

Meaningful Pay: Monetizing F2P without “The Pinch”

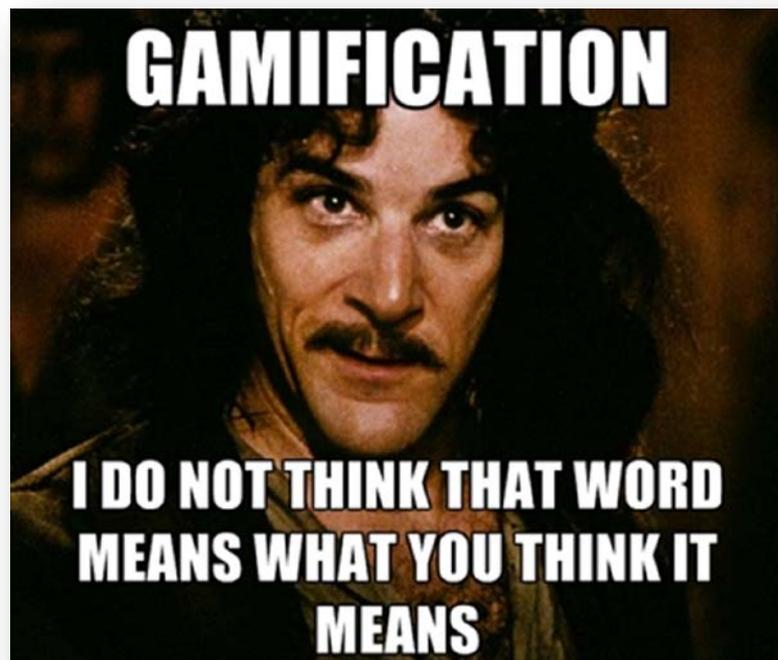
Scott Rigby, Ph.D.

Founder/President

immers^ove



immersive
gauge engagement™

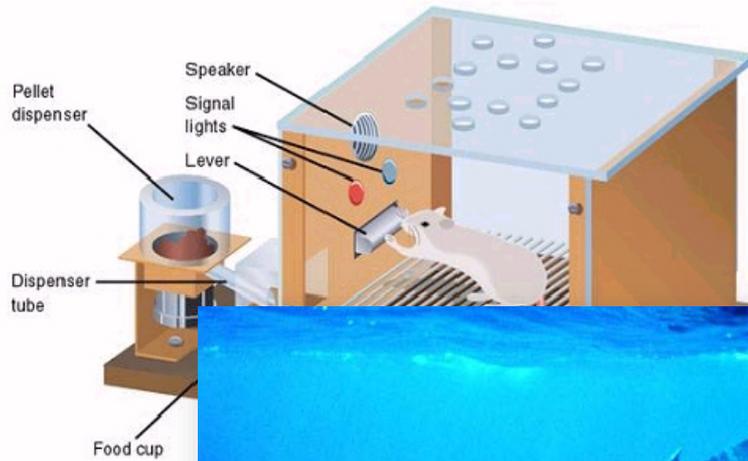


“Time to Pay”

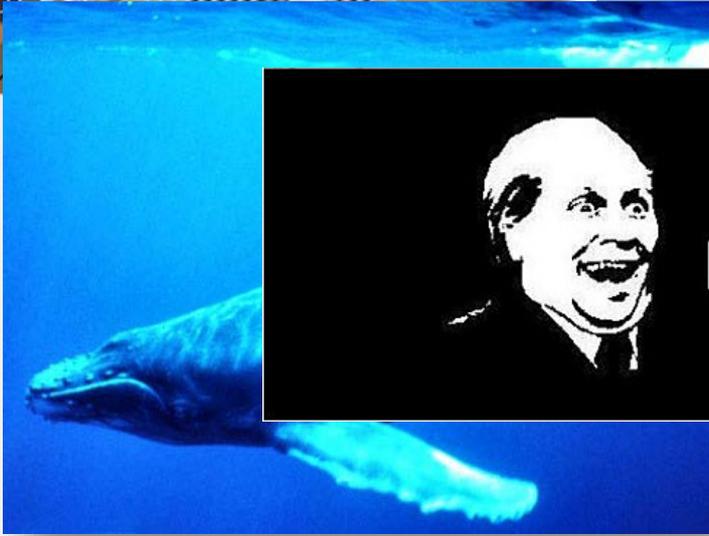
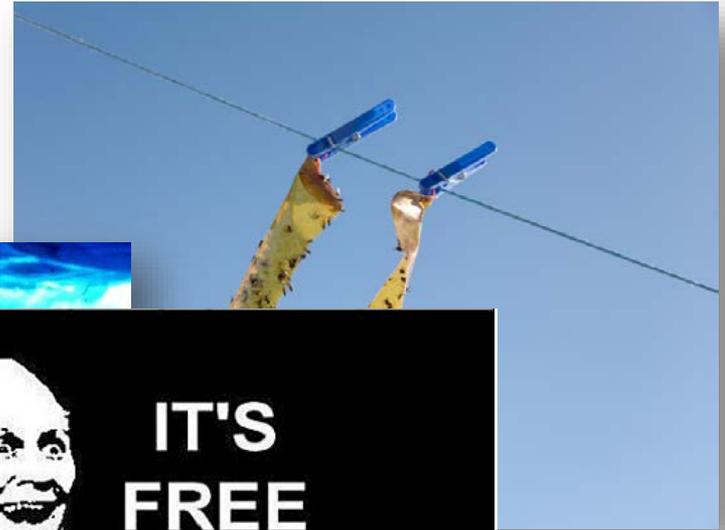
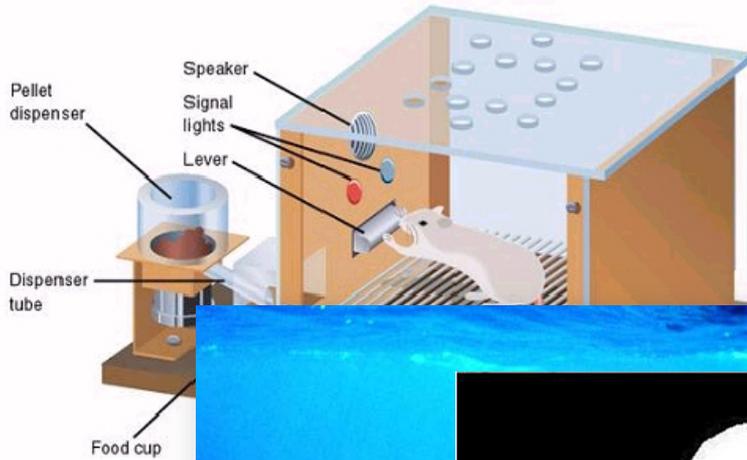


“But I was having
So much fun...grk!”





Subtle Language of Control



**Let's add to that some
bul...err...misdirection**

How to Eat Meat as a Vegetarian!



Your loved ones never need to know you're full of it!

Scott Rigby, Ph.D.

Meat Eater

immers^ove



awed Beer
ask
HOUSE
DUFFHEAD NABE ROT 464
ILGS
BEER
LURIDE
LURIDE
LURIDE

SEABR REVERE

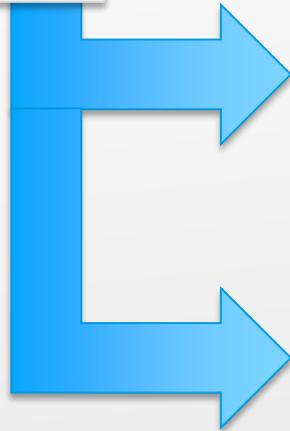
€4.79



Surfer has more
MAU's, DAU's, etc.
than LoL



Just looking at the top 30 games (Daily Revenue)



**500%+ more than
Ranks 11-20**

**1000%+ more than
Ranks 21-30**



**Maybe given all
these pressures it is
understandable
then that we want
to take something
that is a source of
joy and love...**



And use it to “encourage”
certain responses



Our problem
is...



