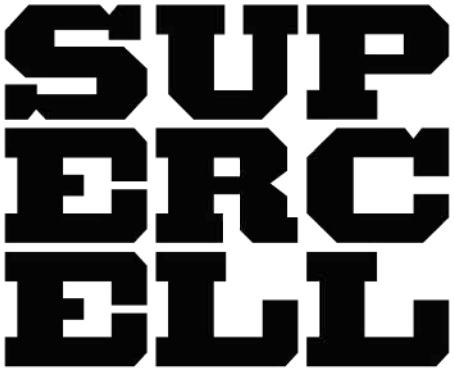
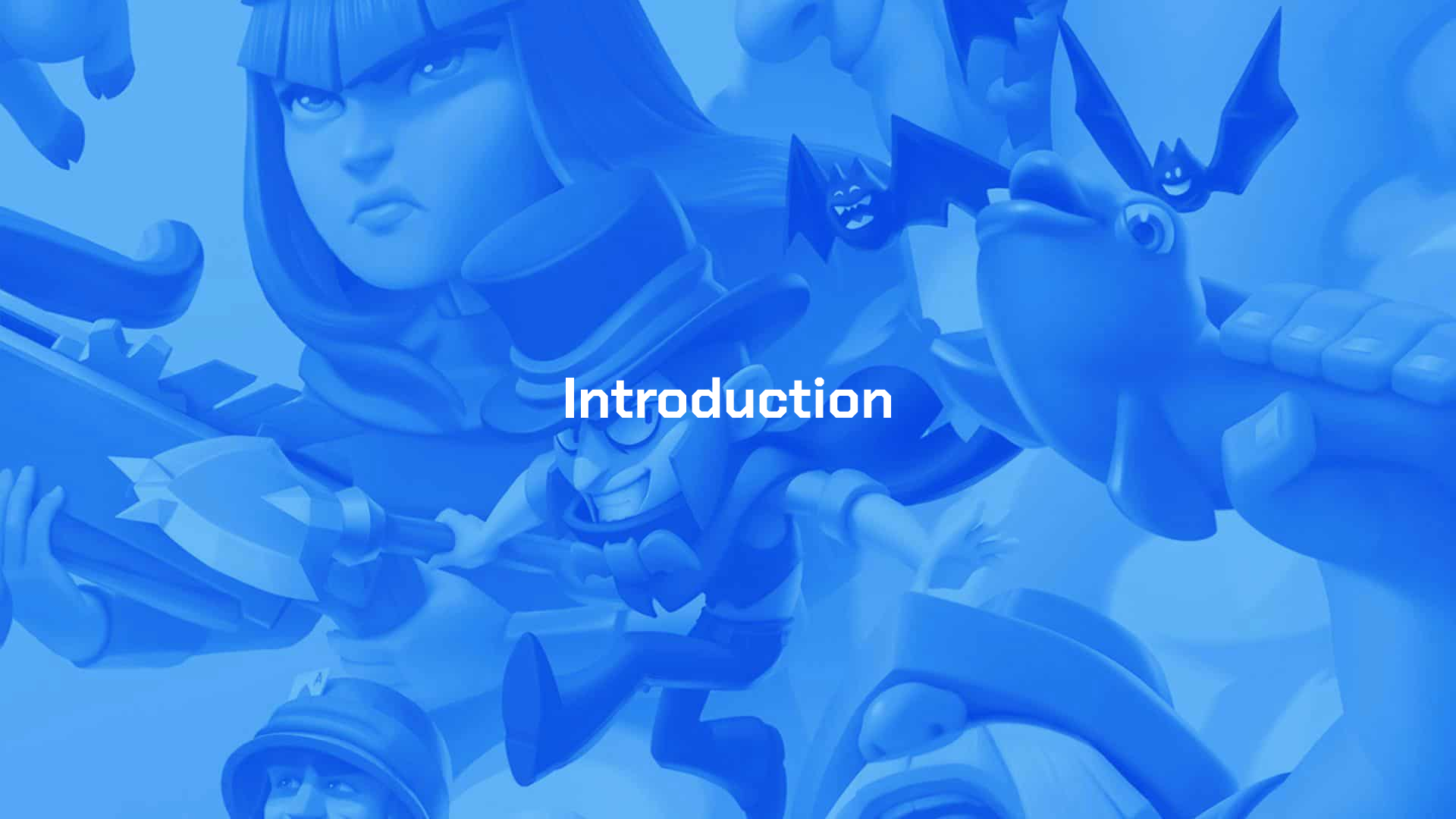


