they can tap and stuff?

Brock: Yeah. Based on user feedback after we released it, it seems like a lot of people really struggle with tilt. And going into it, we didn't think it would be much of a problem because games like Doodle Jump which is one of the highest selling games, you know, uses tilt. And that was kind of the game mechanic that I was imagining that you could play it with just one hand and tilt back and forth and use your thumb to tap and hand off. But people really struggle with it. So in a future update, we're going to allow the option to change the controls.

Interviewer: What were other things that you learned during the user testing?

Brock: You really, really have to spell things out for people. Things that we thought were obvious weren't obvious to people for the first time. Also, just some of the game balancing things that were fun for us were too hard for other people, so we had to lower some of the difficulty levels.

Adam, one of our programmers, said that you need to remember that you're always the best at your own game.

Interviewer: Yeah. Once you released this game, what were you feeling at that point, and what was the price point for this game? Did you decide to take a different business model approach here, or was it the same where you had a paid version?

Brock: Sure. Well, we had a free and a paid version. The paid version came out first. We really put a lot of content into it, so we tried charging a higher price point. I think it was \$1.99 or \$2.99 to first start, but it pretty quickly dropped to 99 cents. In the HD version for the iPad it's still \$1.99.

Interviewer: How were the sales compared to your initial game because you used a different platform this time?

Brock: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did that help or hurt?

Brock: I don't think the platform had much to do with it, but our sales weren't as good as Knife Toss. I think that has a lot to do with just kind of complicated mechanics. Our first game was so simple, and it really seems like some of the best games on the mobile are just very, very simple and have one mechanic.

Interviewer: So yeah, so at that point how were you feeling? It sounds like you spent a lot more time on Zombies Ala Mode, and you got less of a return. As a studio, what did you guys decide to do?

Brock: Well, our next game, Float, we wanted to do something that took a lot less time and also was a lot simpler. We tried to learn as much as we could from, I guess, our failures in this case.

Interviewer: They're learning lessons or whatever.

Brock: Yeah. Learning lessons. So we wanted to do something faster and simpler.

Interviewer: And so, what idea did you guys come up with?

Brock: Sure. So we spent a lot of time batting around ideas, and the idea of Float came about. In Float you basically are kind of tapping, batting balloons around, and you're trying to keep them off the spikes. It's a game everyone has played in their life where they've picked up a balloon

and batted it around and tried to keep it from touching the floor. So it kind of has a universal appeal.

Interviewer: How long did it take to make that app?

Brock: I think that one took like a month, I would say.

Interviewer: OK. What did you guys decide to do this time in terms of the business model and selling it and stuff like that?

Brock: So we're doing two versions again. There's an ad supported version and also a paid version. The ad supported version is you're going to be able to unlock the whole game for 99 cents, and the paid version is just 99 cents.

Interviewer: OK. When did you release this game?

Brock: We released it about a week ago.

Interviewer: Around February 14th, 2011.

Brock: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. How is that going? And what else did you do differently on this release? Now, you've released two games before. I mean, what did you guys also decide to do differently this time? For one thing, I saw that your trailer seemed pretty polished on YouTube. So I wasn't sure if that's something you guys did in previous games.

Brock: Yeah. All of our trailers, I would say, have been pretty polished just because we come from a web, motion graphics background, so we've done some nice trailers.

Interviewer: I see.

Brock: This one we decided to make the trailer kind of follow suit with just the idea of the game, and we wanted to just have the trailer out really fast. So we just videotaped it this time. We videotaped myself playing it, and we just had a little motion graphics at the end, but it took considerably less time to put out the trailer.

Interviewer: And in terms of user testing, what was the response for this game?

Brock: The user testing response has been great. It tests well with hard core gamers clear down to the littlest gamers. My young, one year old daughter can sit on my lap and play it, but we have enough achievements and leader boards and combos and stuff for people that like more complex challenges and stuff more.

Interviewer: Yeah. For the audience, can you describe the game play?

Brock: Sure. Each mode has a little bit different game play, but the idea on all the modes is that you try to keep the balloons up as long as you can and off the spikes. The normal mode is kind of round based, so balloons float down from the ceiling, and there's a little dotted line that moves around on your screen for each round. And if you touch it in the bonus area there, you get a lot more points. The balloons are swept away with some wind in between rounds, and more balloons come in and so that's the normal mode.

