



Turning Disenchanted Players Into Allies in 3 Steps

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Pocket Gems

The War Dragons Boycott of 2016

A collective letter to Pocket Gems: Please Read

#1

07-14-2016, 05:46 PM

Dear Pocket Gems,

We are a united group of leaders in diamond league who are concerned about the direction that WarDragons is taking. There has been a trend towards unachievable events and divine dragons without weekly substantial and unsustainable financial investment (for most general players) as well as boring and glitchy events and the result has been that a large portion of the gamers are left wondering if it is worth participating at all. These concerns are affecting all players throughout the game regardless of economic investment. This change has come to our attention as our own long term teammates are losing interest in the game, and it is even causing hard core players to quit. This must change. This current trend is affecting the passion for gamers to play. For several months we have respectfully asked for changes to occur. PG support has responded with acknowledgement of our concerns but no real tangible improvements. There must be a balancing point where wardragons can be profitable and yet provide enjoyment for all. Ultimately without that there will be many who will just move on to another game or life activity. War dragons is a networking pyramid of players, those below support the game and are connected to the top echelon of players, if the base is bored they will leave and it will affect the entire game. Thus PG needs to figure out how to provide psychologic enjoyment for all, not just the top tier who pay to play.

In order to save the game, PG needs to seriously shift the priority from short term revenue to making the game more fun and thus gaining a more committed community and longer term profits. After much discussion and collaboration, we recommend the following five items should be high priority.

First, event rewards should return to their previous (6-10 months ago) reward status. Meaning, a player could succeed either by skill/determination or by buying chests which allow for faster/higher

About Pocket Gems

- Casual history
- 250 million downloads
- Founded by 2 engineers in 2009
- 205 people today

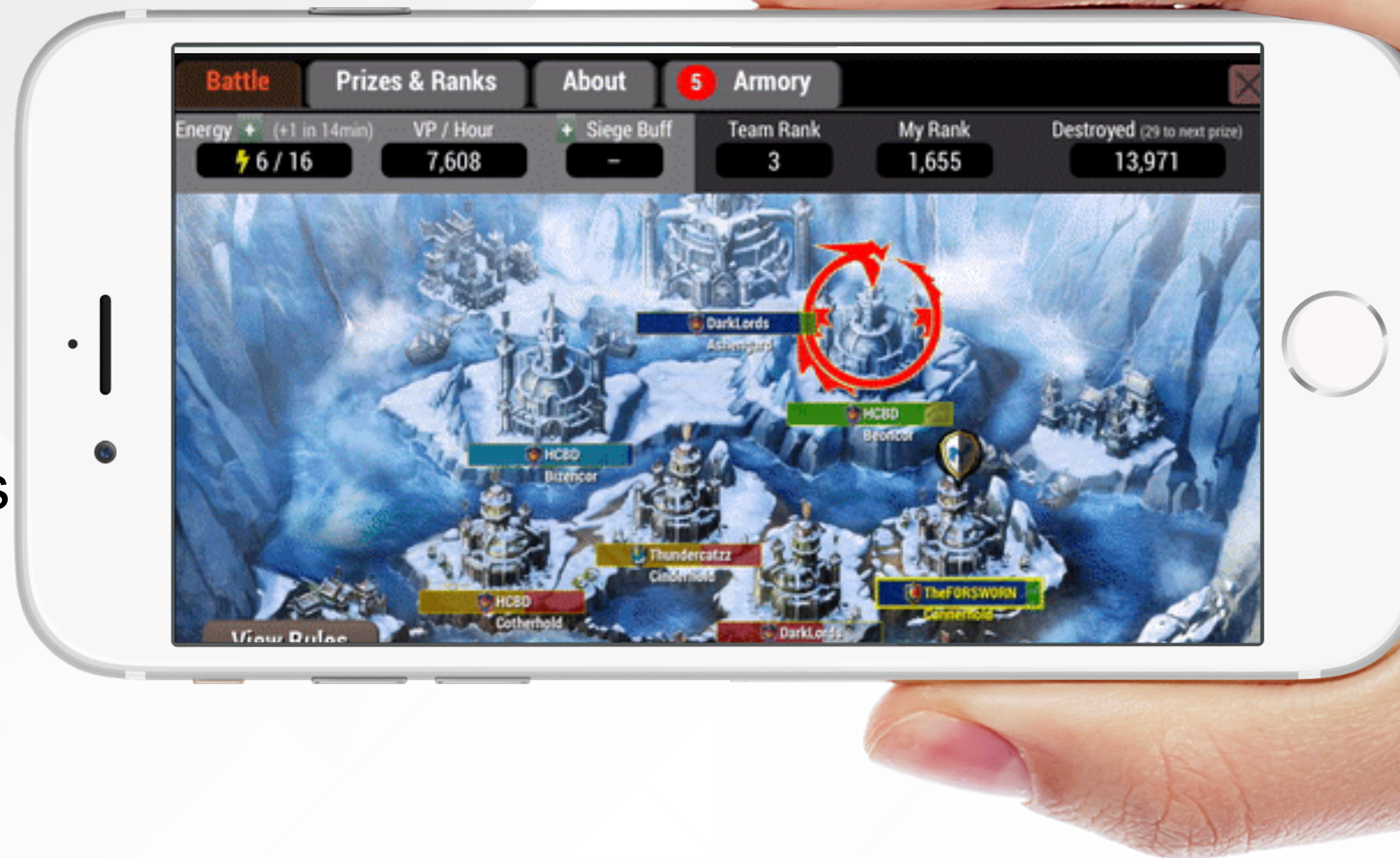


War Dragons



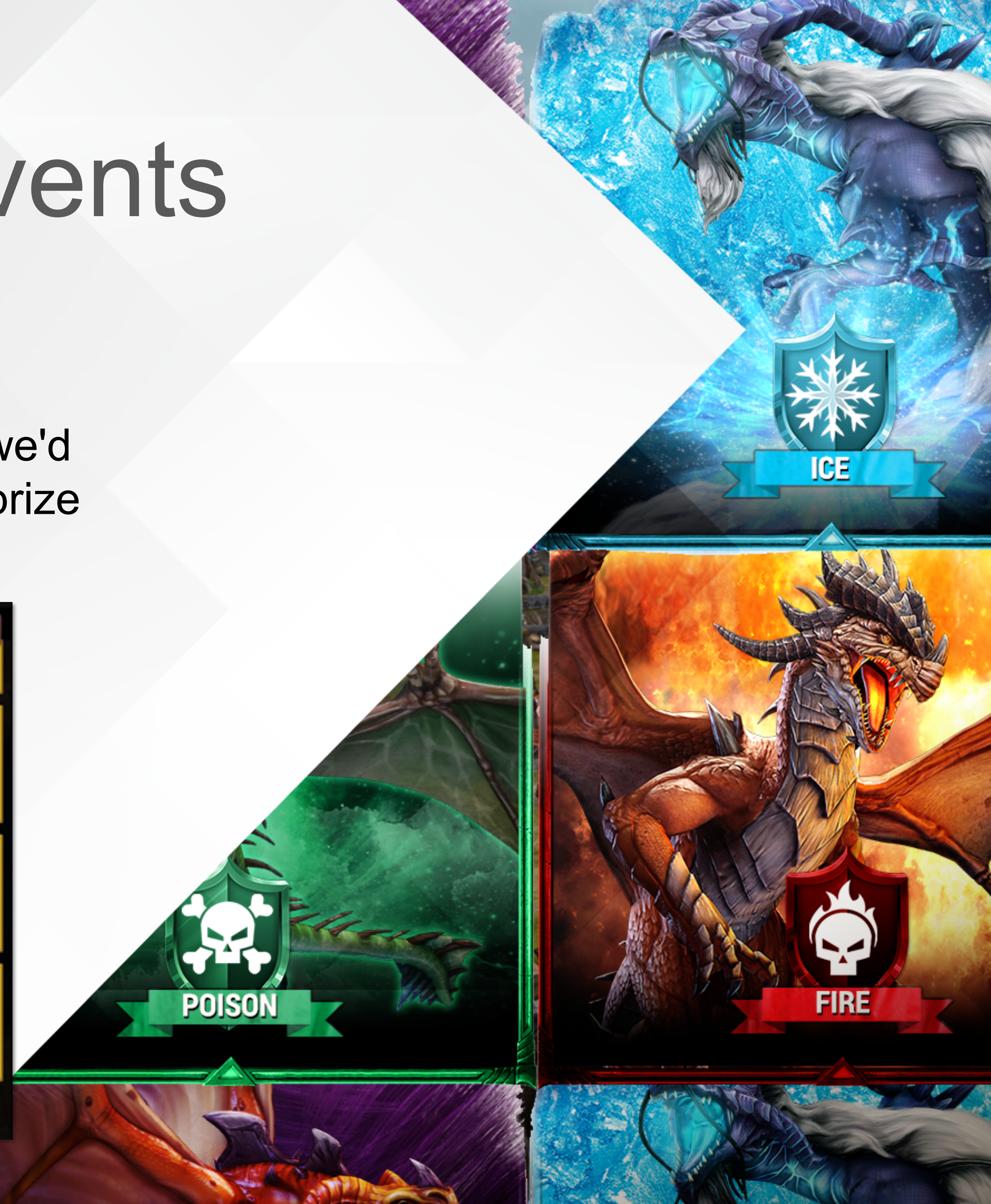
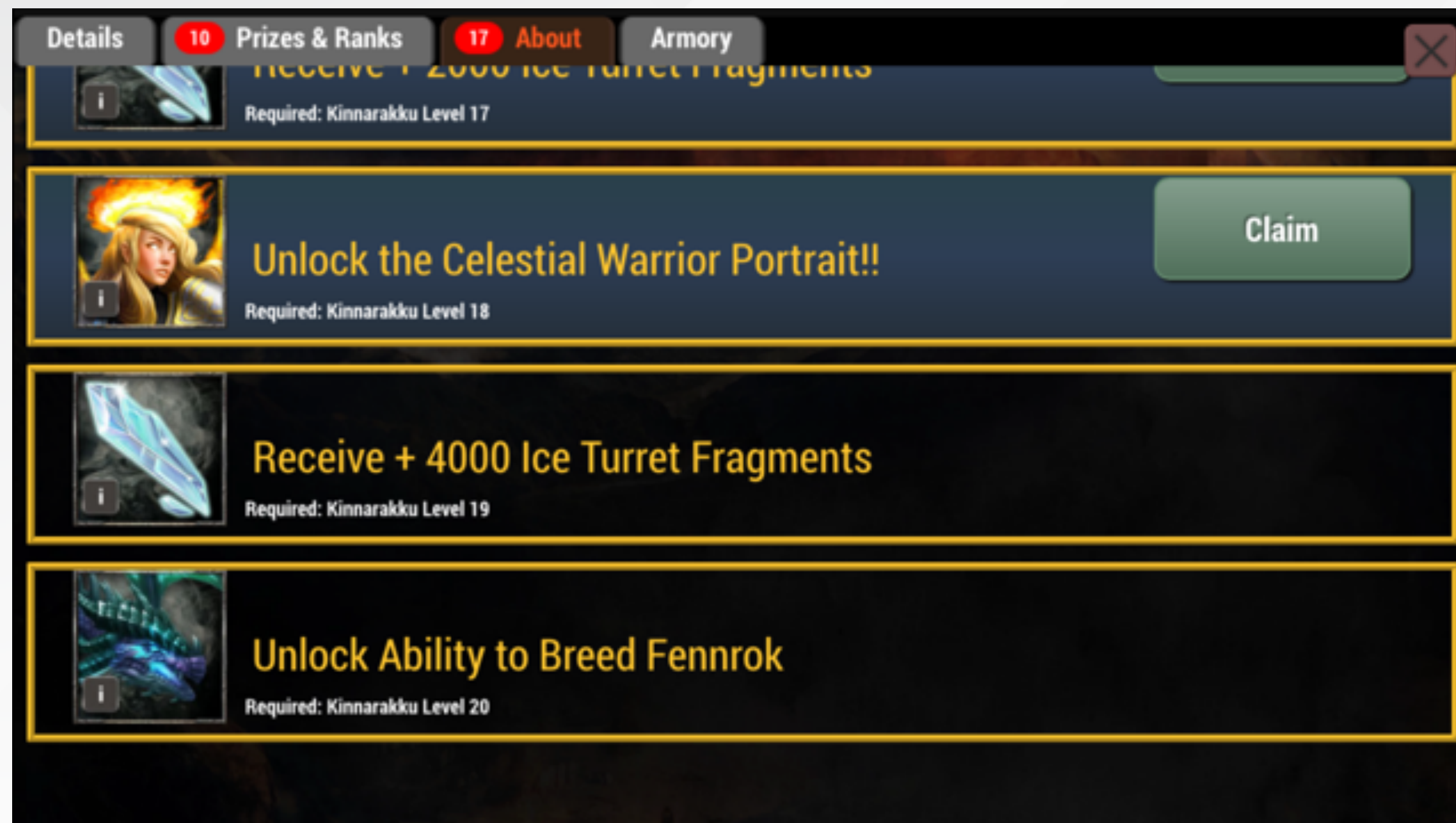
Events Were a Key Component

