What cats can teach you about empathic game design

Chrome Cars

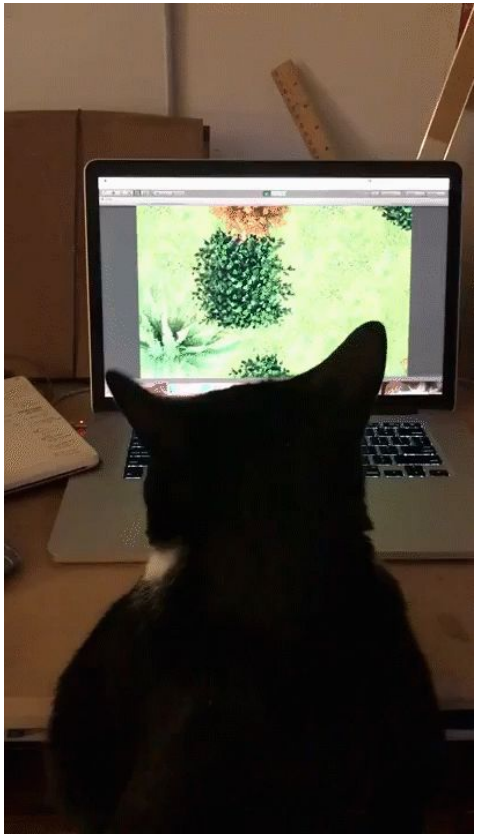
What Cats Taught Me

Relying on verbal communication is making you a worse game developer

Me
AND
Me
GAMES FOR CATS • FACTS FOR PEOPLE

The First Prototype: Will It Work?

The Very First User

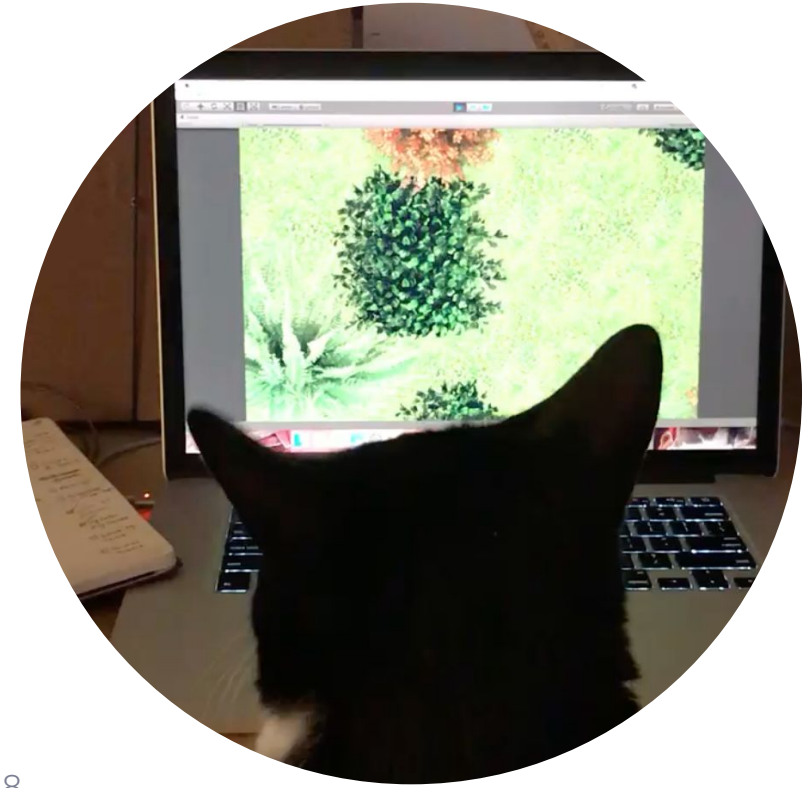


Traditional User Testing

Applied to Cats

Testing

- Tested **web prototype** on **9** cats
- **2** cats watched the device with no tapping
- **1** cat interacted with the device, but **immediately lost interest**