Lessons learned in Game Design

Pavel Volkov



Introduction

QUICK INTRO

- Math and Computer Science degree
- Nearly 10 years in game dev
- At Supercell for 7 years
- Worked on titles like Clash Royale, World of Warships
- Have experience in Data Analytics and Game Design
- Now work on a brand new game

HOW I GOT TO GAME DESIGN

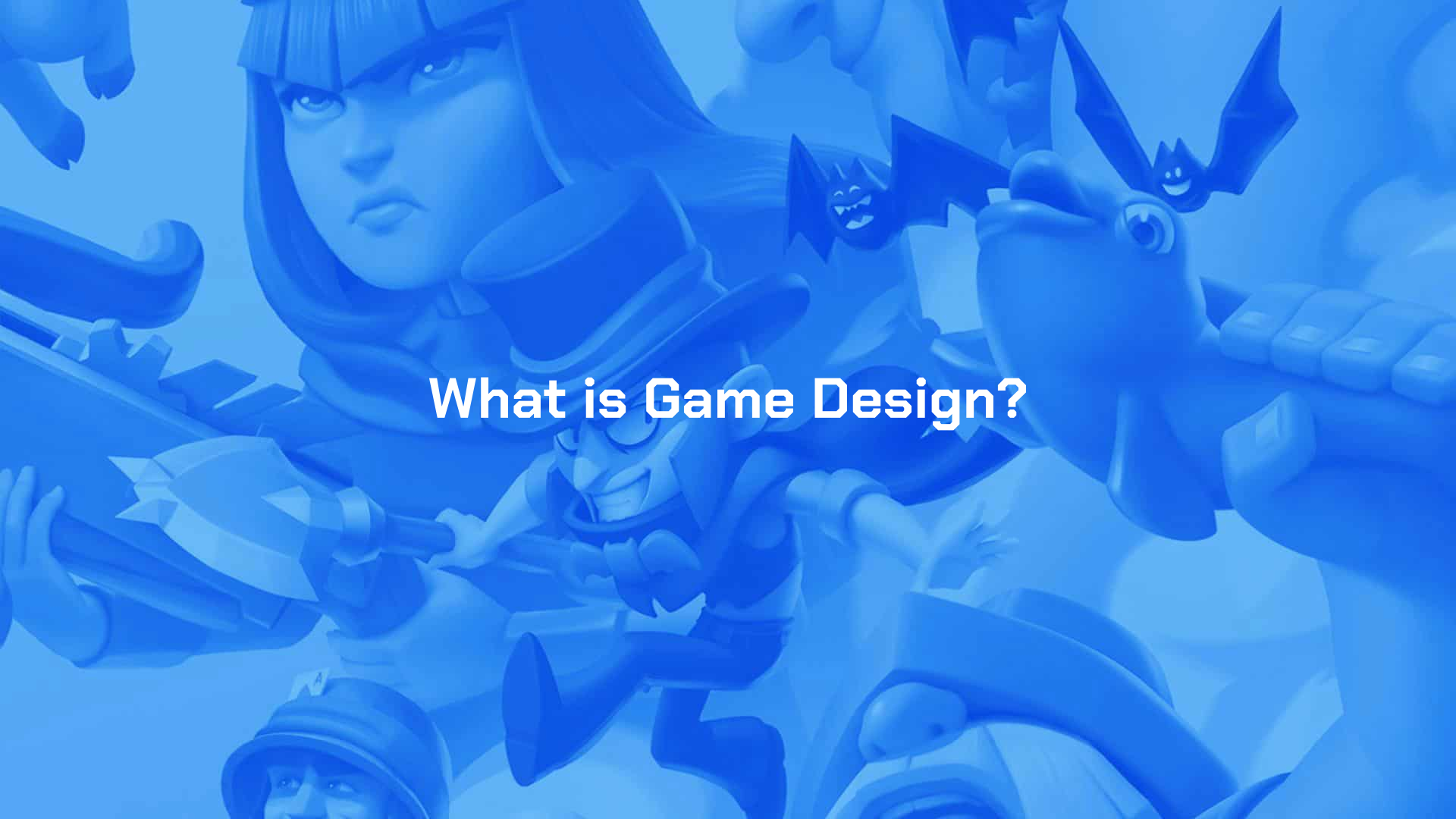
3.5 years

3.5 years

Joined Supercell
as Data Scientist

Previous designer
left & I switched role

Left to join a
new project



What is Game Design?

