



Why Forums Can Be Great for Indie Community and Discoverability

Philomena Schwab
Co-Fawnder Stray Fawn Studio

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE

MARCH 18–22, 2019 | #GDC19



STRAY FAWN *studio*

Co-Fawnder &
Game Designer





NICHE

a genetics survival game



NIMBATUS

THE SPACE DRONE CONSTRUCTOR



Community-based Development

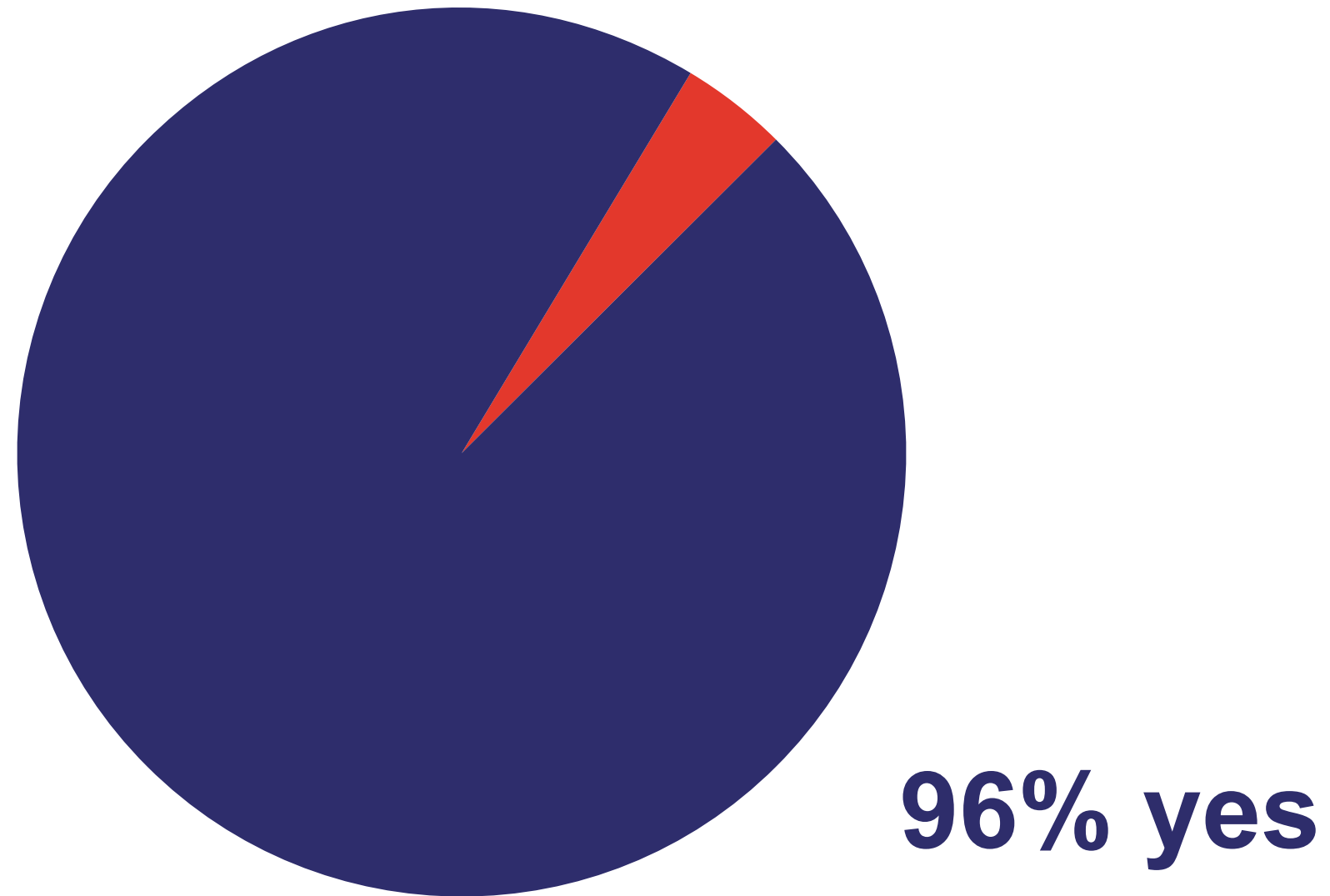


