



From 1 to 2. Postmortem of Making a Sequel to a Popular Mobile Game

BORGET SEBASTIEN
COO & CO-FOUNDER, PIXOWL





May 2012



June 2016

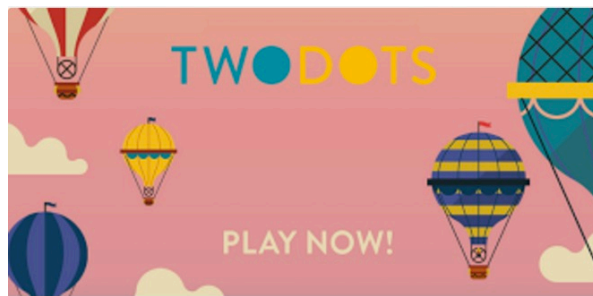


Have you heard about The Sandbox?

- First Launched **4 Years** ago on iPhone.
- Now on all mobile & PC platforms
- Over **745,000** Facebook Fans!
- **Millions of video views** on YouTube
- **21 million** installs, **1.6 million** worlds created & shared
- **45 updates** released, almost 1 per month
- Multiple Awards received, including **Best Game Of 2012 by Apple**



Special Thanks To These Amazing Devs!



Top 3 Reasons They Made a Sequel

- **1: Add New Features / Add More Contents or Levels**
 - **2: Improve Retention & Engagement**
 - **3: Improve Monetization**

"We built the sequel since we were working on improving the initial game for so long and decided that it would be best to start from scratch. We were convinced that the concept was good, but we needed a fresh start.", **Dave Bisceglia (The Tap Lab, Tiny Tycoons)**

"For us it was less about building a sequel -- more about building our franchise around the "dots game mechanic" that we created. We believe we can make many games across multiple categories that use this mechanic.", **Paul Murphy (WePlayDots, Two Dots)**

"Our biggest concern was potential cannibalization between the old game and the new and have tried to position the game as a complimentary experience rather than a true sequel. We move players in both directions between the games with cross promo to boost the network LTV across both games.", **Daniel Hesselberg (MAG Interactive, Wordbrain Themes)**

3 Reasons Why Indies Don't Like Sequels?

<http://bit.ly/2a28pkw> @GWBycer

- **1: One and Done!** *"The passion that drives indie development usually means that the developer will get everything they want in one go"*
- **2: Sequel Demand** *"If it ain't broke, don't fix it"*
- **3: Becoming a Brand** *"The ability to brand your studio around unique concepts is a major goal of any game studio"*

Let's Warm Up the Audience 😊



WHEN DO MOST DEVELOPERS DECIDE TO START MAKING A SEQUEL?

- Being bored working on the first game
- Improving the initial game is more challenging than starting from scratch
- Players are expecting a sequel / more contents
- Wanting to improve Monetization & Retention
- The first game was launched over 12-18 months ago (min.)
- The audience is still very active on Daily and Monthly basis

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WHAT DO MOST DEVELOPERS EXPECT FROM MAKING A SEQUEL?

- Bigger Success = more Downloads & Players!
- Cross-Promotion between the 2 games
- Migrate all players from 1 to the 2
- Better Metrics: Engagement, Retention, Monetization
- More Stores Exposure + Featurings
- Attract a different category of Audience / Players

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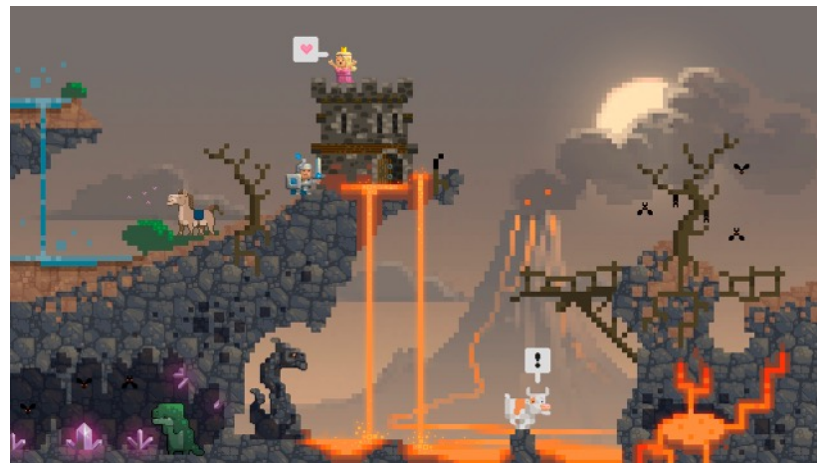
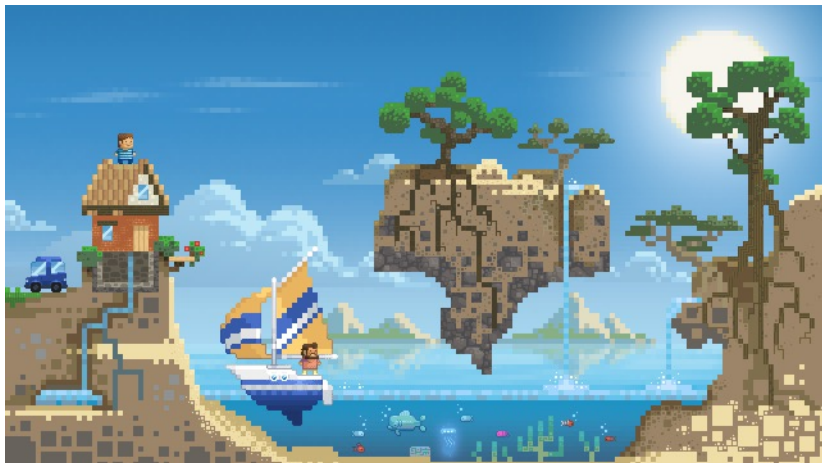
WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES?