There's a limbo mode where you're trying to get the line as low as you can. There's a hot potato mode where you're trying to keep a star balloon in the air as long as you can, but you can't touch it. You have to bat the other balloons into it and keep it in the air. We're also working on a

helium pack so all the balloons are rising, and we have three modes for that under development right now.

Interviewer: Great. So now that you've released this, what's been the results? Are people taking to this game a lot more than the previous ones? What's changed?

Brock: Yeah. So Apple has picked us up. We're on the New and Noteworthy list right now, and it's starting to get some good reviews. Right now we're spending a lot of time trying to get reviews and just market the game and get it out there in front of people. But all the ratings have been very favorable.

Interviewer: Let's talk about some of the marketing things you're doing to get more exposure. So you're submitting to review sites, but other developers do that. How do you get noticed? How do you get these review sites to actually write up about you?

Brock: I think a lot of it has to do with the game. For Zombies Ala Mode we actually hired an agency to help us, and they got it out in front of a lot of people. But not a lot of people wrote about it, and I think it's just because of the game.

Interviewer: Gotcha.

Brock: Yeah. When we sent it to these places, we kind of give a little description and stuff and also a link to the trailer. I think it kind of peaks people's interest in seeing the screen shots and the trailer and stuff.

Interviewer: Are you going to try to use an agency this time or just do it yourself?

Brock: I think this time we're going to do it ourselves.

Interviewer: Yeah. Aside from that, what are other things that you're going to do to market it? With the mobile space, it seems like it's kind of... Some apps will not do any marketing and just go to number one.

Brock: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you have other apps that will do a lot of marketing and not make it. So what do you feel is the formula to make a success on the iPhone?

Brock: Yeah. That's a great question and something that we've been wrestling with for a while. I don't know if there is a magic formula. Sometimes, in the case of Bubble Ball, maybe, it's just a great story of a 14 year old kid.

Interviewer: Well, to be fair though, it got to number one before people knew he was 14.

Brock: True. OK.

Interviewer: So I know, some people were like, oh well, everyone wants to hear about this 14 year old protégé or whatever, but it got there without people knowing that. Once it got to number one or in the top ten, then people are like, wow, this 14 year old did it. That may have helped kind of keep it there, but to get there in the first place this guy did no marketing because he was busy with his, like, school.

Brock: Yeah.

Interviewer: I don't think he knew to submit to review sites and all that other stuff.

Brock: I think free probably had a lot to do with that.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. OK. Go ahead.

Brock: Some other things we're working on, we've contacted a lot of YouTube reviewers. We're giving away promo codes. We're trying to reach out through Twitter to some of the different developers.

Interviewer: Are you guys going to do a story kind of like Angry Birds where they had a cute story associated with their game.

Brock: Not for Float, no.

Interviewer: OK. Aside from that, are you going to buy advertising or do some of these cross promotion exchanges and stuff like that?

Brock: I've read a lot. I don't think advertising necessarily works, especially when it's kind of spotty. Maybe, if you canvassed sites for a while, then it might work, but just kind of the ads here and there don't necessarily work. Now, sometimes some of the review sites and stuff will throw in an ad, if you pay for their review or whatever. So we're considering that.

Interviewer: Yeah. What about the strategy of making your app free for one day or something? Is that...

Brock: We're actually going to participate in that again. Coming up March 4th we're going to be part of FreeAppADay.com's giveaway. And then later, we're going to participate with OpenFeint.

Interviewer: And you do have a light version for this, right?

Brock: Yeah. It'll be out next week. We're just waiting on approval.

Interviewer: Gotcha. Will that just be ad supported, or what is the strategy there?

Brock: Sure. So there's ads in it, and then some of the game modes are locked. If you pay 99 cents it'll turn off the ads and unlock all the game modes. So it'll basically give you... It'll be the paid version at that point.

Interviewer: Would you say your ad revenue is on par with your actual sales revenue, or is there a huge difference still?

Brock: This is going to be our first. That's not true. Knife Toss, the ad sales or the ad revenue from that is a lot less than the paid version, and that may partially be because of iAds fill rate is so low right now.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's what I've heard.

Brock: But we're using a different ad service for the ones in flow.

Interviewer: You also mentioned Android development. So are you guys really seeing these on Android? What's been the response there?

Brock: We plan to release both Zombies and Float for Android. We're waiting on Corona at the moment to fix a couple of bugs, just with performance issues. But those should be addressed here probably in the next couple of weeks, and then, yeah, we should be able to get our games on Android then.

