



QUALITY IS WORTH KILLING FOR

JONATHAN DOWER

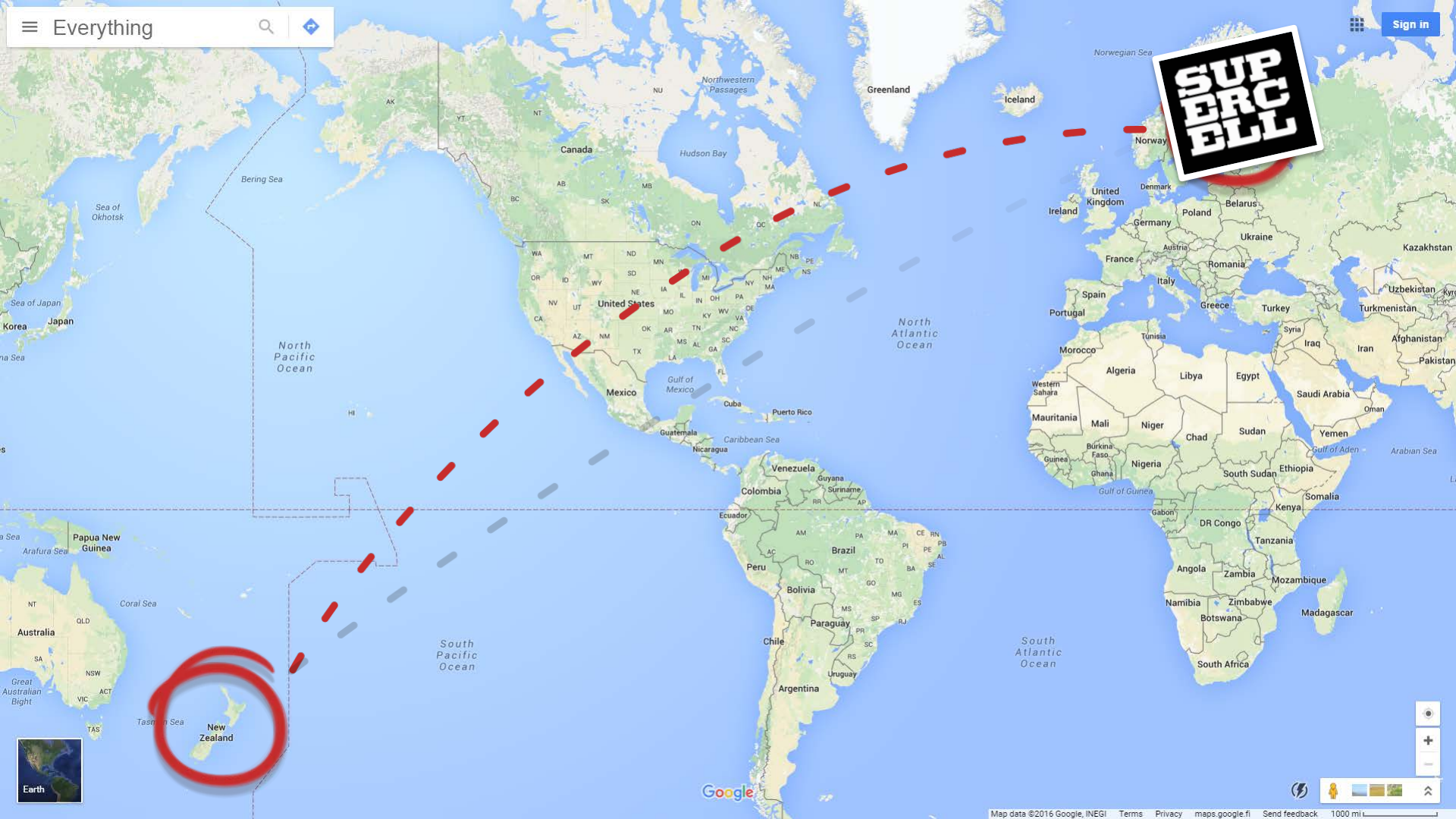
Game Lead and Artist, Supercell

WHO AM I?



Disney





A photograph of a winter forest in Finland. The ground is covered in snow, and the trees are bare, with some evergreens visible in the background. The sun is low in the sky, creating a warm, golden light that filters through the trees. The word "FINLAND" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters in the center of the image.