WHAT IS GAME DESIGN?

“Game design is the art and science of creating interactive systems that engage, challenge, and entertain players through structured rules, goals, and feedback loops”

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“Game design is the art and science of creating interactive systems that engage, challenge, and entertain players through structured rules, goals, and feedback loops”

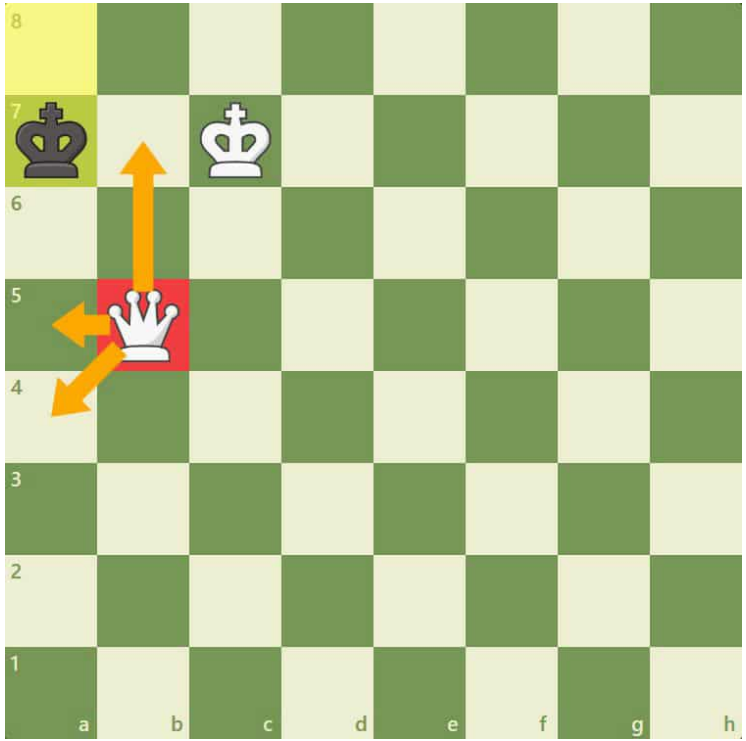
Quote by 


What makes a game

WHAT MAKES A GAME

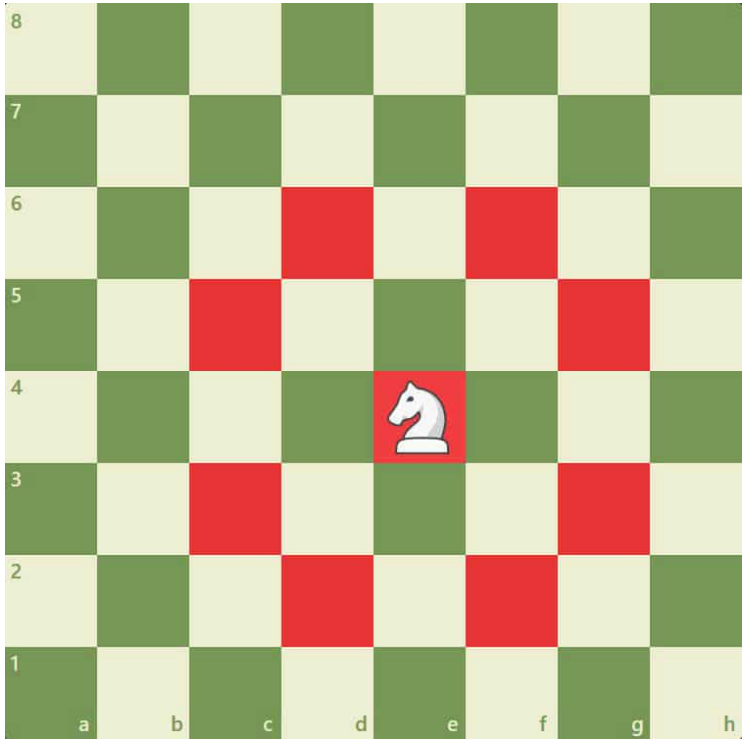
- Goals (must)
- Rules (must, usually come with limitations)
- Feedback
- Progression
- Challenge