What you will take away

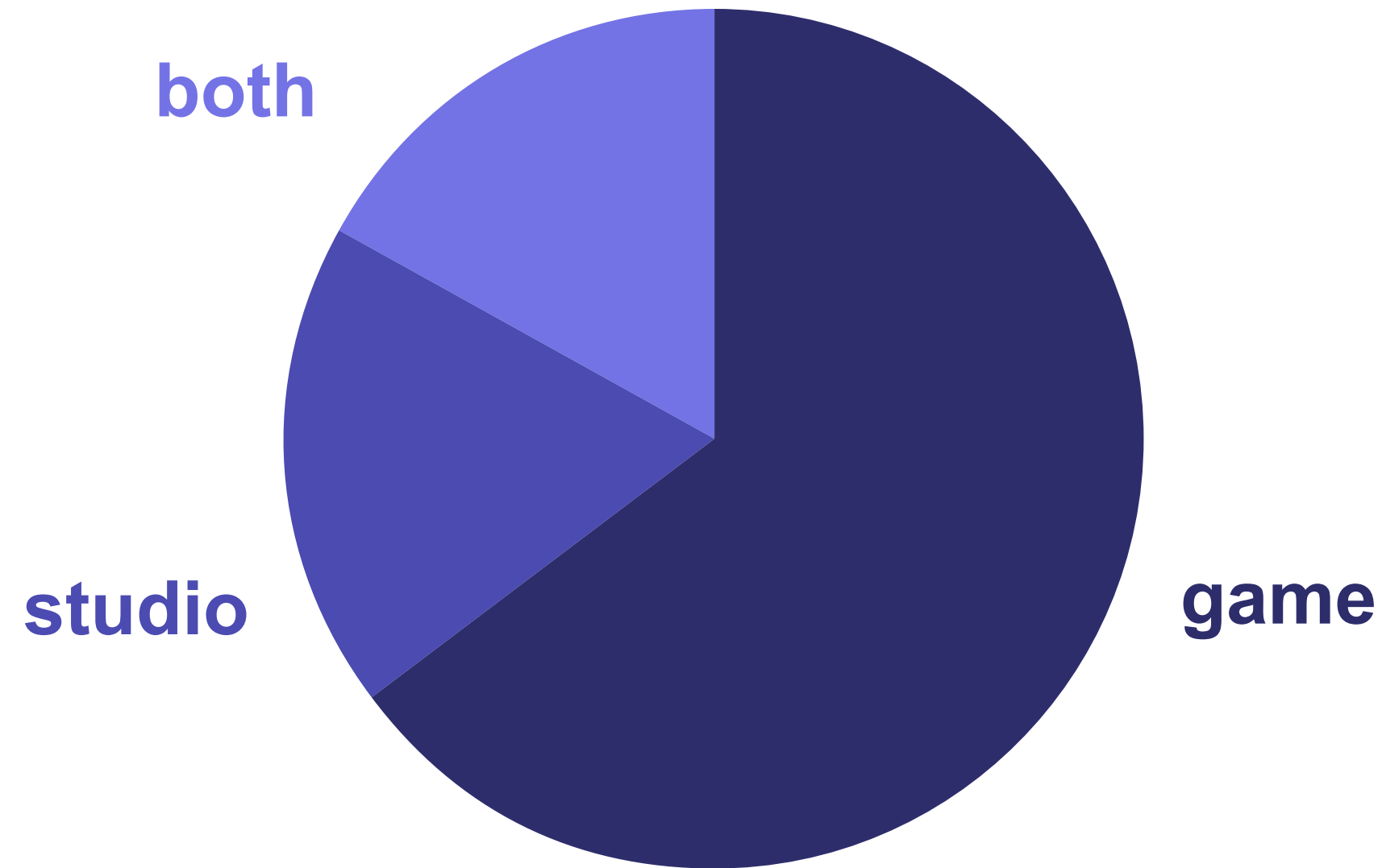
- Which community hubs are popular
- Different kinds of hubs, benefits + problems
- Why our studio chose a forum
- How to make sure people visit the forums

Indie Community Hubs Survey Results

Is community building relevant for financial success?



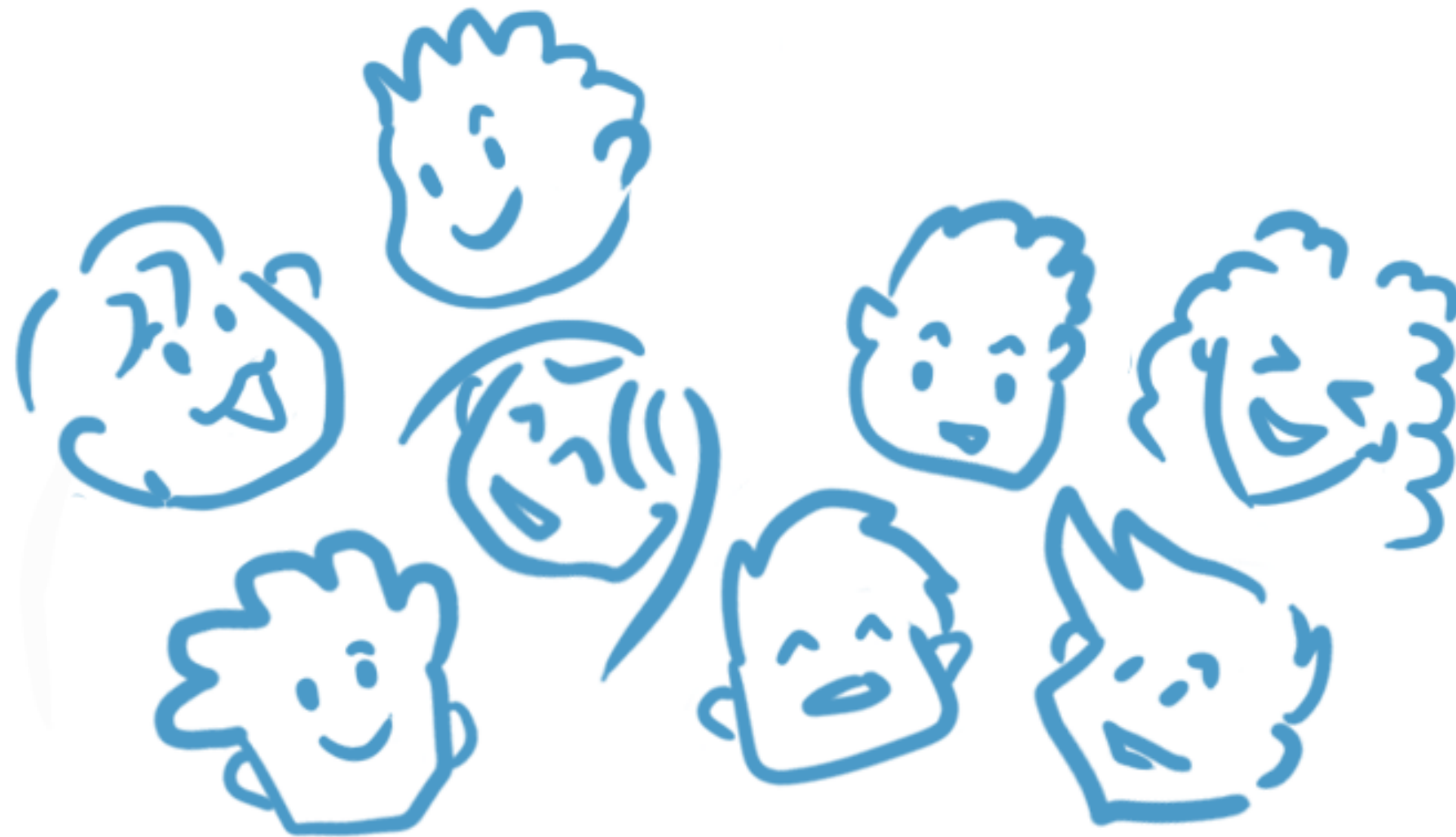
Is your main hub centered around your studio or game?