FINLAND



HELSINKI





WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

- I. SUPERCELL IS A SERIAL KILLER – A HISTORY OF OUR GAMES
- II. WHY IS KILLING IMPORTANT TO US?
- III. SMASH LAND - A REAL WORLD EXAMPLE OF MURDER
- IV. HOW DO WE KILL GAMES?
- V. QUESTION TIME!

I. SUPERCELL IS A SERIAL KILLER

WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SERIAL KILLERS



2010





X

2011



X

2012

X



X

X

X



2013



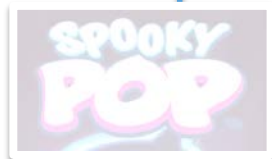
X



X

X

X



2015

X

X



2016

SINCE 2014...

7 KILLED AT PROTO

2 KILLED AT SOFT LAUNCH

1 RELEASED GLOBALLY

SINCE 2014...

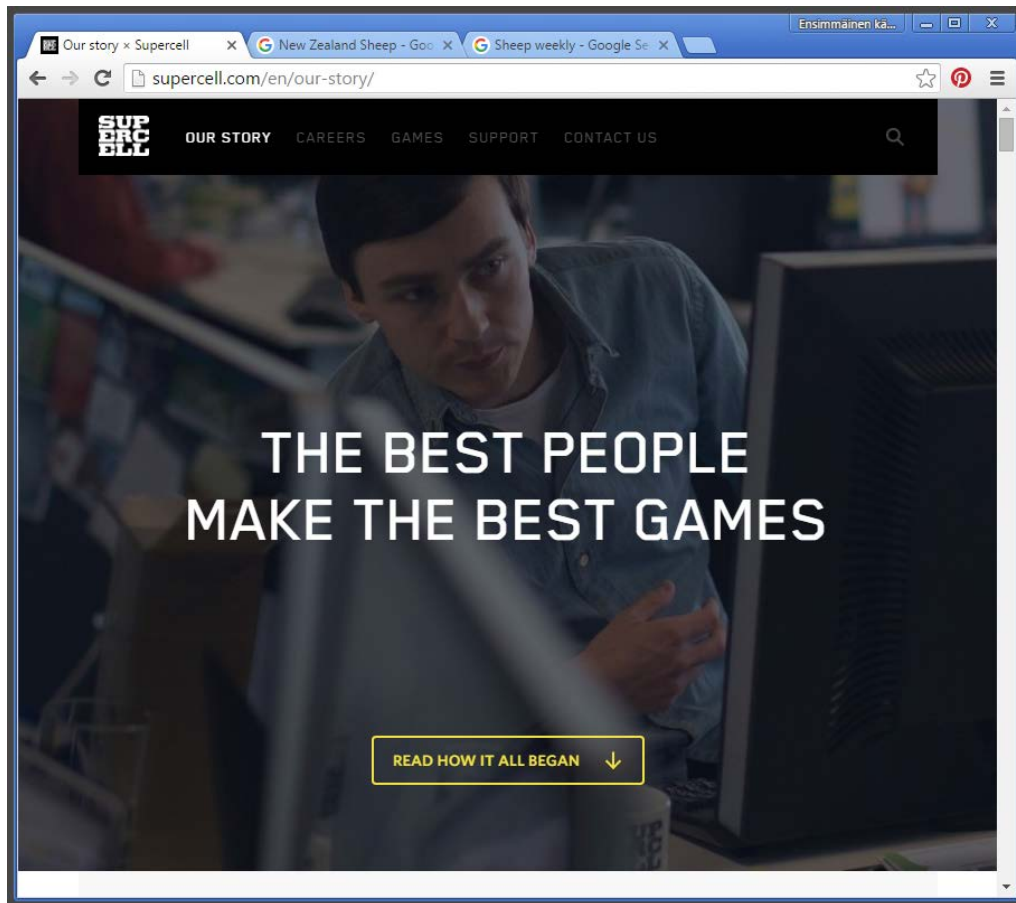
1/10

RELEASED GLOBALLY

9/10

II. WHY IS KILLING SO IMPORTANT TO US

ANSWER = QUALITY



BEST PEOPLE



SMALL TEAMS



BEST GAMES
(with some luck)

- Pro-active doers
- Passion for excellence
- Good person

- Independence
- Focus
- Ownership

Quality

WHAT IS QUALITY TO US?