Customer

**NOT MY
PROBLEM**

We have made our
selling proposition...

FREE 2 PLAY



Play Free!



And the vast majority of
players are not satisfied
with what comes next.

**The ill-effects this causes to our
marketplace**



SHAME



“So...nobody else is going to see this right? There is no way my wife is going to hear about my spending in video games?”

SHAME



“Suddenly everyone was yelling at me for being a “gemmer.” I didn’t even know what that was. Then I realized they were pissed I was spending money. I just figured everyone was. Isn’t that how the game works?”

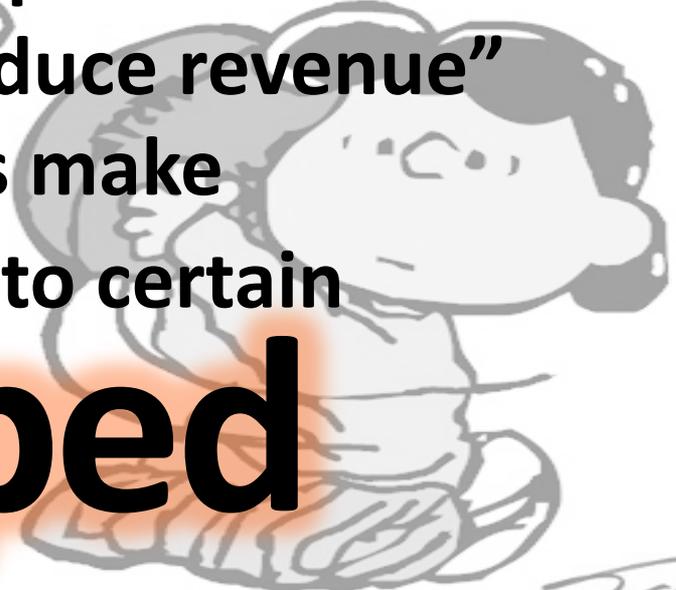
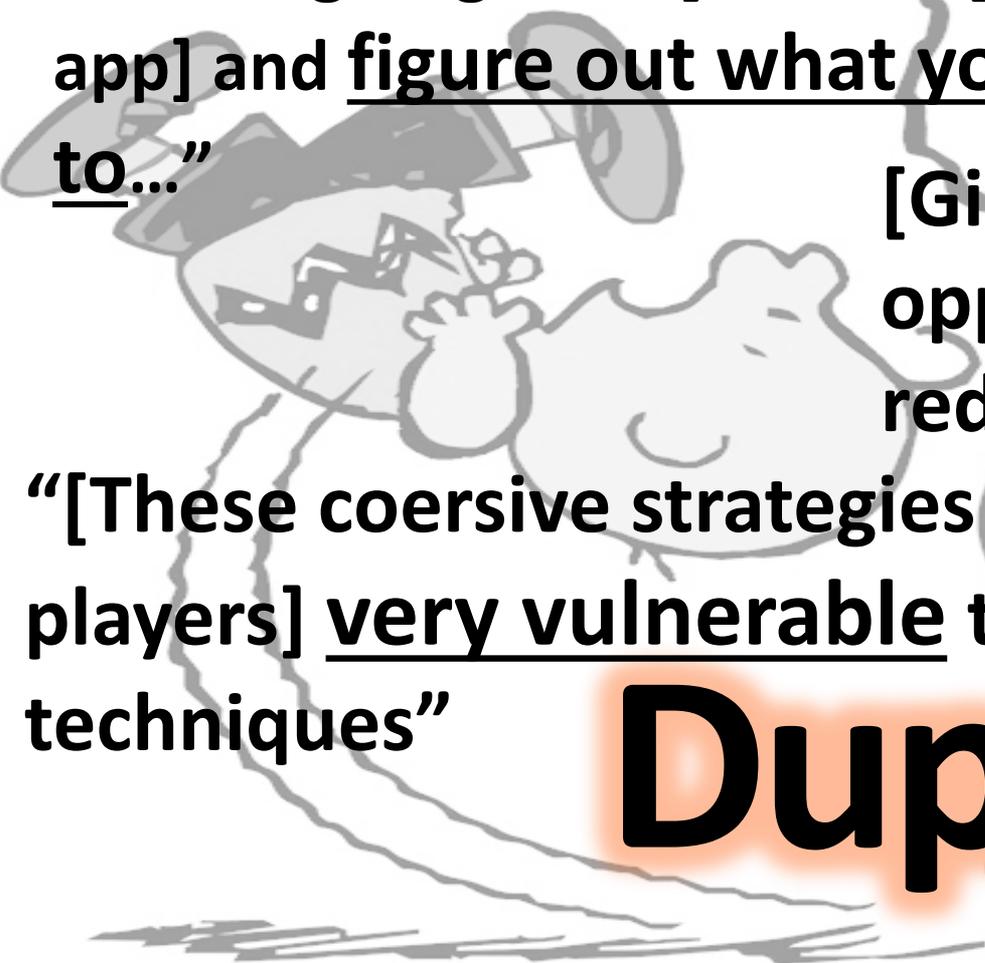
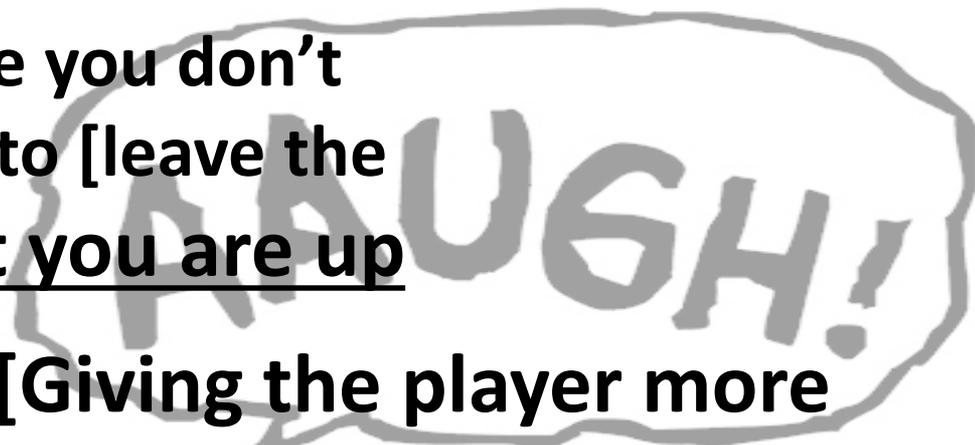
SHAME

“[You must use IAP because you don’t want to give gamers] time to [leave the app] and figure out what you are up to...”