Interviewer: What are the bugs? Is it just sound because I heard there's an issue with Android and sound.

Brock: Right now, it's performance issues.

Interviewer: Like physics.

Brock: A few points, too, and lower just have a lot of performance issues with touch events and physics and stuff. They're completely redoing some of that stuff on the Android side, Corona is.

Interviewer: Yeah. So what's next in store for your studio?

Brock: We have a whole bunch of ideas lined up. I think our next game is going to have something to do with robots.

Interviewer: OK. Are you still going to focus on physics game play or single game player play, or are you going to try to make it multi player now? What's the strategy there?

Brock: I think the multi player stuff is a little down the line for us. I think the next game coming is going to be single player, and it might be... We're going to try to explore chain reaction type of games.

Interviewer: Gotcha. What do you feel about the space? Do you feel it's too late then to have a successful mobile studio because now it seems like mobile's getting very high and everyone's jumping towards it? What are your feelings there, and where do you feel the market is going to go in the next year?

Brock: Sure. It does. The mobile space is definitely crowded, but it seems to me that all the spaces are crowded at this point, whether you're doing Flash online game or whatever you're doing.

Interviewer: Good point. Good point.

Brock: There's a lot of competition everywhere. It's going to be really interesting once some of these tablets come out, when some of the better Android stuff hits with tablets, and we'll see what Web OS and Windows Phone and stuff does. I think that's going to be really interesting once all the tablets get out. Also, there's talk eventually Corona might support the Mac App Store, so that would be really interesting, too.

Interviewer: Nice. Are you thinking about developing games specifically for the iPad? That doesn't seem as crowded. Obviously, the iPhone games can be applied to iPad, but I wasn't sure if that's something you're also looking into. You mentioned your one year old daughter.

Brock: Yeah. Both Zombies Ala Mode and Float, you can play them on the iPad. We did an HD version of Zombies Ala Mode, and then Float is a universal build so you can play it on iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch.

Interviewer: Well, with Zombies Ala Mode, the iPad version, did you see a decent amount of sales there? Is the volume of iPad enough where it's worthwhile to focus on the iPad?

Brock: Yeah. I think so. If I remember correctly, our iPad sales on a daily basis, they're better than the iPhone sales.

Interviewer: OK.

Brock: Right now.

Interviewer: Since you have a one year old daughter, are you looking at games then that your child can just like... Does she play with the iPad any?

Brock: Yeah. She does. I also have a three year old boy that is love with playing Plants versus Zombies.

Interviewer: Oh OK. Cool.

Brock: He loves playing that on the iPad. But my kids love the iPad. We're also looking at doing some other games for just little kids, kind of similar to what Duck Duck Moose is. Kind of interactive stories or more toys since they're not necessarily games but they're activities, I guess.

Interviewer: Are your kids into the iPhone, or do they gravitate more towards the iPad?

Brock: I think definitely they gravitate to the iPad just because it's bigger and easier to play and stuff, but they can definitely play the iPhone, too.

Interviewer: I mean, you have an awesome test group there of kids, so you talked about these interactive stories. Why not develop for the kids' market versus the general market at this point?

Brock: Yeah.

Interviewer: I don't know if there are enough kids on these platforms to make it worthwhile, but I have definitely seen these kind of interactive stories.

Brock: And I definitely think that the parents are willing to buy these for their kids, too. Sometime this year we hope to launch one of those. I definitely think there's opportunity for revenue and just a lot of opportunity for growth in that space because it's perfect for little kids. Kids naturally want to touch the screen on the computer and stuff.

Interviewer: Is your three year old even using the PC any more?

Brock: Not really.

Interviewer: Wow. So he may not go online and play Flash games or all that other stuff.

Brock: No. I mean, he's expressed a little interest in the computer, but it's more hard using a mouse than it is...

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.



Brock: He's a whiz at playing Plants versus Zombies.

Interviewer: I mean, the reason I bring that up is I think some people have mentioned that the thing about iPhone and even iPad to an extent is like, when parents are with their kids, they may just give their kid the iPhone just to keep them quiet. So that's an opportunity where these kids can play the games, that are entertaining.

Given all your learning experiences now for this mobile platform, what are you going to be doing more differently moving forward?

Brock: Well, I think because we're a small independent studio we're definitely try to find games and ideas that appeal to a mass market, quite a broad range, and we also are looking for ways to just develop quickly and be agile so we can lower the risk of developing games.

Interviewer: Yeah. What are learning lessons then that other developers who are looking to do their own games for mobile should consider?