- Lacking innovation => "1.5 VS 2" or same game, different content?
- Assuming all players know how to play (as they played the 1st)
- Comparing 1 vs 2 instead of (1 + all updates) vs 2
- Designing the sequel at first and foremost for the players of the 1
- Ignoring industry best-practises: Softlaunch, Playtests, A/B Testing etc.

Post-Mortem you said?



the SANDBOX2



WHY DID WE LAUNCH THE SANDBOX EVOLUTION?

- **Branding & Vision:** we're building a platform for the next 5+ years
- **Add Core Features:** Expand our game concept (we did 45 updates "dlc-like" before)
- **Keep Active Community:** Players have shown very strong hype + engagement when announcing the sequel
- **Technical Reasons:** old game engine, not cross platform, performance limitations => we wanted simultaneous cross-platform
- **Marketing:** Industry is more focused on covering & featuring new game launches than updates

The Sandbox Evolution Launch Results (August 2016)



New Games We Love



Rodeo Stampede - Sk... Games



Smash Squad Games



Redungeon Games



Teeny Titans - A Teen Titans Go... Games



The Sandbox Evolution - Cra... Games



NinAwesome Games



Squ... Games

See All >

App Store ~

Games ~

QUICK LINKS

Redeem
Send iTunes Gifts

Account
Support

Purchased

FREE, \$0.99, \$2.99



Top Free iPhone Apps

Paid

Free



1. The Sandbox Evolution - Cra... Games

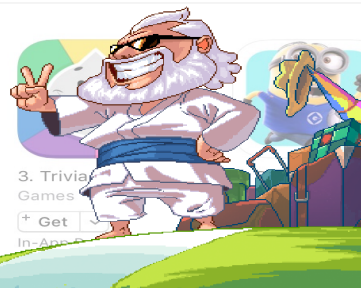
+ Get



2. Crossy Road - Endless Arcad... Games

+ Get

In-App Purchases



3. Trivia Games

+ Get

In-App

- **Over 3.5 million** installs in **2 months only!**
- **Featured** on both **App Store** and **Google Play**
- **#1 Family Game** and **#2 Simulation Game** on iPhone

STEP 1

Understand What Players Love & Do in your Game



KEY FEATURE: CREATE/DESTROY

- Tap to drop elements, pinch to zoom and pan to scroll. Create or destroy with your fingertips.
- Build worlds up to 10x bigger than in the previous Sandbox game

Over 170 Elements to play with!

- Bring Life to your worlds with Dogs, Wolves, Bears, Cows, Deer or Sabertooth Tigers
- Decorate with Houses, Castles and Igloos, and create life on your world with AI Humans
- Utilize tech like Batteries, Crosswires, Resistance, Bulbs, Heaters, Coolers, LEDs and multiple Sensors
- Destroy everything you can with C4, Meteorites, Nitro, TNT or even a Nuke



