GDC 11 Europe

The Settlers Online!
Community Building

Blue Byte UBISOFT

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CV: google me

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The Settlers Online

Success Story

- Browser Flash MMO

- Based on the Settlers IP

- Using AAA Art assets of Settlers

- Start of Development 09/2009

- Closed Beta Q3/2010

- Launch Q4/2010

- 2011: Won 2x "Best Browser Game of the year"

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How negative information can increase revenue

SERVER STABILITY HUNT

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Server Stability: Hunt for improvements

- ✓ Situation: Community was in a bad mood on <u>one</u> server due to lags

- ✓ Support tickets increased

- ✓ We saw some odd behavior of the servers database

- ✓ At this time it was the server with the highest population

- ✓ We needed to hunt down this unique problem

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Server Stability: Improving Community Mood

✓ We changed information policy:

- <u>Honest</u>: Even bad news we posted, no marketing fluff

- <u>Immediate</u>: news had to be on site within minutes

- <u>Direct</u>: on the main page, not on login, forum or in game

- <u>Complete</u>: we posted technical stuff what we did to hunt down the lag

- <u>Frequent</u>: we updated hunt updates daily
  - Sometimes even more frequent

22.03.2011

Server Optimierungen - Status II

Wir haben in den letzten Tagen weitere Optimierungen eingespielt und fast alle abgeschlossen. Morgen am Wartungstag werden wir die letzten Schritte einleiten und Datenbank Optimierungen vornehmen. Alle anderen angekündigten Schritte sind inzwischen umgesetzt.

Wir sehen erste Besserungen aber vor allem Welt 4 - Steppenwald läuft immer noch nicht so, wie wir uns das vorstellen. Diese Situation ist weder für euch noch für uns zufriedenstellend, daher sind weitere Schritte und Analysen in Arbeit, über die wir euch auf dem Laufenden halten werden.

Auch am **23.03.11** werden wir wieder unseren regulären Wartungstag durchführen, die Server werden daher **ab ca. 9:00 Uhr** nicht mehr verfügbar sein. Bitte beachtet auch mögliche Hinweise im Forum und im Spiel.

Euer "**Die Siedler Online**" Team

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Server Stability: Key Learnings

- ✓ Players are thankful for all information they get
- ✓ Even by posting bad news we increased the mood (and revenue)
- ✓ Players are interested in what you do, even if they don't understand it
- ✓ Players realize that you care and honor you for this (and even pay)
- ✓ Btw: the problem was our providers VM configuration

Community Mood / Week

Community Mood
1 = very good
2 = good
3 = okay
4 = so-so
5 = bad
6 = very bad
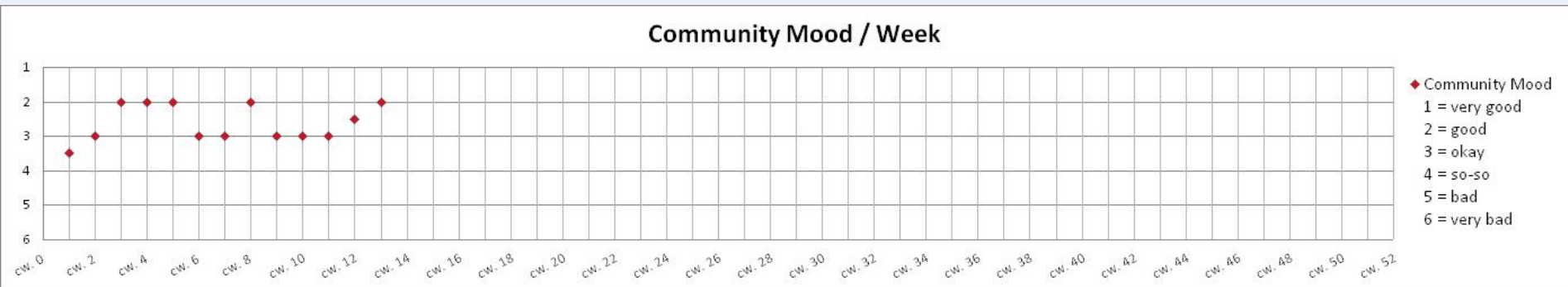
Keeping players happy when they can't play …

MAINTENANCE DAYS

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- ✓ Situation: Community was in a bad mood during maintenance days
  - We now know why Blizzard shuts down their forums on maintenance days
- ✓ Although we announced them ahead of time
- ✓ Although we wrote it clearly on the main page
- ✓ What was happening?
  - Players eager to play couldn't
  - 4 Hours without play seemed long for players
  - Did we see addiction?