- King of the Hill example
 - Teams take down increasingly difficult bases
 - Holding the most difficult bases earns more points
 - Other teams try to take bases to gain points



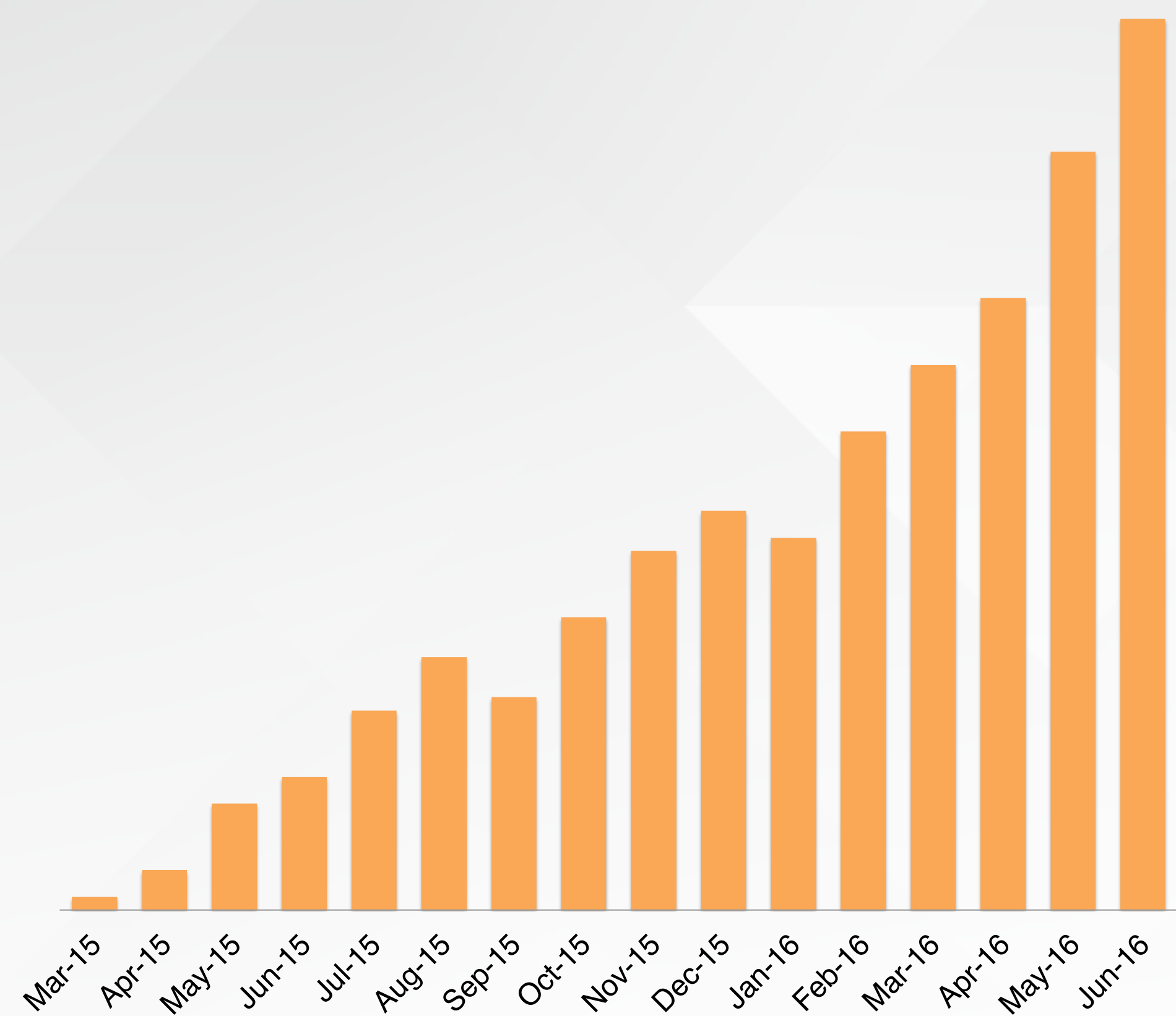
How we Monetized Events

- Top prizes were only achieved through paying
- Once you got the top prize for a given month, we'd come out the next month with a slightly better prize