KEY FEATURE: CAMPAIGNS

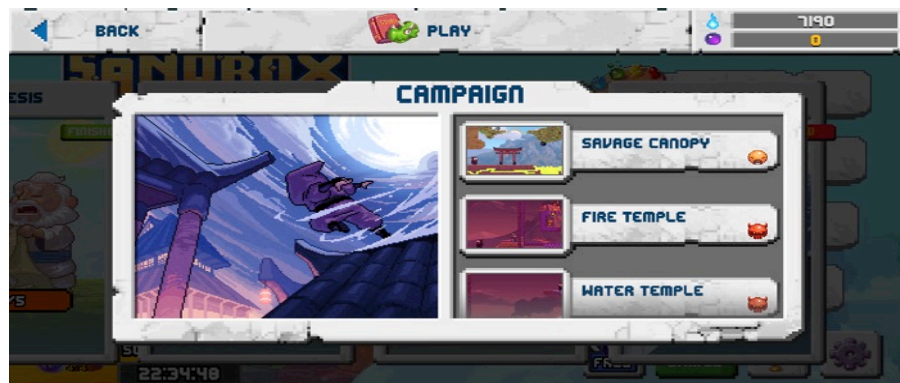
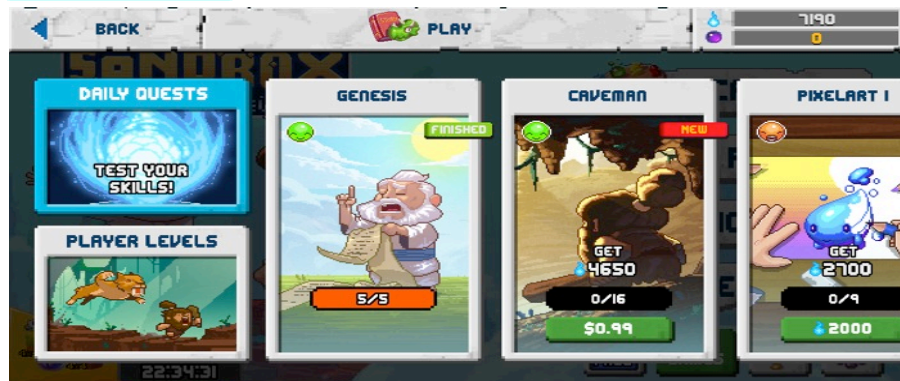
Campaigns consist in a series of levels, that the player should solve using the game mechanics (puzzles, physics, platformer, etc.)

4 Campaigns at Launch

- **Genesis:** Experience the creation of the universe
- **Caveman:** Explore a prehistoric world with the Caveman
- **Pixel Art:** Learn how to draw pixel art
- **Ninja:** Help Fujin, the Ninja of the Wind,

3 more Campaigns Added Already

- **Machines**
- **Sandmix Vol. 1**
- **Ghostbusters!**



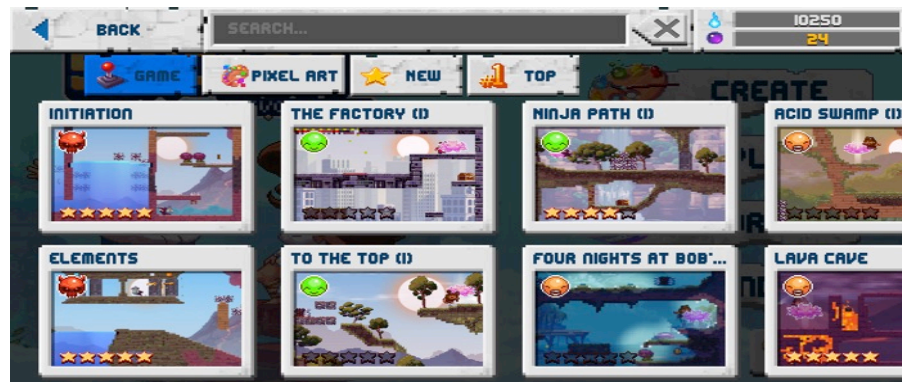
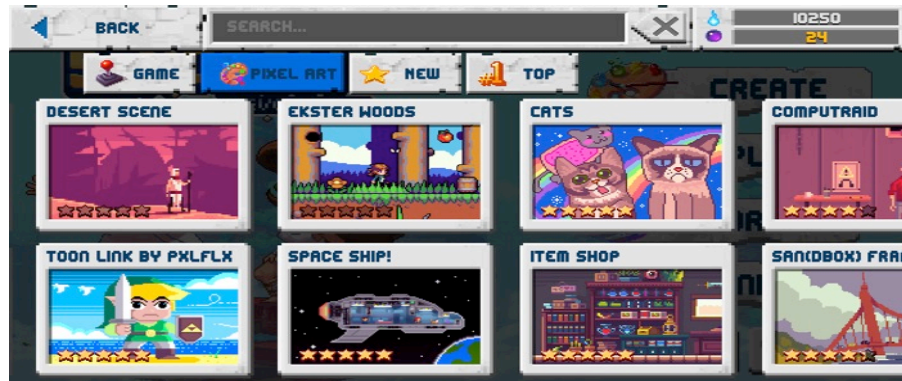
KEY FEATURE: ONLINE GALLERY

Players can share online their creations so other players can watch them, play them and rate them.

We feature on a daily basis the top creations from the community and organize contests of creativity.

User-Generated Contents

- Share your worlds with other players
- Search worlds by keyword or by tags (pixel art, music, arcade, technology or landscape)
- Filter worlds based on the Newest or Hottest creations
- Play the most inspiring worlds and interact with them in various ways



STEP 2

Supercharge It!!

Add New Features They Want!



