

Finding the Fun: Playtesting Your Way to Success.

STEPHEN JARRETT, VP GAME
DESIGN @ ARKADIUM

The logo for GDC 13 NEXT. 'GDC' is in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. The number '13' is inside a white circle with a black border, which is itself inside the 'O' of 'GDC'. Below 'GDC' is the word 'NEXT' in a smaller, bold, black sans-serif font.

GDC
13
NEXT

NOVEMBER 5-7, 2013
EXPO DATES: NOV 5-6
LOS ANGELES, CA

GDCNext.com



STEPHEN JARRETT

VP Game Design



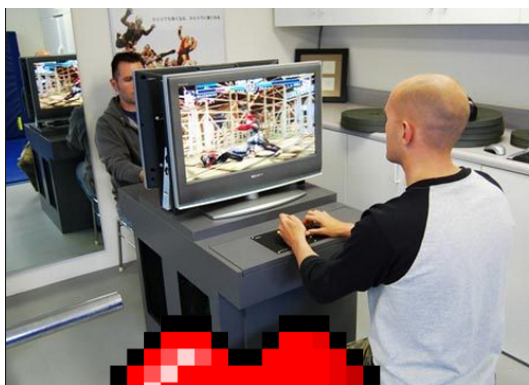
NEW YORK CROSS PLATFORM GAME
STUDIO

SO...

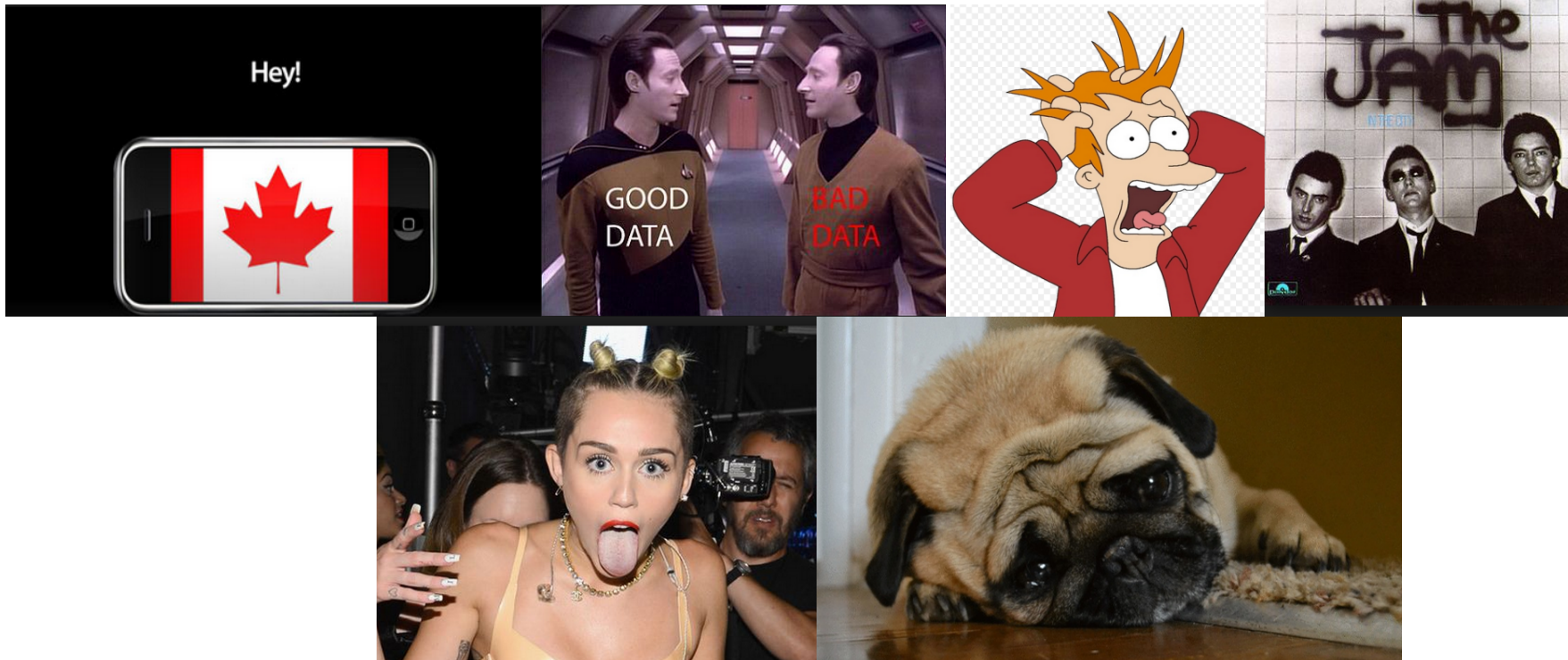
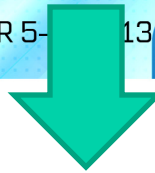
How do we test if our games retain users?