33% Engagement

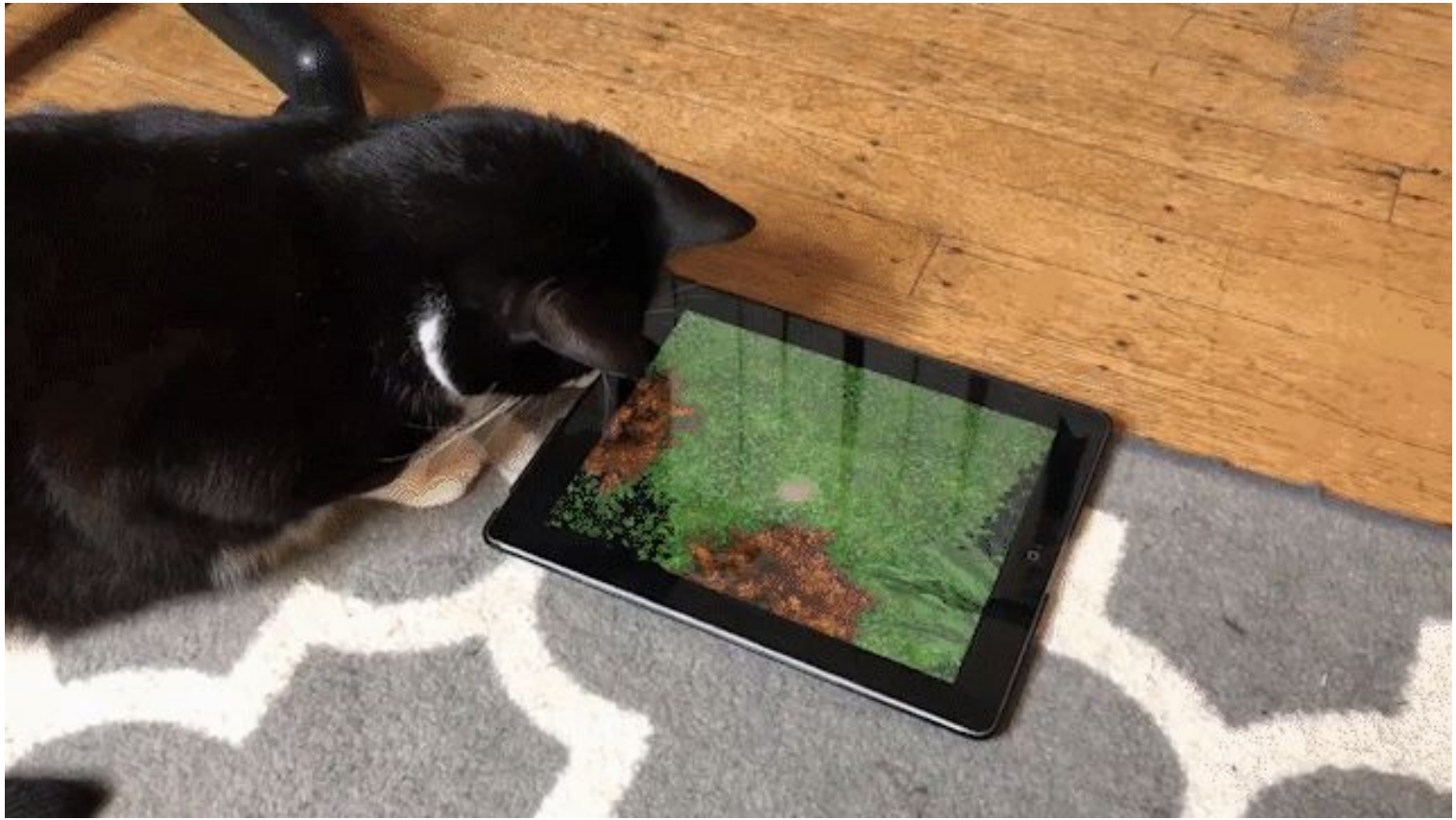
We can do better than that

Big Discovery 1

Cats get bored without feedback

New Prototypes

You Tell ME: Did it Work?



Kinda!

- Tested **touch prototype** on **29** cats
- **7** only watch
- **6** others engage
- **0** cats gave us their thoughts

45% Engagement

That’s pretty good, right?

Nope

To us, watching was engagement. **To our users, it didn't count** unless their cats attacked the screen: reducing our actual engagement to **20%.**