KEY FEATURE: GAME MAKER

Create your very own pixel universes, manipulate natural elements and discover their interactions, while also **expanding the game's original concept by letting players create their very own games by adding controllable heroes!**

Make your own Games or Levels

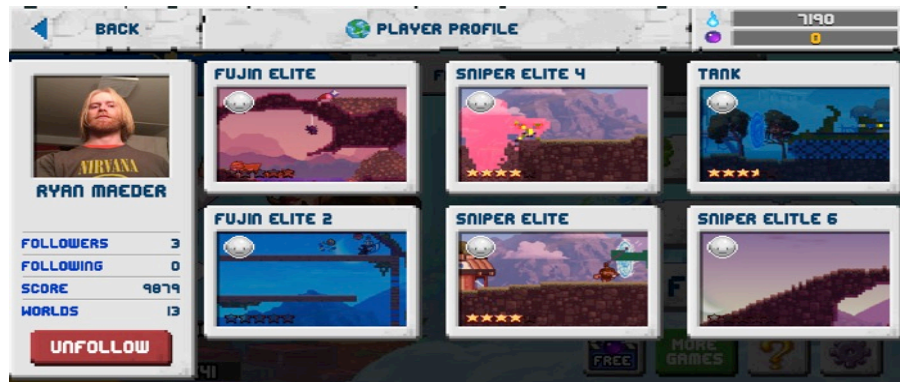
- Create your own levels using Game Design elements: Controllable Heroes, Platforms, Portals, various Blocks or Spikes
- Place a controllable hero character in your level to instantly add intuitive, direct control
- 5 Heroes available to choose: Caveman, Ninja, Avatar, Arnold and Hamster, each with different skillsets



KEY FEATURE: SOCIAL

The Sandbox Evolution is a platform where people can play and create worlds! We're building our very own social network inside the game, allowing the community of players to interact more with each others.

- Save and Sync your progress online with Game Center, Facebook or Email
- Follow your favorite Players and Top Creators via the Social Menu
- Be notified when they share new worlds and play them out
- Read your Activity Wall to see everything that happened during your absence and what's trending
- Bookmark your favorite levels to revisit them anytime you want



Partnerships with Popular IPs!



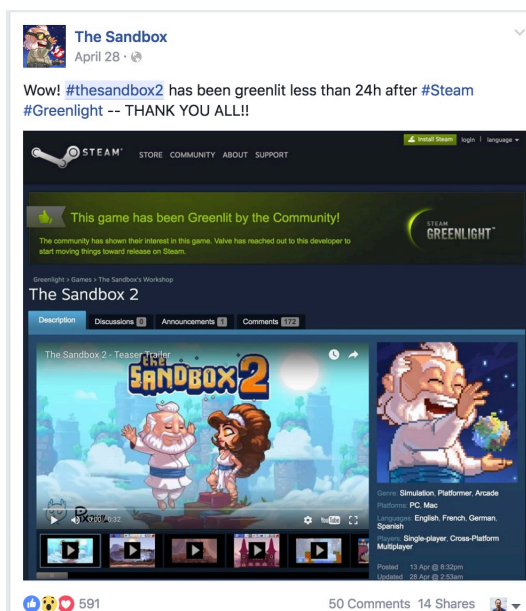
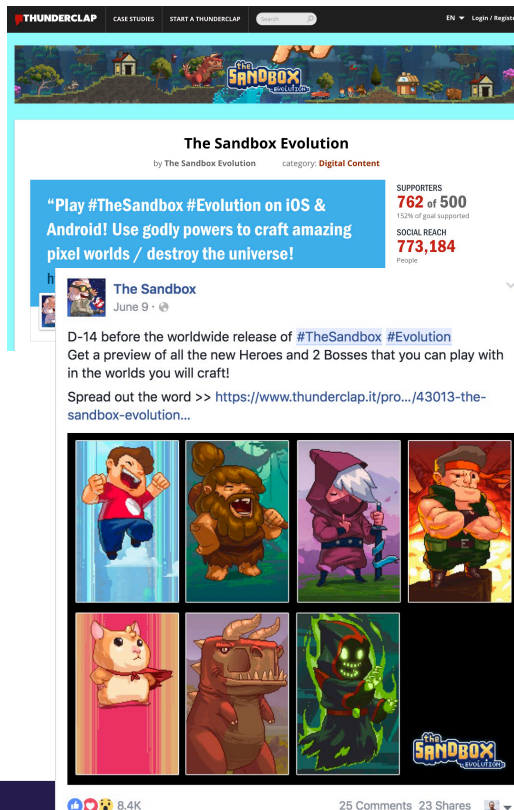
STEP 3

The (very long) Road to Make It Happen!



