

GDC

Paid Acquisition: A Scrappy, Practical Guide

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GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE
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Who Am I?

- I'm Mike, the CEO of Iron Horse Games
- Publisher on iOS and Google Play
- 11M Installs across 19 Titles in the last year.



What Am I Going to Talk About?

- Marketing in 3 Phases on Google Play: Open Beta, Launch, Live.
- Marketing in 1 Phase on Apple: Live
- Marketing Effectively with Facebook and Unity.



Idle Apocalypse

Iron Horse Games LLC Simulation

Everyone 10+

Contains Ads · Offers in-app purchases

This app is compatible with your device.

★★★★★ 58,941

Installed



Tap Wizard: Idle Monster Quest (Beta)

Iron Horse Games LLC Simulation

Everyone

Contains Ads · Offers in-app purchases

You're a beta tester for this app. Awesome!

This app is compatible with your device.

★★★★★ 7,469

Installed

Focusing on Google Play

- Why?
 - Google Play Organic Installs > Apple Organic Installs



Tap Tap Dig - Idle Clicker Game Editors' Choice

Iron Horse Games LLC Simulation ★★★★★ 15,137

Everyone

Contains Ads · Offers in-app purchases
This app is compatible with your device.

Installed

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Updated	Size	Installs
March 10, 2019	Varies with device	1,000,000+ 
Current Version	Requires Android	Content Rating
Varies with device	Varies with device	Everyone Learn More
Interactive Elements	In-app Products	Permissions
Digital Purchases	\$1.99 - \$49.99 per item	View details
Report	Offered By	Developer
Flag as inappropriate	Iron Horse Games LLC	Visit website contact@ironhgames.com

Quick Google Play Open Beta FAQ

- Open Beta:
 - Keywords are important
 - Don't Treat it like a Test Market



Google Play Open Beta Strategy

- Choose & Optimize Your Keywords
- Market Your Game to Increase Organic Installs from Keywords
- Use Results to Apply to Early Access

How Many Installs From ASO?

- No Early Access Feature:
 - 7,000/13,000 Organic Installs came from Search Traffic in a month
- Early Access Feature:
 - 15,000/31,000 Organic Installs Came from Search Traffic in a month

Step 1: Choose Keywords

- Which keywords?
- Which keywords are good?
- Choose 3-5.



tower defense		Track	Research	Traffic and Difficulty		
Traffic	Difficulty	# Apps				
5.5	8.2	240				

Top Apps for tower defense		Last Update	All Time Ratings	Ranking	Category	Keyword Spy
1	Realm Defense: Hero L... Babeltime US ★★★★★ Free	21 hours	347,174	103	Top Free Strategy	
2	Bloons TD 6 ninja kiwi ★★★★★ \$4.99	7 days	51,846	1	Top Paid Strategy	
3	Bloons TD 5 ninja kiwi ★★★★★ \$2.99	2 months	193,148	4	Top Paid Strategy	

Step 2: Optimize Keywords

- Keyword Bank is pulled from Title, Sub-Title, Description, Bundle ID
- Focus on Keyword Density with AppTweak.
- Target a density of 3-5%