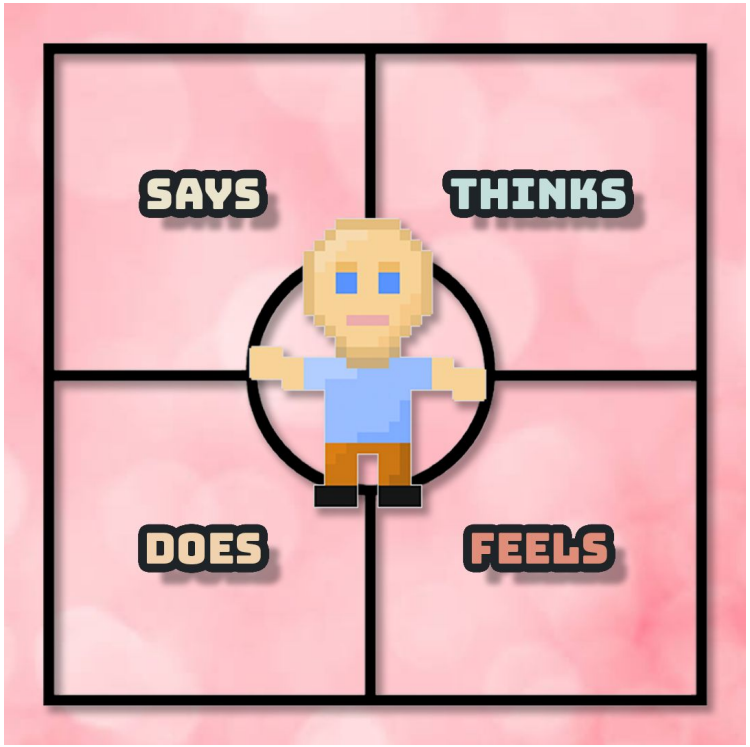
Enter Empathic Design

Experiencing what your end user experiences, with your end user

Designing a baby bottle

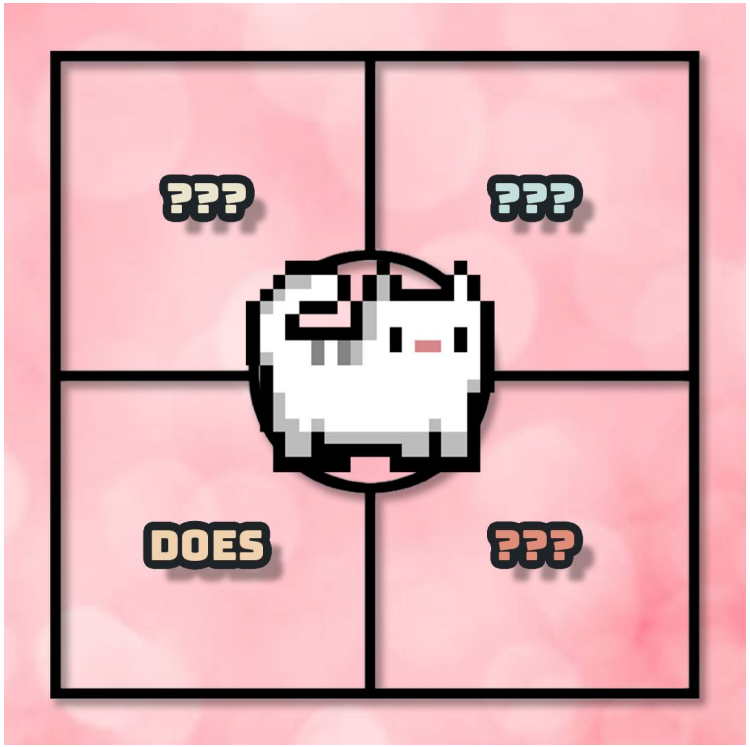
- Milano enters the baby bottle market
- Spend hours observing children using the product
- Notice developmental stages play a role in design
- Notice needs from the child **as well as the parent**

Empathy Mapping



- User's name and picture in center
- Individual moments per category around the outside
- Unique map per user

The Problem With Cats



- Only get ¼ with cats
- **Communication** is our key problem
- **Understanding** has to replace communication

Filling out the Map

Do the Research