WHAT MAKES A GAME



- **Goals**
  - Rules
  - Feedback
  - Progression
  - Challenge

WHAT MAKES A GAME



- Goals
- **Rules**
- Feedback
- Progression
- Challenge

WHAT MAKES A GAME

- Goals
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WHAT MAKES A GAME

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WHAT MAKES A GAME

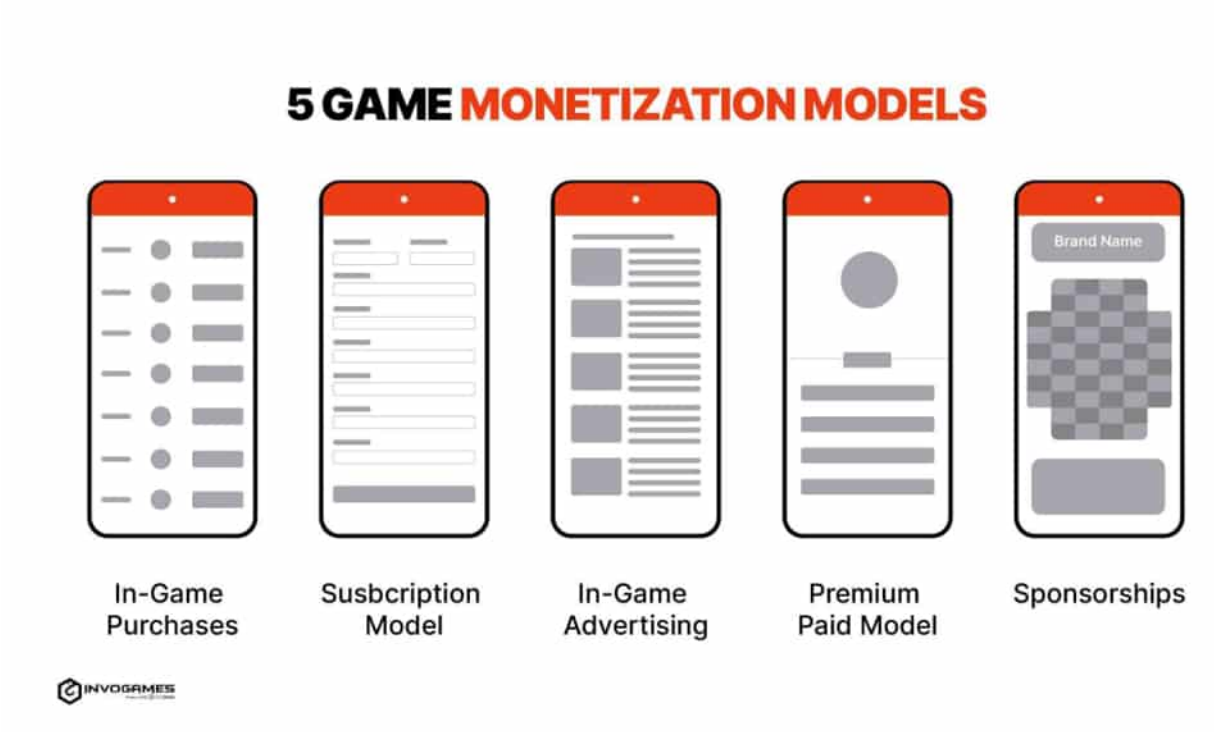
- Goals
- Rules
- Feedback
- Progression
- **Challenge**

WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A GAME (professional viewpoint)

SUPERCELL CULTURE

- The best teams make the best games
- Small and independent cells
- Games that people will play for years
- Games as a Service

