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San Francisco, CA

Step Into Your Player's Shoes:
Making the Most of Team Playtests on skate.

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#GDC23

Hi! 👋

- Design & Programming
- Mobile, PC & Console
- Teaching & Mentoring

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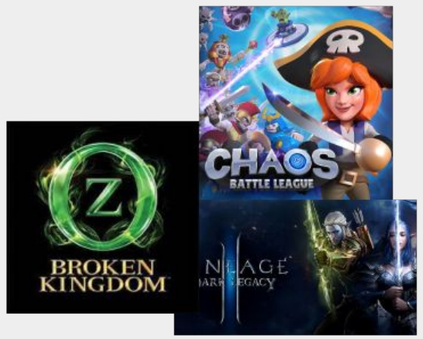
ThisGameStudio



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CENTRE FOR ENTERTAINMENT ARTS

Langara.
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VFS VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL

Ladies that UX™

IGDA GAMES RESEARCH & USER EXPERIENCE SIG

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WE'RE WORKING ON IT

Why talk about Team Playtesting?

Team Playtesting doesn’t replace User Testing…

skate. Insider Playtest Highlights: February | skate.

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skate. Insider Playtest Highlights: August | skate.

Still Working On It | skate.

We're Working On It | skate.

Why talk about Team Playtesting?

Team Playtesting doesn't replace User Testing…

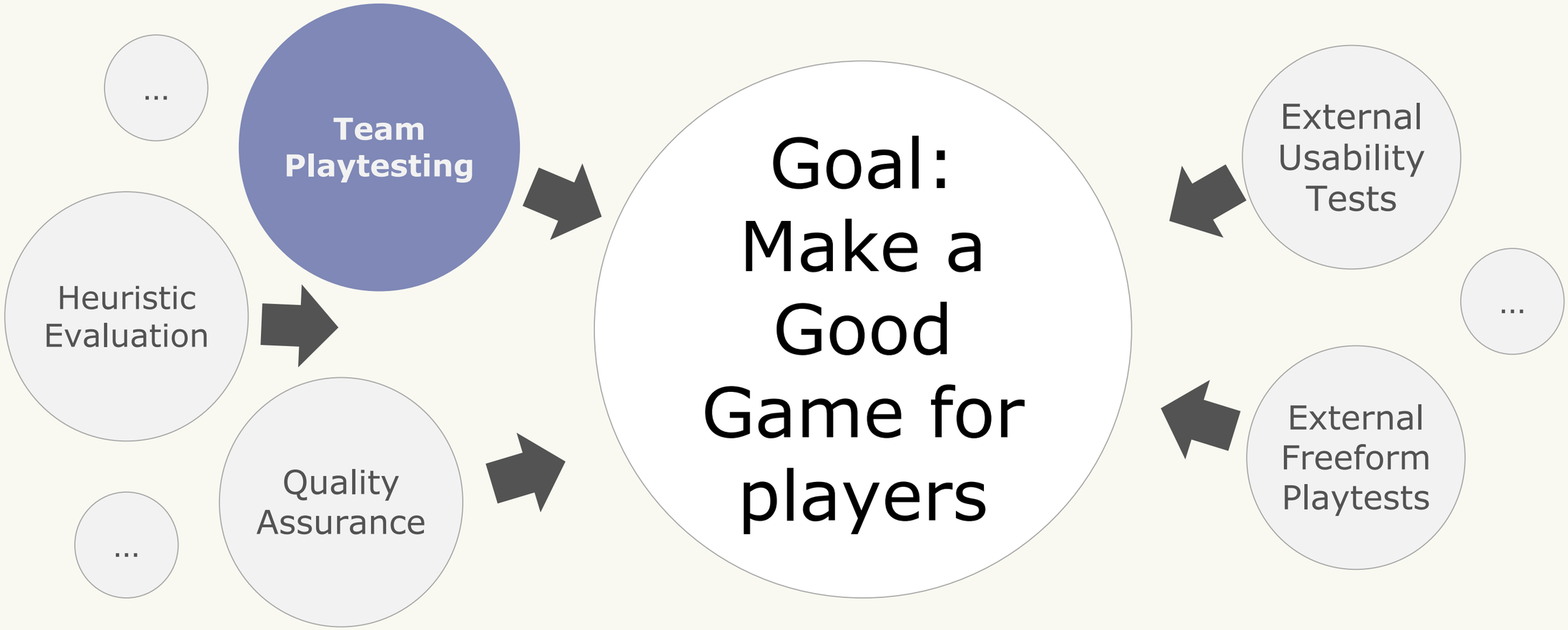
but…

What we'll talk about

1. Team Playtesting
2. **Focused** Team Playtesting
3. How to run Focused Team Playtests
4. Learnings & Wrap up

1. Team Playtesting
2. Focused Team Playtesting
3. How to Run Focused Team Playtests
4. Wrap up

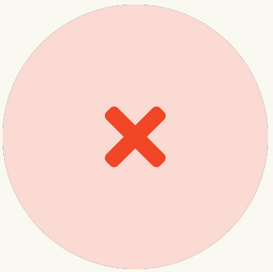
Why do we test?



What is Team Playtesting?