- Fun!
 - Gameplay + Social
- Games that people play for years and years
- Truly Global
 - We develop for everyone
 - Western markets, China, Korea, Japan, All of Asia
 - Everyone!

PLAYERS HAVE CREATED OVER 250MM



CLANS

After two years

1/10

still play Clash of Clans everyday



IF 100 PEOPLE STARTED PLAYING TWO YEARS AGO...
10 WILL BE PLAYING THE GAME TODAY...
DAILY!

A stylized globe centered in the background, composed of a dark sphere with a dense pattern of glowing blue and purple dots, primarily concentrated along the equator and the eastern coasts of North and South America, suggesting global connectivity or data flow.

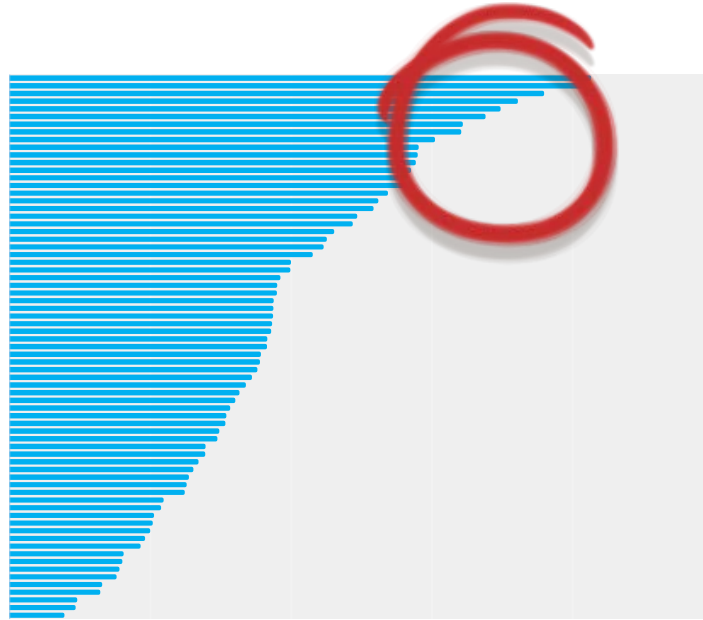
**100 MILLION PEOPLE PLAY OUR
GAMES EVERY SINGLE DAY**

FINANCIAL GOALS ARE SECONDARY TO QUALITY



FINANCIAL GOALS FOLLOW GREAT GAMES!

30 DAY RETENTION FOR TOP GROSSING APPS
IOS, US
SOURCE: SENSOR TOWER



ITS NOT ALL BUNNIES AND FAIRY DUST!

- Best people don't always make the best teams
- Being small is not always focused
- Being independent has its own pressure
- Team goals come before personal goals

LESS IS MORE... (OR MORE IS LESS)

More games + more people + more management/bureaucracy



Less ownership + less independence + less focus



less QUALITY

III. SMASH LAND

A REAL WORLD EXAMPLE OF MURDER

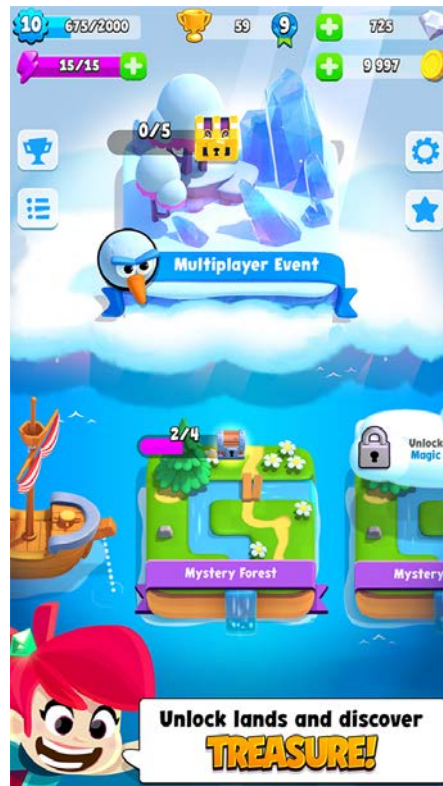
HOW BIG IS SMALL?