We read a lot of books and looked up a lot of cat facts. Turns out cats are **semi-color blind**, have **poor vision** within a foot, are primarily **motion** based, and see at up to **60 FPS**.

Find the Experts

We found cat behaviorists and asked as much as we could. They **agreed that watching is engagement** and pointed out that **vision is only part of hunting**

Spend Time with Them

We started regularly going to Cat Cafes and testing with the cats there. Turned out that **different cats liked different games**, and many cats seemed to **not see the mouse**.

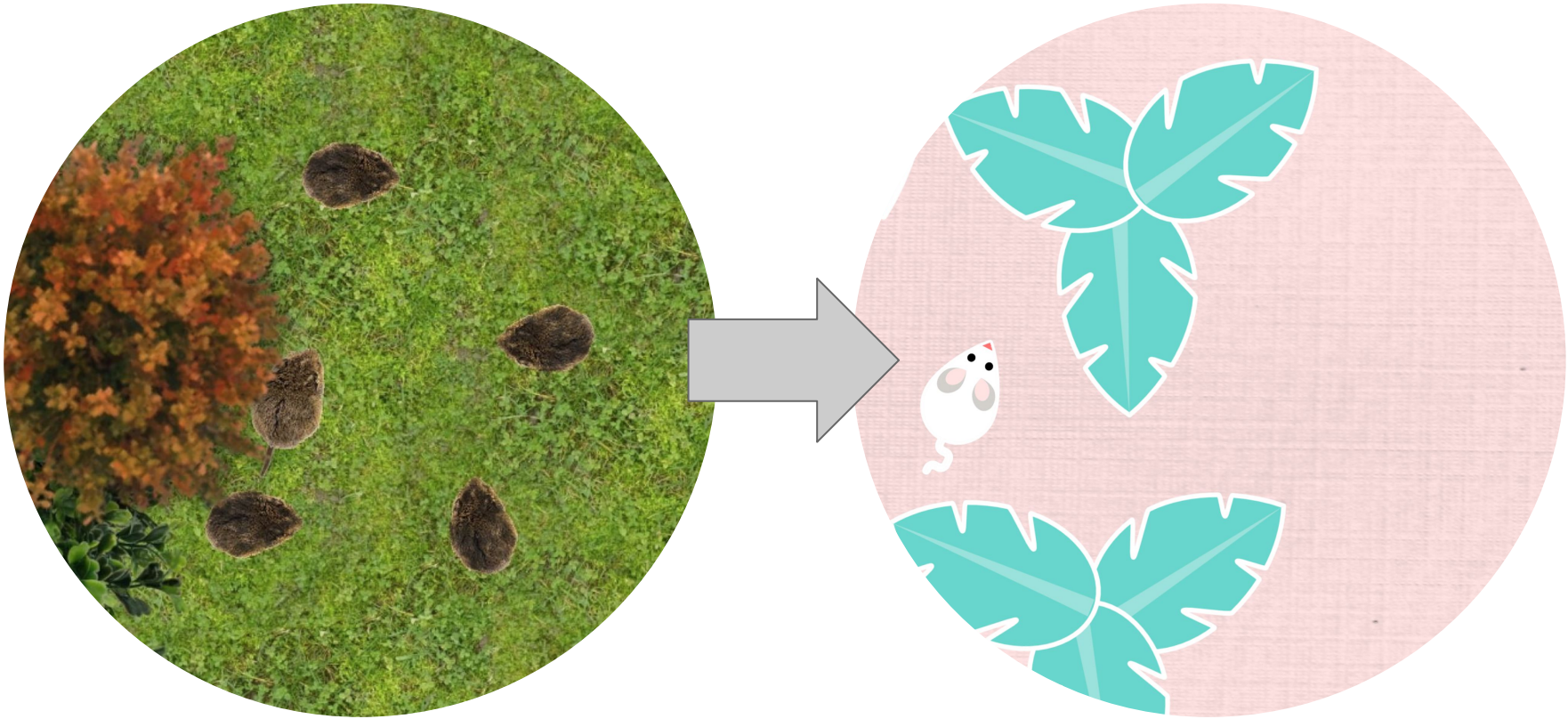
SAYS
WHERE IS IT?
THINKS
THERE IS MOVEMENT!
DOES
MISSES SCREEN
FEELS
MUST ATTACK!