- Testing with members of the team
- Common Practice
- Recurring
- Different sized groups

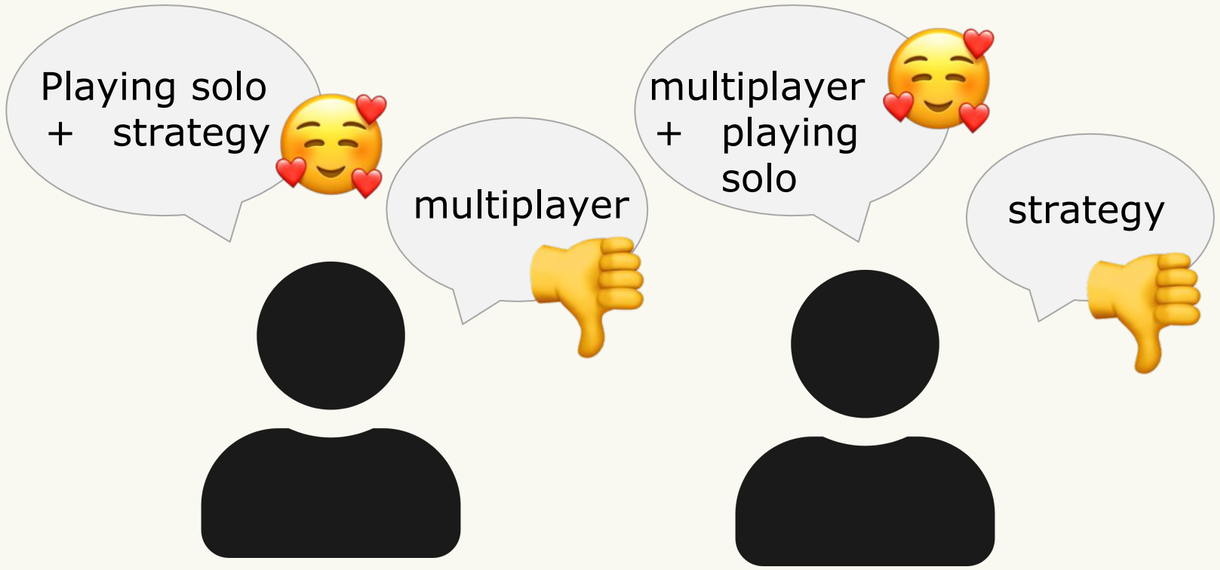
Quick & Low Cost Iteration Loops



Different than target audience

What do we mean by not being the target audience?