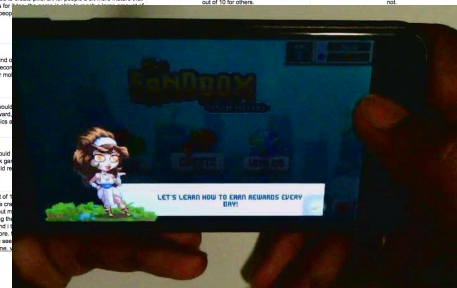
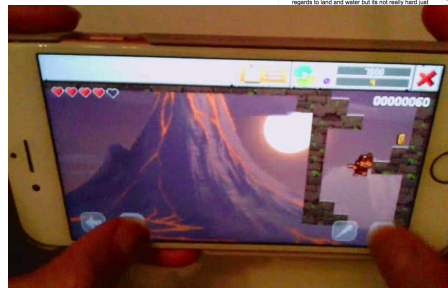
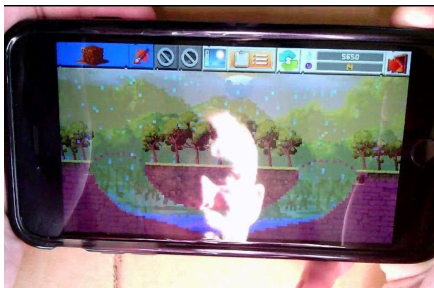
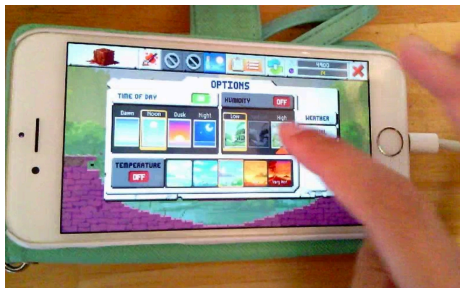
Continuously Gauging Interest

- Started talking about the sequel 6 months before scheduled release
- Talked about it on Forums
- Put the game on Steam Greenlight Process
- Launched Thunderclap Campaign
- Teasing... hundreds of assets have been posted on social networks!



Playtesting ... A Lot!

- Over 50x 15 minutes video playtests = hours of gameplay recorded and analyzed
- What testers do is as important as what they say, or don't say!
- Post-Test Surveys also useful