Brock: Sure. I would say, keep the game simple. Do it because you want to. Be aware of feature creep. Keep your scope small. And, I guess, do everything you can to lower your cost upfront so you're lowering your risk of development.

Interviewer: So by lowering cost, does that mean you just do your own program art, or what's your suggestion there? Because for a lot of developers now, you have something like Corona or Unity 3D. It really does speed up development, but you still have the bottleneck of art work, I think.

Brock: Sure. We come from an art background and...

Interviewer: Oh yes. That works really well for you, right.

Brock: We learned to program and stuff, but coming from that art background we've talked to a lot of people, and there's a lot of artists that are wanting to break into gaming. So there's no reason why you can't team up with an artist, an audio guy.

Interviewer: Did you guys do your own audio or get an audio guy, or did you buy pre-made audio clips, like from SoundRangers.com or something like that.

Brock: Yeah. We've done some of both. We have some guys that are good with audio and did some of their own fully. And then, for some of the music we did some stock tracks and stuff.

Interviewer: Do you feel that audio and art work and all that stuff really matters? And you look at something like Bubble Ball, no one would have predicted that would have been number one.

Brock: Yeah.

Interviewer: So is it really more about the game play over everything else, or do those other things matter? Would the best strategy be release something? It may not be perfect, but if it gets traction then refine and improve the art work and other things.

Brock: Well, I personally believe that all the things do matter. They greatly enhance the experience and make the experience. So you definitely need to have a fun mechanic, and your game play needs to be solid. But I think it all comes together, and I think it is important. Personally, I think things like Bubble Ball are kind of a little bit of an anomaly.

At most in general, if you look at the top of the charts they do have good quality art and sound effects as a rule, I think. Now, there's styles. There's the Doodle style which some people put out, but in general I would say that I believe you need to have high quality art and sound.

Interviewer: Let's talk about OpenFeint. How has that been in terms of... What have you used OpenFeint for, and has that actually helped your game? It doesn't sound like your games are multi player, so I wasn't sure what the benefit of OpenFeint was, aside from, maybe, cross promotion or something like that.

Brock: Yeah. They enable us to do leader boards and achievements real easily, and I do think that does add some value to the game. And I think it adds some replayability for some types of players.

Interviewer: OK. And do you have analytics in your games so you can see how often people are playing and how often they're playing and stuff like that?

Brock: Yeah. We started using Flurry Analytics.

Interviewer: Yeah. Have you found that to be useful? Is it important to have analytics, and what have those analytics opened your eyes to in terms of how people are using your games?

Brock: Sure. I think analytics are very important. Again, we come from a web background, so it's always interesting to study a website's analytics. From a game design standpoint, I think it can help you balance the game. I think that's a big thing you can learn from it and also just kind of see if there's flow issues, if the people are getting stuck somewhere.

Interviewer: Well, have the analytics inspired you to change anything about the design of your game or do an update based on what you're seeing in the analytics?

Brock: Not yet. We just started implementing them into Float in its early days, but we're definitely going to be watching them and see if there's things that we need to tweak.

Interviewer: Do you have stats on how long people play Float each day or any other interesting stat that the audience could benefit from?

Brock: Yeah. Let me come back to that. Adam's going to look it up for me.

Interviewer: OK. How are you going to stand out now? I know you said that moving forward you guys have got some other quick play ideas out there, but like we kind of discussed, there's already interactive storybooks for kids. There's already physics games. There are already MMOs. There are all these other types of games. How do you stand out? What are you going to do to really break away from the crowd?

Brock: Sure. I think some of it is just building a brand, building some brand recognition and also building some intellectual property that you can build some characters that are recognizable for little kids.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Brock: That's the plan that we're going with for the little kid games. We're developing a series called Pasture Play, and those games are all going to be faith based out of the Bible.

Interviewer: Oh OK.

Brock: So we're going to do multiple Bible stories and stuff.

Interviewer: Is that the next thing you guys are going to release, or is that going to come out in parallel with your kind of mass market approach, too?

Brock: Those are going to be under a different brand. They'll be out this year. So Crawl Space Games are kind of the fun and quirky games for everyone, and then Play Pen games is just going to be for family friendly games.

Interviewer: How is Twitter? Do you find Twitter a viable marketing channel, or are you using Facebook Pages and all that other stuff to do marketing?