What do you use as your main community hub?







Why did you choose this as your main hub?

Discord

- Easy to set up & use
- People already have accounts
- Platform independence
- Direct & quick contact to devs (chat)
- Useful bots (roles, give aways, etc)

Why did you choose this as your main hub?

Steam

- Set up automatically & free
- Have to maintain it anyways
- May influence purchase decision of game

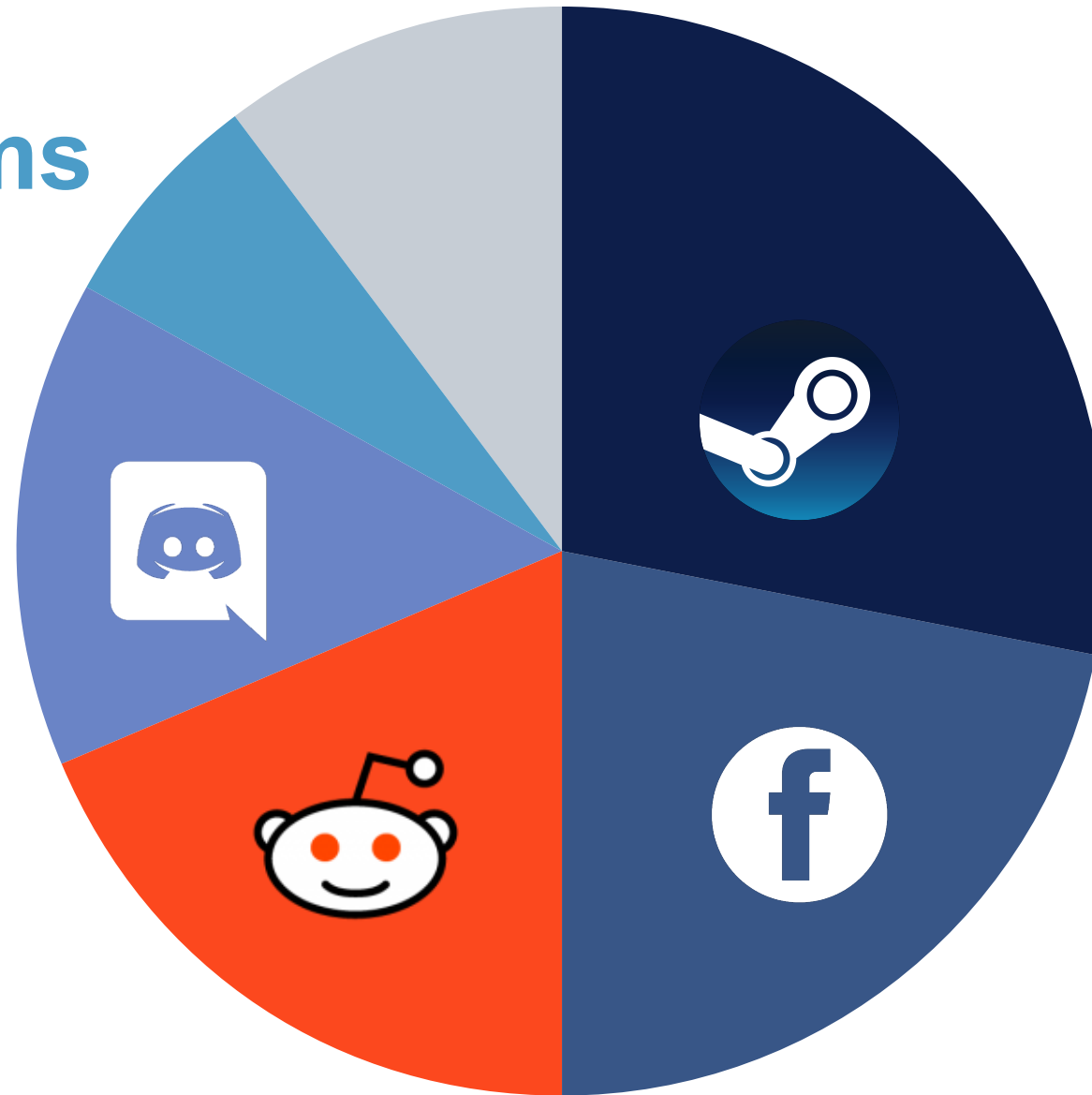
Why did you choose this as your main hub?