Has strong engagement?

How do we find the fun?

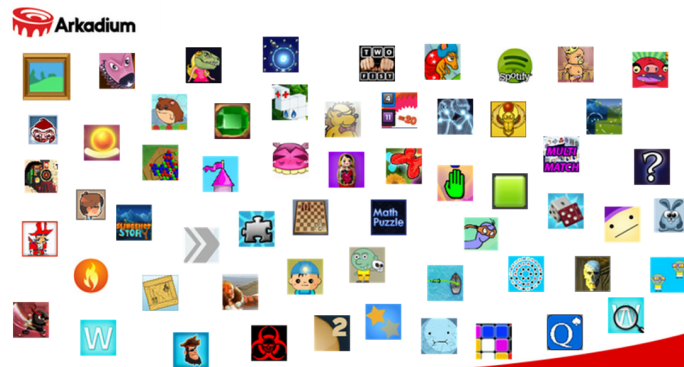
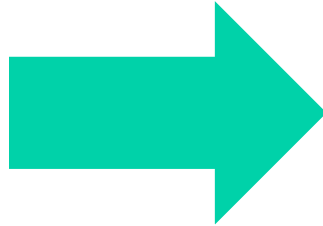


**WE DID THIS
WE WERE WRONG**



WE DID THIS TOO







Games we
are currently
testing



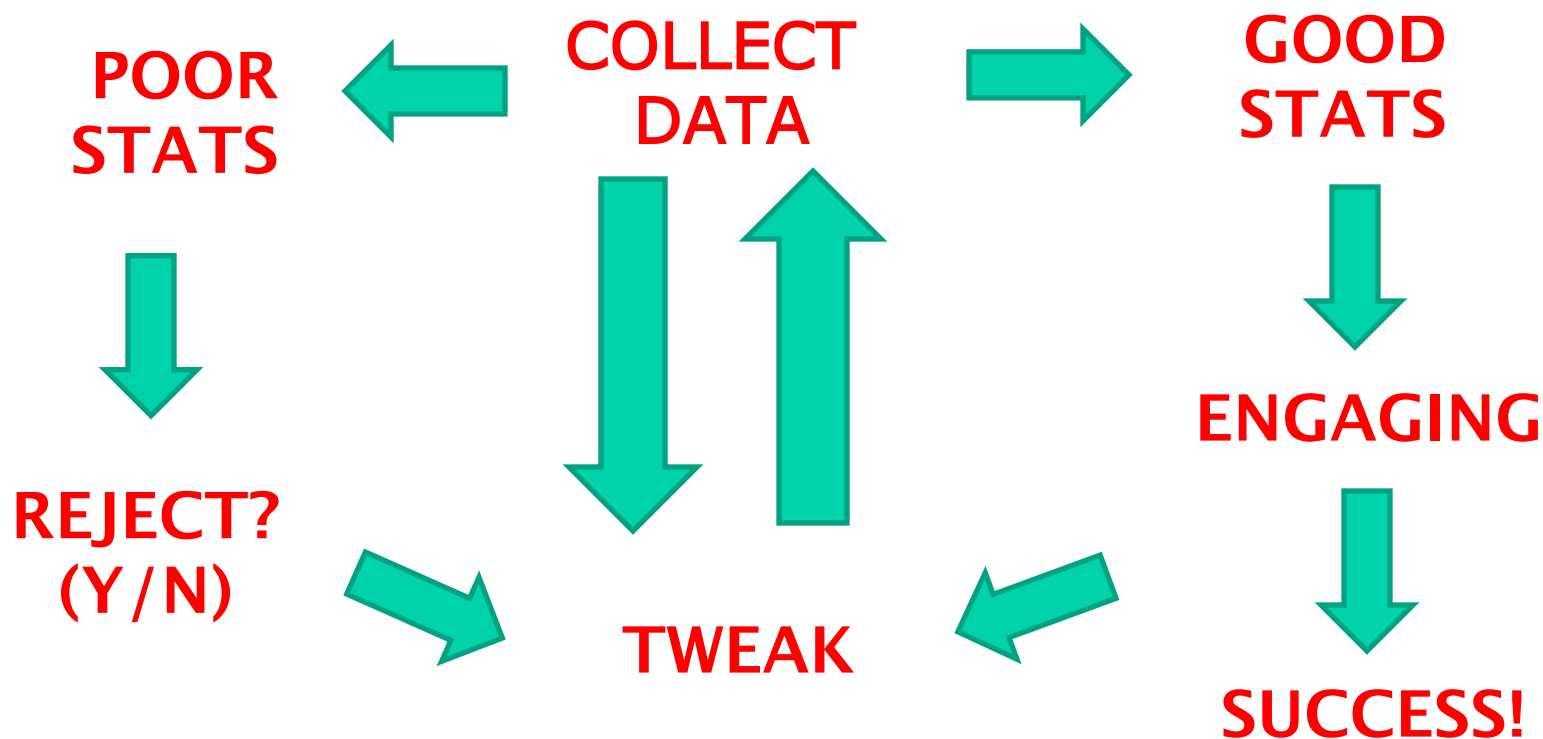
1/2 Million
users per month

Rating	Name	Category
★★★★★	 Batiki Bash (Beta)	Beta Games
★★★★★	 Critter Cover Up: Puzzle Collection (Beta)	Beta Games
★★★★★	 Critter Cover Up: Unlimited Play (Beta)	Beta Games
★★★★★	 Fire (Beta)	Beta Games
★★★★★	 Galaxy Bounce (Beta)	Beta Games
★★★★★	 Swaptiles (beta)	Beta Games
★★★★★	 Transport Tasks (Beta)	Beta Games
★★★★★	 Worm's Adventure (Beta)	Beta Games

GATHERED DATA AND USED IT!



TWEAK-TEST-TWEAK



Questions we would ask

- Is the mechanic fun?
- Is there strong engagement?
- Do players connect with world and characters?
- Does the game monetize?

Lets look at some Data!



JIGSAW BLAST

Jigsaw game
where the player
matches one
piece at time.



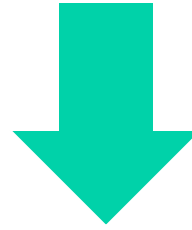
JIGSAW BLAST

- No way to lose
- All about performing chains
- Score based
- Relaxing music
- Time spent –