180 Worldwide

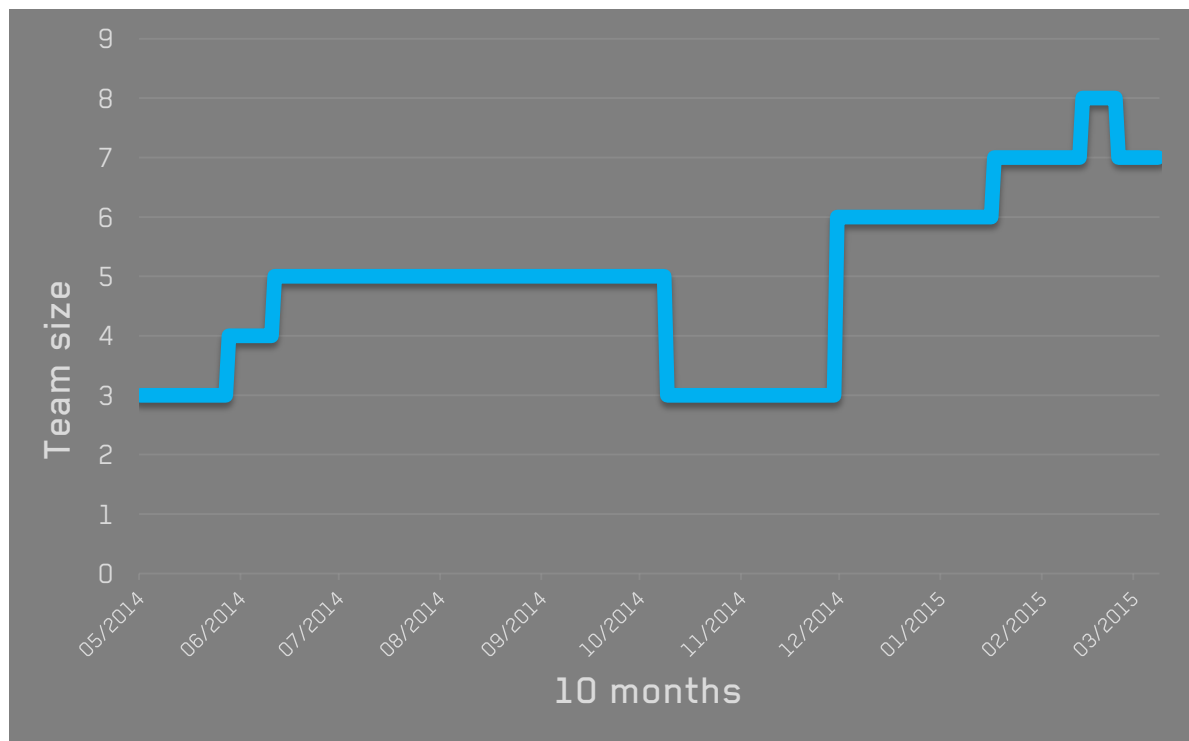
70 Developers

3-15 Game Teams

SMASH LAND



SMASH LAND TEAM SIZE



A white speech bubble with a black outline and a small tail pointing downwards and to the left. The number 4.96 is centered inside the bubble in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The bubble has a subtle grey drop shadow.