Facebook group

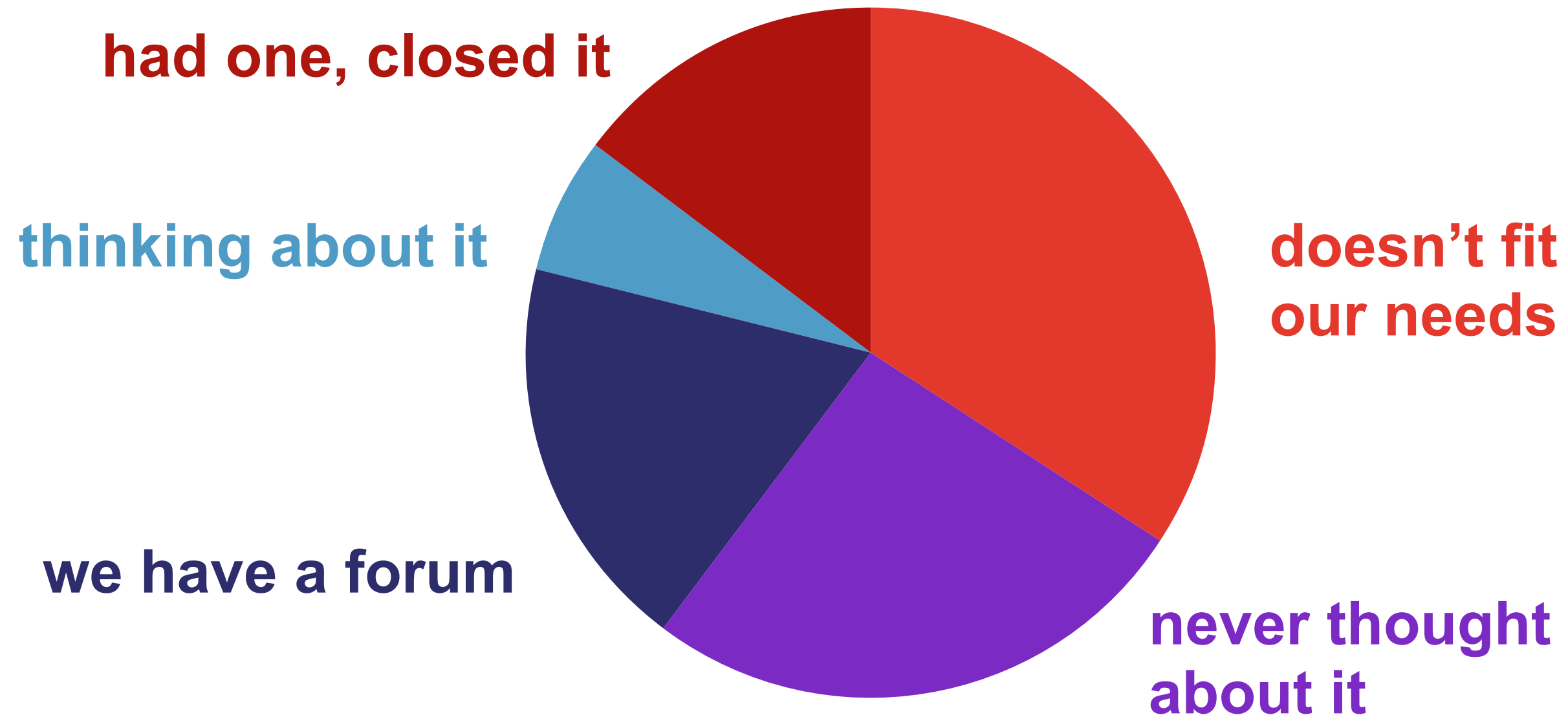
- People already have accounts
- Posts can go viral
- Familiarity (for users and devs)

What other hubs do you use alongside your main?

Forums



Did you consider opening a forum?



Why? Contra forums

- Doesn't make sense for small games / studios
- Needs already fulfilled by Steam forums & Discord
- Hard to opt in & gain traffic
- Cost & effort to maintain

Why? Pro forums

- Best structure for long, in-depth discussions
- Full control / Your own rules
- Best way to collect user feedback & bugs
- Makes sense if studio is big / has more than 1 game

Why our studio chose a forum

STRAY FAWN

STUDIO





NICHE

a genetics survival game

How it worked for us



facebook® | join our
group +

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facebook® | join our group +

