Design and Monetization Strategies in Highly Successful F2P Games

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Design-centric Approach

● Let's look at successful F2P games through a game design lens

● This is NOT a talk about any of the following:

- Metrics

- Marketing

- Production Process

Design Parameters in F2P

- Trying to make money in the F2P landscape
  - Convert users as much as possible and for as much as possible
  - Increase the likelihood that any user will convert
- This means the game must be fun somehow -- why else would players stay?

Design Parameters in F2P

- The game design includes the monetization.

F2P Ecosystem Realities

• Most people will never pay anything, and many are actively looking to not pay.

• Most of your money will come from the small percent of whales.

• Therefore, you need to identify whales quickly and build the game to monetize them.

Types of F2P Games

- I'm going to look at three types of F2P games for this purpose.
  - Single Player
  - Social Multiplayer
  - Hardcore Multiplayer
- Focus on one main example for each.
- Not meant to be comprehensive.

Single Player

- Games where the core play is entirely by solitarily.

- There may be avenues to compare scores or share results, but you play alone.

- Game Example: King's Saga games (e.g. Candy Crush Saga, Pet Rescue)

Incentives in Saga Games

- Players are trying to progress.
  - In Saga games, this means completing levels.
- Play is interesting when progress is interesting, and when it is appropriately challenging to progress.

Progression Map

Proper Level Difficulty

Randomness as Obstacle

Multiple Goal Structures

Monetization as DDA

Monetization as DDA

Other Types of Single Player

- Similar tactics work in other multiplayer games
- Take Endless Runners
  - Achievements and Score and Distance as measures
  - Random level layout in a fixed difficulty range
  - Purchased power-ups as just-in-time boosts to goals

Core Takeaways – Saga Games

● Focus on level design (variety and challenge)

● Build multiple progression models for hardcore players

● Use just-in-time purchases as player-controlled DDA

Social Multiplayer

- "Grind" Multiplayer
  - Anyone can advance given enough time.
- Progression is a core system, but it's more strategic than challenge based.
- Multiplayer play is asynchronous, but rich.
- Game example: Clash of Clans

Social Multiplayer Incentives

- Players are trying to build and protect their advancement.
  - Mostly an individual advancement rather than a progress map
- Teams work together to achieve.
- Teams have rivals and want to hurt them.

Multiple Advancement Vectors

Multiple Advancement Vectors

Multiple Advancement Vectors

Time Gating

TOWN HALL COMPLETION TIMES IN CLASH OF CLANS
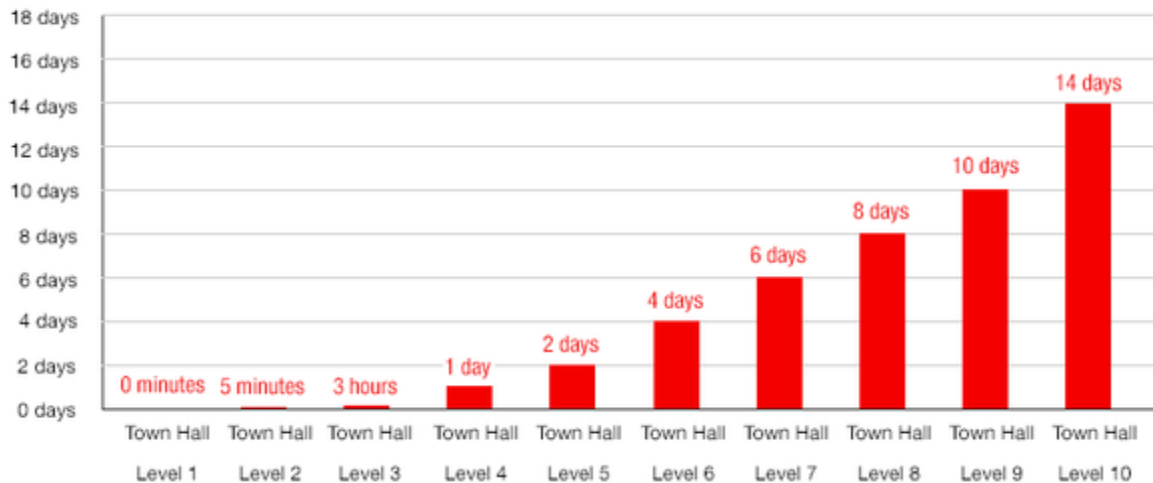
Time Gating

Clan Responsibilities

Clan Responsibilities

Clan Responsibilities

Clan "Responsibilities"

Core Takeaways – Grind Games

• Time planning needs to be balanced carefully for all attributes

• Incentives for players to collaborate need to be complex but understandable.