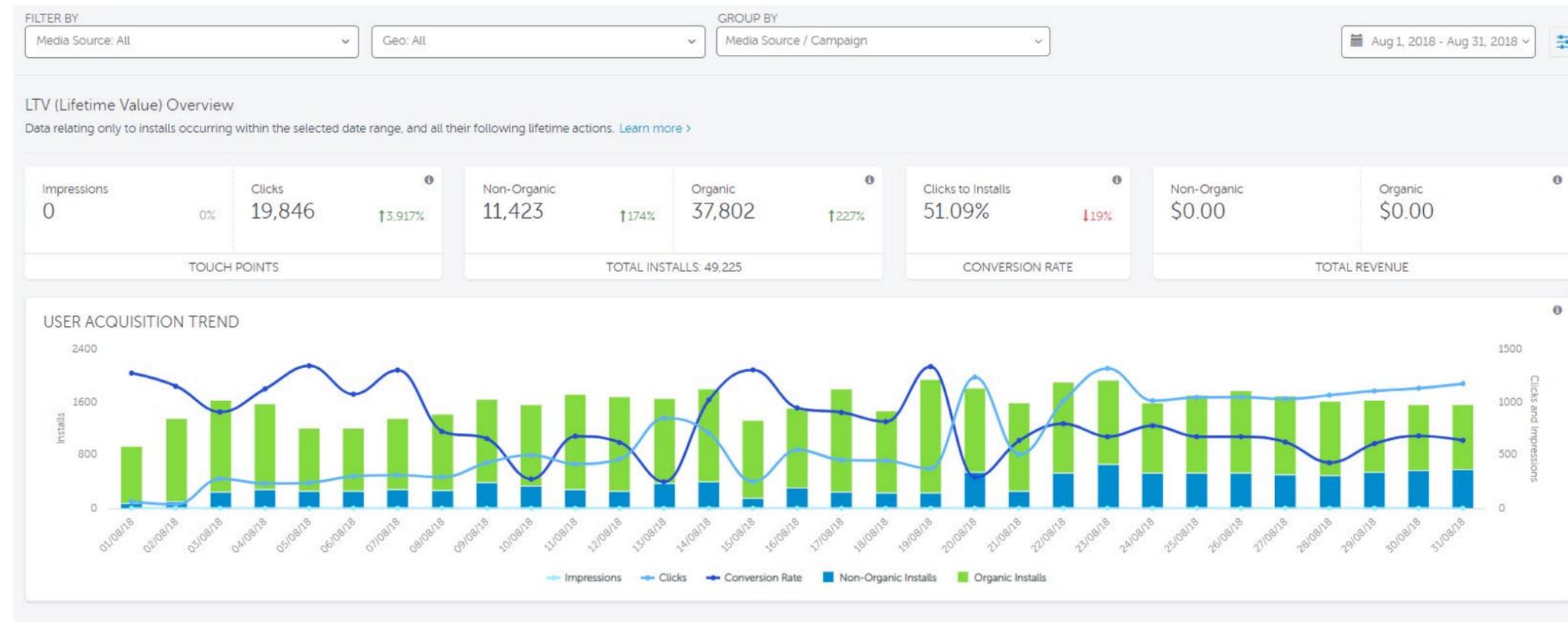


Keyword Count and Density [?](#) Show: 1 word 2 words 3 words

Keyword(s)	Count	Density ?
card	12	3.34%
cards	9	2.51%
deck	8	2.23%
tcg, battle	7	1.95%
war	6	1.67%
pve, upgrade	5	1.39%
game, campaign, easy, skills	4	1.11%
hundreds, build, free, trading, online, pvp, offline, defeat, battles, uncivil	3	0.84%
collect, challenge, multiplayer, duels, strategy, enemies, inspired, balanced, win, fast, over, ccg, challenging, ==, pick, earn, play, world, pixel, art, soundtrack	2	0.56%

Step 3A: Market w/ Money

- Integrate Appsflyer for Attributing Paid Installs
- Start Campaigns on Facebook and Unity
- Spend 50-100 US a day
- Focus on T1 Markets