[Giving the player more opportunities to think] will reduce revenue”

“[These coersive strategies make players] very vulnerable to certain techniques”

Duped



Schwiz

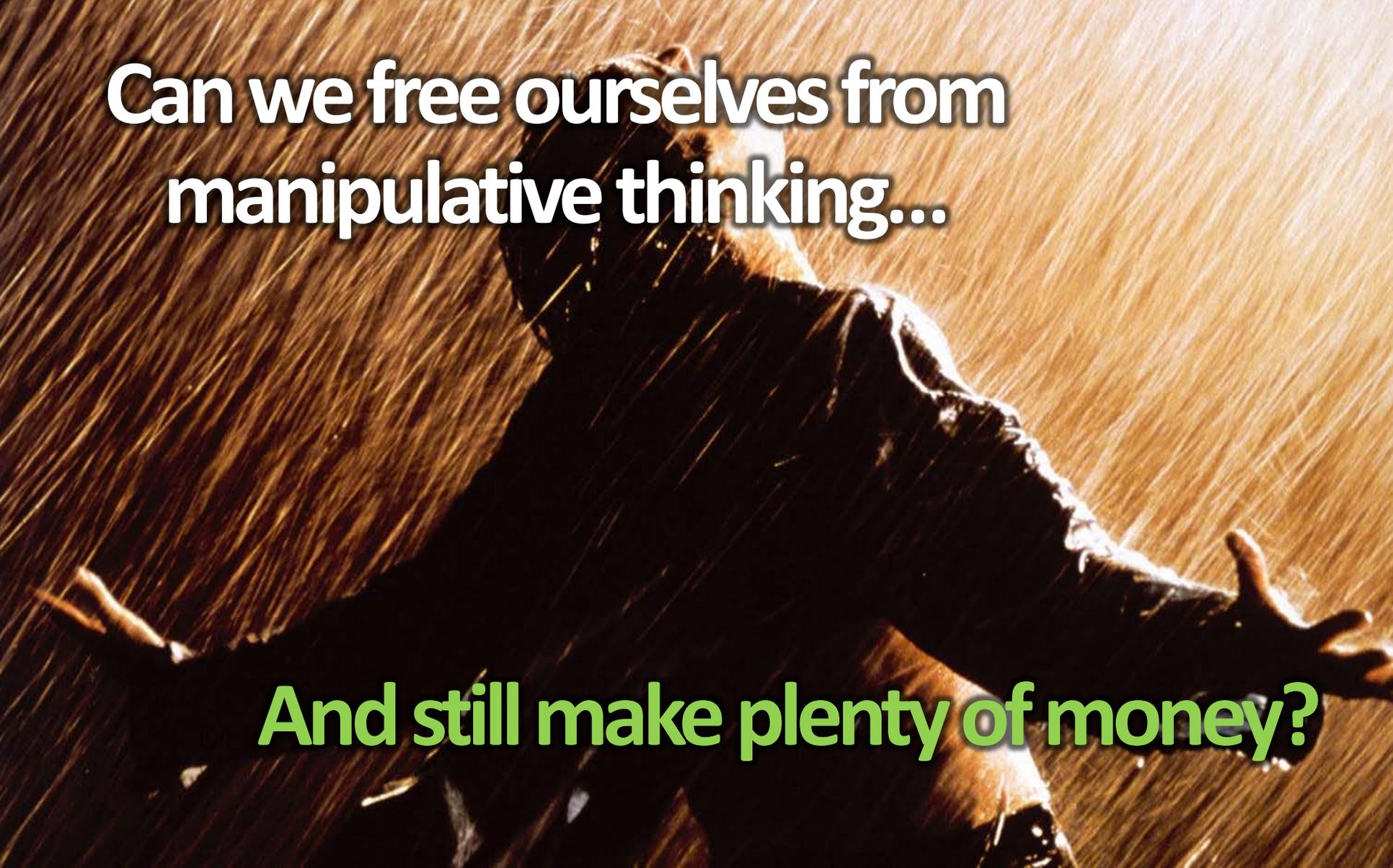
How do you feel?

**Is there any reason your players
would feel differently?**

**Ever consider this contributes to 98%
of them never paying?**

A person is hiking on a mountain trail. The image shows their legs from the knees down, wearing dark shorts, grey socks, and brown hiking boots. They are standing on a rocky path surrounded by green grass and some pink flowers. In the background, there is a vast mountain range under a blue sky with white clouds.

This industry is barely begun...how do we feel about the models we are establishing?

A person in a dark suit is standing in a heavy rain shower. Their arms are outstretched, and they appear to be looking upwards. The rain is captured as a dense field of vertical streaks, creating a dramatic and somewhat chaotic atmosphere. The lighting is warm, suggesting a sunset or sunrise, which casts a golden glow on the scene.

**Can we free ourselves from
manipulative thinking...**

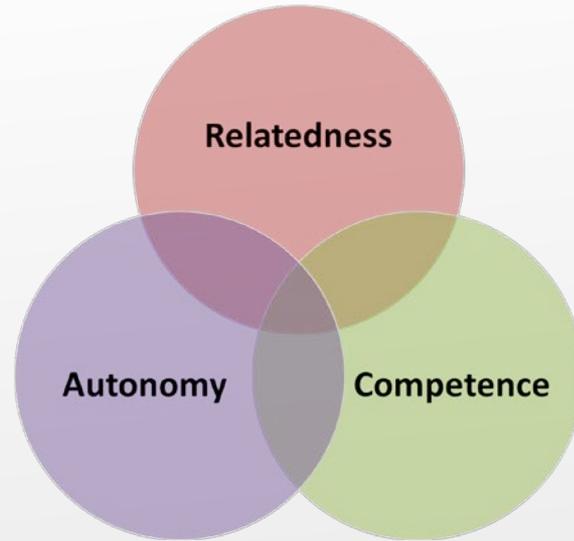
And still make plenty of money?

We've been doing decades of hard research on the psychology of motivation, satisfaction, and engagement



And doing it for over a decade in video games

Players engage and spend when basic psychological needs are met



[...and no manipulation is needed]

“Player Experience of Need Satisfaction” (PENS)

AUTONOMY

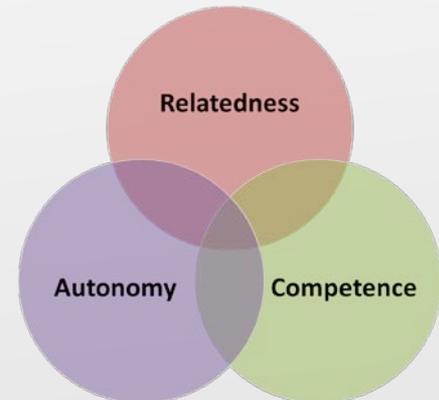
- ❑ Need to experience personal volition (not necessarily “freedom”), meaningful choice and opportunity

RELATEDNESS

- ❑ Need for meaningful connection to others, and feeling their support for our competence and autonomy

COMPETENCE

- ❑ Need to successfully grow; to extend our abilities, skills and efficacy



When these needs are met...

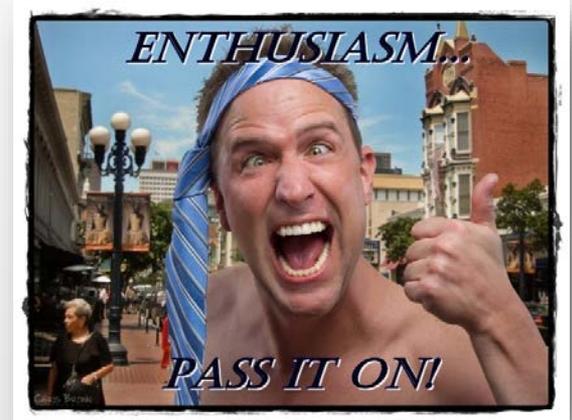
People Spend
More



People Engage
Longer



People Become
Evangelists



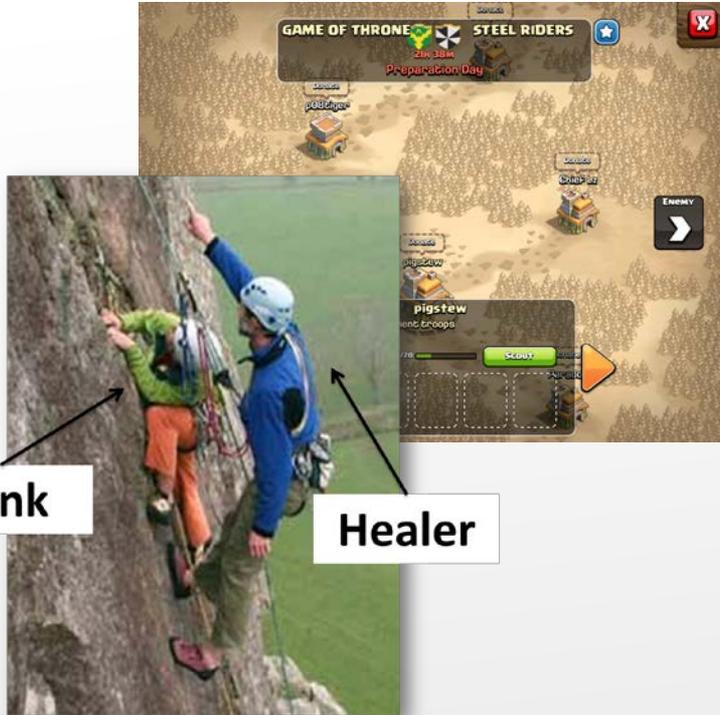
**Let's look at how this translates into
mechanics
within current F2P Winners**