• Revenge structures motivate resource expenditure.

Hardcore Multiplayer

- "Skilled" Multiplayer
  - Players advance based on how well they play.
- These games are strategically deep and difficult to master.
- Multiplayer play is synchronous and involved.
- Game example: League of Legends

Hardcore Multiplayer Incentives

- Players want to demonstrate their skill.
  - Money cannot trump skill.
- Players specialize and define themselves in relation to the game's mechanics in idiosyncratic ways.
- Groups of players want to play at the same level.
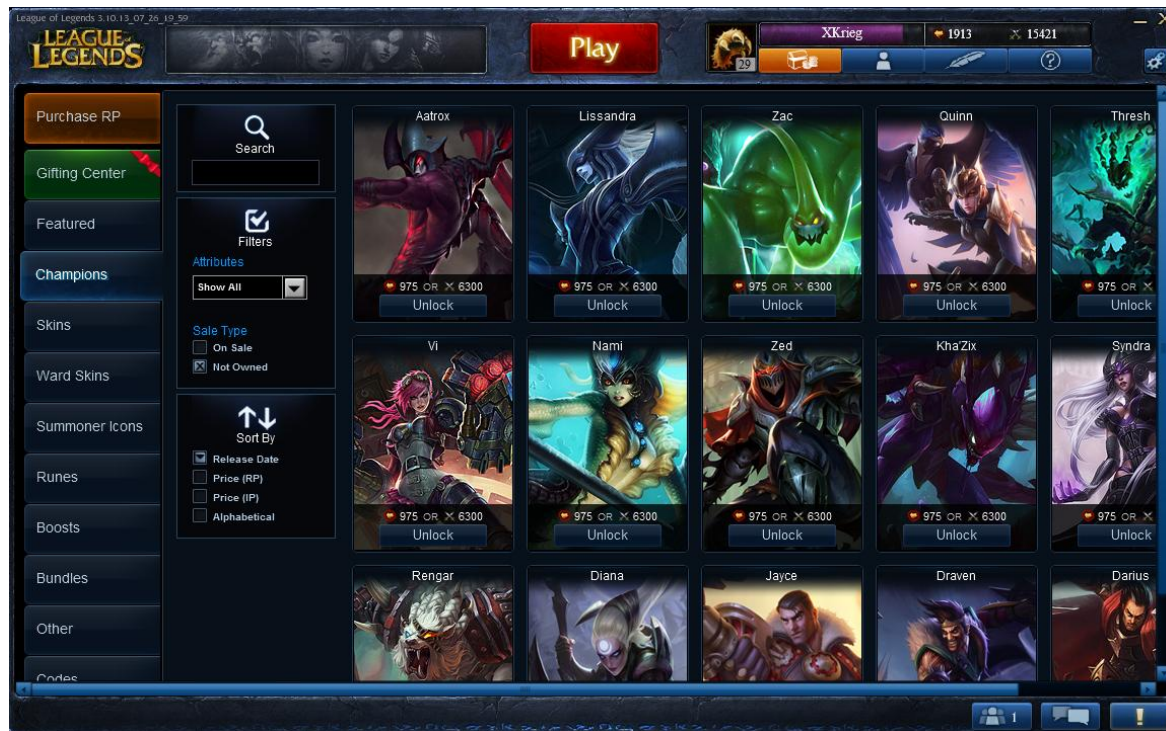
Deep Core Skill-Based Play