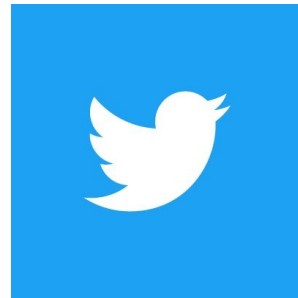


How it worked for us



MailChimp®

facebook® | join our group +



How it worked for us

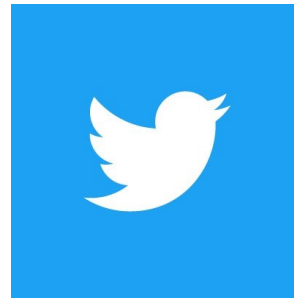


KICKSTARTER



MailChimp

facebook | join our group +



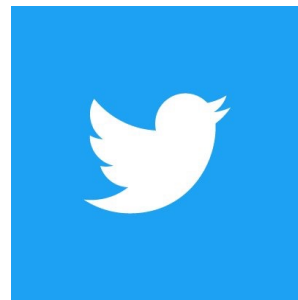
How it worked for us



KICKSTARTER



MailChimp



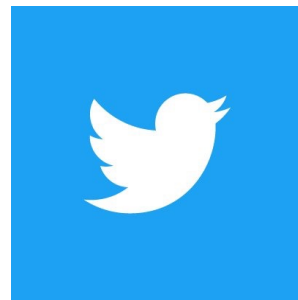
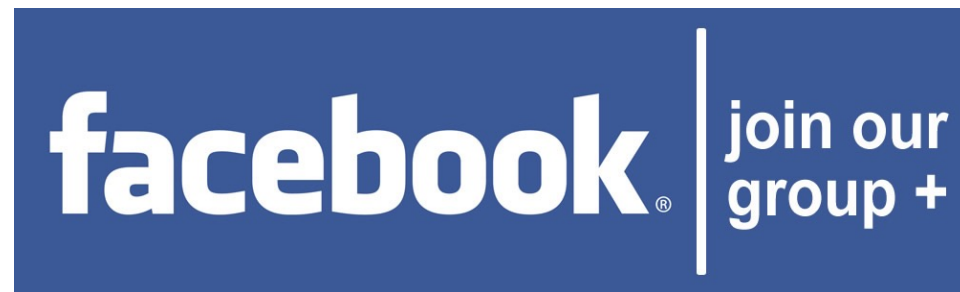
How it worked for us



KICKSTARTER



MailChimp



DISCORD

How it worked for us



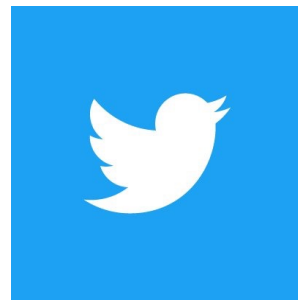
KICKSTARTER



MailChimp



YouTube



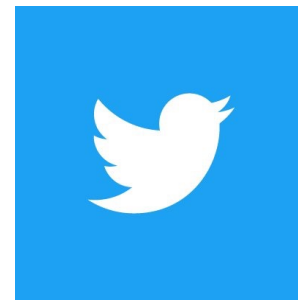
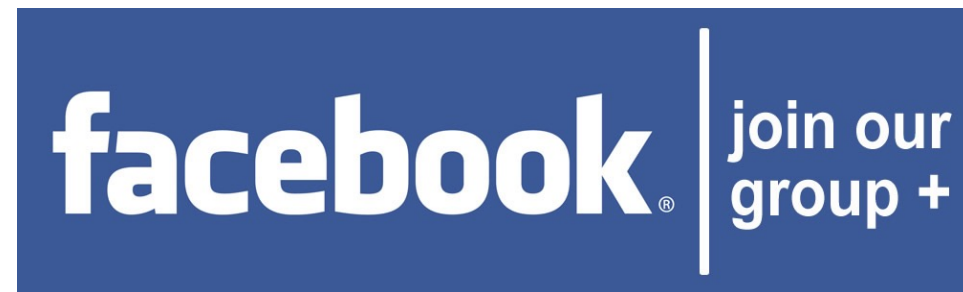
DISCORD

How it worked for us



KICKSTARTER  reddit

 MailChimp®  YouTube



DISCORD

How it worked for us



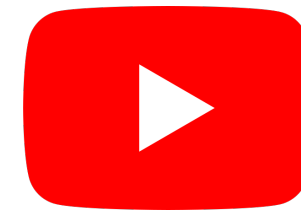
KICKSTARTER



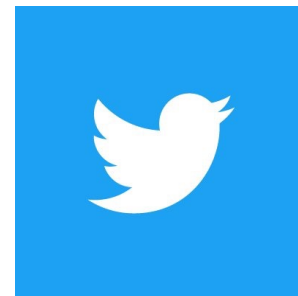
reddit



MailChimp



YouTube



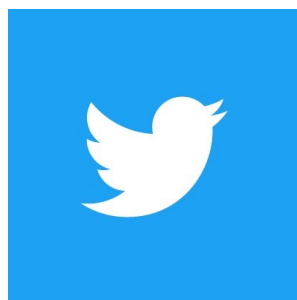
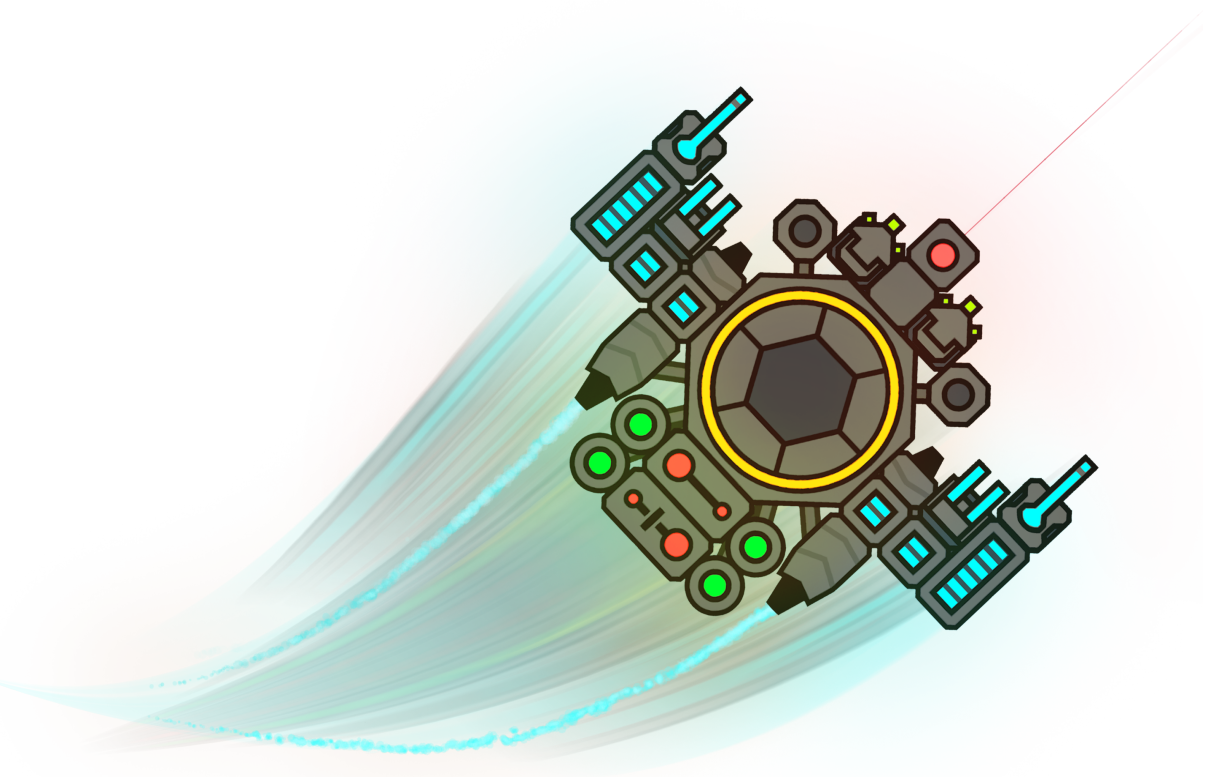
DISCORD