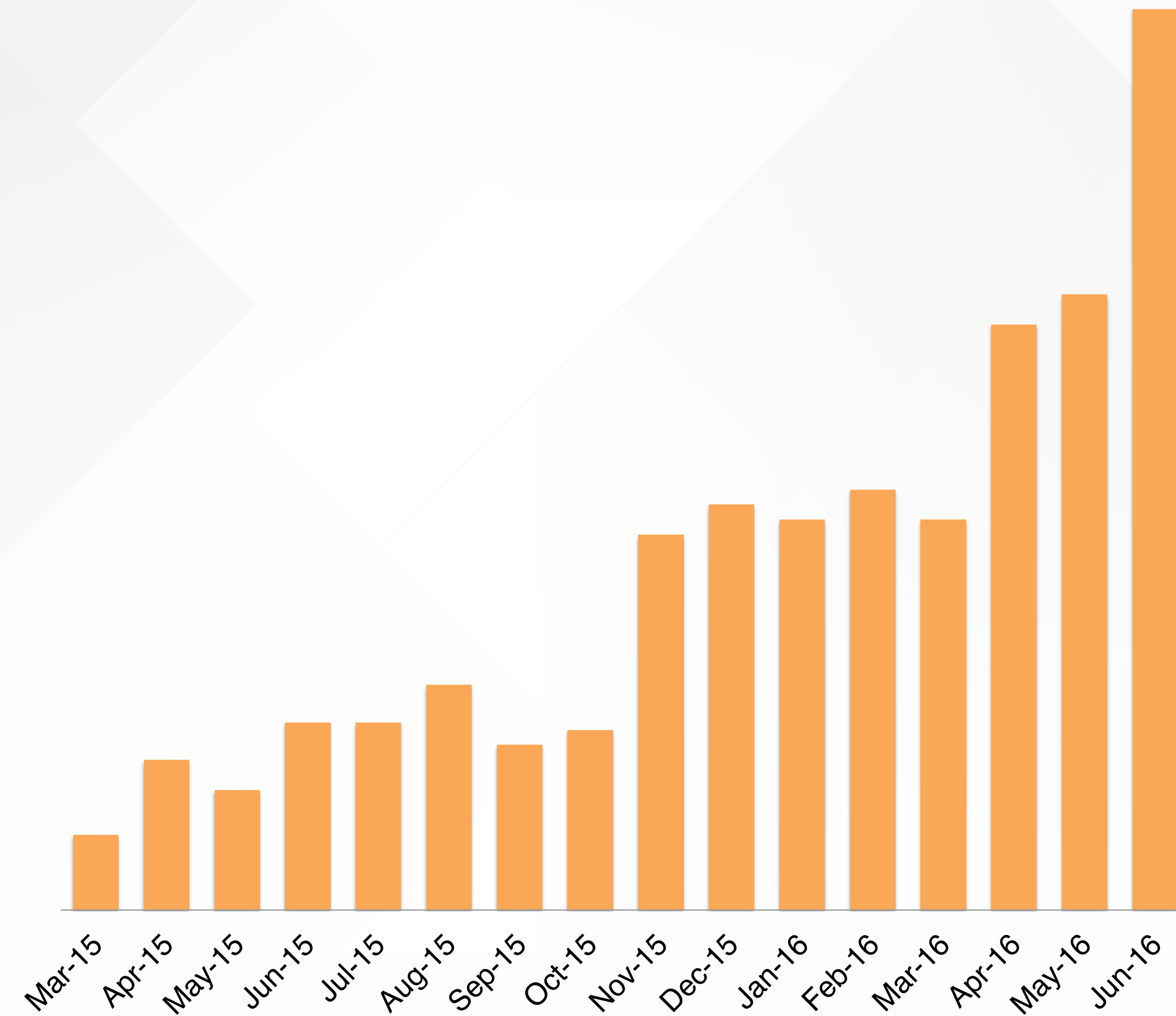


Game Was Doing Well Pre-Boycott

Revenue by Month



MAU by Month



The Letter

➤ What was it?

“We are a united group of leaders concerned about the direction War Dragons is taking...”

“For several months we have been asking for changes to occur”

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“Long term teammates are planning to quit”

“We are going to stop spending in the game until these issues are addressed”

Player Boycott- Demands

➤ We got an extensive list of problems that our players wanted fixed



Event rewards dependent
on \$ more than skill



Event prizes
are unbalanced



Bugs and glitches



Divine dragons
are broken



Game economy
is broken

Is it Actually a Problem?

- We've had these types of "boycotts" before in other games and they quickly break down or are unfounded
- Is it a loud minority or representative of a large problem?
- Do want to be in the business of making games that upset our players so much they boycott us?



Turns Out, it Actually Was a Problem

Churn Rate



Communication



How Do We Respond?



Silence

Band aid that left the players angry

Happy Medium

Engage players in a conversation to try to do some healing

Agree to all Demands

Causes problems down the road



Responding – Digging Deep

- The goal is to create a dialog
- Help players understand why we made certain decisions – then listen!
- Get to the base assumptions that drive their opinions



Responding – Learning

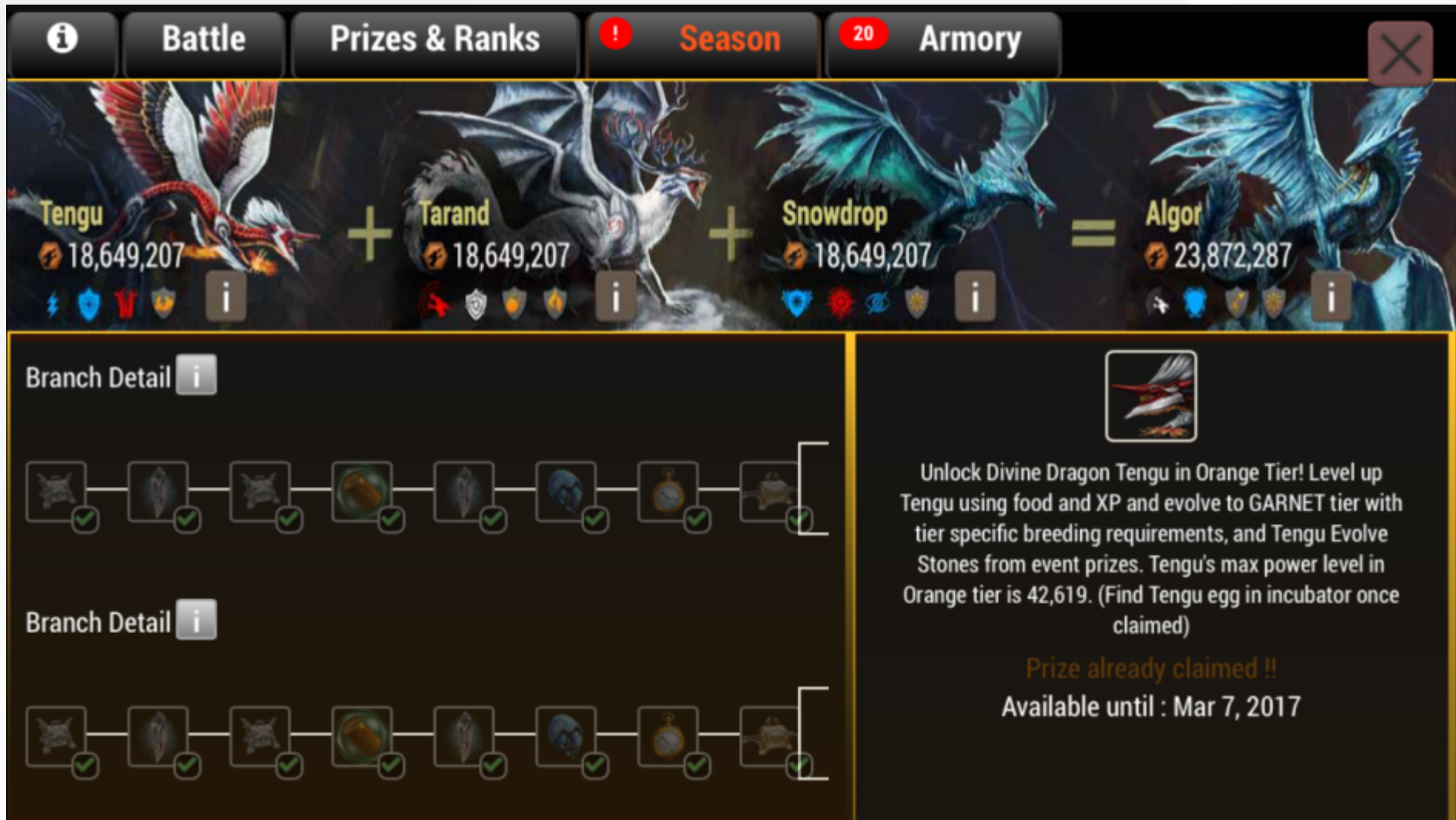
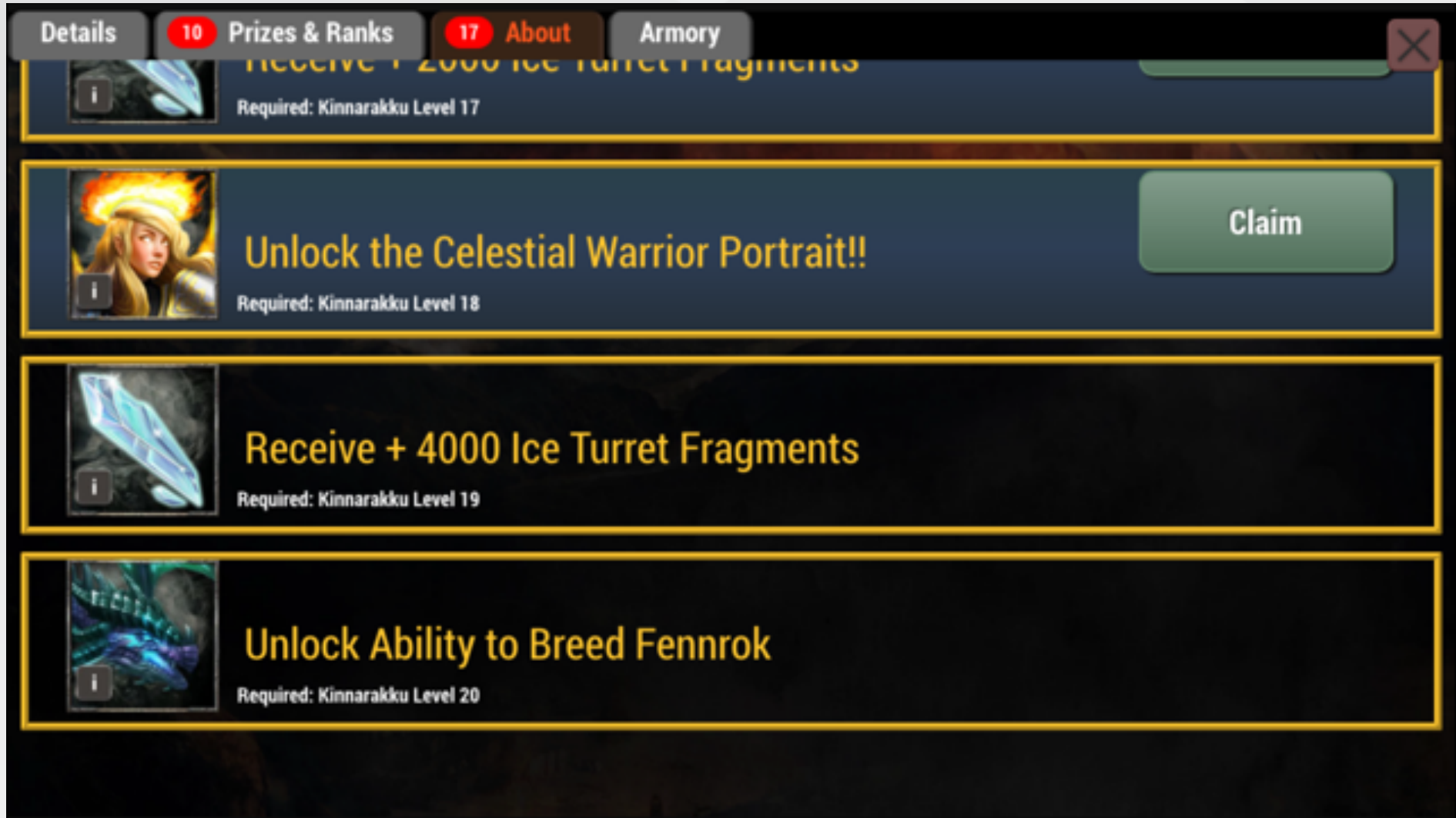
- Assumption #1: Payers valued Exclusivity
 - What we learned: Payers valued power, everyone expected Dragons
- Assumption #2: VIPs cared about winning
 - What we learned: VIPs cared about their TEAM winning
- Assumption #3: Prizes needed to be monthly
 - What we learned: Community could maintain excitement for prizes over a longer time span