MONETIZATION STRATEGIES



CORE TEAM ASSEMBLY

Artist

Programmer

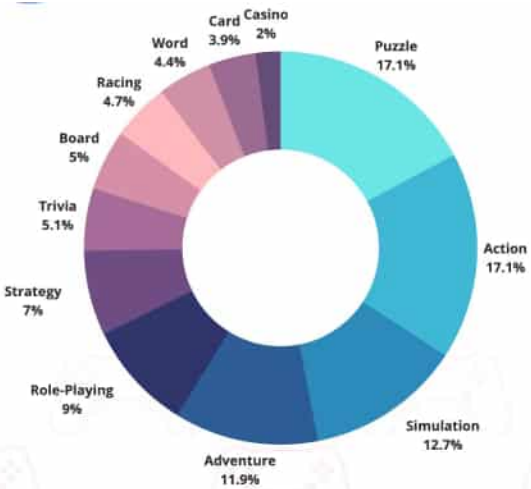
Designer

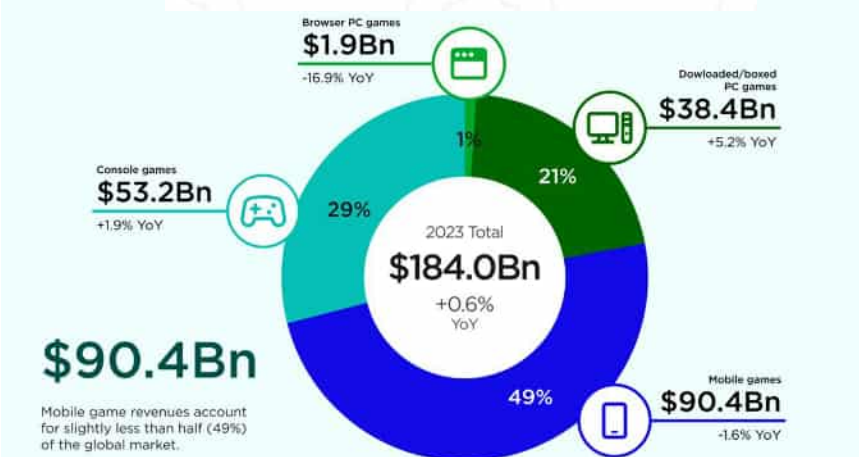
- Share the same values
- Share the same game vision
- Align on the execution plan
- Small team size for easier navigation and cost-effectiveness

GAME'S PRODUCT-MARKET FIT

- "What's the unique selling proposition of your game?"
- Is there (enough) audience for the game?

Back up your assumptions with market research





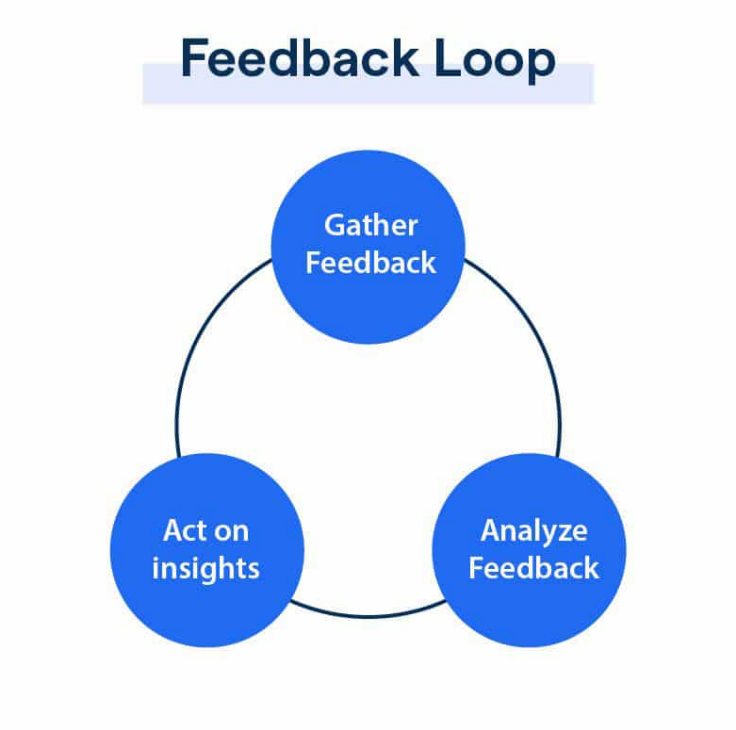
ALIGNMENT PHASE

- Agreeing on glossary
- Broad strokes requirements for MVP (Minimal Viable Product)
- Setting deadlines and goals
- Investment in execution speed

AS THE DEV PROCESS GOES

- Proceed towards aligned direction
- Break down vision into smaller sets of dev “hops” and close imaginary gaps asap
- Things get more clear as you go
- Define must-have features for the first public test
- Set yourself a clear goal and verify your assumptions with real players