The background is a vibrant, stylized illustration of a space scene. In the center, a large, orange and yellow mechanical structure, resembling a space station or a large drone, is positioned above a curved, orange and yellow surface that looks like a planet's horizon. The structure has a central circular opening and several smaller openings. A bright, orange and yellow beam of light emanates from the bottom of the structure, pointing towards the horizon. The sky is a deep blue and black, filled with stars and various space debris, including a large satellite or space station on the left and a smaller satellite on the right. The overall style is reminiscent of a retro sci-fi video game.

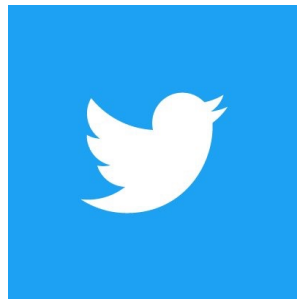
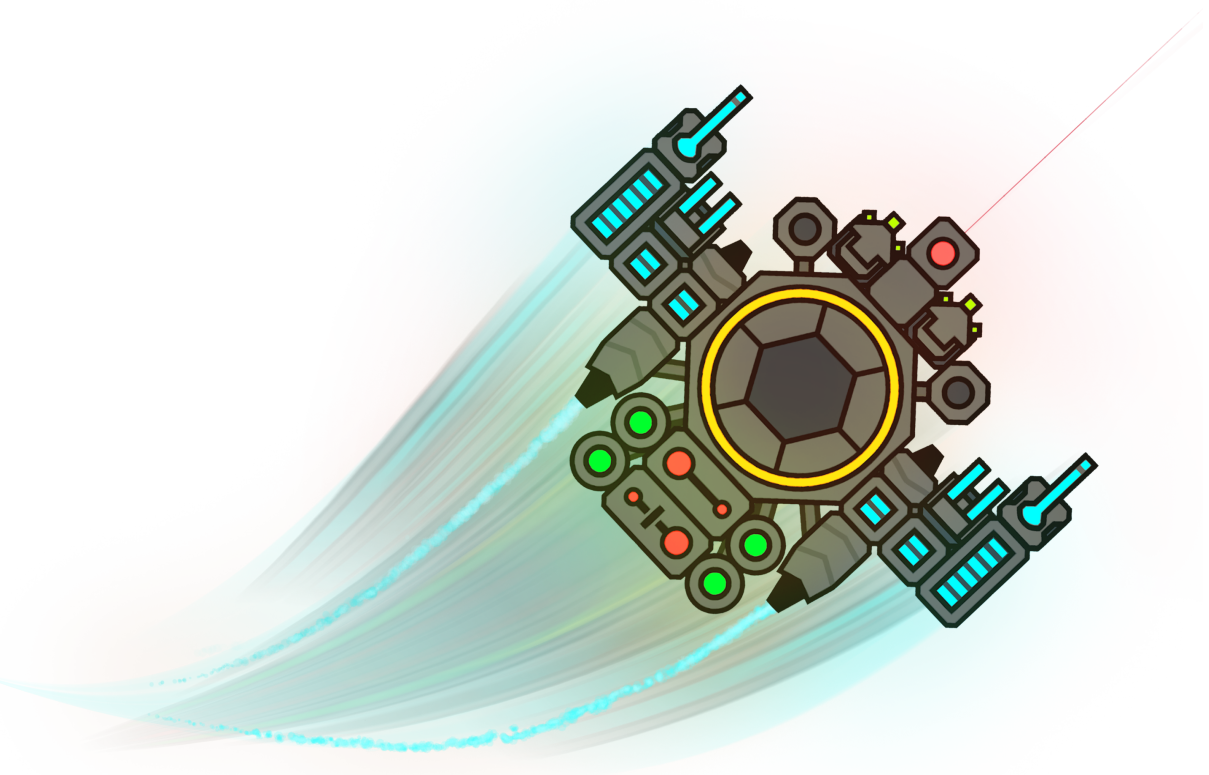
NIMBATU