11 mins in 2
sessions a week
per unique user

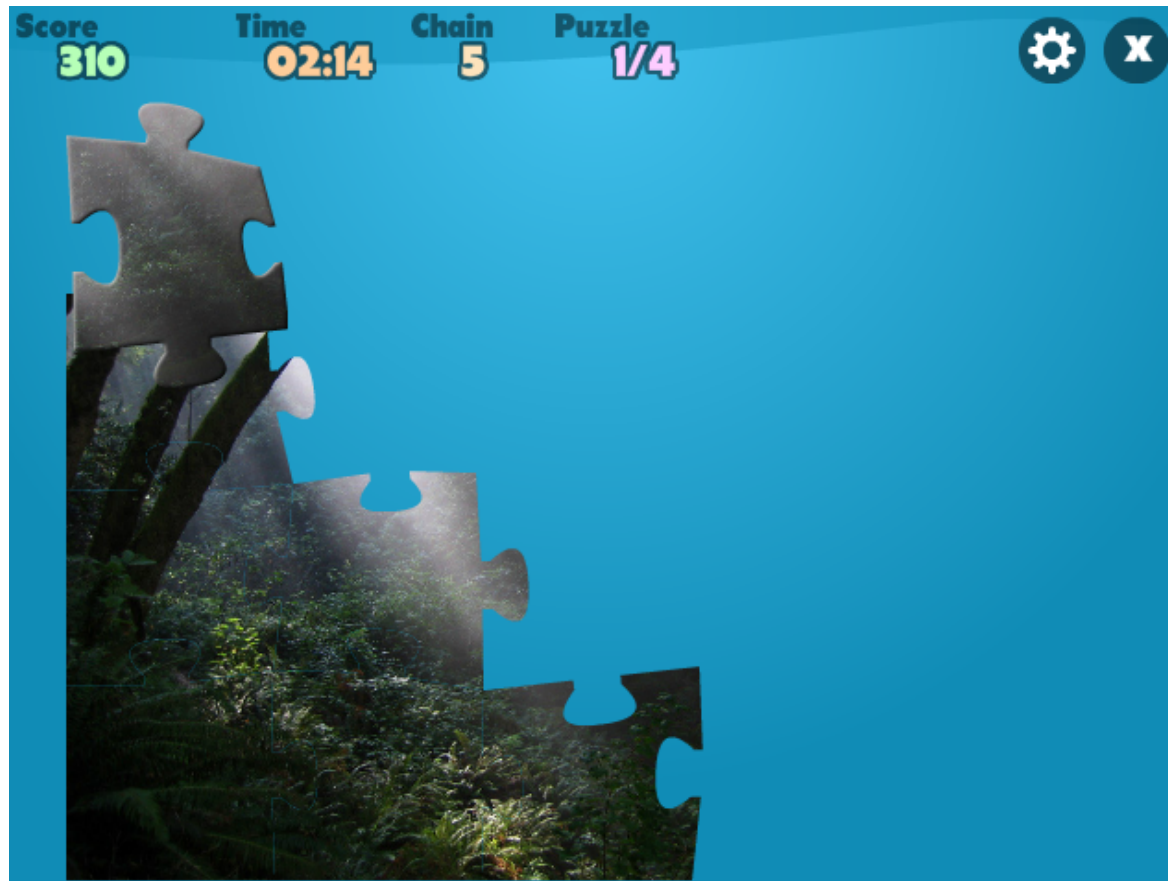


JIGSAW BLAST

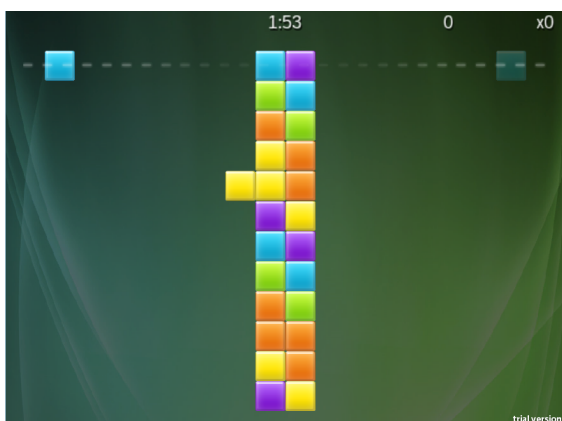
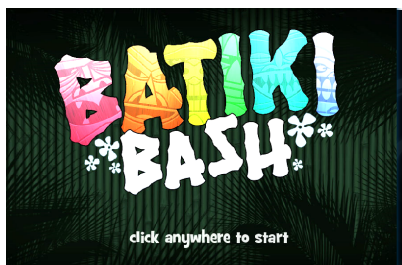


- Added time limit –
- Players can now lose!