Curse of Knowledge



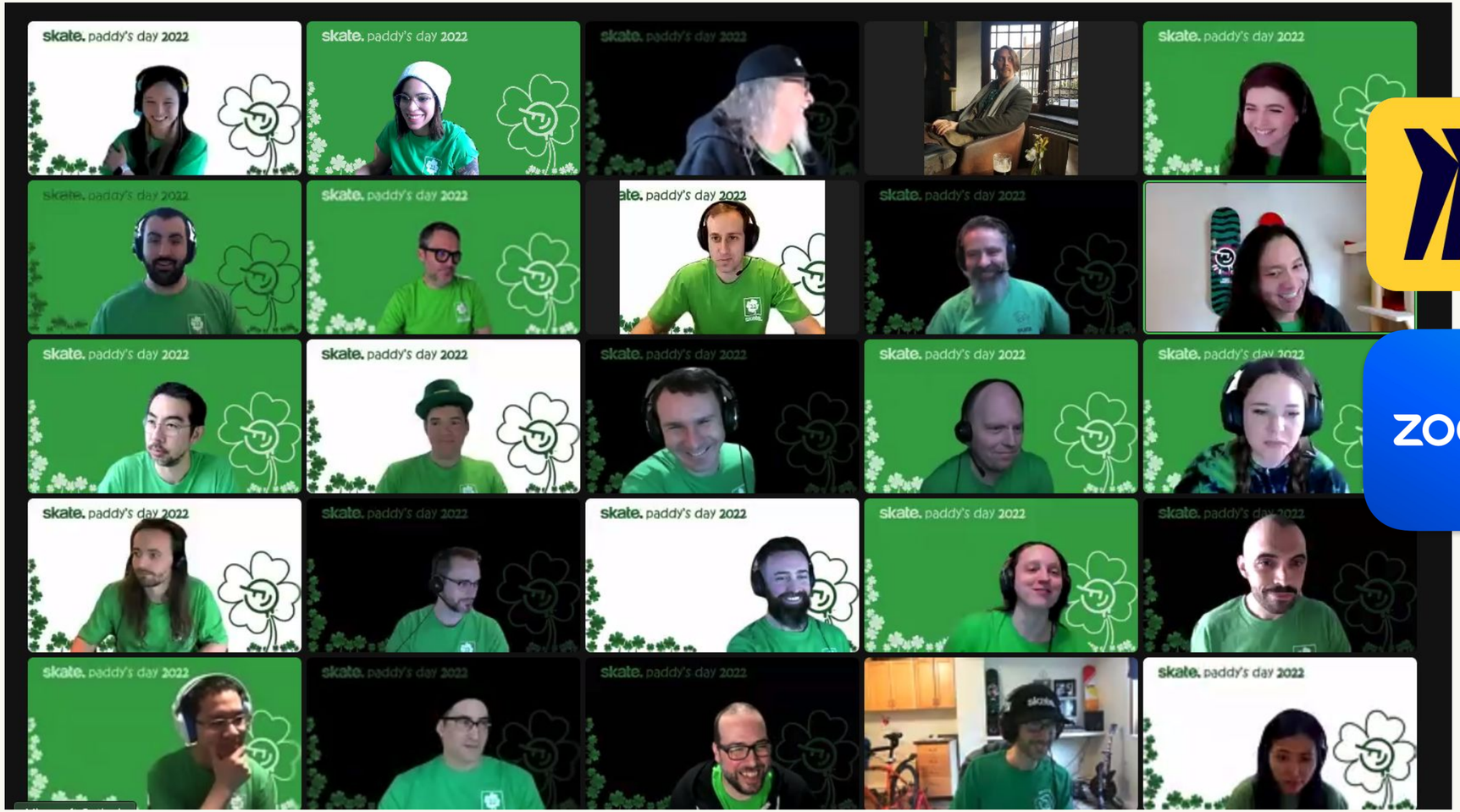
Personal Tastes & Motivations

External User Testing solves this

- Recruit Target audience
- Recruit New players
- Freeform or Focused

…but this is not always an option

Team Benefits

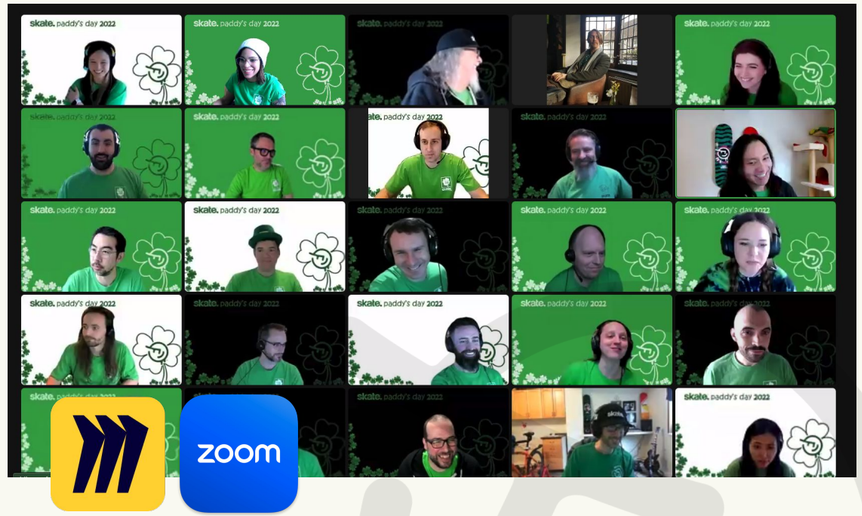


zoom

FULL CIRCLE

Team Benefits

- Shared vision
- Give everyone input
- Connect & have fun



Need to balance different perspectives.

Leveraging Team Playtests

Good 👍

- Quick & Low cost iteration
- Fresh eyes in team
- Team alignment

Not so Good 👎

- Developer Bias

Leveraging Team Playtests

How can we leverage the strengths of Team Playtesting while minimizing the weaknesses?

How did we do this?

‘Focused Team Playtests’ where we get the team to Step into player’s shoes:

- Provide scenarios to try
- Segment the feedback based on relevant traits

which resulted in:

- More meaningful feedback
- Team engagement & UX buy-in

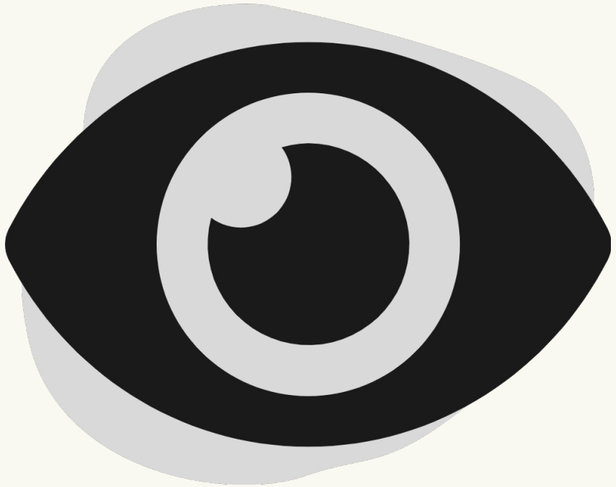
1 Team Playtesting

2 **Focused Team Playtesting**

3 How to Run Focused Team Playtests

4 Wrap up

What are Focused Team Playtests?