Step 3B: Market w/ No Money

- Get An Integration Bonus
- Get a Line of Credit

Step 4: Monitor Keywords

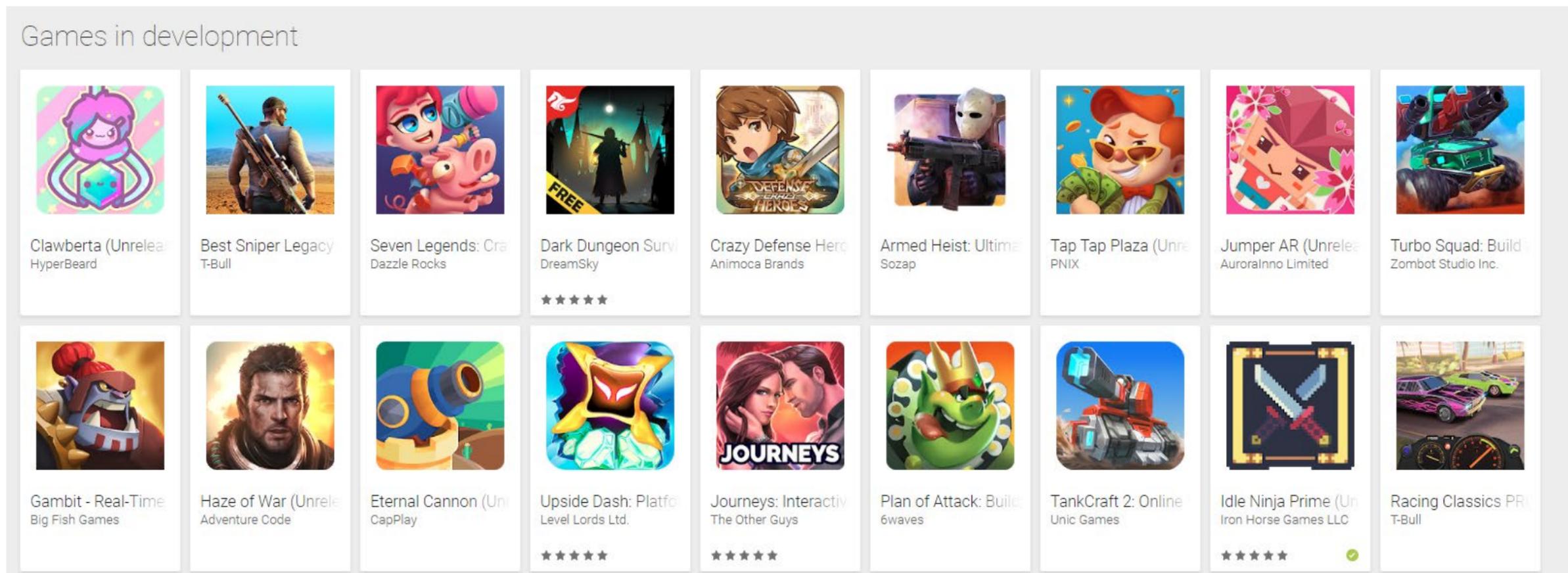
- Google Play Dev Console > User Acquisition > Search
 - Volume/Quality
- Troubleshoot
- Target Top 10-15



Acquisition channel	Store listing visitors	First-time installers	for 1 day	for 7 days	for 15 days	for 30 days
<input checked="" type="radio"/> All acquisition channels	99,047	10,711	5,630	3,404	—	—
Conversion rate	—	10.8%	52.6%	31.8%	—	—
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Play Store (organic)	98,824	10,687	5,619	3,396	—	—
Conversion rate	—	10.8%	52.6%	31.8%	—	—
Benchmark	—	(-4.3%)	(+9.1%)	(+8.7%)	—	—
<input type="radio"/> Search [?]	16,030	1,298	631	379	—	—
Conversion rate	—	8.1%	48.6%	29.2%	—	—
<input type="radio"/> Explore [?]	82,794	9,388	4,981	3,012	—	—
Conversion rate	—	11.3%	53.1%	32.1%	—	—

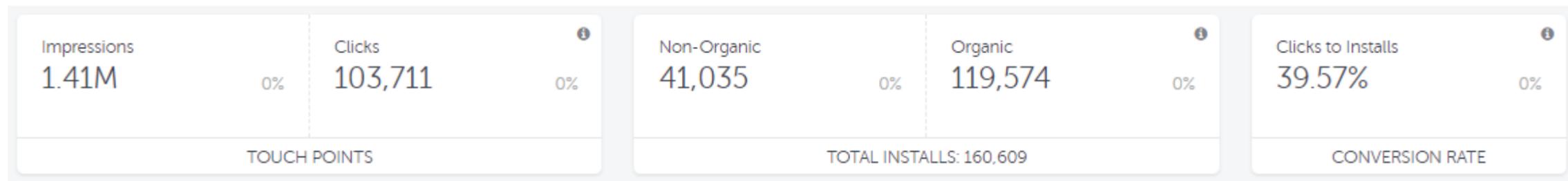
Step 5: Apply For Early Access

- Use KPIs to make the case why your game is worth the feature!
- Remember, Google is a business too.