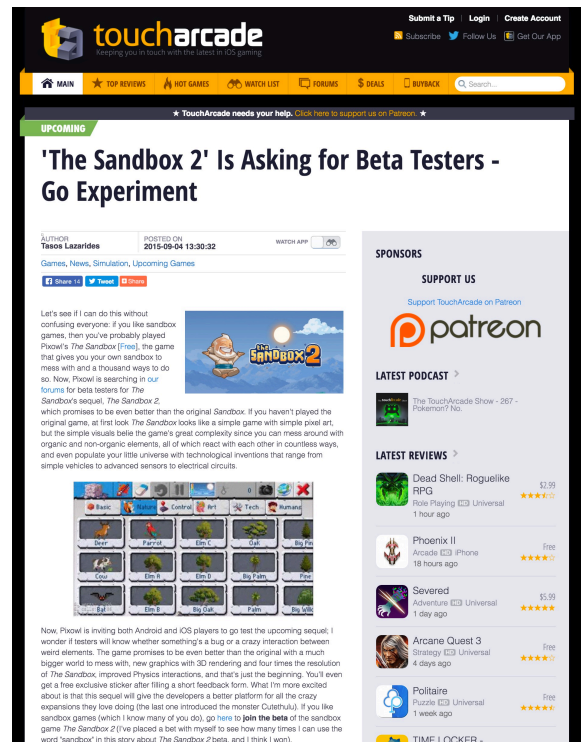
End of Test - Question 1	End of Test - Question 2	End of Test - Question 3	End of Test - Question 4
Did you find the game easy to play? (0=Not at all, and 10=Very Easy)	How did you like the game? (0=Not at all, and 10=Very Much) Would you play it every day or recommend it to your friends?	Would you be keen to pay for more contents such as other campaigns or costumes? For more elements? For something else? (0=Not at all likely, and 10=Very Likely)	What, if anything, was "confusing" or "frustrating" about playing this game?
<p>10. The game is very easy to learn how to play. Mainly because you go through the tutorial campaign and it shows you how to do the various things and introduces you to the game. With that knowledge one can just go play the game for a short period of time and figure out what everything else does.</p> <p>10. It was really easy because I was extremely into the first sandbox game, and played that game out, and all of the controls and elements were the same, except for the new movement controls and such, so for a veteran sandbox player, (give it a 10, but for the average player that had never played the first one, I would say an 8, just because the game is pretty easy to grasp on its, with comprehensive [sorry for bad spelling] :)</p> <p>10. Very easy to learn. The level I've had from another player was challenging but it was fun.</p> <p>The game is simple to understand and immediately engaging, and there are options to play either easy or more difficult levels. I'll be honest there is a choice in how difficult the level is due to levels being used made)</p>	<p>8. I give the game an 8 because in not a game I would play every day because I feel like I would get bored if I play too much. I really like the game like I mentioned and this is a simple version that I would be able to play when I'm bored and have access to my computer or phone and have the building something. I would recommend this to my friends who also like creating building games.</p> <p>10. I would play that game every day since there is always a range of different level to beat.</p>	<p>0. Maybe if the game had more to do and was better graphics designed but for now, really don't like spending money on simple games unless I end up playing them for weeks.</p> <p>0. I'm would rather play the free part of the game than pay for anything at all. I would want to have more content.</p>	<p>There was nothing confusing because the tutorial and campaign went through all of what everything does and how the game works. Besides that it was really easy to just look at the game and move around with it and get the hang of it. If I had to choose one thing to be that when I go into the menu, accidentally I can't just tap the screen to close it.</p> <p>The buttons to move the characters and to jump and attack where a little small on my phone.</p>
<p>9. I do not usually have the time to play iOS games daily, but this game is original and intuitive, so I'd definitely recommend it to friends. It's however called to a particular game (more creative games) therefore not all of my friends would like it.</p> <p>5. This game was a lot of fun but it would not be my go-to game. This is a fun game to play for an hour or two after school. I would recommend this to one of my friends who likes indie-style games.</p>	<p>10. I would play it every day. I would like to see how everything works together. I imagine I can make some pretty incredible things.</p> <p>10. It was very easy, most things were made very clear.</p>	<p>3. I do not spend enough time daily on my iOS device to spend playing money in their store, but I can sure enjoy other players would pay for some content.</p> <p>0. I rarely spend money on mobile games and I do not like this one very much so there is no way I would spend any money on it.</p>	<p>Nothing at all because I played the first one, for a month, so I just saw everything how everything went with everything, not much more I can say here.</p> <p>Some animations seemed out of place and badly designed. The default theme of the game is nice, but the way it goes blocks more around sometimes isn't very fast!</p>
<p>7. Most of it was easy, but some things weren't explained such as the different objects you can encounter in the Play mode.</p> <p>I will give the game a 7 for ease. The tutorial did a good job of teaching the basic features but I feel like more in-depth information is still needed to easily play the game and know how each of the elements interacts with each other.</p>	<p>10. I would play it every day. I would like to see how everything works together. I imagine I can make some pretty incredible things.</p> <p>5. This game was a lot of fun but it would not be my go-to game. This is a fun game to play for an hour or two after school. I would recommend this to one of my friends who likes indie-style games.</p> <p>3. I let the sandbox and play modes were easy, but the sandbox mode felt kind of boring and I didn't see why I had to waste time exploring things instead of having the mode available at the start. The play mode's controls were okay, but I wasn't experienced well at all and I encountered a bug that would have made me have to wait the level through the menu.</p>	<p>0. I usually don't spend too much money on mobile games and I believe there is already enough content to keep me satisfied.</p>	<p>The only thing that was confusing was when I was just starting off, creating my own world was a little overwhelming. There are so many different materials and elements I don't really know where to begin or how to make them interact with each other.</p>
<p>10. The game was very easy to play. I got it out of 10, I say this because the game instructions were clear and I knew exactly what the controls were at about, when I was playing with the game. I did not find it very challenging, but I was creating when I was for a limited amount of time. The only thing I can't find the challenge is that I was not getting much out of it in the game. I am going to say, I did not see how the game will play things and how high they seek for instance, I seem to have different rules in reports to land and water but I did not really find it</p>	<p>10. I really love the game. It's out of 10 I think it is a game I would spend a lot of time on it every day. I think it is a game that many would appreciate, people of all ages and I could tell that much after seeing it. If you wanted a game like this, you would be lucky to find it. I think it is a game that many would appreciate, people of all ages and I could tell that much after seeing it. If you wanted a game like this, you would be lucky to find it. I think it is a game that many would appreciate, people of all ages and I could tell that much after seeing it. If you wanted a game like this, you would be lucky to find it.</p>	<p>0. I usually don't spend too much money on mobile games and I believe there is already enough content to keep me satisfied.</p>	<p>The only confusing thing I game was when I was looking at other worlds or at a table where I could see what I was looking at and which can only be looked at. I suppose the game would make it easier like there is a pop-up message for each world you go to? Same goes for other worlds can be edited or not.</p>

Beta-Testing Too!

- Time to face real-world users!
- Start as early as possible, don't be scared
- Be very concise on the questions you ask to your testers! + Leave 1 open question ☺
- Engage personally with your testers for more precise feedbacks

Questions

1. Did you find the game easy to play? (0=Not at all, and 10=Very Easy) **Please explain your answer in details**
2. How did you like the game? (0=Not at all, and 10=Very Much) Would you play it everyday and/or recommend it to your friends? **Please explain your answer in details**
3. Would you be keen to pay for more contents such as other campaigns as Caveman? For more Elements? For something else? (0=Not at all likely, and 10=Very Likely)? **Please explain your answer in details**
4. What, if anything, was confusing or frustrating about playing this game? **Please explain your answer in details**



And then Soft-Launching!