Player Lens

Scenarios & User Traits

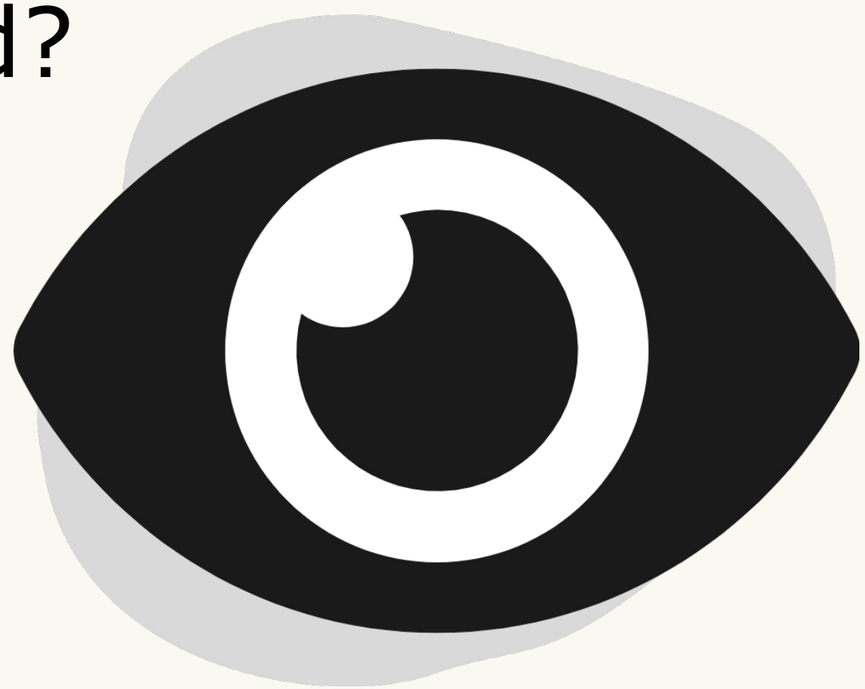
Logistics

Plan, Run & Action

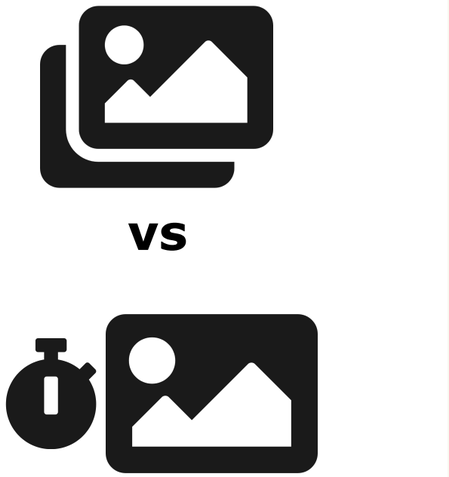
Player Lens

Who is it for and how is it used?

- Scenarios
- User Traits



What does a scenario look like?

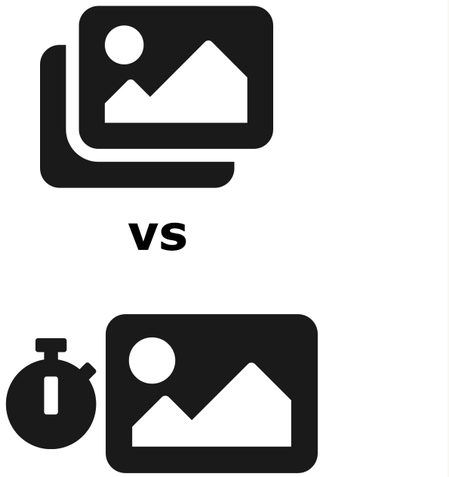


In-Context

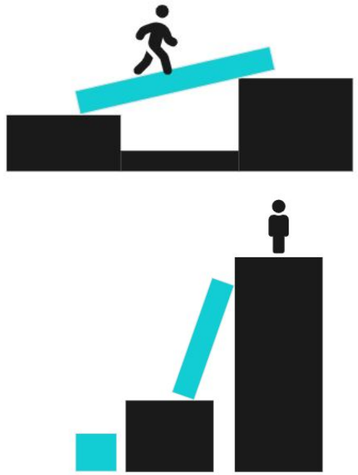
"Take 2 photos from different camera angles"

"Perform a trick, then take a photo of it, save and return to gameplay"

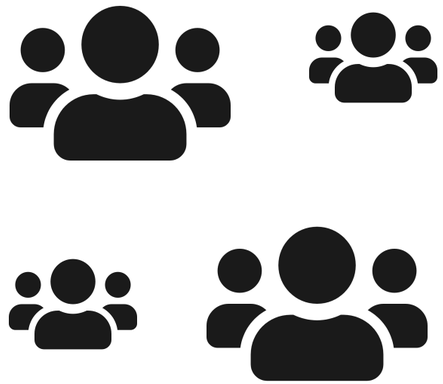
What does a scenario look like?



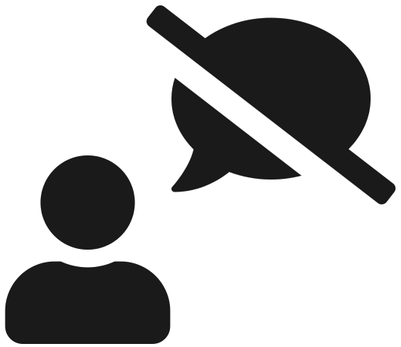
In-Context



Different Goals



Situation



Constraints

What do user traits look like?