What Do You Think Was Wrong?

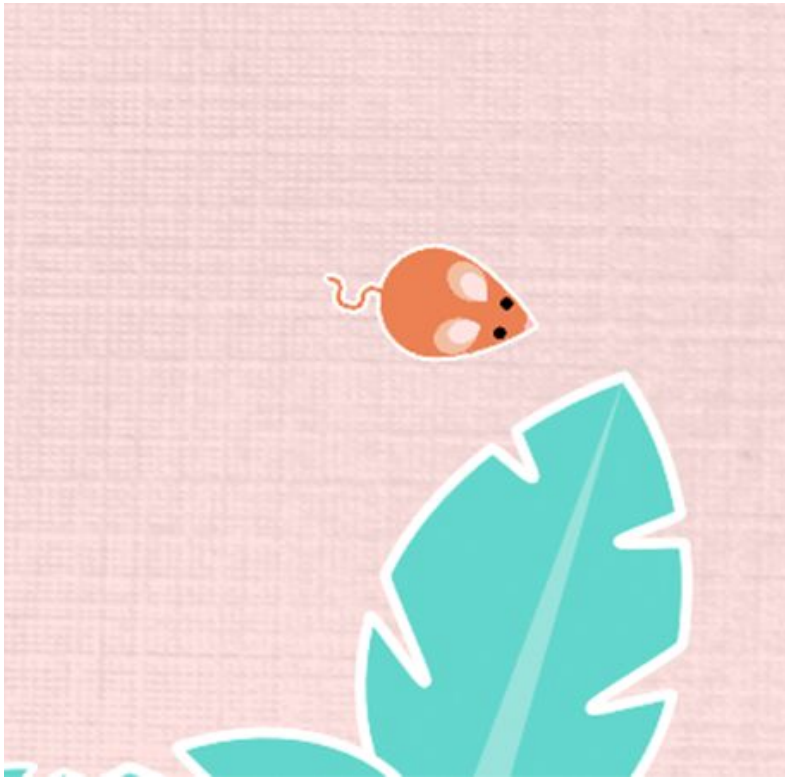
Big Discovery 2

Our art style was ruining everything

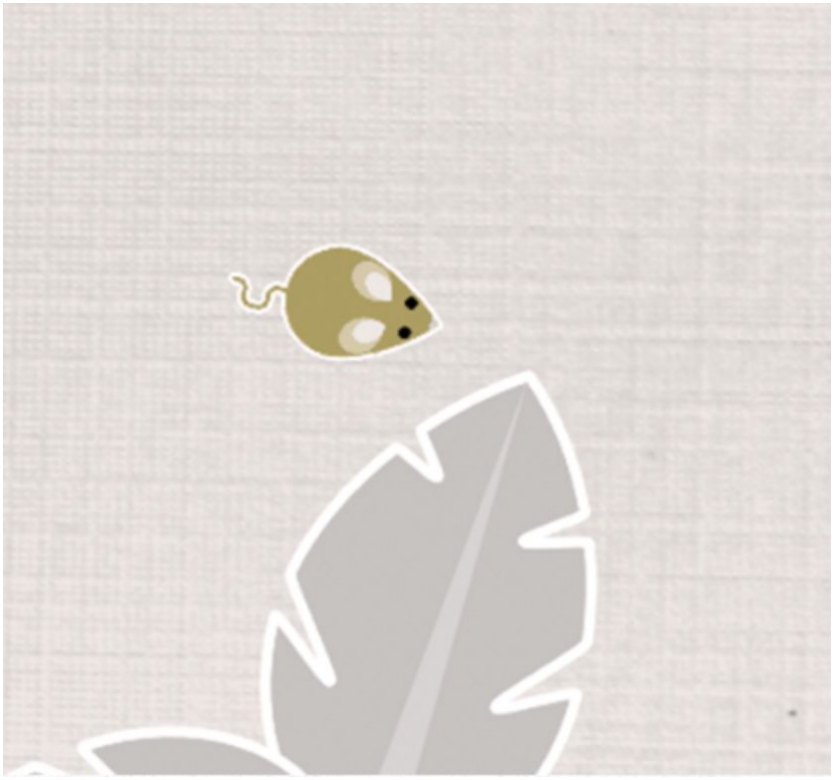
Engage the Cats



People Vision



Cat Vision



Launch Ready Games

- Tested new prototype on **42** cats
- **11** only watch
- **18** others engage
- **0** cats told us why they liked it now

Empathic Design on Cats

	Before	After
Cats Tested	29	42
Percent Watch	24%	26%
Percent Engage	20%	43%

And we did it without a single word from our users

If It Works for Cats...

Does it work for peoples?

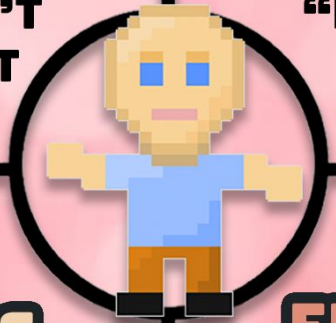
I don't use the data screen at all. But I like it. It's why I show people the app.

SAYS

WATCHING DOESN'T COUNT

THINKS

DATA IS "NEAT"