- Measure as much as you can
- Aim to get 3,000 users minimum per soft-launch (5-10k ideally)
- Iterate as many times as possible and compare results across all releases (we did 6 soft-launches, almost every 2 weeks)



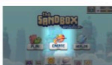


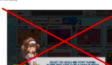

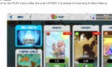
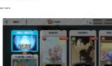



TSB2	SL6		SL5	SL4
	CA, SE & AU			
total installs	5566	100%	0%	0%
finish tuto	4333	78%	33%	19%
world Created at least 2 time	1685	39%	15%	-35%
start Tutorials campaign	3400	78%	52%	31%
start Caveman campaign	811	19%	120%	-5%
bought 10 elements or more	2130	49%	68%	59%
play at least 2 player world	662	15%	-15%	-55%
complete at least 1 daily quest	536	12%	18%	-43%
play 5 or more player world	276	6%	32%	-51%

	SL3	
TUTORIAL STEPS	Unique Users	Global
Part 1 - Start	1990	100.00%
Part 1 - Tap Create	1990	100.00%
Part 1 - End	1580	79.40%
Part 2 - Start	1580	79.40%
Part 2 - Tap Play Menu	1650	82.91%
Part 2 - Tap Quest 100 Menu	1650	82.91%
Part 2 - Select Quest	1630	81.91%
Part 2 - End	1570	78.89%
Part 3 - Start	1570	78.89%
Part 3 - Tap Worlds Menu	1590	79.90%
Part 3 - Select Player Worlds	1240	62.31%
Part 3 - Play World	1210	60.80%
Part 3 - Finished Play World	120	6.03%
Part 3 - Exit without finishing	1440	72.36%
Part 3 - End	1570	78.89%

First Time User Experience

- It matters a lot!!!
- So many iterations of the FTUE
- Asked for external game designers help
- Playtested over 50 times in video
- Fully removed 30s introduction video

Screen Preview	List of changes versus SL2
	Changes: - none Nice to have: - Make the Loading in background to the Intro Animation (gain some seconds in loading) => dev optimisation to discuss with Lucas
	Changes: - show a GOD finger animation to tap on "CREATE" button (same as TS81)
	Changes: - remove all the Dialogs of Gaia - Top Toolbar should have the Mission Tracker - use the Orange arrow to highlight the Mission Tracker button in top toolbar - show a white text on the background "DISPLAY YOUR GOALS TODAY" - maybe add on bottom right corner the God or Gaia for visual hint?
	Changes: - have a good brief "Day Intro" on this level, like TS81: "Let's get started ..." - the Mission Tracker will display 2 clear goals, copied from TS81: 1. Make Mud 2. Make Sand
	Changes: - make water available in level - make player drop Soil instead (like in TS81) - only show Soil as Element in menu - all others Elements are locked or not even visible - disable the menu to select the Painting Tools as well - disable EXIT button in top menu - disable Mana Shop button as well - the world has NO PAN, it should be 120x80
	Changes: - show the Reward for in-game for completing the first mission: "You unlocked Mud!" - maybe add on bottom right corner the God or Gaia for visual hint?
	Changes: - show Mud and Stone in the Elements menu - use Arrow to highlight Stone in Element menu - make player drop Stone - all others Elements are locked or not even visible - maybe add on bottom right corner the God or Gaia for visual hint?

1 FTUE - Step by step 	7 FTUE - Step by step 
2 FTUE - Step by step 	8 FTUE - Step by step 
3 FTUE - Step by step 	9 FTUE - Step by step 
4 FTUE - Step by step 	10 FTUE - Step by step 
5 FTUE - Step by step 	11 FTUE - Step by step 
6 FTUE - Step by step 	12 FTUE - Step by step 