Responding – Monthly → Seasonal Prizes

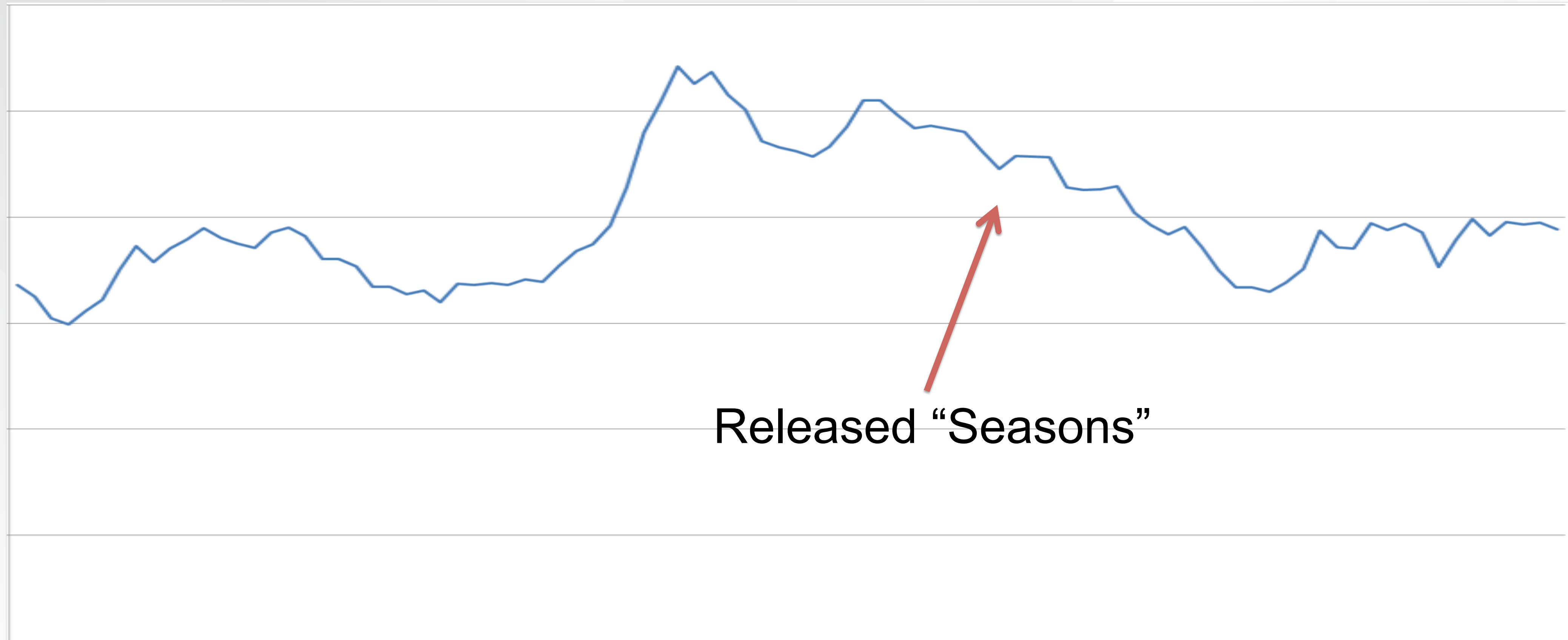
Before

After



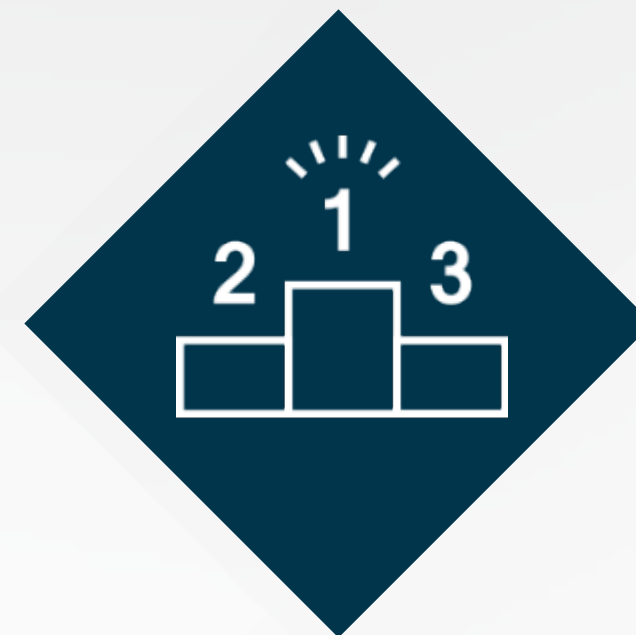
Crisis Averted...For Now...

Churn Rate



Released "Seasons"

Communication Flow



Veteran Players
(Ambassadors)



Players (In-game)



Players (Social Media)



Players (Forums)

Talking to Players

- Integrated a #slack channel into our in-game chat
- Invited key influencers and VIPs (leaders of top teams) to the chat group



Restructuring

- Created a pod solely focused on retaining players
 - Strong PM
 - Dedicated QA and engineers
 - Autonomy to make game changes with retention as guiding metric



Surprise and Delight vs. Pain Relief



Quantifying Love and Hate

- For every feature we released, we would determined the Love:Hate Ratio to anticipate player sentiment