- ✓ We announce maintenance one day ahead with time (!)
- ✓ We announce it again on the maintenance day
- ✓ We post once per hour minimum what we are doing
- ✓ Even technical stuff

- ✓ <u>Result</u>: Community was VERY happy
- ✓ Even praised our new communication

"Your open communication about the server status led me into spending €25 euro for your game"

30.03.2011

Wartungstag heute, den 30.03.11 - STATUS

<u>13:14 Uhr:</u> Die Wartungsarbeiten sind beendet. Bitte beachtet, dass es erfahrungsgemäß nach den Wartungsarbeiten noch kurzfristig zu Login Engpässen bzw. langsameren Reaktionszeiten kommen kann.

11:09 Uhr: Phase 1 der Wartungsarbeiten wurde bereits abgeschlossen. Wir bereiten uns nun darauf vor, Phase 2 zu starten und mit den Arbeiten am Webservice zu beginnen.

<u>10:21 Uhr:</u> Unsere Server sind nun offline und wir haben mit Phase 1 der Wartungsarbeiten begonnen.

<u>09:09 Uhr:</u> Die Server werden langsam heruntergefahren. Sobald diese bereit sind, werden wir mit den Wartungsarbeiten beginnen.

An dieser Stelle wollen wir euch nochmal darin erinnern, dass aufgrund von Arbeiten am Webservice **ab ca. 12 Uhr** <u>weder Website noch Forum</u> verfügbar sein werden. Natürlich werden wir versuchen, den entsprechenden Zeitraum so kurz wie möglich zu halten.

Euer "Die Siedler Online" Team

Redirecting community aggression

HACKERS INCOMING!

- ✓ Situation: Main Page & Login lagged due to DOS attack
  - ▪ DOS = Denial of Service
- ✓ Community was unhappy of course
- ✓ Action to block took 2 hours due to nature of attack

The Joy of Tech   by Nitrozac & Snaggy

I'm so proud of Jimmy.
Apparently he's one of
the world's best at a new
computer game.

Oh really!
Which game?

Something called
"DDOS Attack"

HACKER MOM

joyoftech.com

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Hacker Attack: Results

- ✓ We posted that we suffer under a hacker attack
- ✓ We posted updates about our actions
- ✓ We also posted that we will take the case to the police

- ✓ Result: Community anger directed to hacker
- ✓ No follow up attacks due to police mentioned
- ✓ Btw Hacker was located and ID'ed easily

Predicted – still came sooner than expected

THE 'RUSSIAN INVASION'

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Russian Invasion

- ✓ Situation: One article in RU lead to thousands of RU players coming to our servers
  - Note: usually happens with EN version, CM predicted it 2 weeks before
  - Note 2: they played the German version as EN wasn't online yet
- ✓ Community was unhappy of foreigners in their chat
- ✓ „Сообщества был недоволен иностранцев в чате"
- ✓ Lot of negative behavior and racism online
- ✓ Btw: happened with CZ and PL players as well

Russian Invasion: Solution

- ✓ We divided Chat channels by Global IP
    - ▪ Switching language channels still allowed
- ✓ Clearly communicate the plans, time needed and issue
- ✓ Both sides were very happy about the solution
- ✓ Other languages followed: CZ, PL, EN channels

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Players feel it's 'their' game

INTERNAL (?) ROADMAP

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- ✓ Situation: Community was unhappy with the End Game
- ✓ Level 30 players became bored and "vented"
- ✓ At that point less than 5% were level 30, but they were a loud 5%
- ✓ End Game was planned to be released months later*
  - ▪ *Now online and very successful
- ✓ Feature requests were posted, some excellent ones
- ✓ Reaction from dev team was nil: due to workload

Game Information & Future Plans: Solution

✓ Solution: Change of policy

- Opening up communication of internal plans

- Posting next steps (short term)

- Posting next feature plans (middle term)

- Posting future plans (long term)

✓ We updated these as soon as plans changed

✓ We included community feedback items

- And we marked them as such!

KEY LEARNINGS - SUMMARY

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Key Learnings

- ✓ Community Management & Support a <u>must</u> have before & after launch

- ✓ <u>Honest</u>, <u>Immediate</u>, <u>Direct</u>, <u>Complete</u>, <u>Frequent</u> communication is key

- ✓ Communicating bad news is good

- ✓ Never underestimate your community to understand your situation!

- ✓ Communication intensity of CM/Support requires leads to be on site

- ✓ Prepare for the unexpected

- ✓ Good CM & Support pays for itself!

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Know the difference!

Community Management is NOT support!

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Q&A

Blue Byte is looking for talents to work on the next online games!

Contact jobs@bluebyte.de