UI/UX Design Iterations



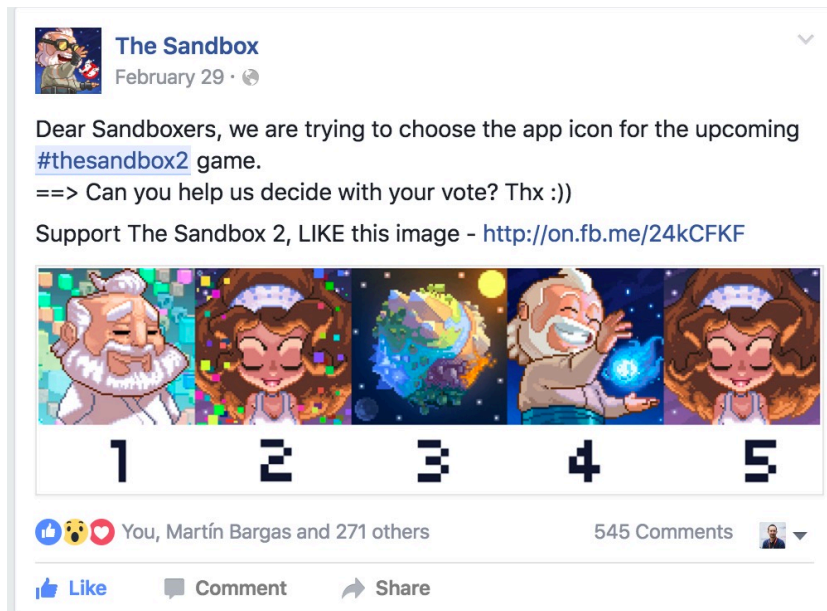
- Multiple Iterations
- Based on Softlaunch Metrics and Playtests

BONUS LEVEL ☺



Choice of App Icon

- Involve our Community + Indie Groups to choose our App Icon to pre-select the 2 finalists
- Ran A/B Testings with small UA campaigns to decide the winner



Choice of our Game Title



The Sandbox New Version

Pixowl is publishing a new version of The Sandbox. It will be a new application.

What's the best name for our new game The Sandbox?

- ☐ The Sandbox 2
- ☐ The Sandbox Evolution
- ☐ The Sandbox Gaia
- ☐ The Sandbox Legend
- ☐ The Sandbox Legend of Gaia
- ☐ Other:

Video



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UPCOMING

'The Sandbox 2' is Coming Along Nicely, and the Developers Want you to Help Name it

AUTHOR

Taoos Lazzarides

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After developing the very inventive and creative The Sandbox (Pixel), Pixel's been steadily working on developing a better version of the original with higher resolution pixel graphics, ten times larger world size, new quests mode, new campaigns, pixel world maker and game maker, and more. From the looks of the various videos posted in our forums, the game is shaping up to be a great, well, sandbox. In this newer version, you can do things like designing your characters and levels and then controlling characters in-game to test your level design or check out other players' inspiration. The developers are really paying a lot of attention to the sharing aspect of the game as shown by the online gallery players will be able to use to share their creations both in video or stills.

The Sandbox Evolution - Teaser Intro Video

Subscribe to the TouchArcade YouTube channel

Many recent iOS games have benefited a lot from allowing players to build their own levels and share them with others... for instance Geometry Dash 1.5.1.0.5 - isn't it?

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LATEST PODCAST

Dead Shell: Roguelike RPG

Role Playing iOS Universal

1 hour ago

\$3.99

★★★★★

Phoenix II

Arcade iOS iPhone

18 hours ago

Free

★★★★★

Severed

Adventure iOS Universal

1 day ago

\$5.99

★★★★★

Arcane Quest 3

Strategy iOS Universal

4 days ago

Free

★★★★★

Politaire

Card Game iOS Universal

Free

★★★★★

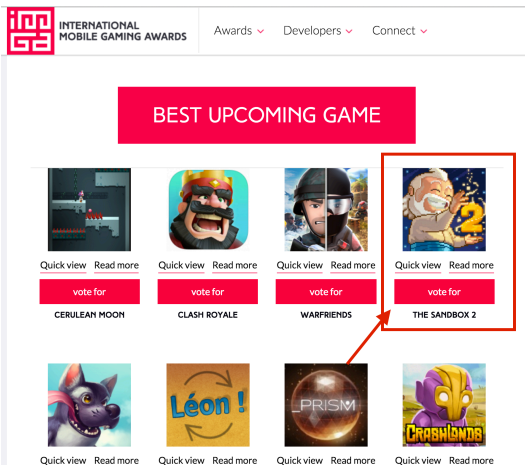
Choice of Marketing Screenshots

- Same Approach as App Icon => involved Community + Indie Groups
- And ran A/B testing with small UA campaigns



Participating to Indie Contests

- Real Competition with other Indie Devs + Professional Jury
- Strong Motivation factor for the Team
- Helps on Generating Buzz and Leveraging Community Support



"The Sandbox 2" by
Pixowl, USA

Open world
Smartphones, Tablets

Nominated for:
- Best Mobile / Tablets
- Best Casual Game
- Most Promising IP
- Most Creative &
Original



"Tower of Babel" by
DNA Studios,
Switzerland

Party
Others, Web Browser
Games

Nominated for:
- Best Social Game



"Trial by Viking" by
Last Life Games, USA

Action
PC, Xbox One, PS4

Nominated for:
- Best Desktop /
Downloadable



What's Next?



<http://bit.ly/2a28pkw>

Questions & **Answers!**

That's all Folks!

for today 😊

Thank you!

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