4-1 Leave it in



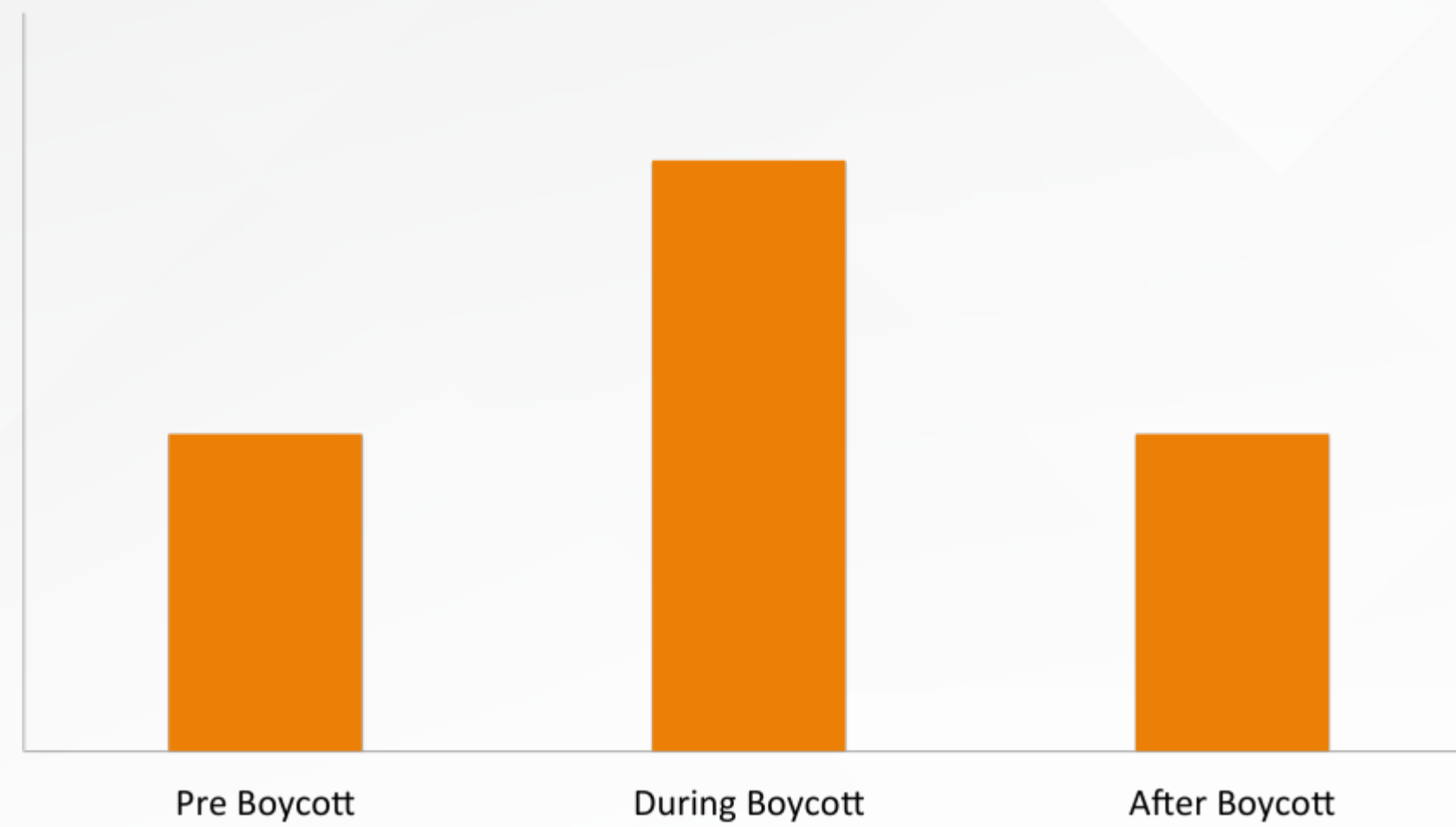
3-1 It's not done



2-1 Not good enough

Results

Engaged Player Churn



Players Are Happy Again

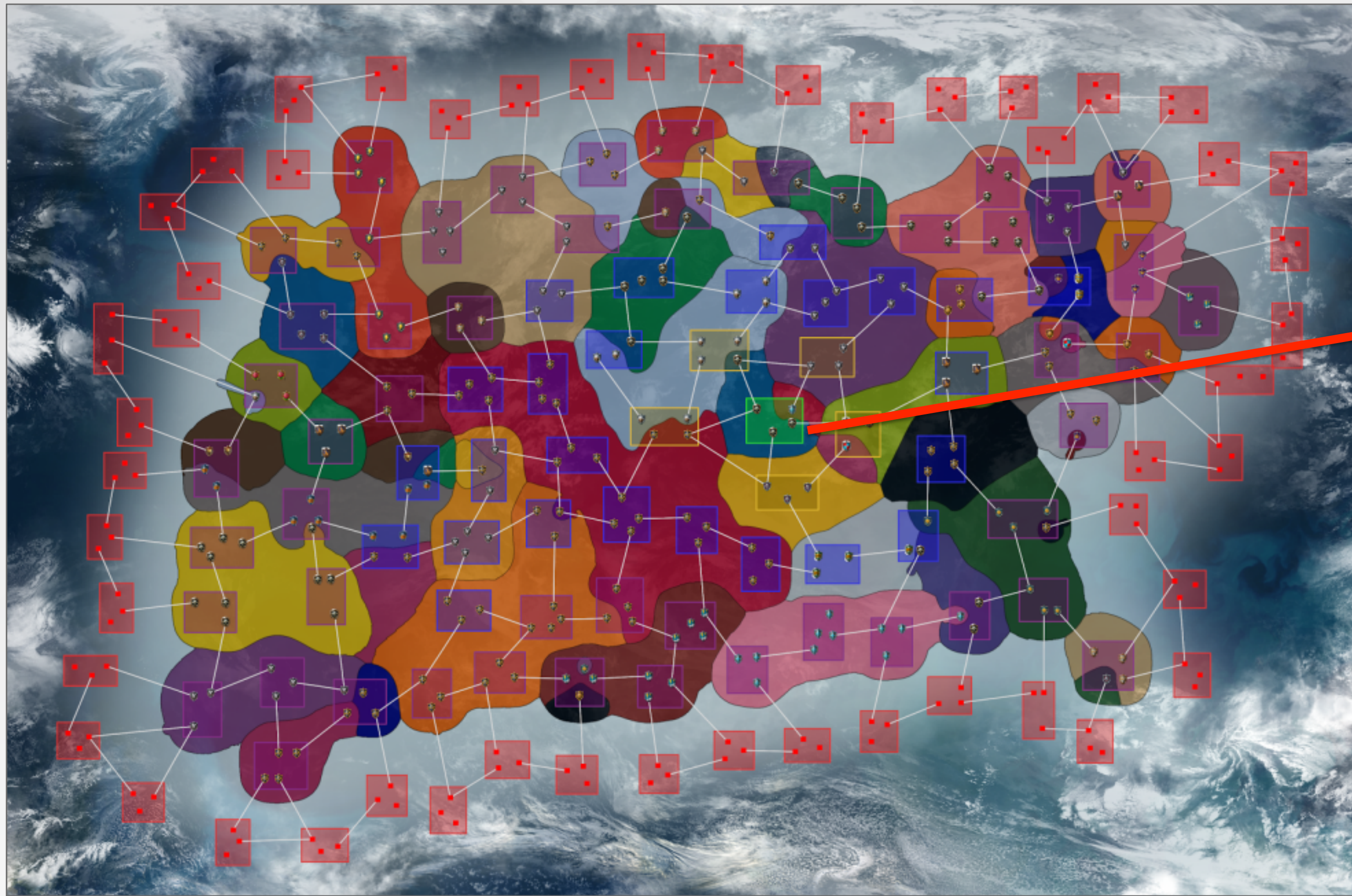
- Transparency + addressing their concerns
- Now What?
- Give them agency in the development process!



Agency



Co-development- World Map

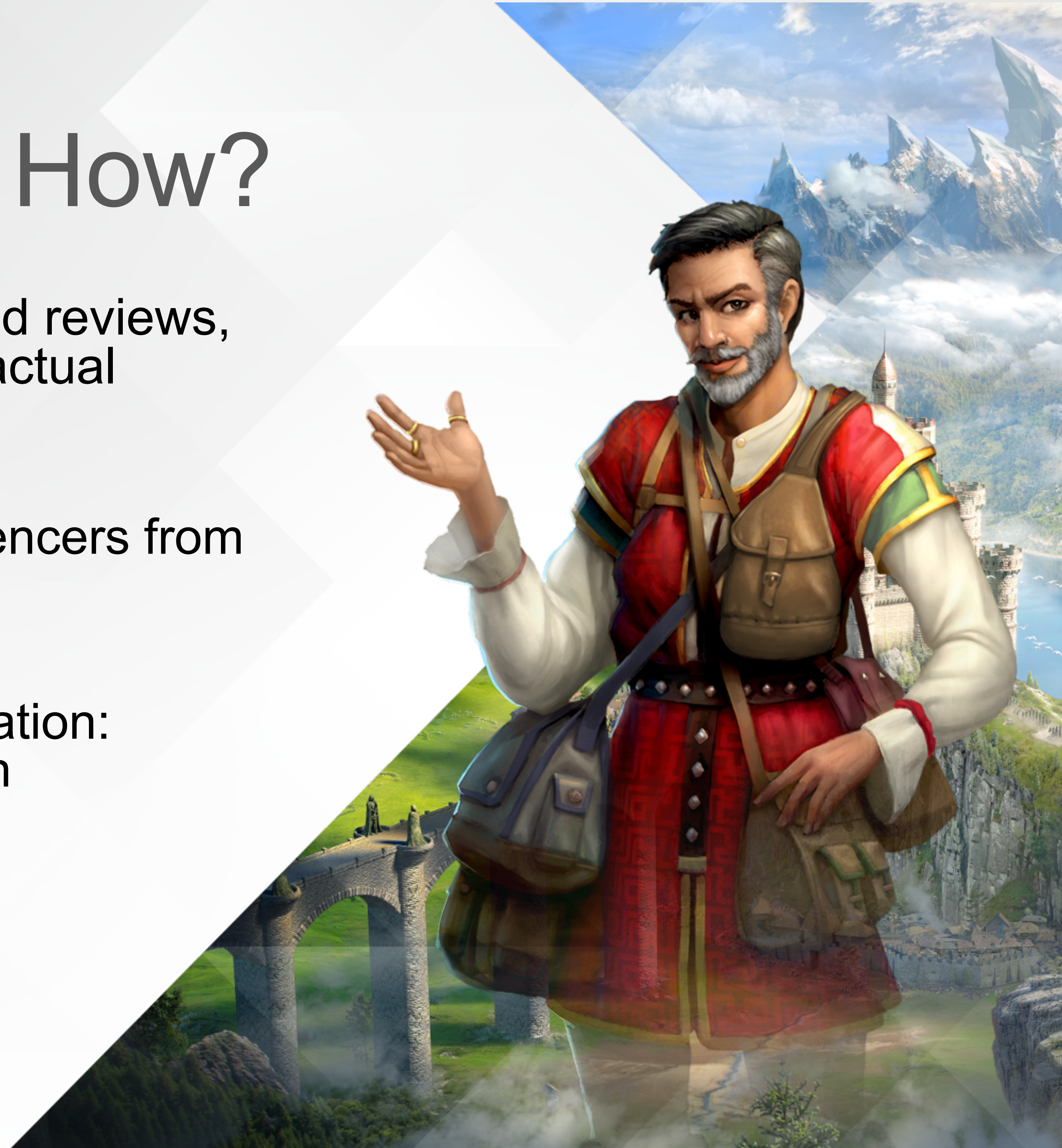


Co-Development – How?