THE SPACE DRONE CONSTRUCTOR

Second game

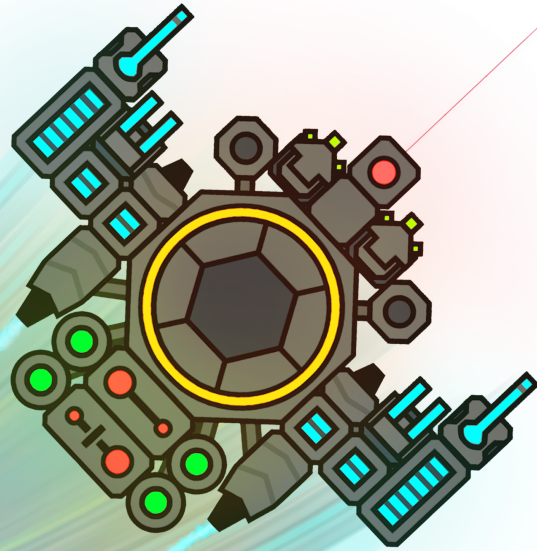


Second game

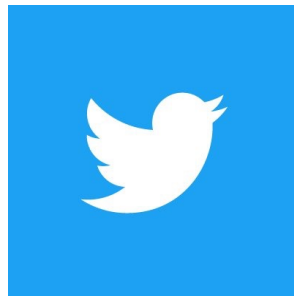


reddit

Second game

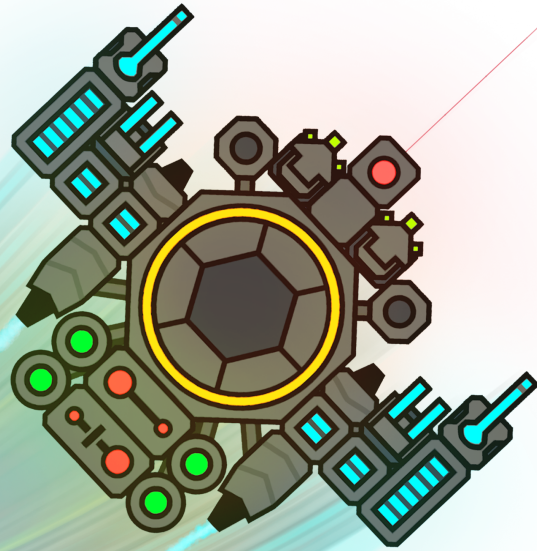


DISCORD



reddit

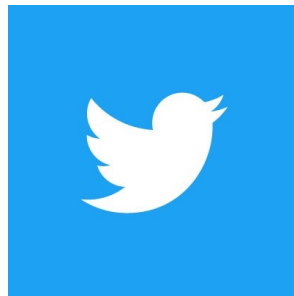
Second game



KICKSTARTER

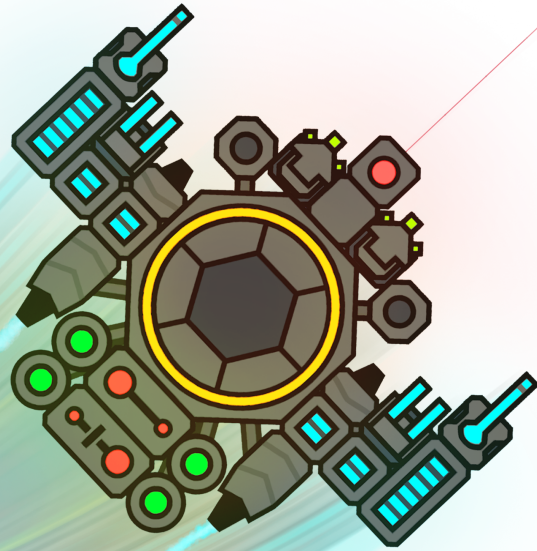


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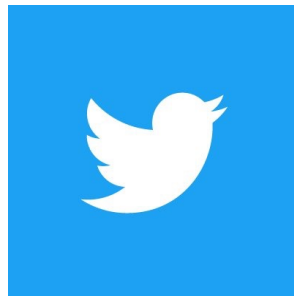
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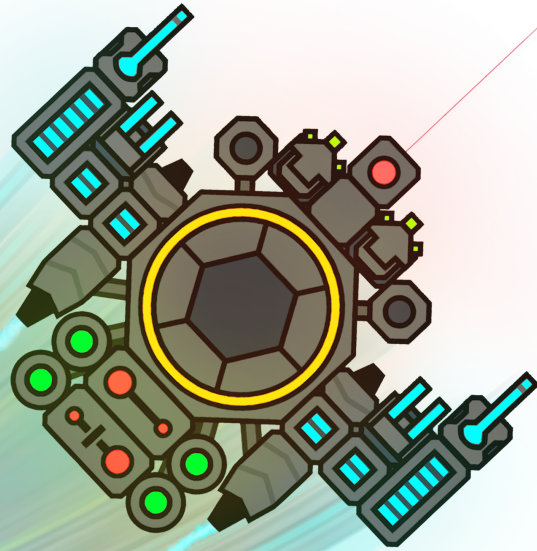


reddit



MailChimp

Second game

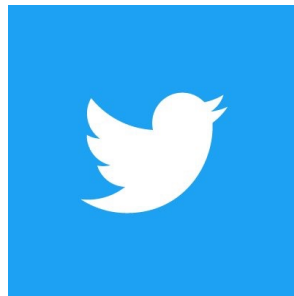


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DISCORD

imgur

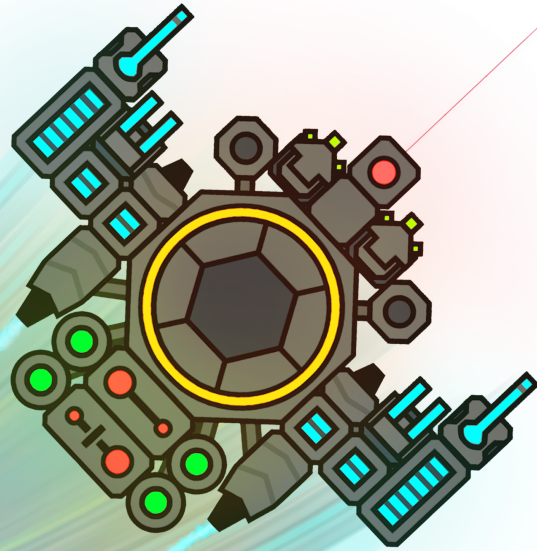


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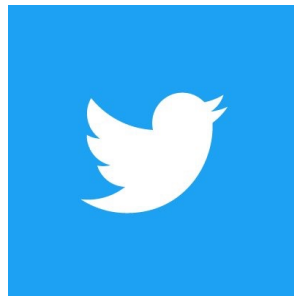