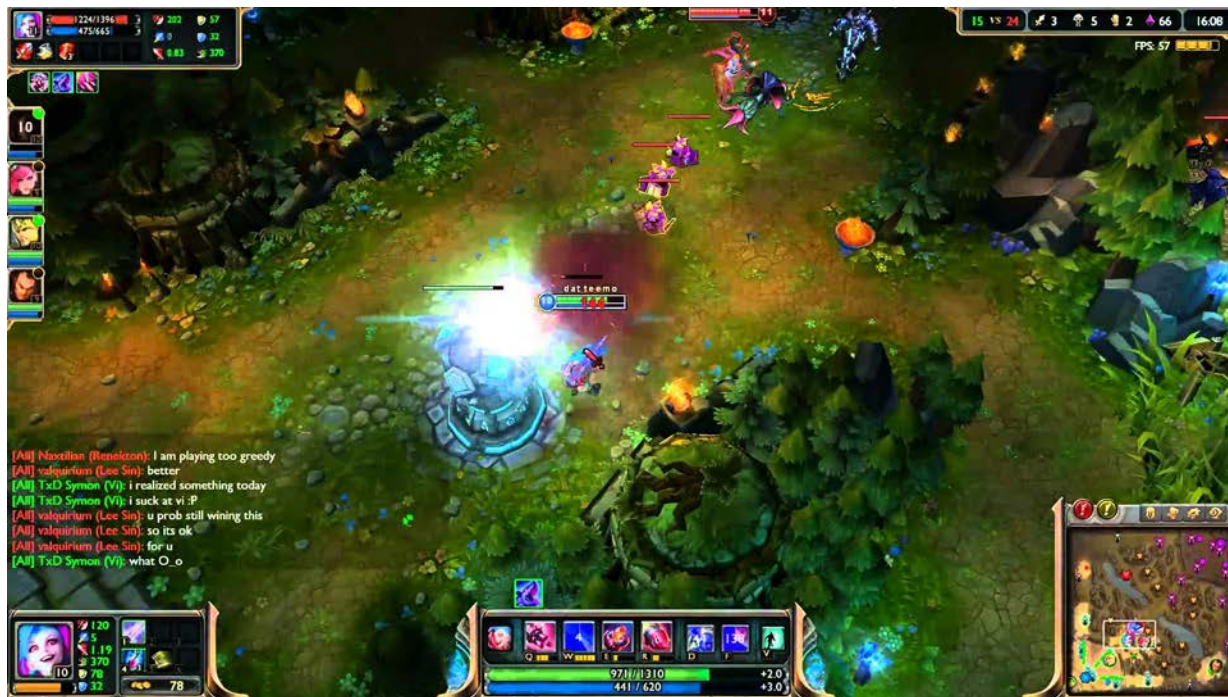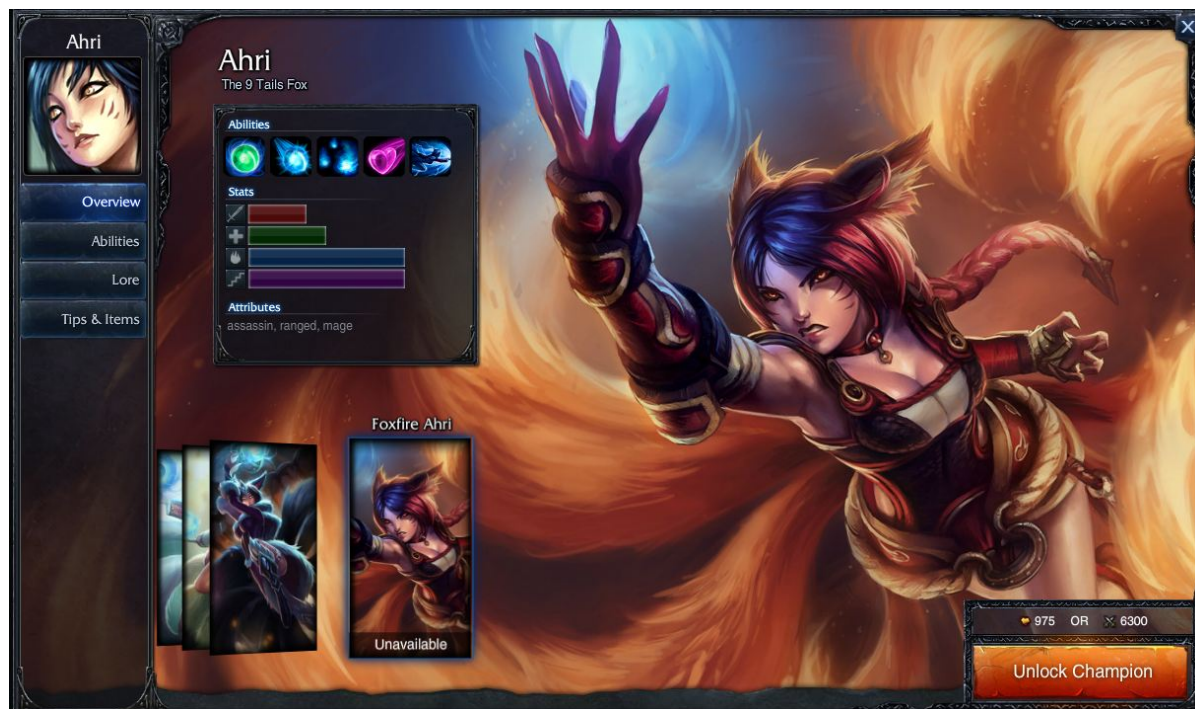
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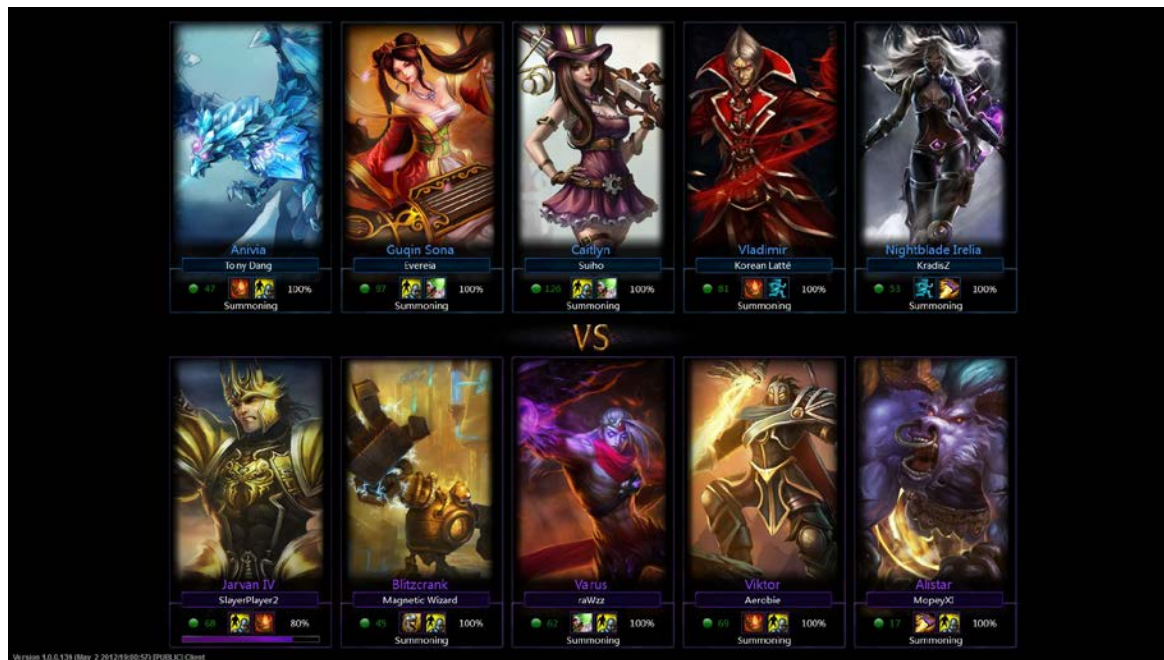
Gates on Advanced Play

Vanity Items for Personalization

Team Play Optimization

Team Play Optimization

Core Takeaways – Hardcore

● Monetization gets players to an even field to compete.

● Dedicated players take deep pride in play and will personalize.

● Team incentives create pressure to keep up with each other and thus spend.

Common Lessons

● Make a complete, but sub-optimal, experience for casual users. Keep them in.

● Explore your mechanics for hardcore motivations and monetize those.

● Understand your audiences community to figure out how status and teamwork manifest.

Common Lessons

● Make a complete, but sub-optimal, experience for casual users. Keep them in.

● Explore your mechanics for hardcore motivations and monetize those.

● Multiple vectors of achievement make completion both harder and more interesting.

Common Lessons

- Leverage the social community that your game creates through its incentives.
  - Collaboration and gifting
  - Competition and rivalry

Thank You

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