V1 (7/16) Weekend alpha release: mixed reviews, but we got a lot of good feedback from actual comments and from behavioral data

V2 (10/16) Private beta: invited top influencers from Ashenvale Alliance to participate

V3 (2017) Full rollout with general population: influencers helping to promote the launch



Player Suggestions Implemented

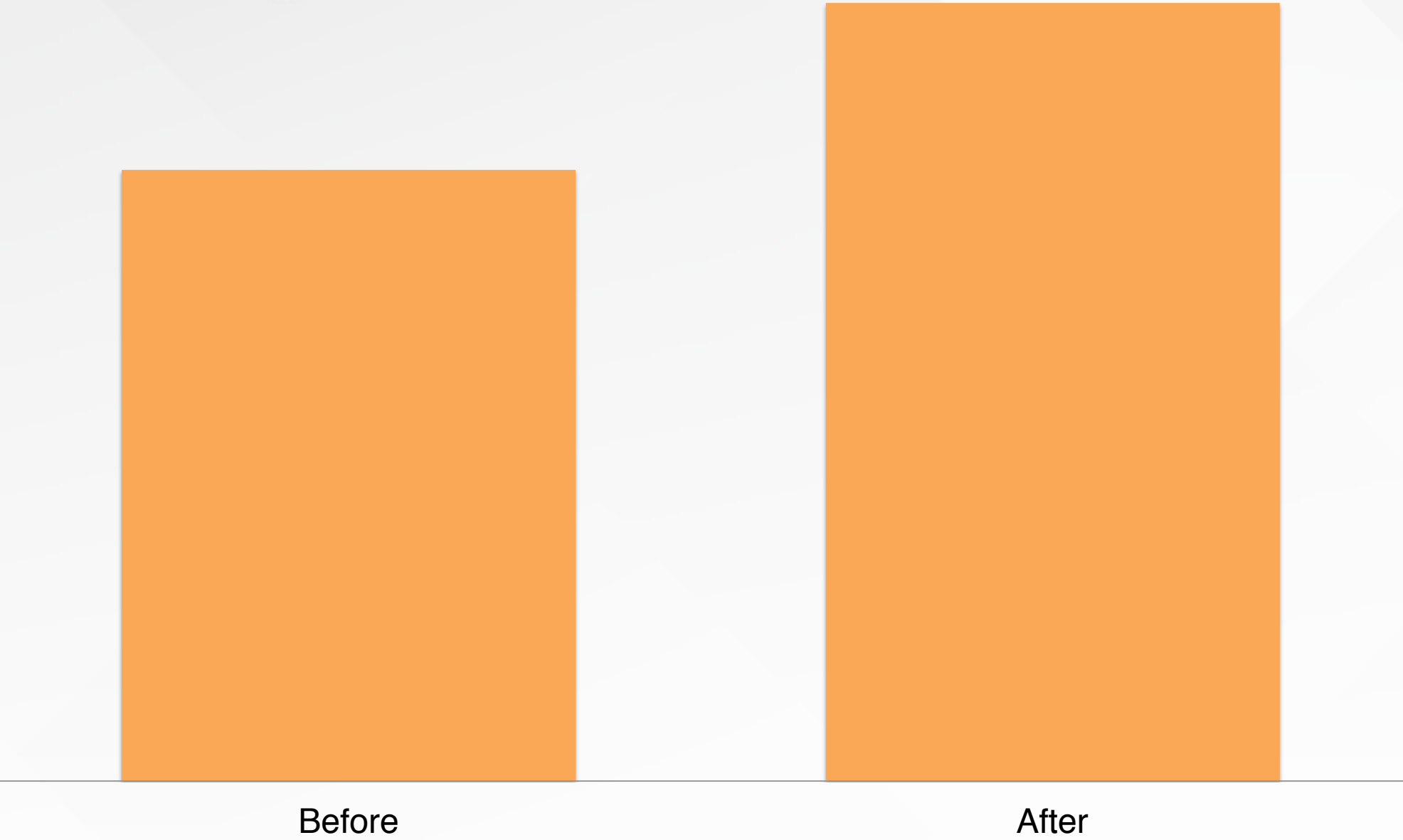
- Make map heterogeneous instead of homogenous
 - Add bottlenecks and points of control to the map to make it more interesting
- Add roles into world map
 - Let players elect governors, marshals and bankers who are needed to carry out important tasks on the islands they control
- Land-based battles vs. sea-based battles



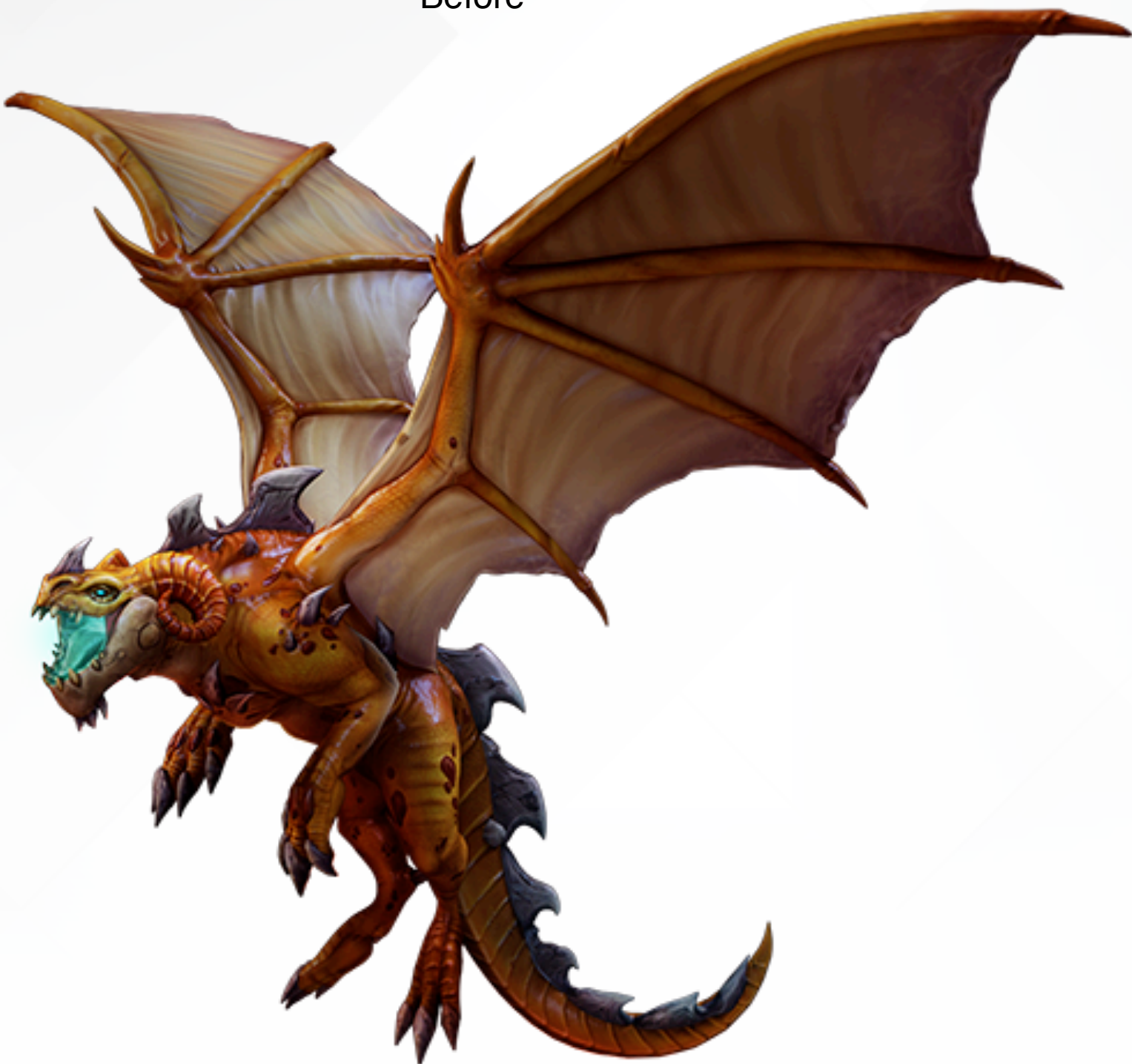
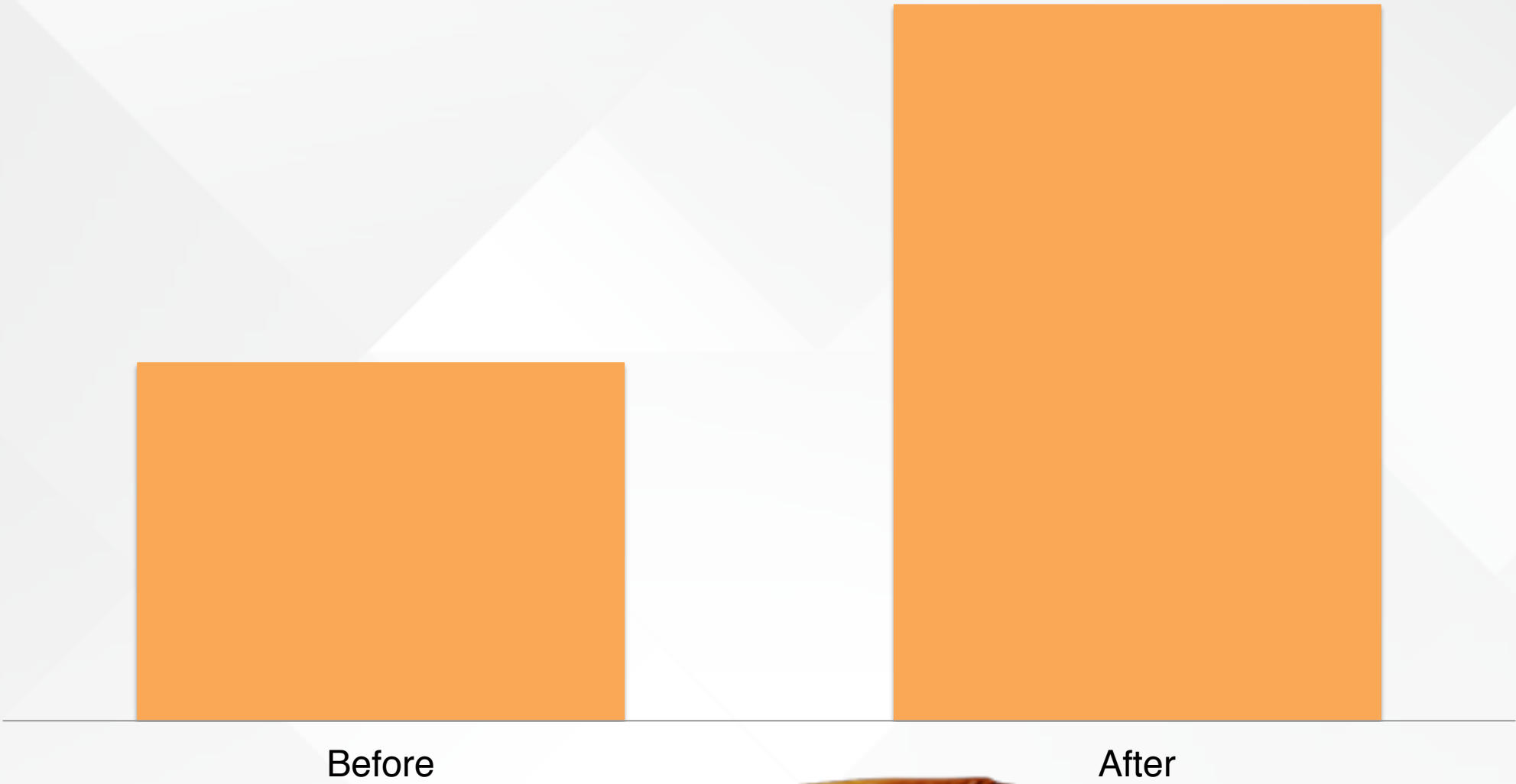
Results