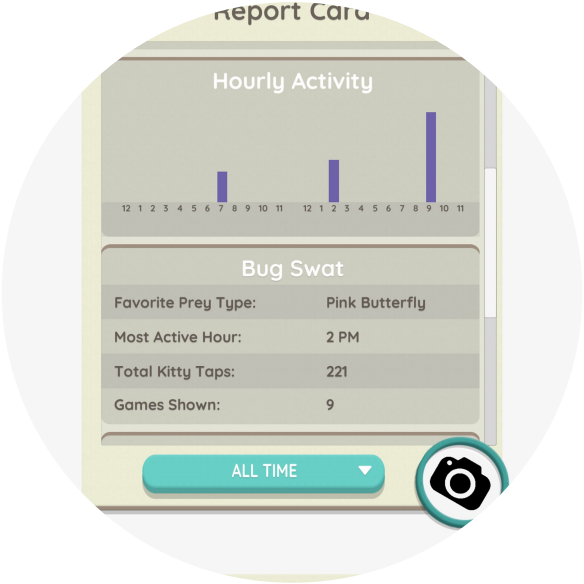


DOES

PLAYS IN PERSON

FEELS

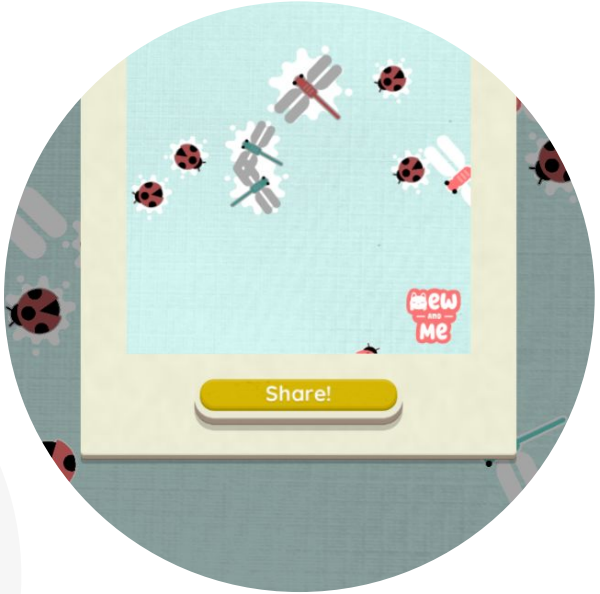
MISSES THEIR CAT



Big Discovery 3

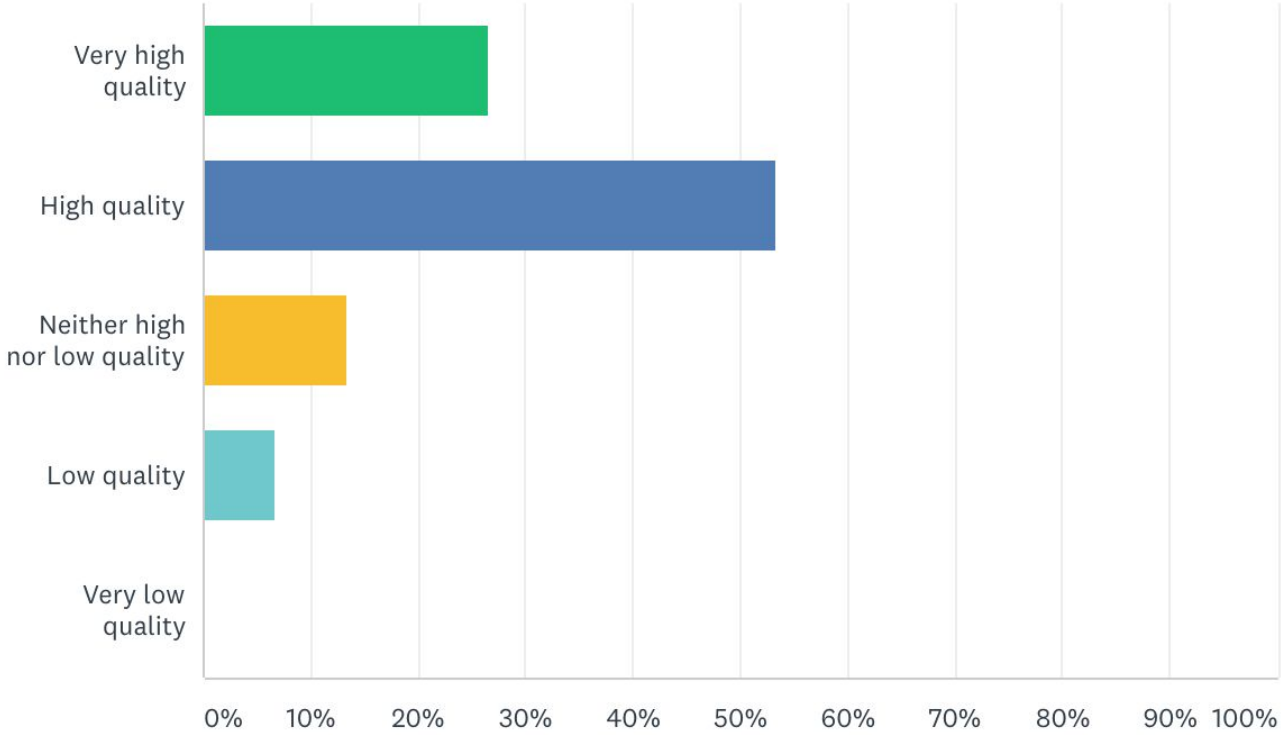
We were selling an intellectual product to emotional people