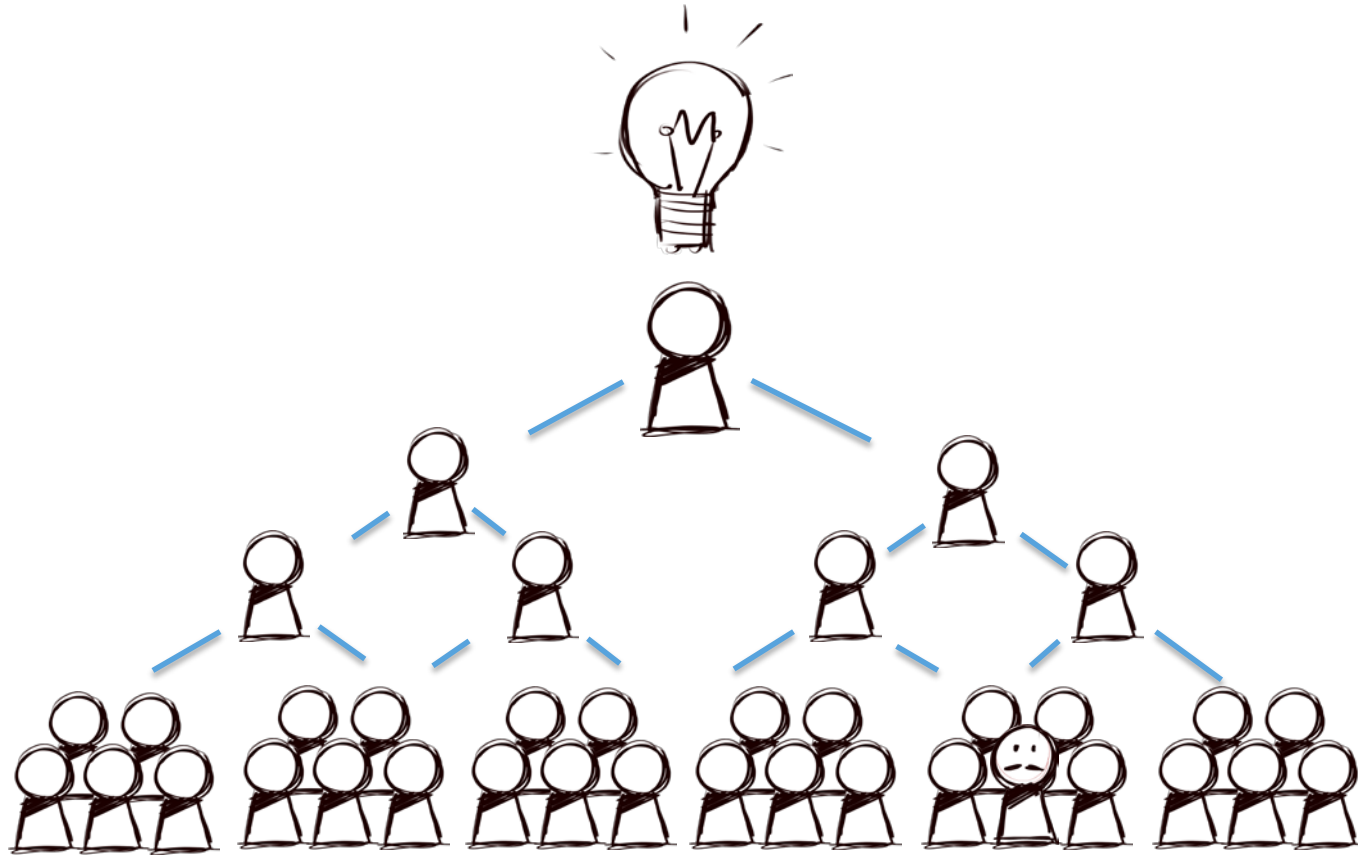
4.96

...people made Smash Land in 10 months

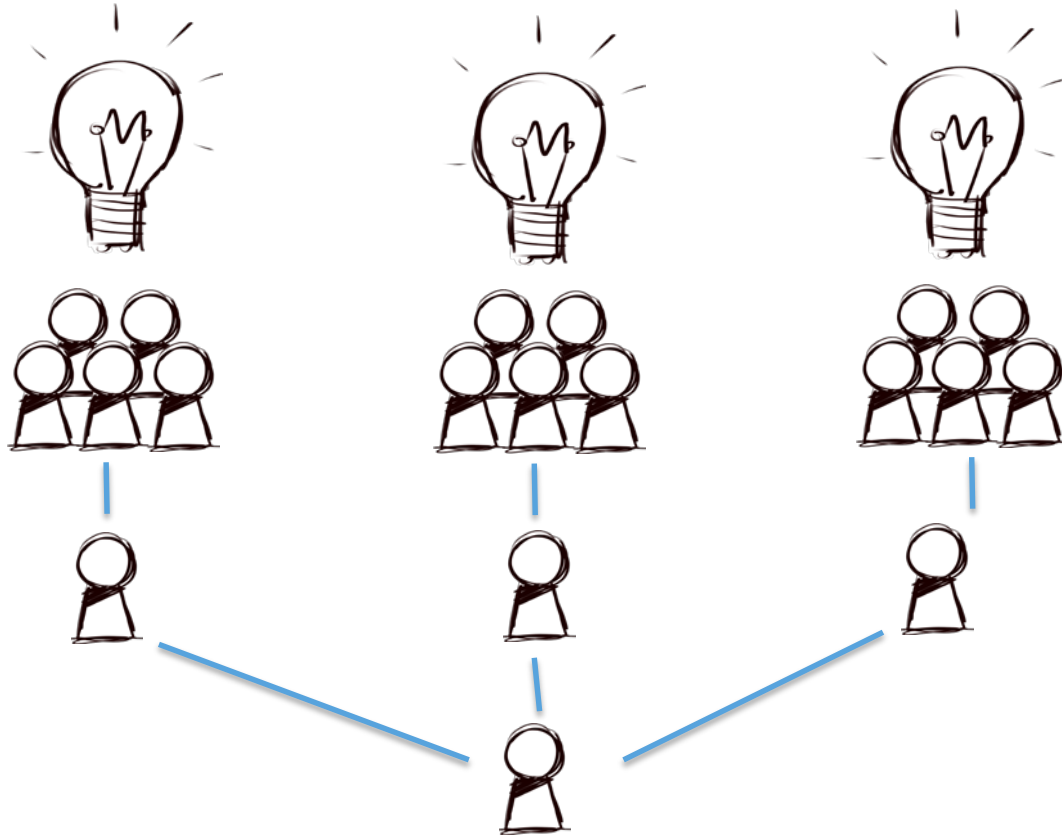
(+ Martin)

HOW DO WE MAKE GAMES?

TRADITIONAL MODEL

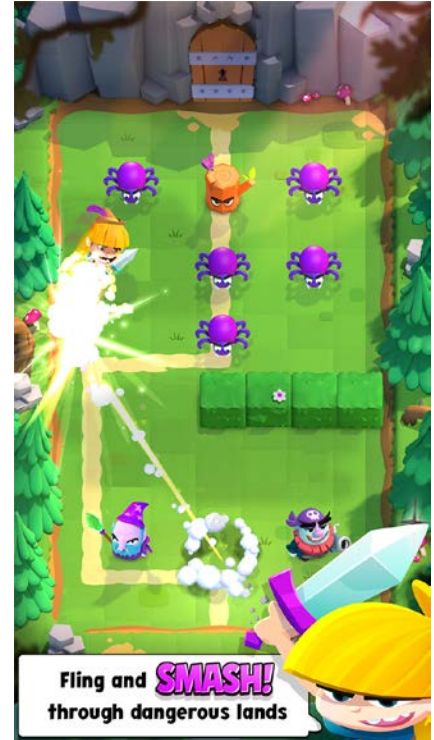
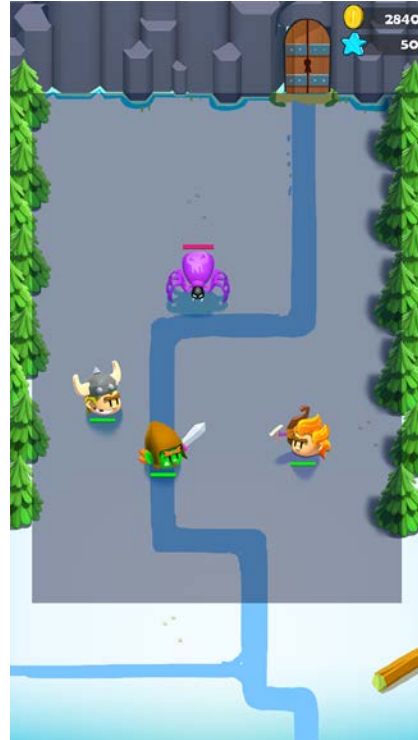


SUPERCELL MODEL



HOW WE MADE THE GAME...

- The team decided on a concept
- Focused on gameplay first
- A lot of attention to PvP experience
- Company playables
- Set our beta targets...



BOOM!... PRESSED THE BUTTON!



BETA

- 10,000 DAU by day 7
- Retention and ARPDau – below our target
- Session count was low
- Players more likely to stay after reaching PvP!... Cool!