Engagement
increased to
60 mins per week
in an average of
6 sessions



CHALLENGE IS A MOTIVATOR FOR ENGAGEMENT



15 mins



45 mins



9 mins



42 mins

Stunt Armadillos

- A timed Character based flick game
- Flick incoming armadillos to smash obstacles and earn score
- The more score you get the more armadillos you earn

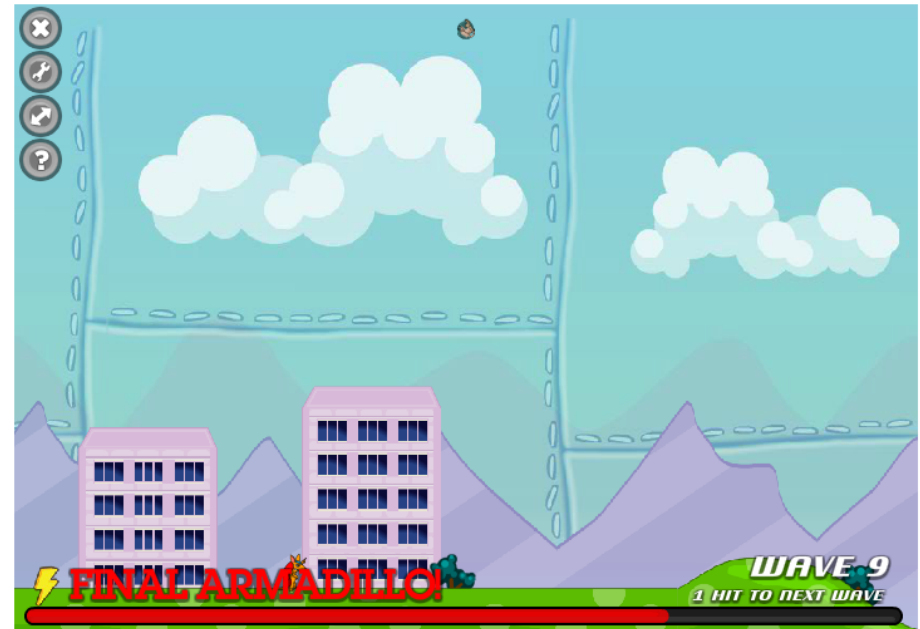


Stunt Armadillos

Engagement –

1hour 55 mins

Average play session
22mins

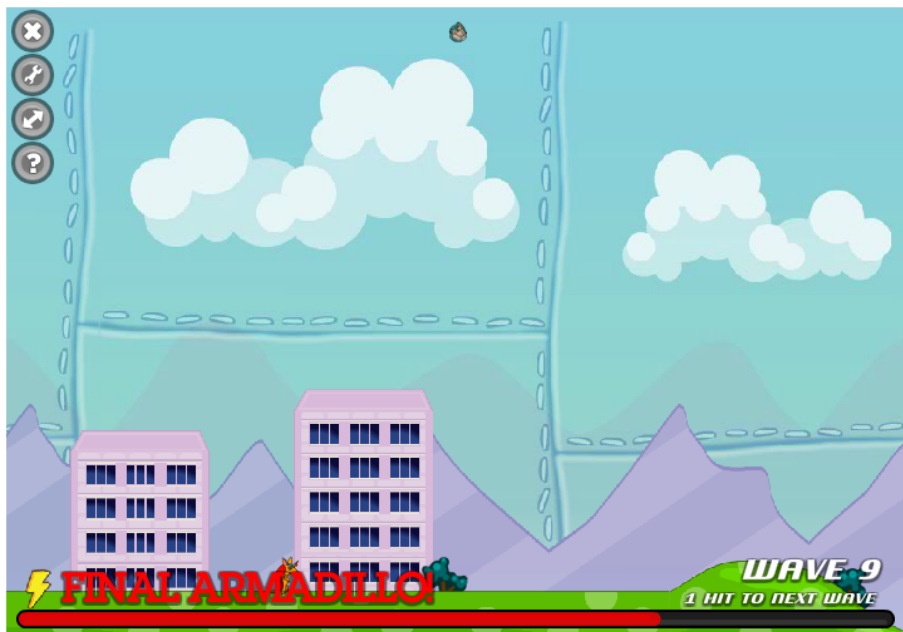


Stunt Armadillos

- We made it harder to earn Armadillos
- Game sessions became shortened.
- Engagement