Brock: Yeah. We have a Facebook Page, and we also do stuff on Twitter. We have found that Twitter is a good way to connect and also Facebook. The Anasca community around Corona is certain to be pretty vibrant. They've been supporting Float. We've been giving away promo codes and stuff, and that's been pretty exciting to see.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. So any other stats on the Flurry stuff or is that...

Brock: So the average play time's between one to three minutes.

Interviewer: Cool.

Brock: A typical, I guess, one mode or whatever. That's, I think, pretty normal for mobile. You play it here and there, when you're standing in line and, again, another reason why when to keep it simple because people are often doing other things or waiting while they're playing.

Interviewer: Aside from your own games, what are your favorite mobile apps and games?

Brock: Let's see. Plants versus Zombies is a big family favorite. I know a lot of the guys in the office are playing Tiny Wings now.

Interviewer: Yeah. I heard about that. You know, that's another story, right? That's another story of literally this guy... It sounds like one guy.

Brock: Yeah.

Interviewer: It went from nothing to almost... Is it number one now?

Brock: Yeah. It's number one. It knocked Angry Birds off the other day.

Interviewer: It doesn't even have a light version. What is it? What do you think it is that's... Some of these things just shoot up out of nowhere.

Brock: I think with Tiny Wings it's just polished to perfection. It looks beautiful, and the mechanics are just great. He did an awesome job with it.

Interviewer: Well, you know, a lot of people do an awesome job, right?

Brock: Yeah.

Interviewer: But there's no free version, so you can't test it. I guess, maybe, the fact that it's kind of shot up there is what inspired people, but there's so many other games that also look nice, right? It's not like just the top five games are the ones that are the most polished.

Brock: Yeah. That's true.

Interviewer: I don't know because I was talking to someone else about that. We were like, why is that? Why does one thing shoot up? And then,

I don't think he submitted to any review site or anything else. But, yeah, so you haven't found that formula yet then.

Brock: No. I wish.

Interviewer: OK. So, Tiny Wings. Any other apps? Do you use any other utility apps?

Brock: I thought EpicWin was a fun idea. It's a "to do" app. It's made of light RPG elements. I thought that was pretty fun. Instapaper, what else are we playing? You know, we just try out a lot of games all the time just...

Interviewer: That's part of your development strategy is to just keep on playing other games and see what you can learn from them.

Brock: Oh yeah, definitely. We're just getting started in game development, so we have a lot to learn.

Interviewer: Yeah. What are you guys doing then to make sure and beef up your game development and game design skills?

Brock: I'm reading all the time and playing a lot of games.

Interviewer: What kind of things are you reading? Is it mainly books, mainly online?

Brock: Yeah. I've been reading a lot of game design books. I can look up... Hold on a second.

Interviewer: Some of the people I interview, they're kind of doing game development as a hobby. And so, it would be nice to know how you're keeping up with game development. It is a quickly changing pace, and

there's always something new to learn. It would be nice to hear just how you keep up with it and also keep up on the mobile space where there are a lot of apps released every day.

Brock: Yeah. One book recommendation, I've read quite a few game designs books here lately, but "The Art of Game Design" by Jesse Schell, that's one of my favorite books so far.

Interviewer: Great.

Brock: I also last year attended Casual Connect in Seattle for the first time. So we're trying to go to some conferences and stuff.

Interviewer: Did you find that conference valuable?

Brock: There were definitely some sessions that were really interesting, especially about just trying to monetize games and just the business side of it. Like I said, we have a lot to learn. I felt like a "newb" going there just trying to soak up as much information as I could.

Interviewer: Are you guys going to Game Developers Conference or focus on Casual Connect?

Brock: Right now, I think we're going to focus on Casual Connect. I'd love to go to GDC in the future, but right now just our schedules and stuff don't allow for it.

Interviewer: OK. Where can listeners find out more information about your games and potentially play them?

Brock: Yeah. Our main site is CrawlSpaceGames.com.

Interviewer: OK. And how do you spell that?

Brock: C-R-A-W-L-S-P-A-C-E-G-A-M-E-S.com.

Interviewer: Great.

Brock: And then, if you want to check out Float, we have a separate site for that. It's called FloatGame.com.

Interviewer: OK. Great. Any other last words then for developers out there looking to do mobile games or thinking about mobile development?

Brock: Yeah. Have fun and check out Corona. We recommend it.

Interviewer: OK. Great. Thank you very much for your time. Appreciate it.

Brock: Yeah. Thank you.

Interviewer: Take care. Bye.