Competence: Efficacy and Growth



*Meaningful
Growth*

Relatedness: Positive Emotional Connection



Mutual Support



**Friendly Competition
and Status**

Altruism is an immensely valued activity

Thanks for always being there to give
me lives on Candy Crush...
It means a lot



**Research shows: The Giver gets
as much or more benefit than
the Receiver**

Case Example: Fire Age (a top earner) heavily monetizes altruism

Fire age combines multiple levels of altruism with the ability to “level up” your status as a giver

The image displays three screenshots from the game Fire Age, illustrating the player's engagement with altruistic mechanics.

Top Left Screenshot: Alliance Help
This screen shows a list of alliance members who need help. The player's Gold is 41,028. The list includes:

- PoppaCapp421**: Help me research Energy Recovery. Progress: 6/13. Help button.
- Arnavutt1**: Help me research Light Cavalry. Progress: 6/14. Help button.
- TrialByFire1**: Help me research Strategic Trap Defense. Progress: 1/17. Help button.
- Empire.110269398**: Help me build a level 8 Barracks. Progress: 3/12. Help button.
- Empire.110263566**: Help me research Cavalry Defense. Progress: 6/13. Help button.

Buttons for "More Information" and "Help All" are visible at the bottom.

Top Right Screenshot: Store History
This screen shows the player's Gold (67,338) and a table of "Total Funds / Loyalty Earned".

Funds Earned	Loyalty Spent
1,097,400	0
983,700	120,000
828,600	0
484,500	0
444,400	0
312,600	0
275,100	86,000
274,400	0
253,300	0
240,700	0
232,100	0
211,200	0
207,800	0
194,800	0
191,400	0
185,800	0
185,500	0
182,500	0

Bottom Right Screenshot: Alliance Gifts
This screen shows the player's Gold (67,338) and their "Gift Level 7" with 341,876/1,000,000 points. It includes a "Gold Gift" timer and a "Clear all Opened and Expired Gifts" button. Text below explains the gift system: "Every time you get a Wood Gift Pack (USD \$4.99), Stone Gift Pack (USD \$9.99), Bronze Gift Pack (USD \$19.99), Silver Gift Pack (USD \$49.99) or Gold Gift Pack (USD \$99.99), you and your alliance members will receive a gift. These gifts expire if they are not opened within 24 hours. Check back frequently to see if any of your alliance members gave you a gift!"

Chat messages at the bottom of the screenshots read: "[G8] Grrilla War: well I was zeroed while at work" and "[G8] PoppaCapp421: can we get some store stock".

Autonomy: Feeling choiceful and free from external controls





What undermines all of these needs?



When players feel controlled...

***They are less satisfied**

***They disengage more quickly**

***They do not re-engage readily**

**In short: LTV is greatly
threatened monetization
opportunities are suppressed**

Nothing feels more controlling than a fishy story

We don't feel **competent** because we don't believe we understand the rules and how to be successful

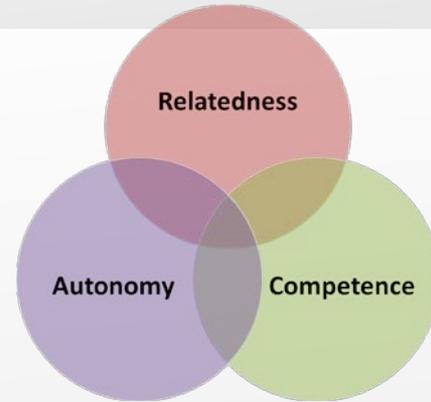
We don't feel **relatedness** because we feel someone is trying to pull a fast one

We don't feel **autonomous** because we don't feel volitional – that we are making the choices



Need Satisfaction is the dominant experience of monetization leaders, and it is what players consistently value most highly

1. Players value increased **competence satisfactions** through
 - Greater Efficacy (individual and team)
 - Increased Growth
2. Players value increased **relatedness satisfactions** through
 - Contributing to group goals and success (cooperation)
 - Team status (healthy pride)
 - Engaging in friendly competition (“stone sharpening stone”)
3. Players value increased **autonomy satisfactions** through
 - Opening up new opportunities
 - Activities/Goals
 - Growth

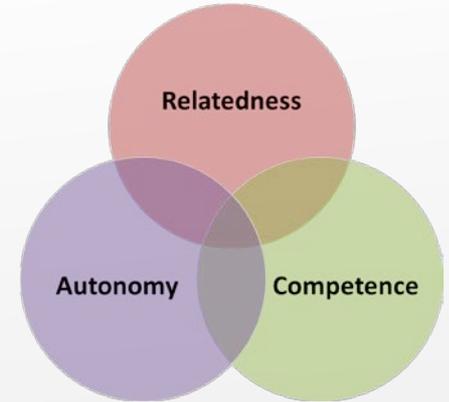


**If you build a foundation of need
satisfying gameplay...**

...you can more effectively sell opportunities to more immediately and densely satisfy those needs

Players will “buy time” most often to increase **competence**, **autonomy**, and **relatedness** need satisfactions. Specifically:

1. They will buy in order to have needs satisfied more **immediately**
2. They will buy in order to increase the **density** of need satisfaction



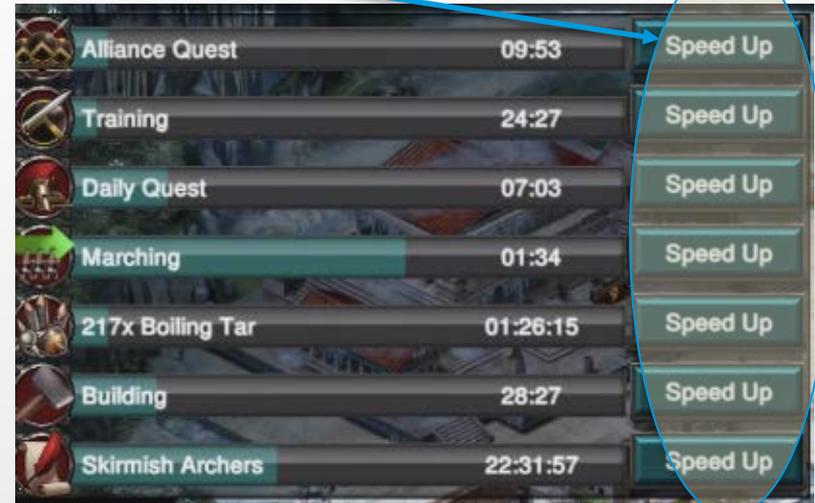
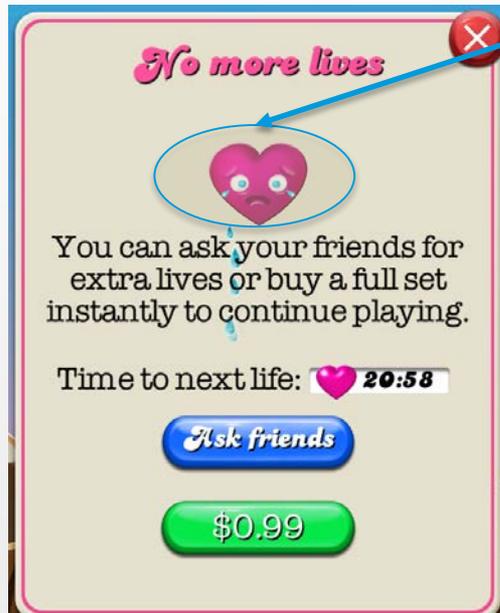
Immediacy: Our desire to HAVE IT RIGHT NOW!