AFTER FIRST PUBLIC TEST



- Check on your original assumptions
- Make adjustments based on the observations
- Set another achievable milestone to test
- Iterate until you reach desired metrics
- When targets are reached - congratulations, you game is ready to roll live as a stable business

HOW DOES TEAM CHANGE WHEN THE GAME IS READY TO GO TO LIVE OPERATION

TEAM GROWTH

Artist

Programmer

Designer

TEAM GROWTH

Live game implies non-stop content production that would suffice players needs

Art

- Character
- UI
- Environment
- Animations/ VFX
- Concept
- Sound

Code

- Game
- Server
- Infra

Design

- Gameplay
- Systems
- Economy
- Live Ops
- Product
- Monetization

Support

- Testers
- Customer Support
- Release Management
- Analytics
- Player Research

≈ 40-200 people

LEARNING DIMENSION IN GAME DESIGN

ONBOARDING

Every single game has some learning element in it as it needs to teach players the rules and engage them throughout the game

LEARNING

Some noticeable concepts:

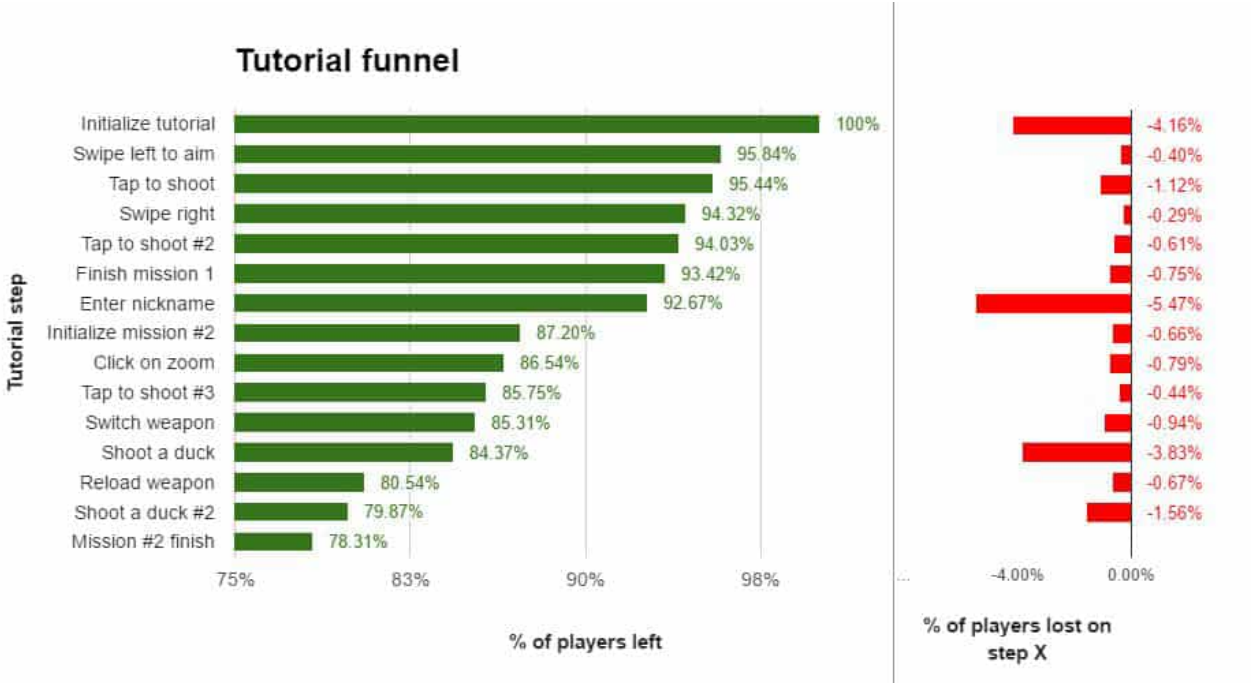
- Tutorial
- Complexity budget
- Complexity alleviation with visual language
- Rewards
- Progression

TUTORIAL

- Best tutorials are non-pushy, learn-by-doing ones

TUTORIAL

In many games it’s optimized and iterated on using funnel analysis



COMPLEXITY BUDGET

”Game designs have a complexity budget. You can only have a certain amount of complexity and you have to figure whether it’s worth spending.”