BE BOLD IN BETA!

- Entry flow much faster
 - **14 mins** to PvP (was 45)
- Added team challenge mode
- New short term progression for pvp
- Added new resources
- Added items
- Added spells



NOTHING CHANGED!... ☹️

ACCEPT THIS...





ANYWAY... WE KILLED IT!

- Not a game people would play for years and years... or decades!
- Beta Targets were not meet
- Lack of content
 - Meta game was weak and narrow
 - Hero usage/collection was flawed
- Updates started to feel cluttered

BUT WE CAN FIX IT!



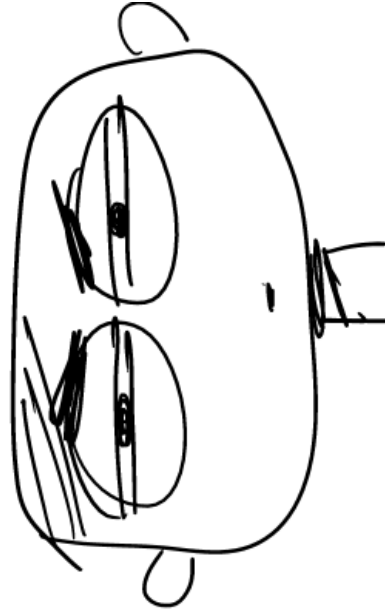
IV. HOW DO WE KILL GAMES

WE SET TARGETS

- The team sets KPI targets
 - Retention and ARPDAU
- Team checks targets with Ilkka before launch
- Targets are transparent to whole company
- Then its up to the players!

BLAH BLAH... BUT, WHO ACTUALLY MAKES THE
DECISION!?

THE TEAM!




ALL GOOD DECISIONS ARE MADE IN THE SAUNA



- Can we lock into this for years!?
- The second you think about killing... kill it, chances are you already have


THEN TELL THE CEO...




Mon 29/06/2015 1:12 AM

Jonathan Dower

Smash Land - Good bye, we love you

To  crew

Cc  Life: Team


Hey guys,

For the Non-Helsinkians and the people who weren't here at this morning's update.

We have decided to kill Smash Land.

We decided this as a team at the end of last week. It is the teams decision and it feels like the right thing to do.


Why?





Wed 01/07/2015 6:07 AM

Ilkka Paananen

Re: Smash Land - Good bye, we love you

To Jonathan Dower;  crew

Cc  Life: Team

 You replied to this message on 01/07/2015 7:09 AM.

Hey Everyone,

I am sure we all feel very sad right now. Many of us absolutely loved Smash Land. And, what's worse, we all know how incredibly hard the Smash team worked on their game, days & nights, weekends, all the time. Anyone who followed them close enough knows this. We would all have loved them to launch the next global hit.

On the other hand, I feel incredibly proud:

First, Smash Land must be by far the best game killed in Beta, EVER. I do not think there is ANY other team in the world who would have killed it. And just think about it: if the team killed a game that was as great as Smash was, how great must the next one be once they get onto it!

Second, this is an amazing example of our culture in action. Sometimes I worry that we are drinking our own kool aid and the culture is not as strong as we make it sound (in presentations). But events like this prove that the culture is stronger than ever. There is no better example of the values of Responsibility, Quality and Focus than this one. And I am sure we after the post mortem we will have a great example of our value of Learning as well.

SHARE LEARNINGS



Company wide postmortem

SO, WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE DUDES?





FINALLY, FOR ANY OF THIS TO WORK, WE NEED...

- Trust
- No fear of failing
- Best Teams

ON THE HUNT FOR MURDERERS!

- Pro-active doers
- Passion for excellence
- Good person

<http://supercell.com/en/careers/>

QUESTION TIME!

Meet the Supercell developers at GDC!

Careers Center

Today 4:00pm – 4:50pm

CHECK THIS OUT!

THE ART OF KILLING GAMES

by Adam Telfer, Wooga

EURO GDC 2014

Overcoming Analysis Paralysis: Experimenting in Bears vs. Art

by Luke Muscat

GDC 2015

<https://heyhelsinki.wordpress.com/>

<http://gamesfirsthelsinki.com/>

THANKS!