Immediacy in Games:

How quickly can I have need satisfying experiences?

- Example: energy/life mechanics that manage how much we can play in one session (and allow us to pay to accelerate)



Density:

The frequency and proportion of time we are satisfied

- Mechanics that provide a greater frequency of need satisfaction create greater intrinsic value from a game



Example: The ability to pay to have persistent vendors that sell options to grow characters. This increases the density of need satisfactions

Case Study: Clash of Clans

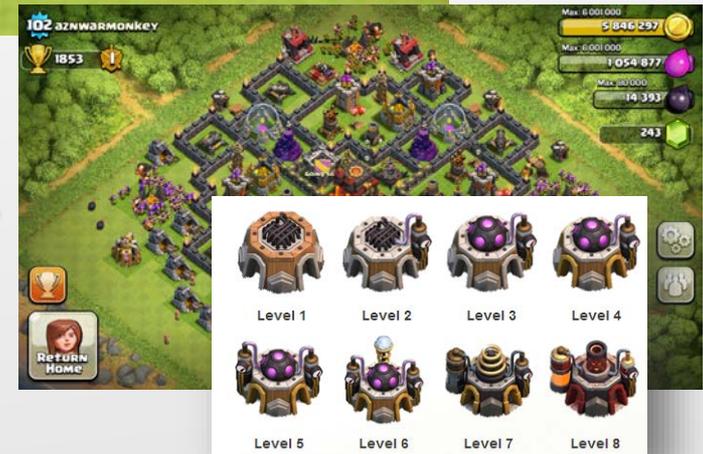
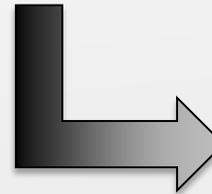


Clash of Clans: Deep Competence Satisfactions

Efficacy



Growth



Clash of Clans: Deep Relatedness Satisfactions

Altruism and Support



“I Matter” to Group Goals



Social Status and Pride in my “Family”

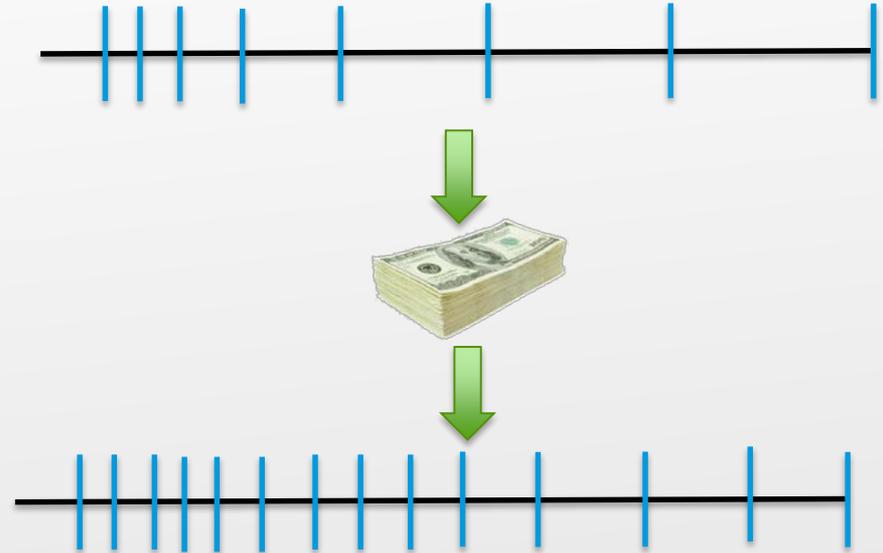


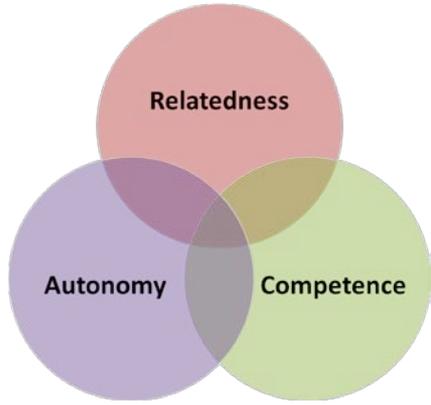
With strong need satisfaction: Clash can Monetize Immediacy and Density

Immediacy



Density





Respect

Goal is to create

foundational experiences of need satisfaction

and then

**Promote opportunities to buy more
satisfaction**

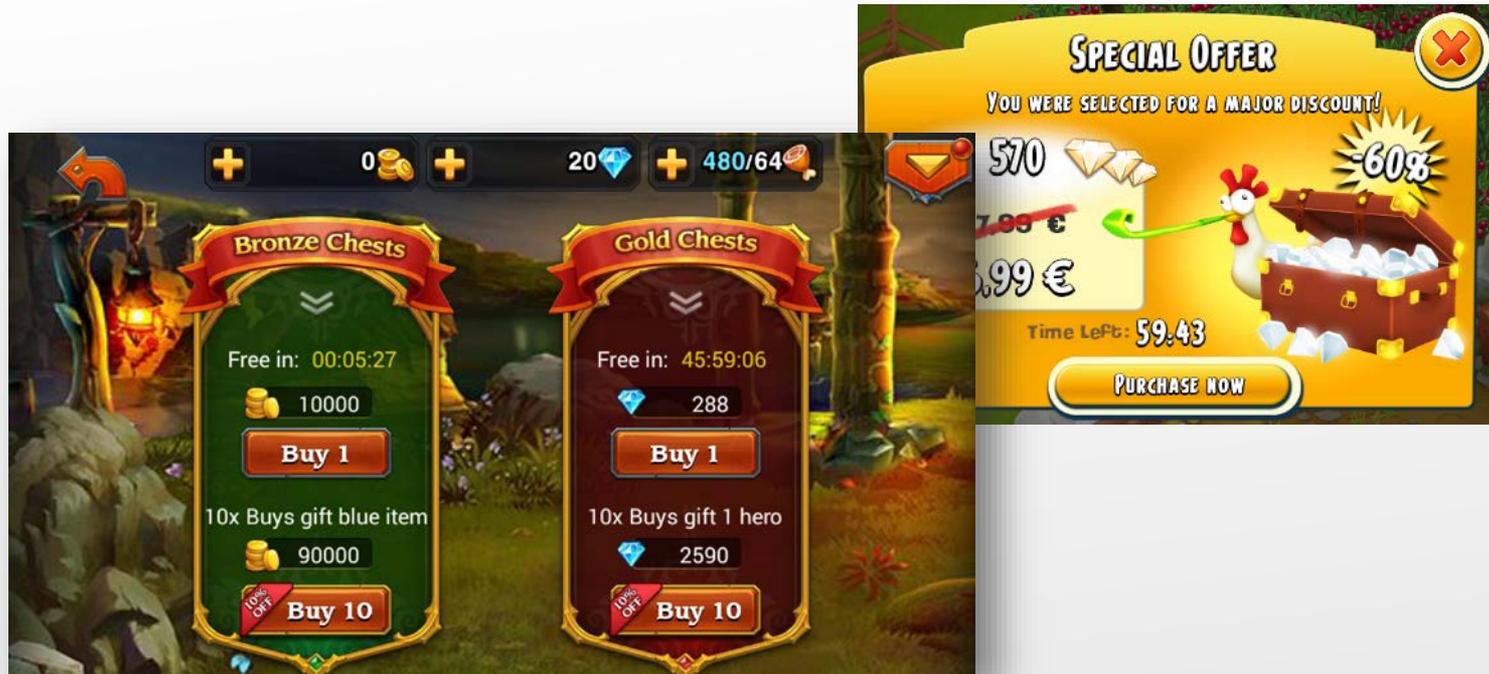
**False Promises
undermine needs right
out of the gate...**



Establish an Honest “Monetization Contract”



Step 1: Communicate IAP and Normalize a “Spending Schema” as early as possible



Step 2: Clearly Link Opportunities to Spend to Satisfaction (Current and Future)

Hay Day's tabs allow for straightforward navigation and a high level of goal projection by seamlessly presenting current and future farm upgrades to players.