Empower the People

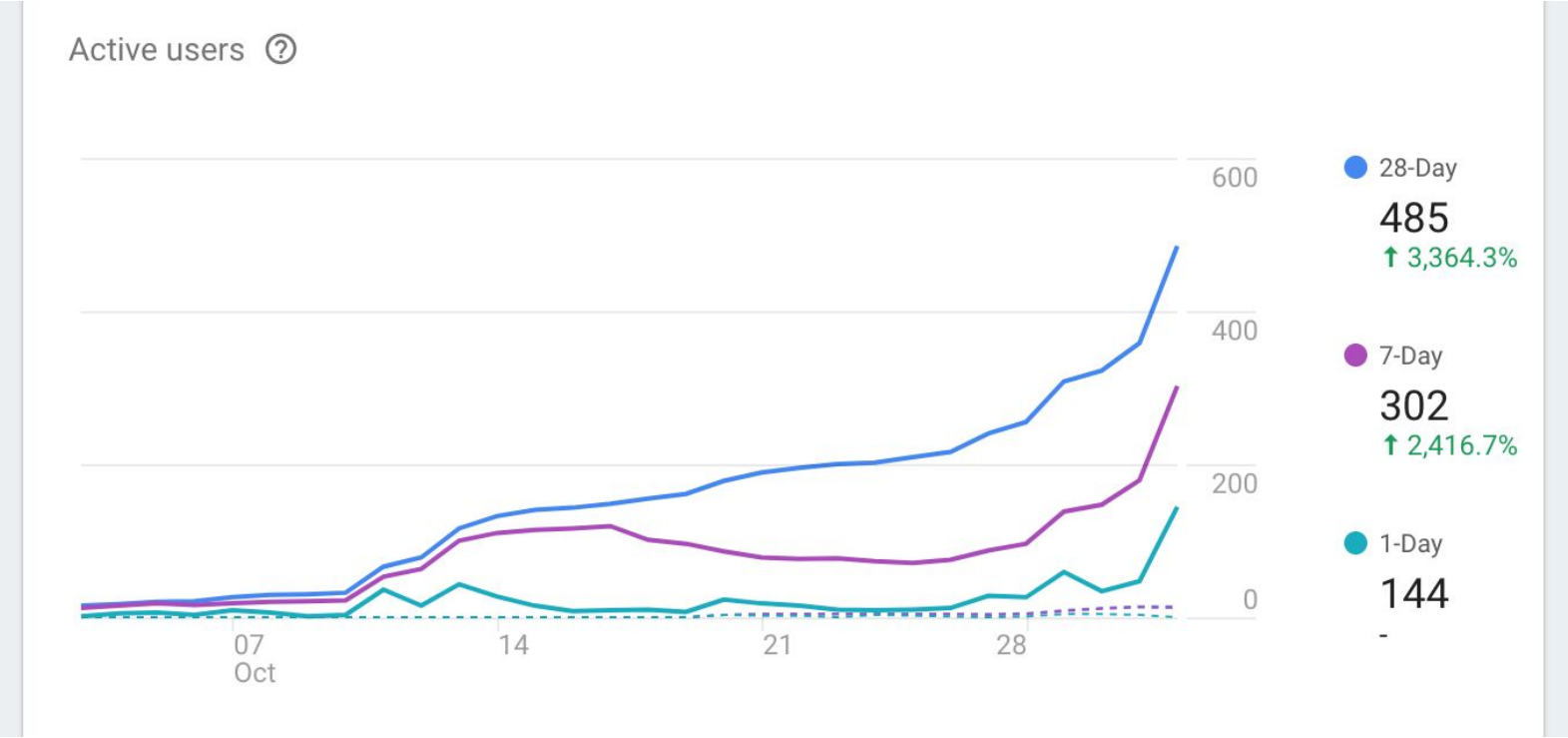


The People Results

And why Human Centered Design works



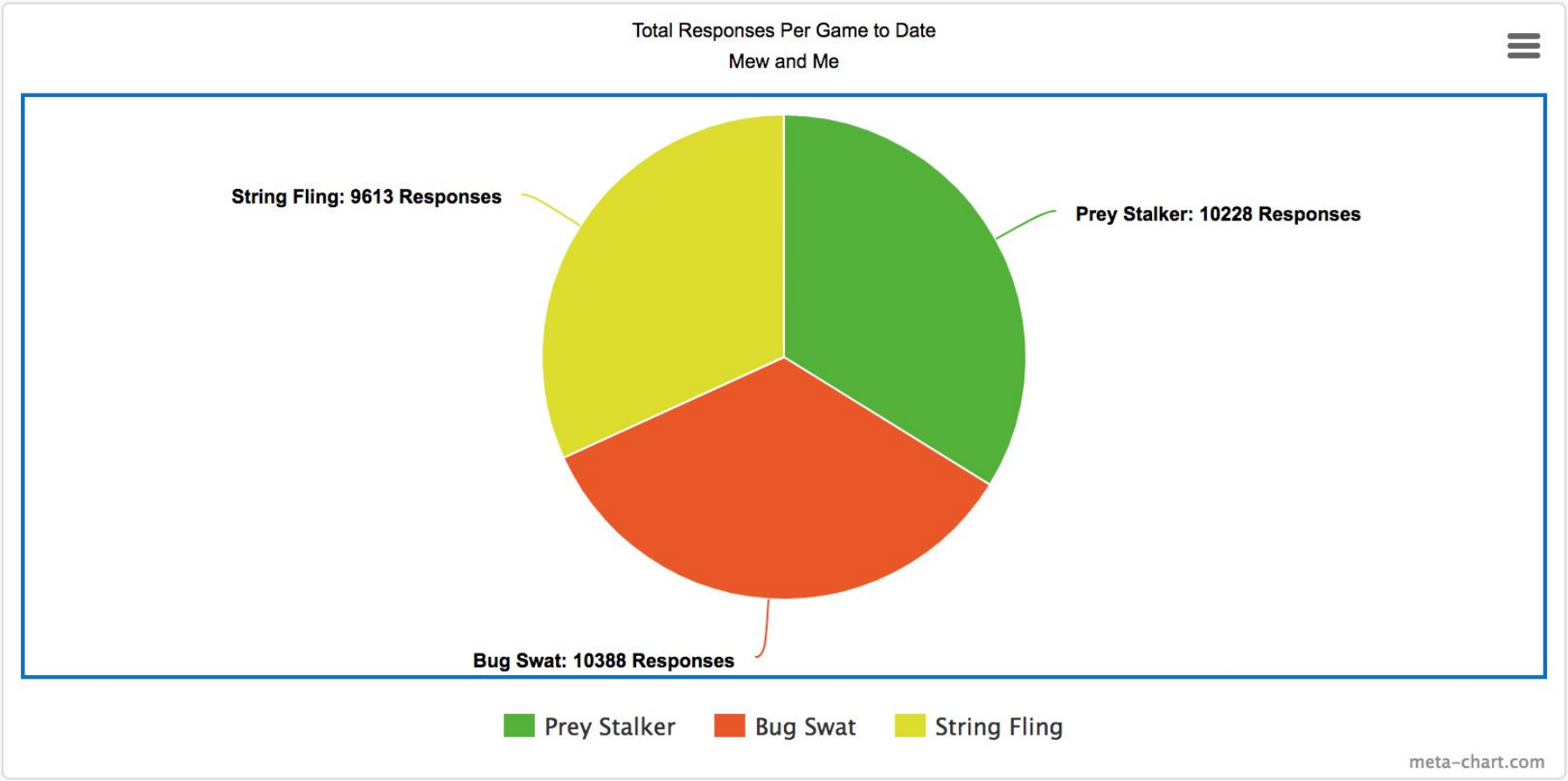
Now THAT is pretty cool



A pretty awesome launch!