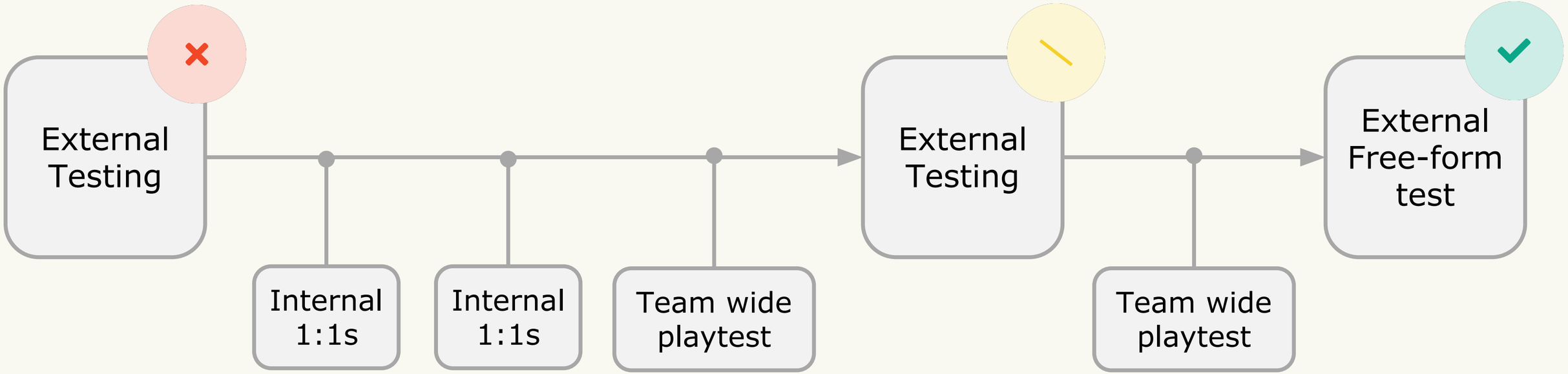
Familiarity

Motivation

Shared Pain Point

How have we used this before?

- Capture Feature iteration loop



Capture Tool Improvements

- Current state metrics below target
- Too complex for players
- Created Player Lens to assess from
- No extra external research bandwidth

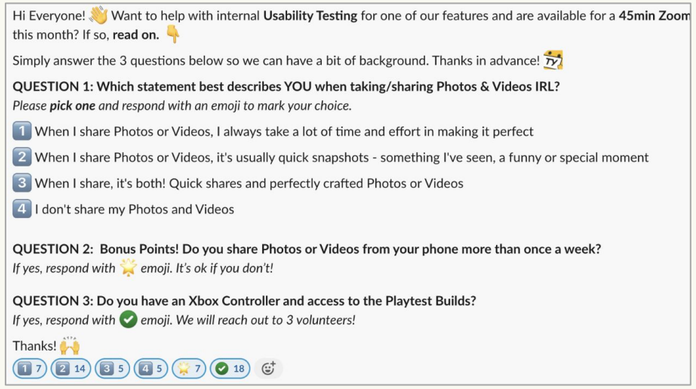
The Camera tool was complicated to use, resulting in zero photos being produced during the session

Priority: High

[redacted]

Note: Some players were looking for just pressing a button to take a quick snapshot.

Internal 1:1 Tests


Hi Everyone! 👋 Want to help with internal **Usability Testing** for one of our features and are available for a **45min Zoom** this month? If so, **read on.** 👇

Simply answer the 3 questions below so we can have a bit of background. Thanks in advance! 🙏

QUESTION 1: Which statement best describes YOU when taking/sharing Photos & Videos IRL?
*Please **pick one** and respond with an emoji to mark your choice.*

1️⃣ When I share Photos or Videos, I always take a lot of time and effort in making it perfect
2️⃣ When I share Photos or Videos, it's usually quick snapshots - something I've seen, a funny or special moment
3️⃣ When I share, it's both! Quick shares and perfectly crafted Photos or Videos
4️⃣ I don't share my Photos and Videos

QUESTION 2: Bonus Points! Do you share Photos or Videos from your phone more than once a week?
If yes, respond with 💥 emoji. It's ok if you don't!

QUESTION 3: Do you have an Xbox Controller and access to the Playtest Builds?
If yes, respond with ✅ emoji. We will reach out to 3 volunteers!