Just under 4 hours
(3hours 49mins)

With Average time per
play session 12mins



**KEEP THEM HUNGRY FOR
MORE – LET THEM TAKE
A BREAK**

- We increased ads on our Facebook game
 - Ads every 3 plays

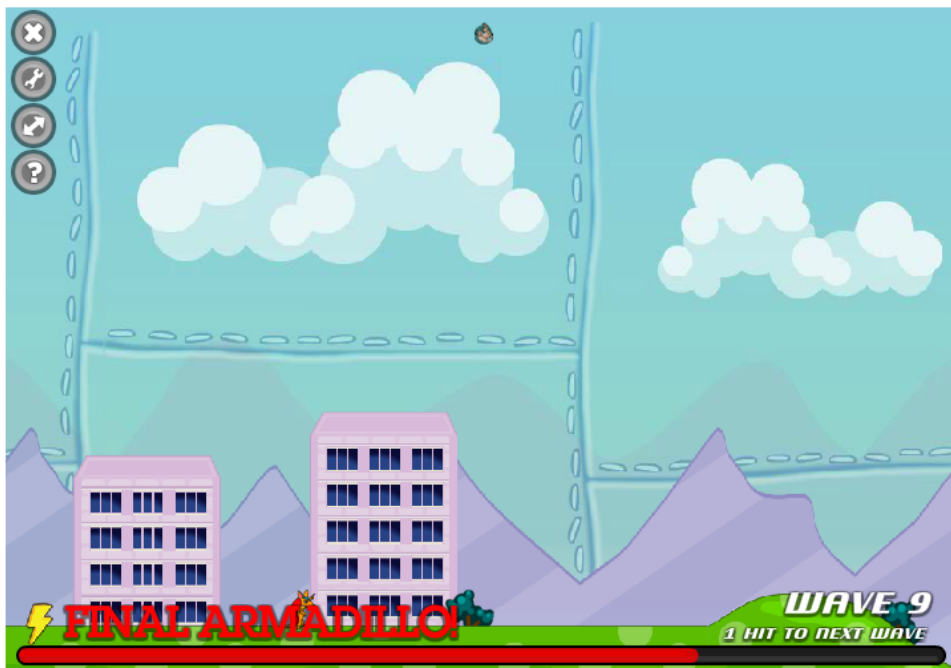
We got a 4X
engagement
boost



Stunt Armadillos

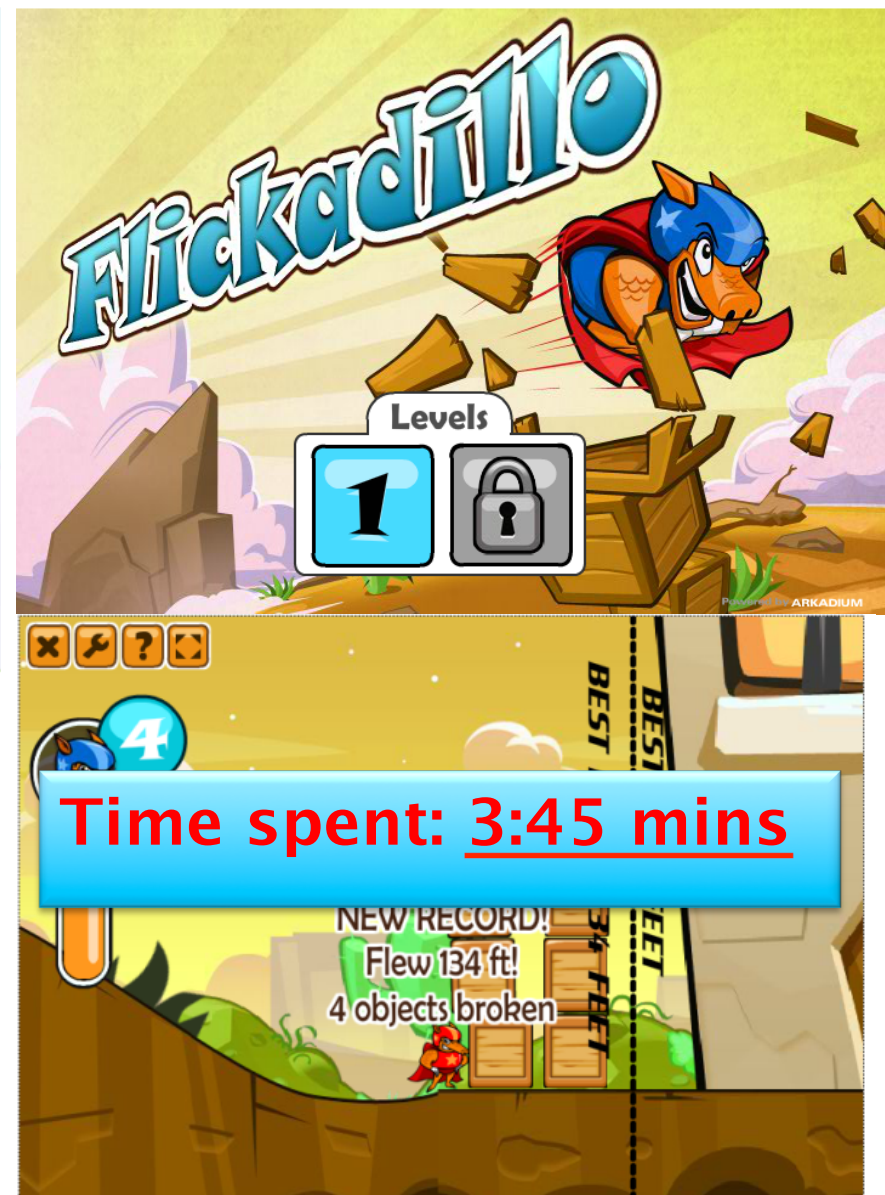
Could we increase engagement even further by improving art and polishing the game?