Time Spent in Game



Player Love



Players Are Happy and Have Agency

- Now What?
- Empower the community to create more!

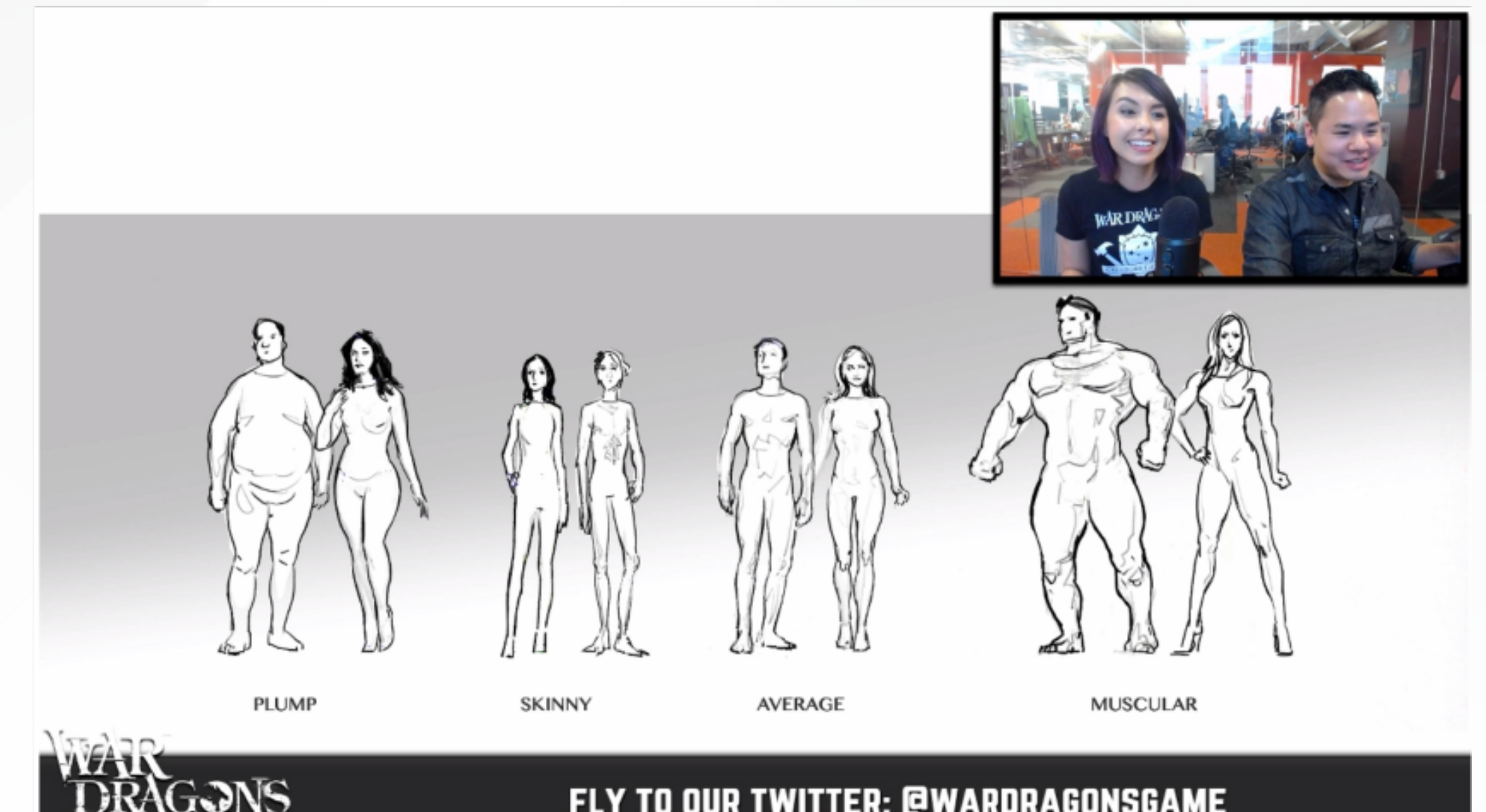
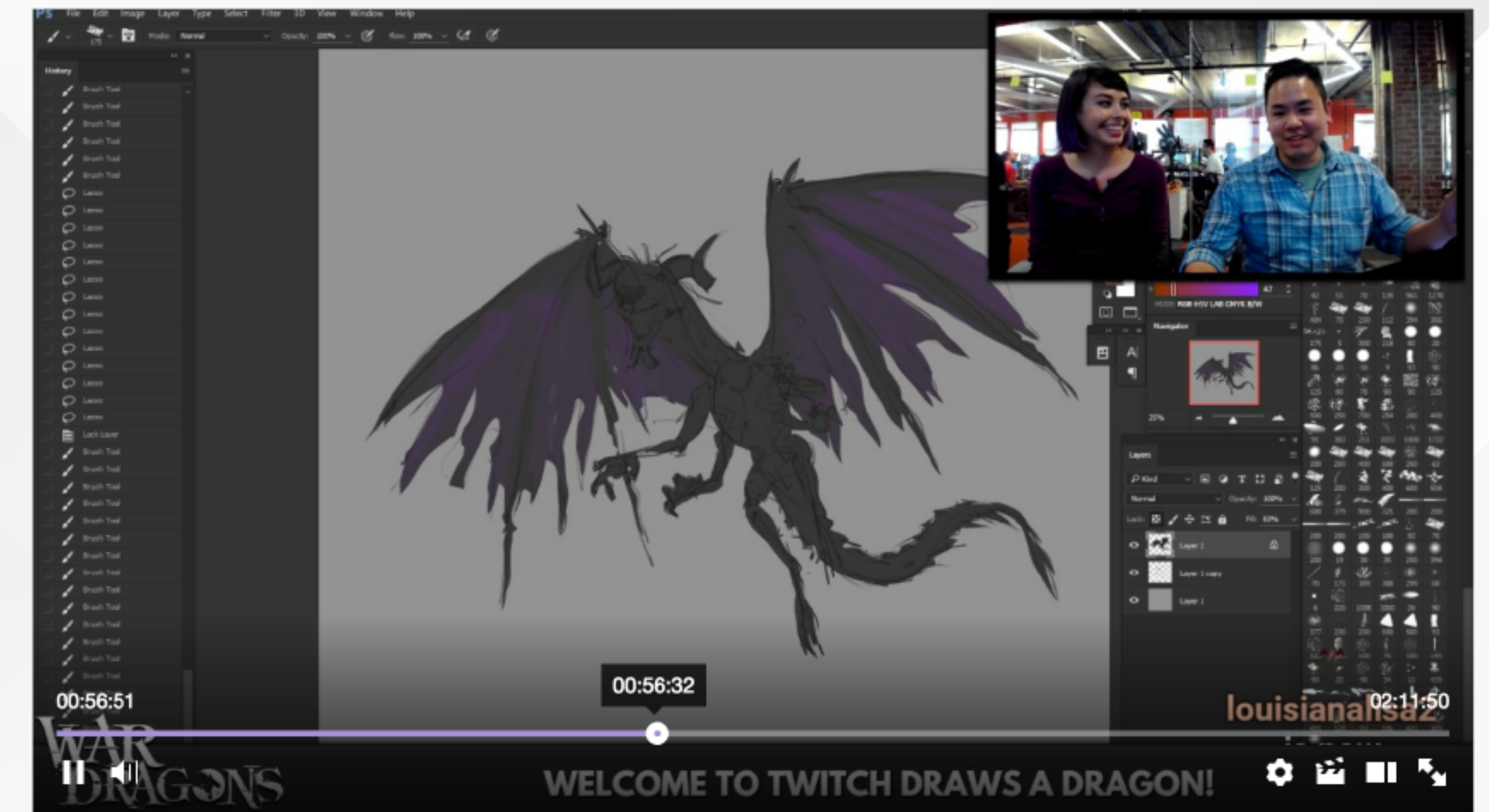