Thanks! 🙌

1️⃣ 7 2️⃣ 14 3️⃣ 5 4️⃣ 5 💥 7 ✅ 18

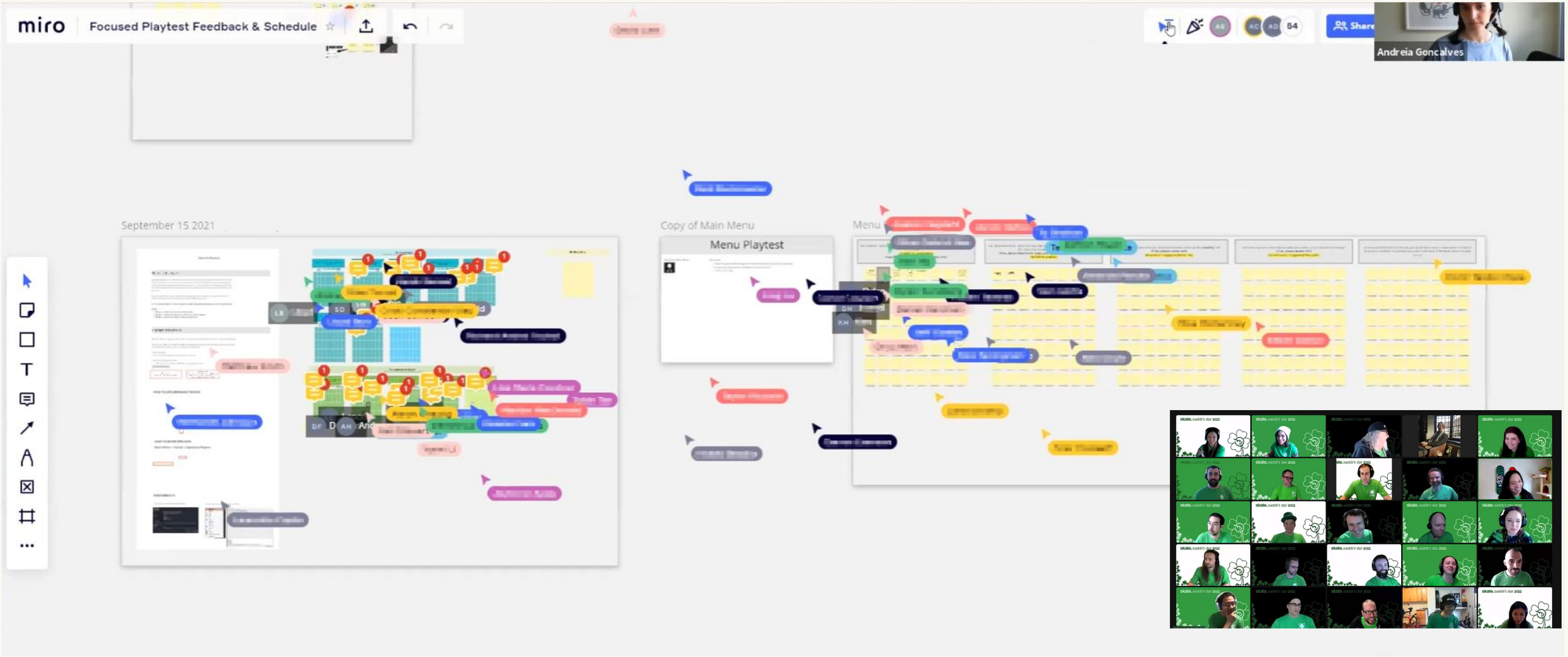
Recruited on Slack based on Traits

Test using Quick Creation Tasks

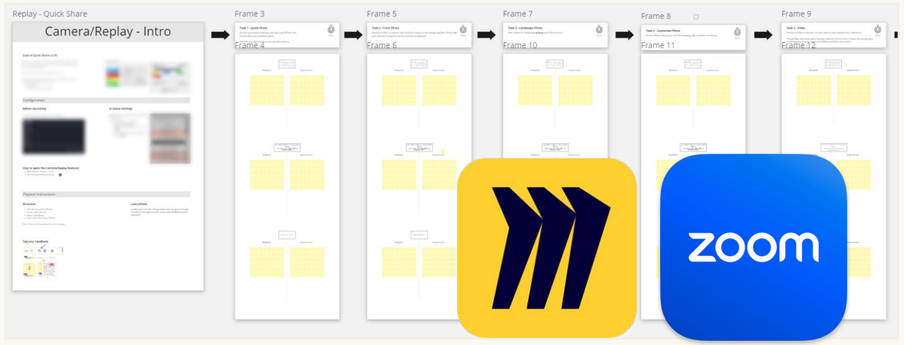
Orbit - Change camera to face character	✓
Free Cam - Take Picture without Landscape	✗
Trim	✓
Watch Trimmed Video	✗
Hide/Unhide UI	

Debrief scoring sheet to track issues

Team-wide playtest



Team-wide playtest

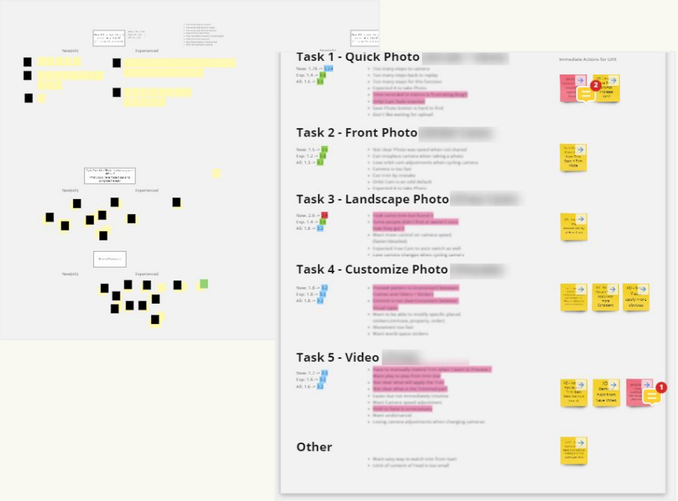


Task 2 - Front Photo

Perform an Ollie or any trick, then find that moment in the footage and take a Photo with your Character facing the Camera, then save it and return to gameplay