Five Clearly Organized Tabs

- Farm Production
- Animals
- Product Manufacturing
- Foliage
- Décor & Visual Appeal



A waiter in a white shirt is holding a black tablet computer, likely for a point-of-sale system, at a restaurant table. A woman in a dark blue top is seated at the table, holding a wine glass. The scene is set in a restaurant with a wooden table and various dishes and glasses. The text is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

**This builds a respectful and consistent schema
...that has money baked in**

Broken Schema



Additional Recommendations for Removing “The Pinch”

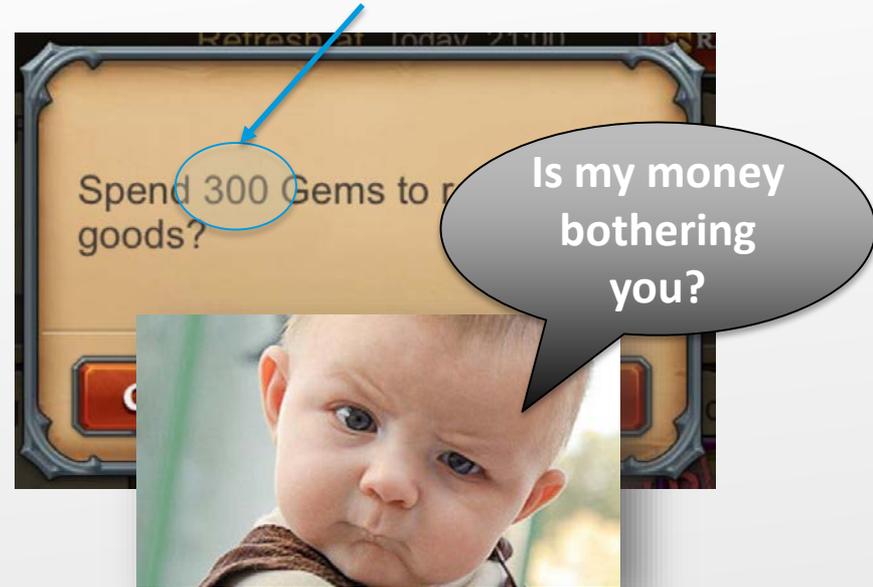
Removing "The Pinch"

Recommendation: Don't Exploit Spenders

1st Refresh...here's my money folks!



3rd Refresh.....Huh?





**These experiences
are jarring and
players are much
more likely to feel
controlled or
pinched...**

Suggestions:

- **Make pricing consistent** – Players want a schema for your game they can trust, and don't like developers controlling them like a parent
- **People expect to get more when they pay more**, not the other way around. Most industry leaders do this
- Help players understand – **Don't just explain rules, explain rationales.** Just explaining a rationale makes people feel less controlled and keeps them more satisfied and engaged.



Recommendation: Avoid “Loss Aversion”

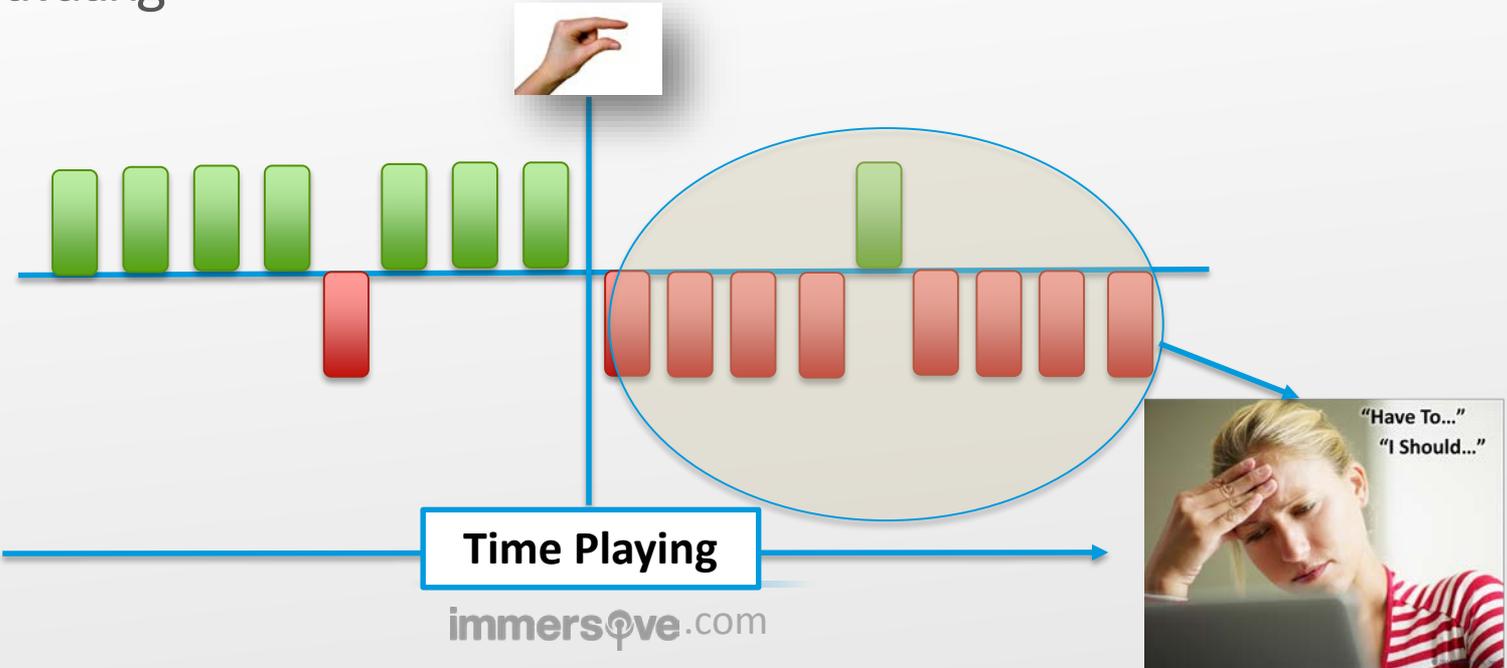
- We tend to feel more negative impact from losing what we vs. positive impact from receiving similar gains (Tversky and Kahneman)
- When something is ours – it feels particularly painful to have it taken away

When this happens with respect to need satisfaction in a game, it can feel highly pressuring and dissatisfying

Causing "The Pinch"