The Cat Results

And why Cat Centered Design works

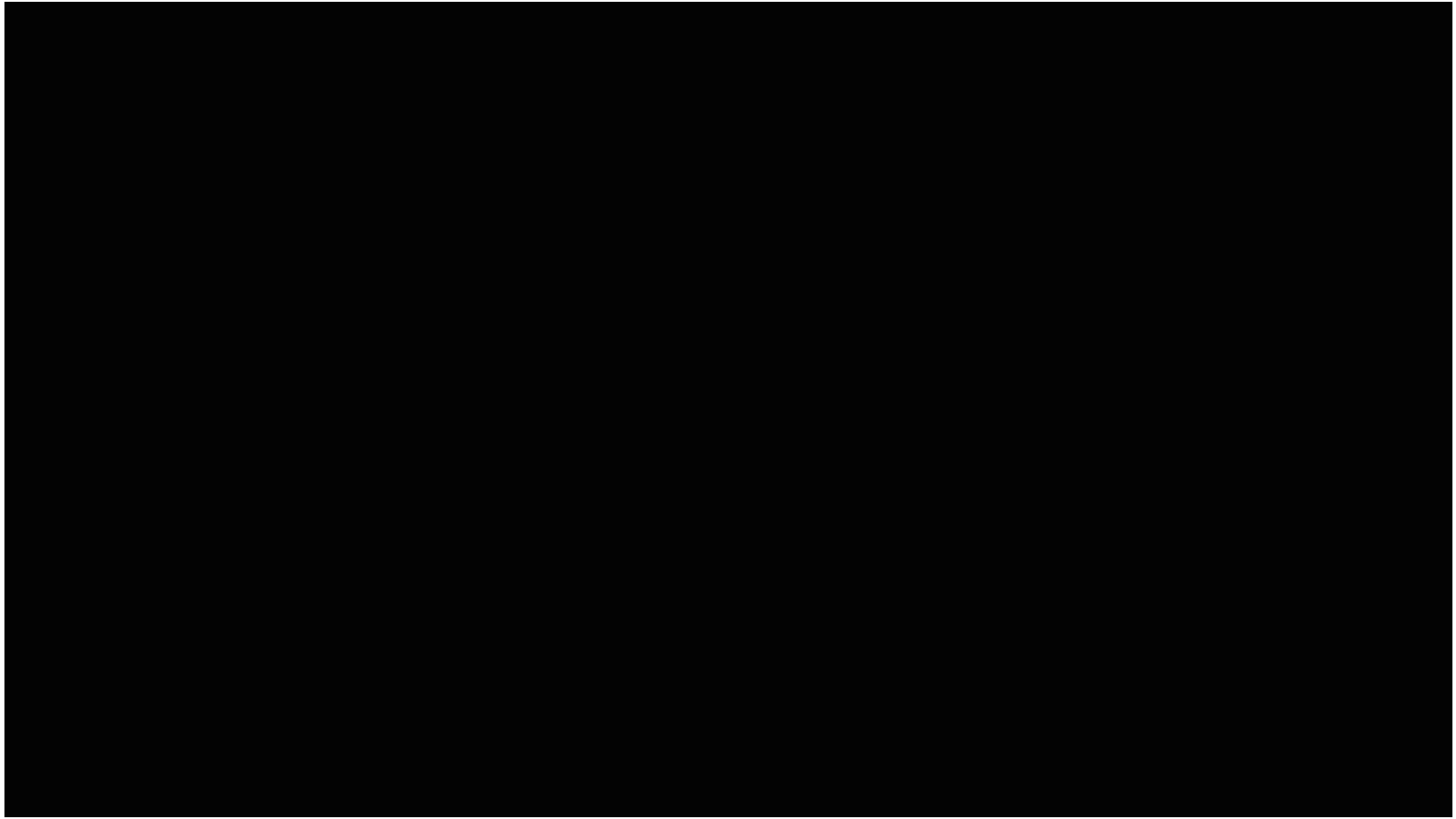

Total Responses Per Game to Date
Mew and Me
String Fling: 9613 Responses
Prey Stalker: 10228 Responses
Bug Swat: 10388 Responses
Prey Stalker
Bug Swat
String Fling
meta-chart.com

62% Engagement

And this is NOT including cats that watch

And Now, Your Reward

I know what you're here for



Our Key Takeaways

1. Empower ***Their*** Use Cases
2. **Research** your Target Users
3. Use **Empathy Mapping**

And....

The True Moral of the Story

Spend the time to understand your user, not just talk to them

Any Questions!?

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