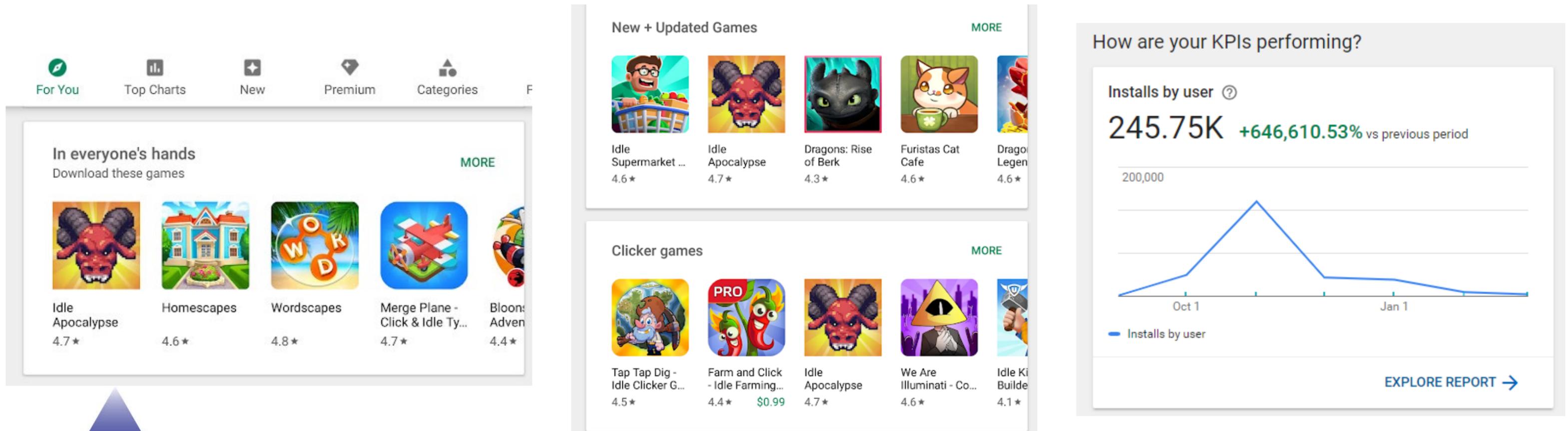
Google Play Launch FAQ

- Window lasts 30 days
- Window Begins at Global Production Launch
- Paid to Organic Ratios are Inflated during your first 30 days of Launch



Google Play Launch Strategy

- Market your game aggressively during the first 30 days to increase organic installs.



How Many Installs During Launch?

- Averaged Across Multiple Launches in the first 30 days:
 - Acquired 75,000 users and generated 175,000 organic installs

Step 1: Learn from Open Beta

- Which marketing creative was strongest?
- Which channels/targeting had high ROI?
- Which keywords are you focusing on for launch?