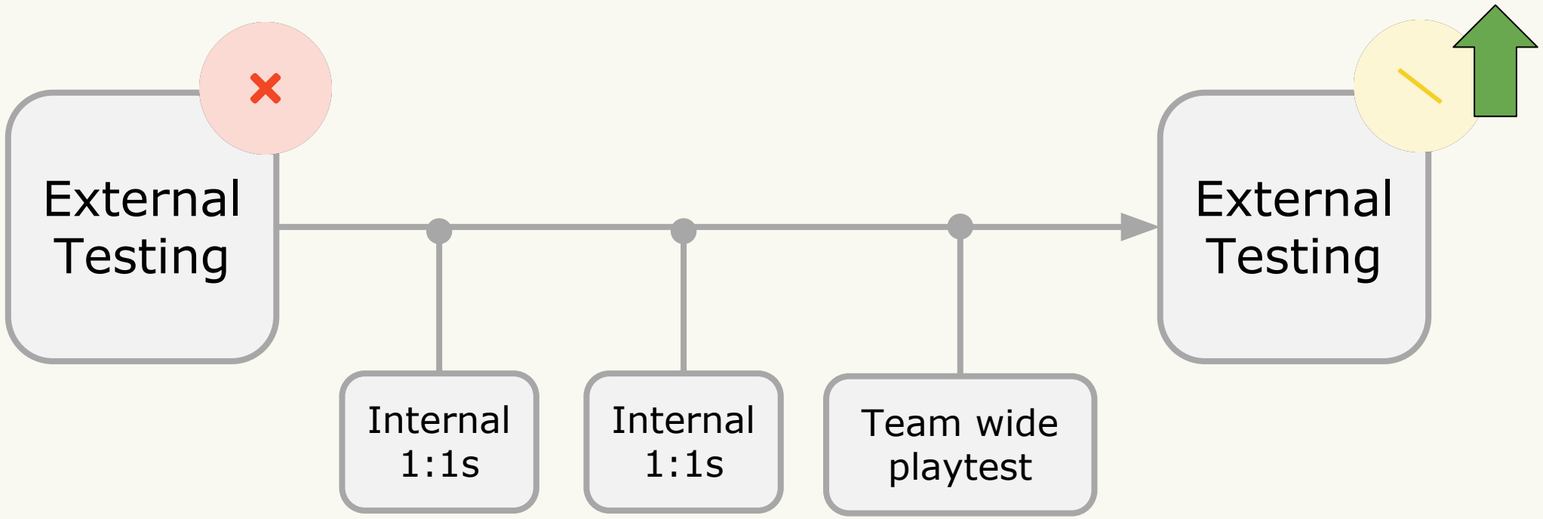
Test using Quick Creation Scenarios

Feedback segmented by Familiarity



Interpret feedback & create actions

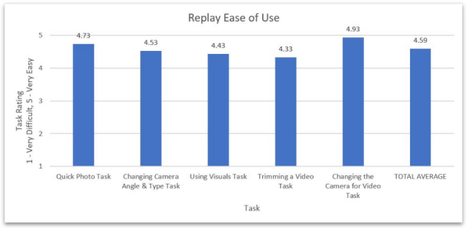
Improved feedback & metrics



Players completed all of the tasks in the Replay feature

The player experience with Replay has significantly improved from the last UXR session

- Players could distinguish saving images vs videos
- They knew how to change the camera type
- Players needed a few second to grasp the controls for trim but could trim videos with no issues
- They could easily write the captions for the images



One remaining issue…

- Pinpointed learnability issue
- Added tutorial
- Test in team-wide playtest
- Positive results but not enough new players

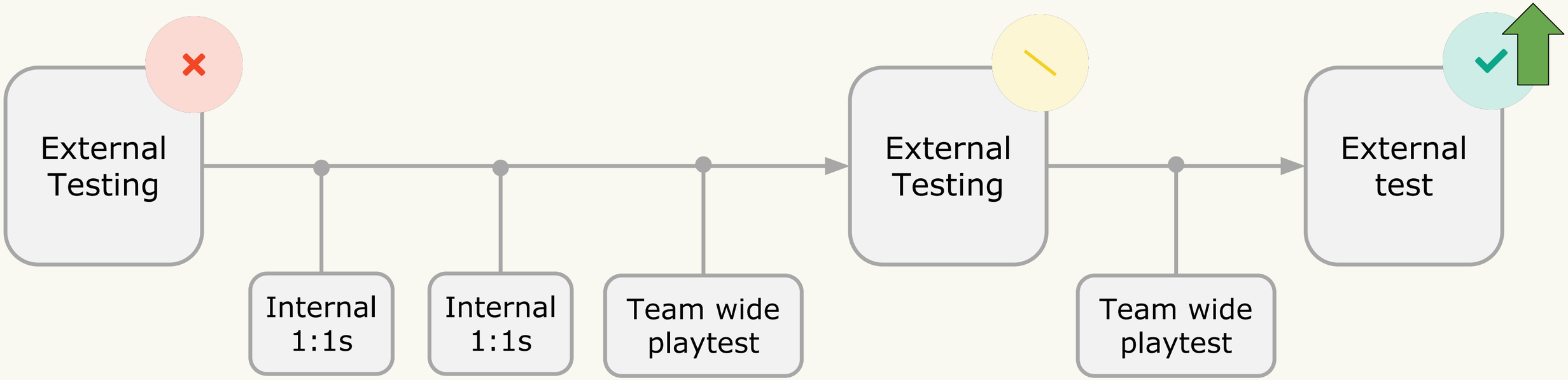
Some players did not know they have access to more than 15 seconds at first

- In Replay players thought they only had access to 15 seconds without visiting the trim mode
  - This caused few players to think they missed a cool trick they did and try to recreate it again
  - The bug with Replay footage not pausing while player was in the Menu exacerbated the issue for some players

What was your level of familiarity with the Photo + Video Editor before trying the Tutorial?

32 responses

Achieved target



Leveraging Focused Team Playtests

- Internal feedback helped us improve the solution in a way that met players needs.
- Available when extra user testing was not possible.