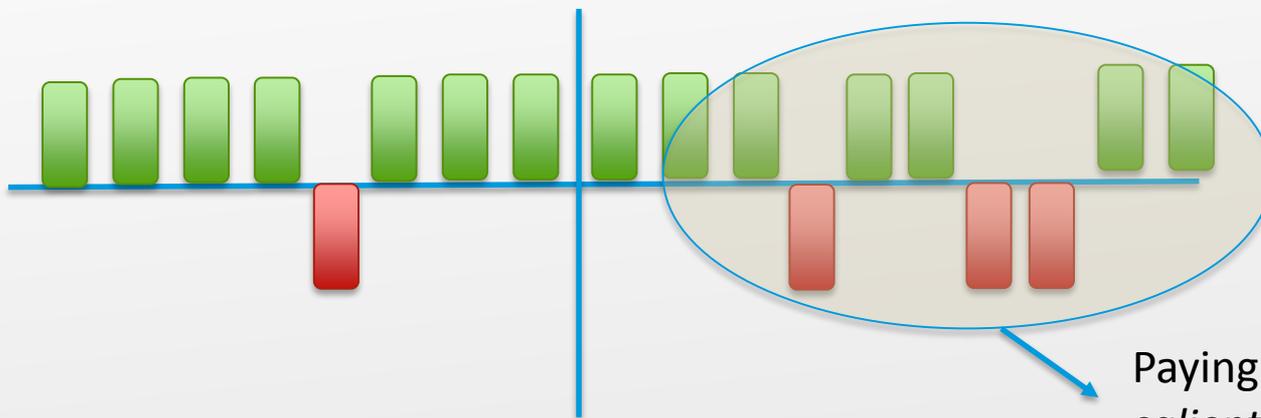
Example: Losing Efficacy (and Competence Satisfaction)

- **Efficacy pressures:** Drastically changing the player's experience of success during gameplay in order to motivate spend will be highly demotivating



Recommendation: Ensure efficacy does not break, while emphasizing value of spend

- **Efficacy support:** Ensure players maintain a satisfaction of critical competence needs, while still encouraging payment to increase their success and satisfaction



Paying is made *salient*, but game value isn't broken in the process

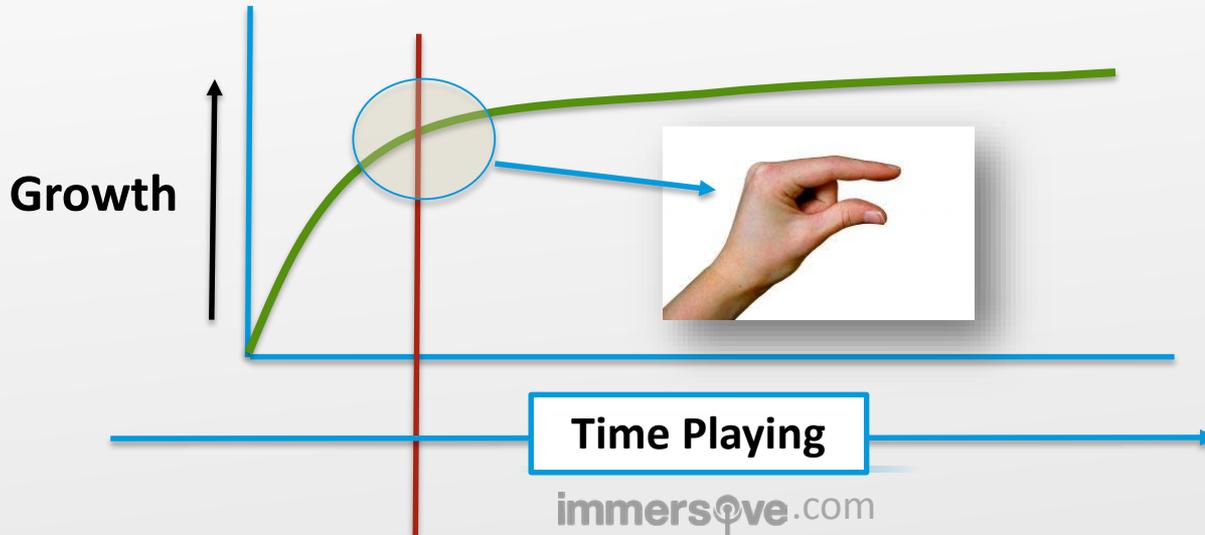
Example: Soda Crush

“Sometimes I know I’m at a point where it just makes sense to spend some money to push through to success, but its much better than playing [other game] where I feel pressure at virtually every level. At least in Crush I know I will have multiple boards to enjoy between hitting those walls”



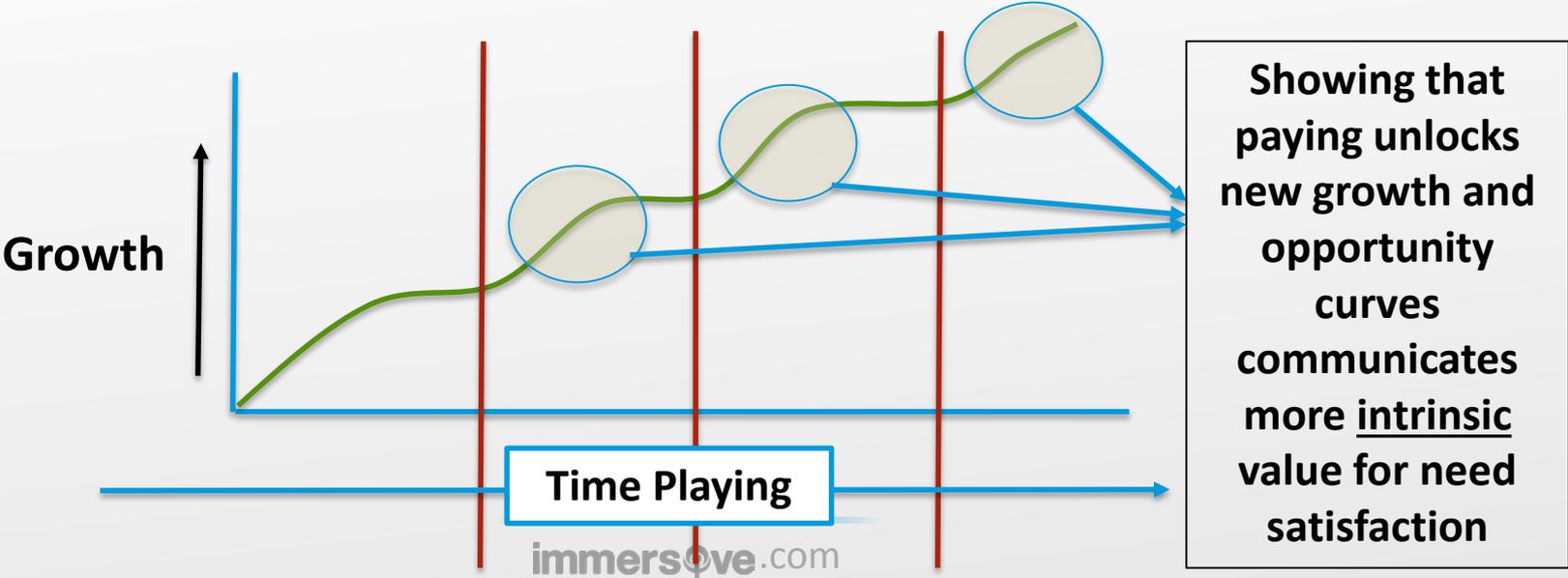
Throttling Growth and Opportunity

- **Growth pressures**: Do the game mechanics drastically "throttle" growth to force IAP's and monetization (without showing player the benefits to need satisfaction)?