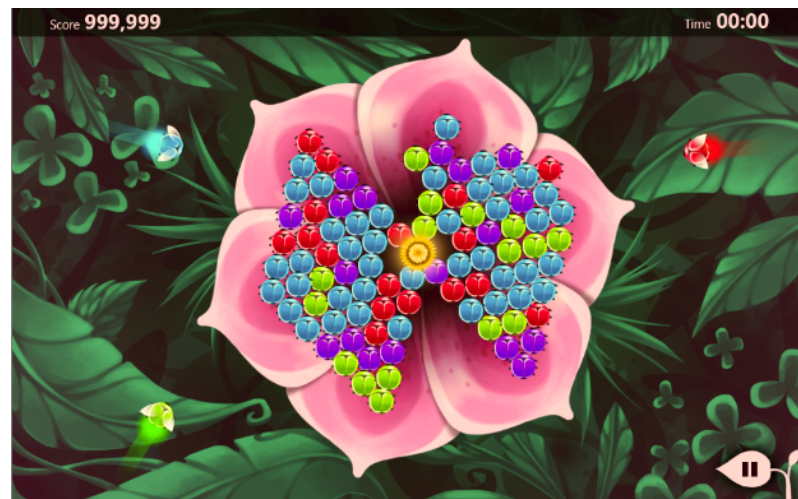


Stunt Armadillos

Time spent: 3:55mins



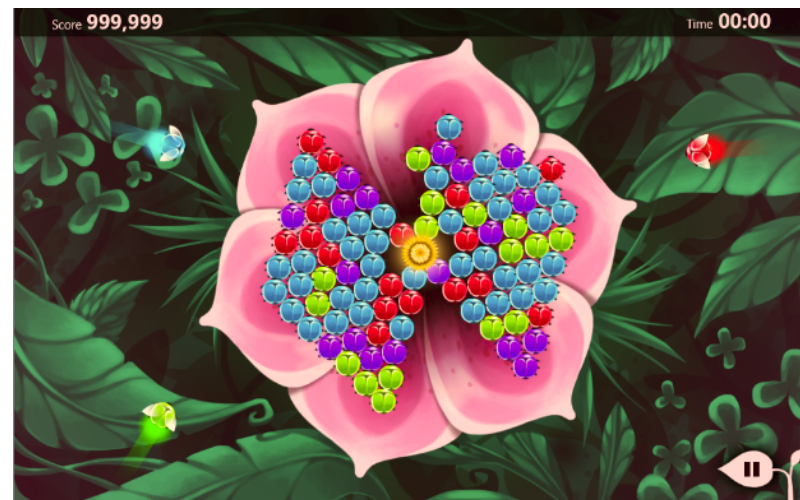
**GAME POLISH DID NOT
INCREASE ENGAGEMENT
TO AN ALREADY
ENGAGED USER BASE**



Rotate the board to match incoming bubbles



10 mins per
engaged user
\$7 cost per install



30 mins per
engaged user
\$3 cost per install

THEMES ARE MORE APPEALING TO NON-ENGAGED PLAYERS

After 2 months, we
removed Stunt
Armadillos and
Flickadillos from GDG

This is what
happened...

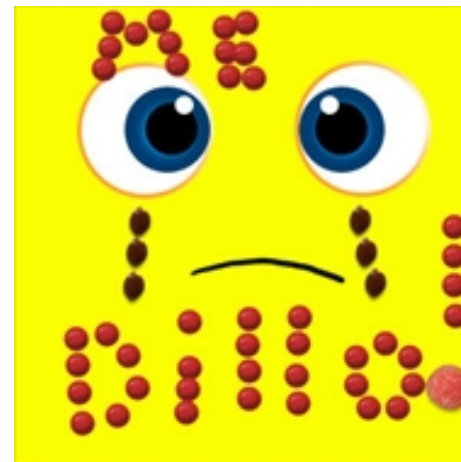


"Every day i come to GDG i still have my fingers crossed - waiting for the return of the armadillos . . ."

"I wish they would bring back stunt armadillos"



"I think there are many armadillo addicts suffering withdrawals. There could be a mutiny; possibly an incredible uprising. The GDG offices could be picketed or maybe even stormed!"



"Bubble board is ok, but I need Armadillos!"

**CULTS MAY FORM ON GAMES WITH
HIGH ENGAGEMENT
MAKE SURE THEY HAVE A PLACE TO
COMMUNICATE**

RECAP

1. Create a simple prototype and test early
2. Find a place where you can observe players
3. Be patient with testing and observe players for 1 month
4. TWEAK/TEST/TWEAK
5. Keep costs low on your prototypes
6. Release an updated version and test again

- **CHALLENGE IS A MOTIVATOR FOR ENGAGEMENT**
- KEEP THEM HUNGRY FOR MORE – LET THEM TAKE A BREAK
- **MAKING A MORE POLISHED GAME DID NOT INCREASE ENGAGEMENT TO AN ALREADY ENGAGED USER BASE**
- THEMES ARE MORE ENGAGING FOR USERS WHO ARE NOT ALREADY ENGAGED
- **CULTS WILL FORM ON HIGH ENGAGEMENT GAMES IF PLAYERS HAVE A PLACE TO POST**
- **ADDING CHARACTERS AND PERSONALTY TO YOUR GAMES WILL INCREASE ENGAGEMENT**

EXTRA TIPS

- Don't use space themes for casual players
- Players LOVE leaderboards and have 2X more engagement as games that don't
- Research the market before prototyping
- Understandability
- Introduce new mechanics over time to keep the game fresh



STUNT ARMADILLOS
Coming this Spring!

AND FOLLOWING ALL THESE RULES!



OUT NOVEMBER 2013

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