Empowerment

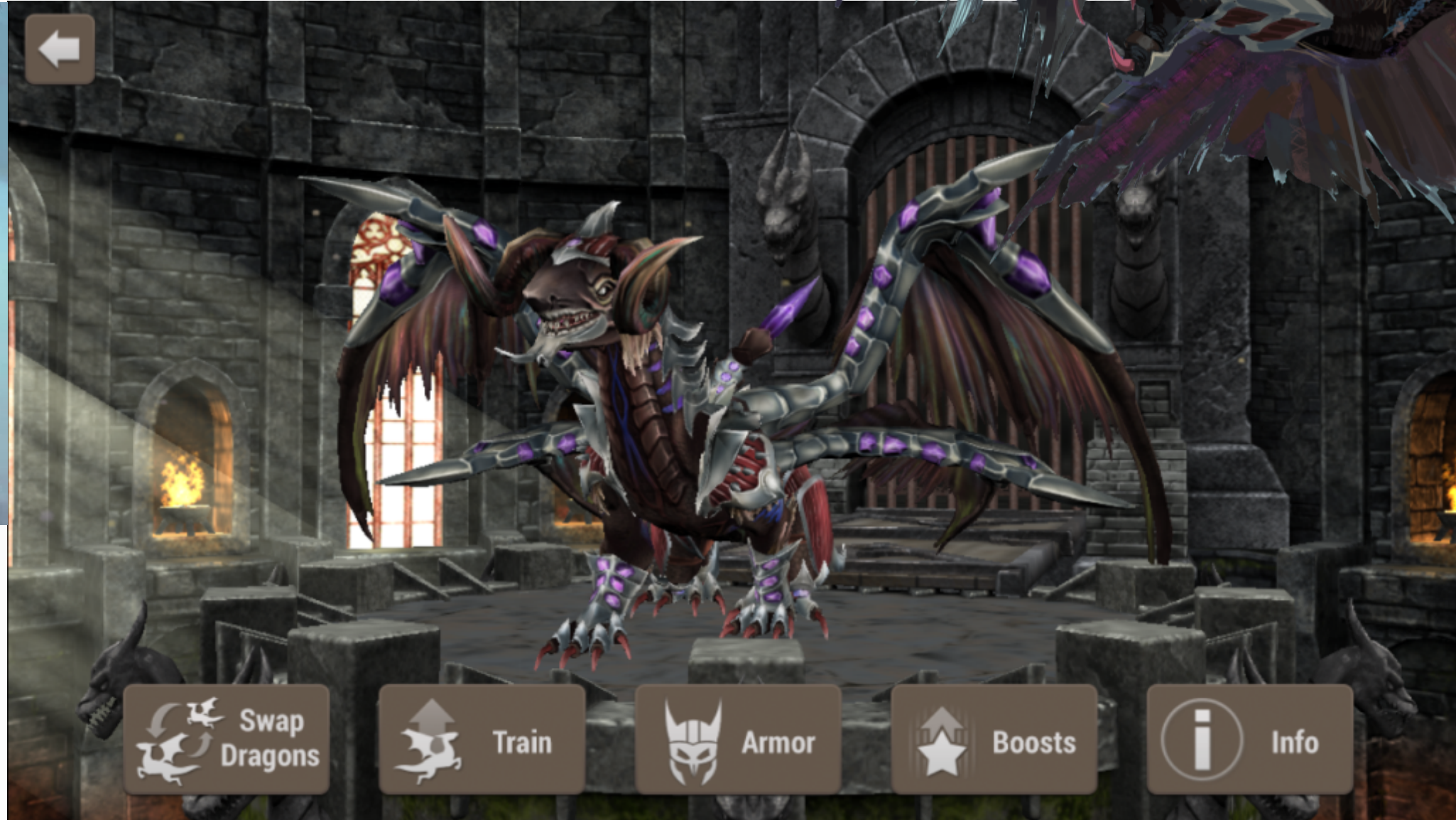


Engaging on Twitch

- Twitch
 - Create a new dragon
 - Create a new portrait



Necroth!! – The People's Dragon

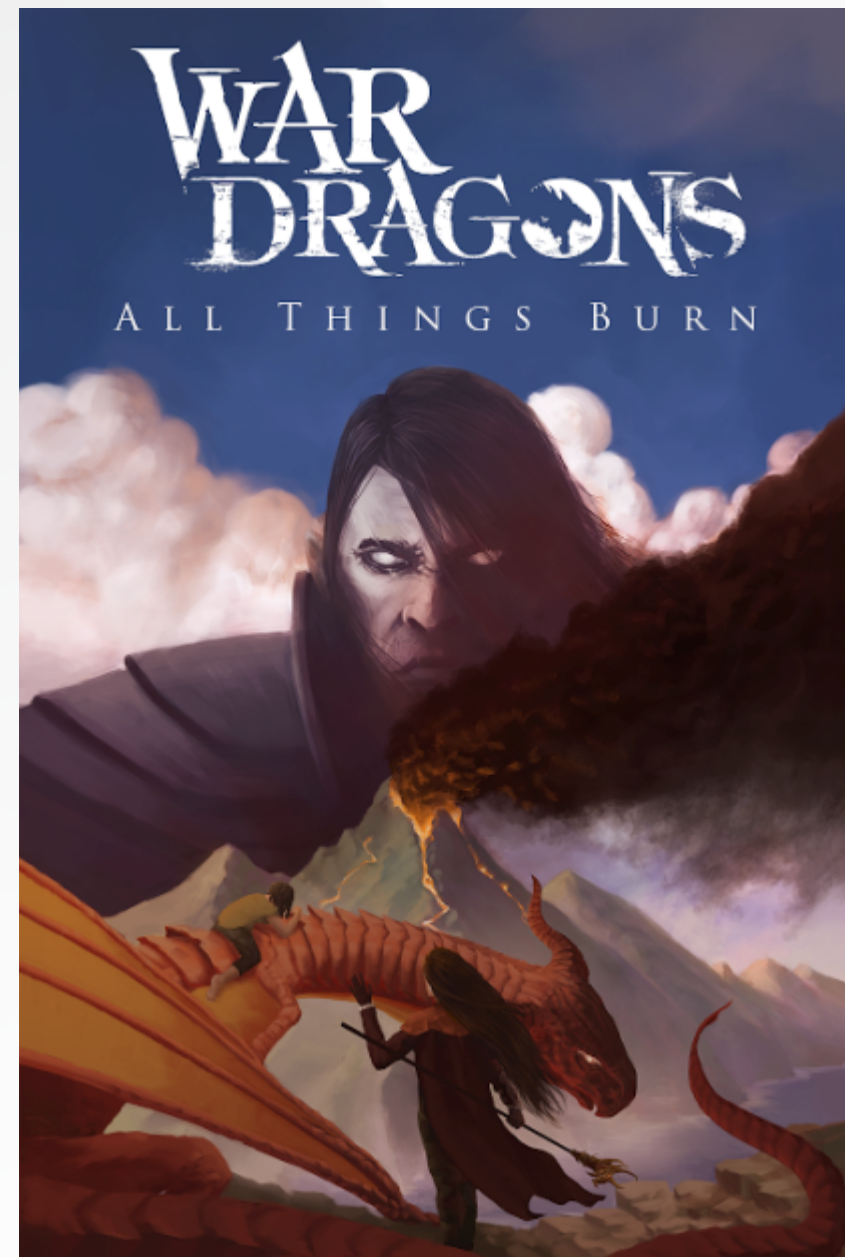


Creator's Faction



Surprise and Delight Outside the Game

- Built out our universe with a novel
- Unique event rewards: 3D printed figurines



Our Community is Stronger



Turning Disenchanted Players into Allies



1 Communication



2 Agency



3 Empowerment /
Identity

Takeaways

1. Be aware of the longer term impact of your decisions

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1. Be aware of the longer term impact of your decisions
2. When issues arise consider your options for communication
3. Create hot-lines of communication between your product/engineering team and players
4. Try to dig down to understand and address core player needs
5. **Getting feedback is great. Co-creating is even better!**

GDC[®]

Questions?

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE[®] | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