— Richard Garfield, creator of Magic the Gathering

COMPLEXITY BUDGET

- Players need a game to be simple enough to learn but complex enough to remain engaging over time

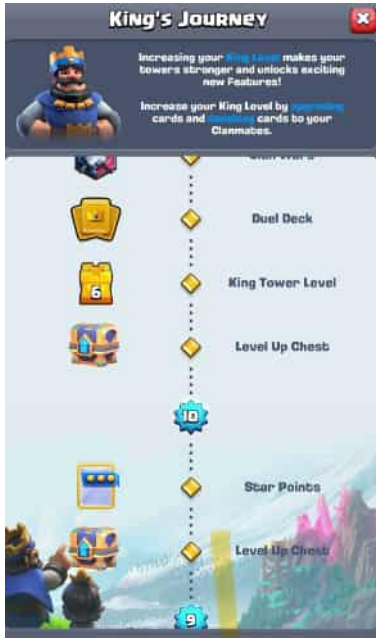
COMPLEXITY BUDGET

- Keep initial mechanics straightforward to onboard new players, saving complexity for later when they are ready to explore advanced strategies

6 months

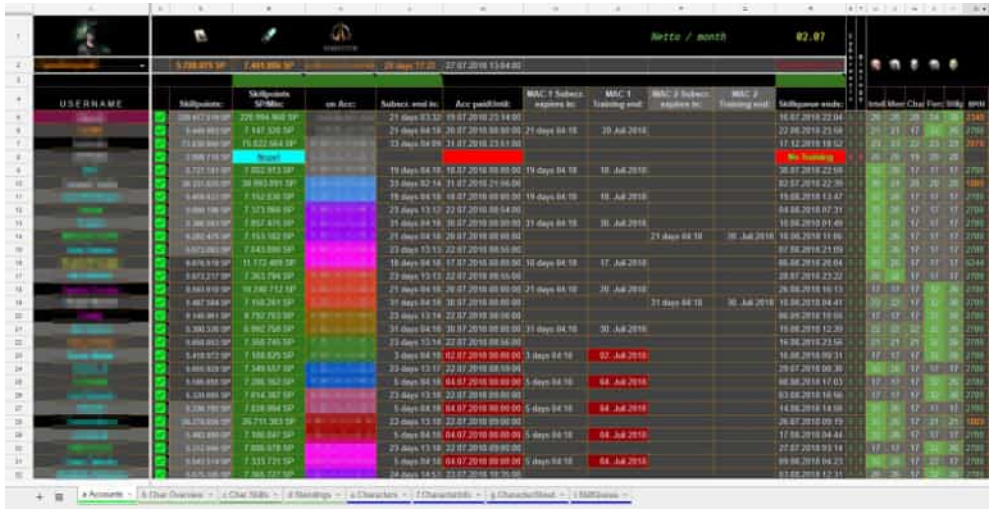
COMPLEXITY BUDGET

- Introduce mechanics one at a time so players can master them without feeling overwhelmed



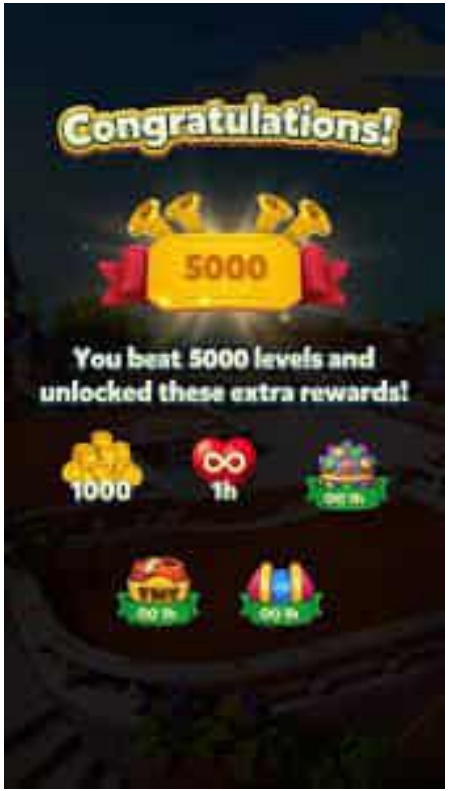
COMPLEXITY BUDGET

- Different audience has different complexity budget



VISUAL LANGUAGE

REWARDS



- Positive reinforcement of certain behaviours
- Feeling appreciated for their time
- Achievement & acknowledgement of progress

PROGRESSION

Key for long-term engagement


QUESTIONS?