Telegraphing Growth Plateaus

- Growth opportunities: Put in pay points that communicate opportunities for meaningful growth paths



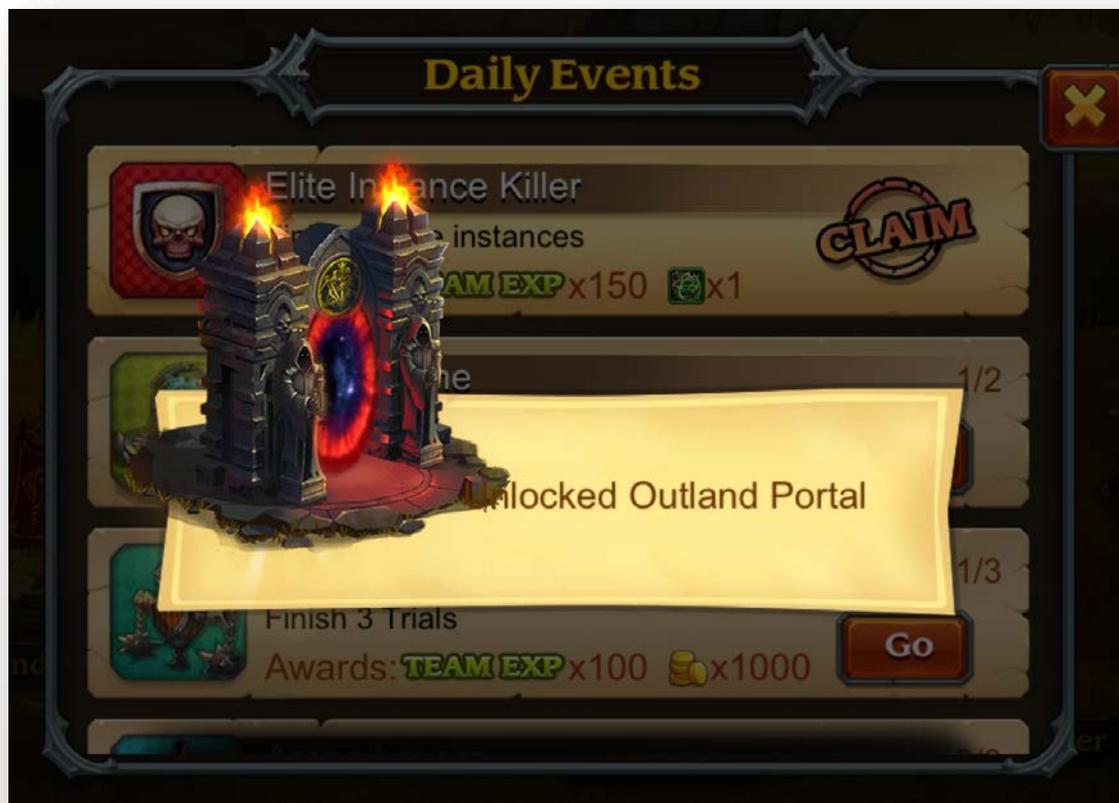
Removing "The Pinch"

Example: Heroes Charge



Removing "The Pinch"

Example: Heroes Charge



Wrapping up

There is no one right answer on how to achieve goals

Builders



Puzzle



But if we keep up the current strategies and controls...

“Don’t let them think...”



“Monetize fear of loss...”

“Hide the connection to actual spending...”

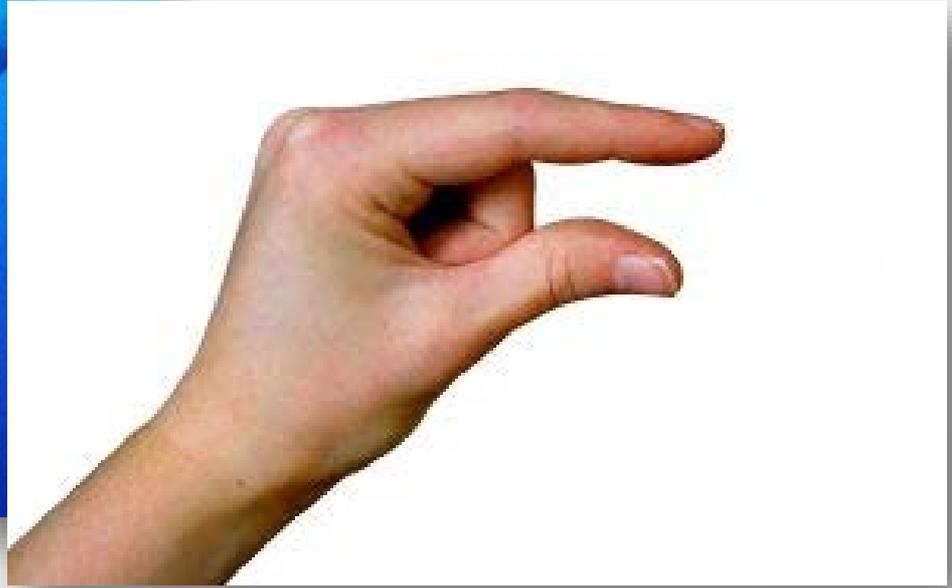
...we are kidding ourselves that customers aren't on to us



**And another thought on the 1 or 2%
that currently support us**



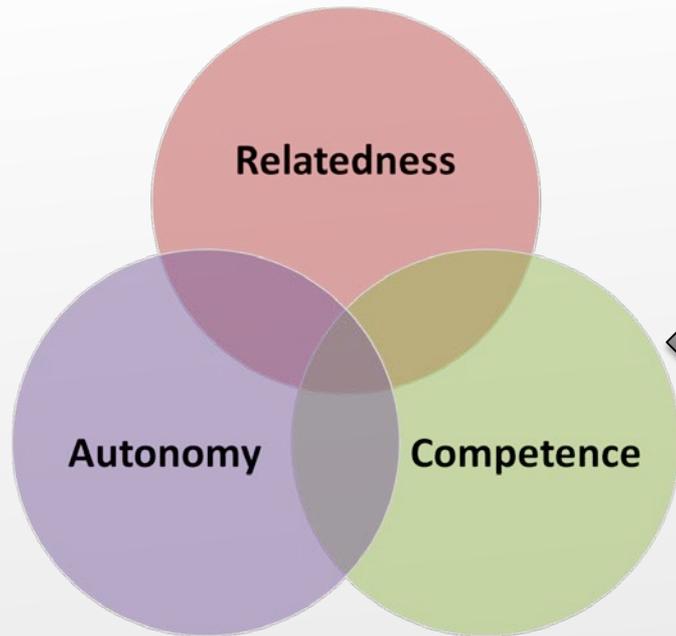
This language makes it clear we are currently building our business on them



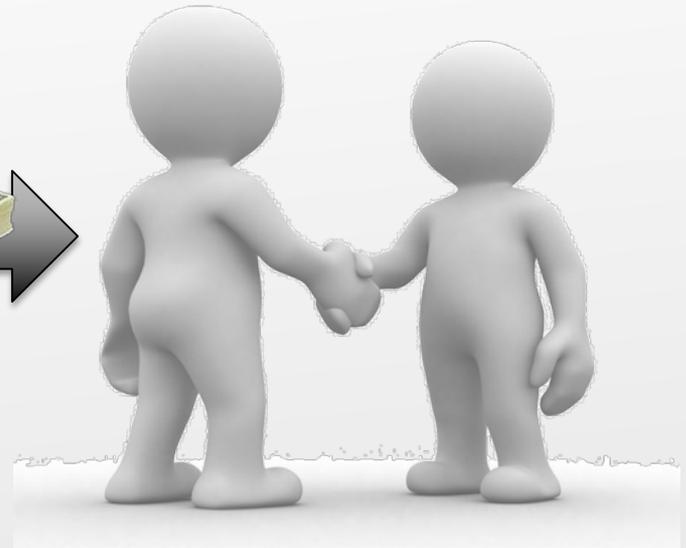
**Meanwhile, we are leaving 98% of
our players on the sidelines**



We have the opportunity to capture so much more revenue...and respect



Basic Need Satisfaction



Honest Transactional Contracts

Thanks!

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