Step 2: Choose Marketing Partners

- Main 2 Partners:
 - Unity
 - Facebook
- Additional Partners:
 - Tapjoy
 - Ironsource

Step 2A: Unity FAQ

- Won't exceed budget
- Won't exceed bid
- Only uses video creatives
- Can get a line of credit

Step 2A(continued): Unity Tips

- Slight Creative Variations=Impression Bump
- Blind Bid Around Your ARPU
- Share Session/Rev Info

Step 2B: Facebook FAQ

- Won't Exceed Budget
- Will Exceed Bid
- Uses Display Ads & Video Ads
- Can Get a Line of Credit

Step 2B (continued): FB Tips

- Mind the Honeymoon
- Display Ads **STILL WORK**
- Start Low Cost Bidding, then Move to Bid Caps

Live

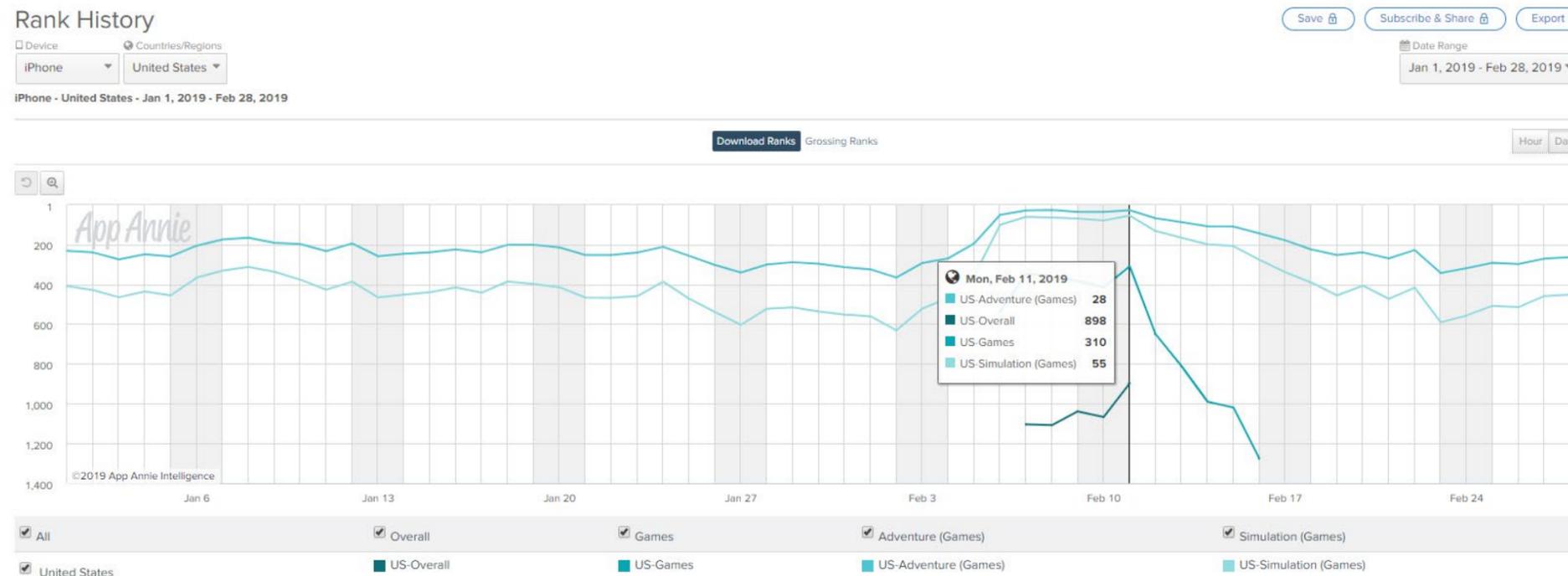
- Organic to Paid Ratios can still be high; 1-2 Organic for every Paid install
- Use data from Launch to pitch for New & Updated Featuring
- Try new marketing partners

Apple is different

- Paid to organic ratios are 4-7:1.
- Know your targeting and ARPUs from Google BEFORE kicking off on Apple.
- Chart positions do give increased organic installs...just not enough to compensate for the cost.

Chart Positions on Apple

- 4k installs/day=300 in Games in the US
- Yields 100-200 Organics More Daily



Wrap Up

- Keywords Matter in Open Beta on Google Play
- Marketing During the Launch Window on Google Play is critical
- Google Play Organic Installs > Apple Organic Installs