1 Team Playtesting

2 Focused Team Playtesting

3 **How to Run Focused Team Playtests**

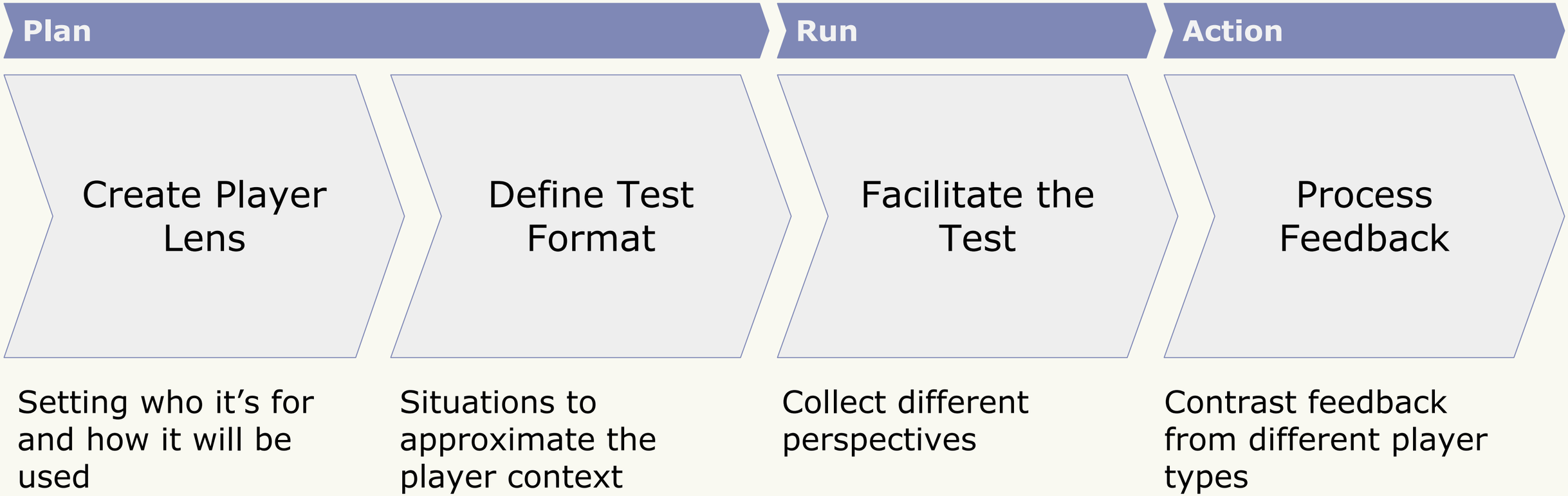
4 Wrap up

Logistics

Running effective tests:

- How to Plan & Run Tests
- Tips & Tricks

How to run Focused Team Playtests



Facilitation Tips & Tricks

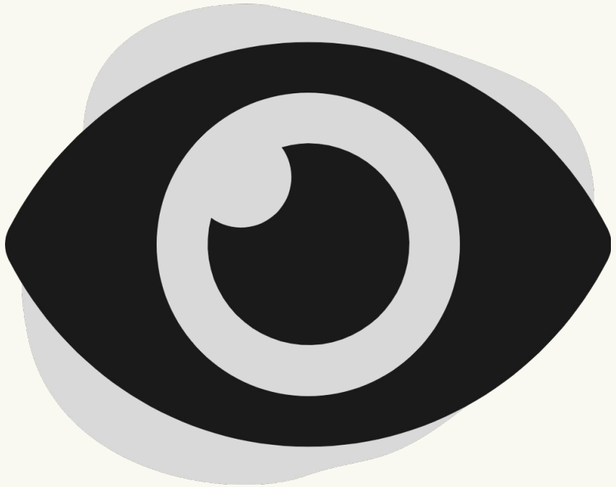
- Clear instructions & Context
- Creating environment for honest feedback
- Tagging feedback with names
- Direct feedback to collection method

1. Team Playtesting
2. Focused Team Playtesting
3. How to Run Focused Team Playtests
4. **Wrap up**

What we've learned

- Reduce Friction
- Effectiveness can vary
- First hand experience is powerful
- Diversity is key

How to Step into your players shoes?



Player Lens

Scenarios & User Traits

Logistics

Plan, Run & Action

How to Step into your players shoes?

Focused Team Playtests

=

More Relevant Feedback

Team Engagement & UX Buy in

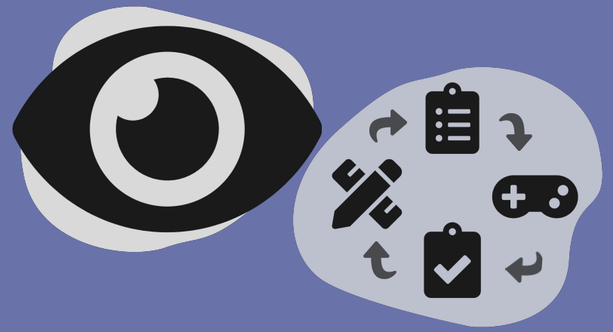
Summary

- **Team playtests** are a useful source of feedback and can become more user-centered
- **Focused Team Playtests** helps the team try the game closer to player’s perspectives
- **Focused Team Playtests** lead to more relevant feedback & team engagement

‘Step into your Player’s Shoes’
to improve internal feedback and help build empathy with players.

Thanks!

Questions?



Plan		Run	Action
Create Player Lens	Define Test Format	Facilitate the Test	Process Feedback

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