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DISCORD

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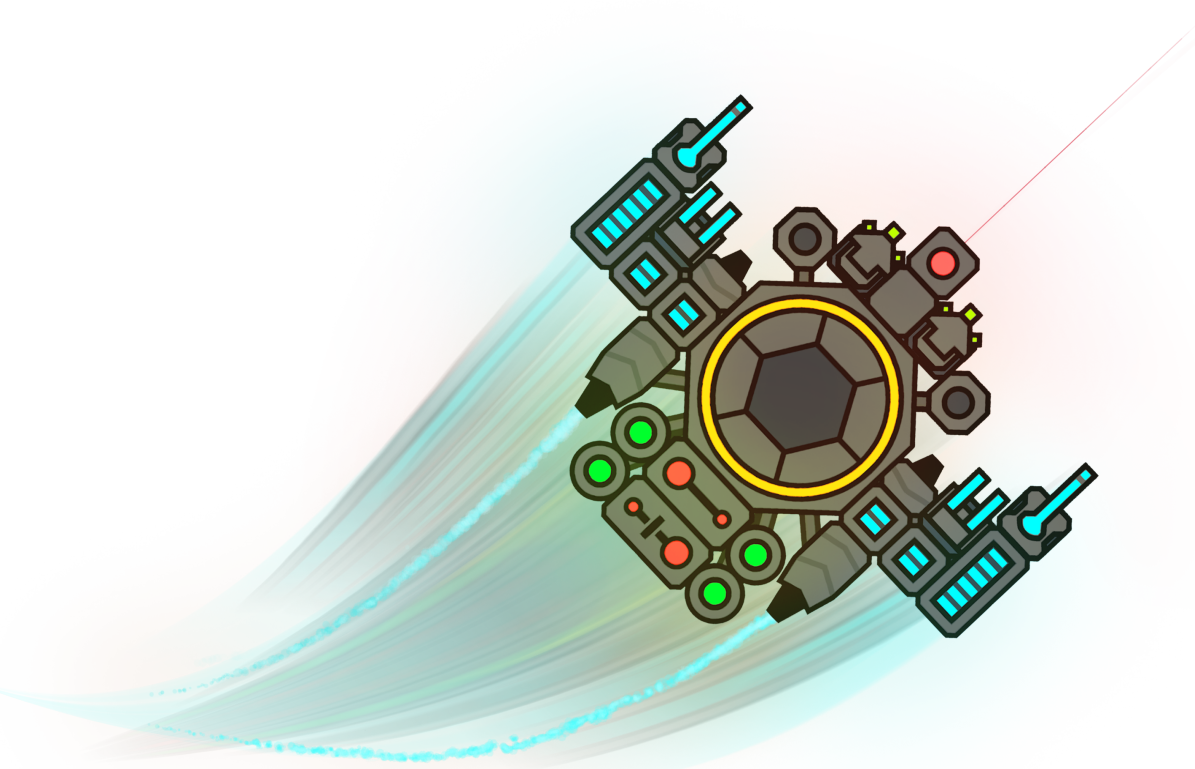


reddit



MailChimp

Second game

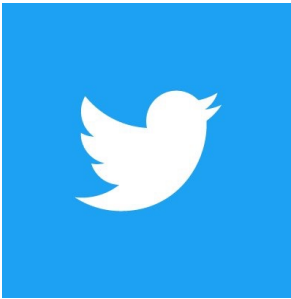


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DISCORD

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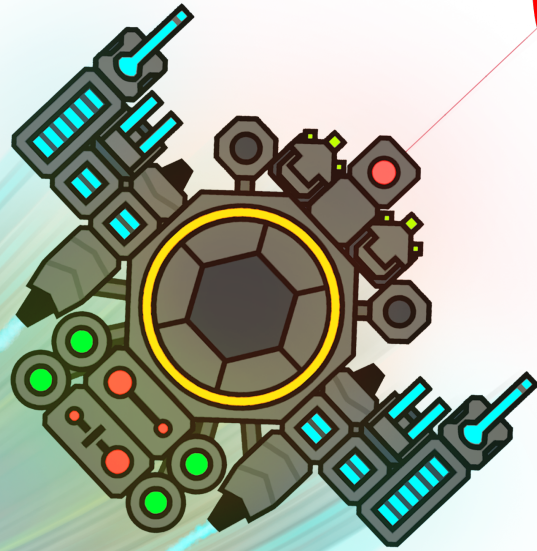


reddit



MailChimp

Second game



YouTube

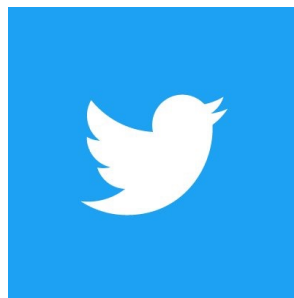


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DISCORD

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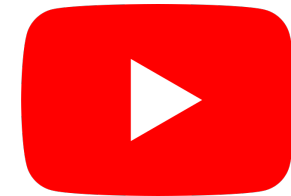
Communication Overload



Let's make it studio-based then?



Studio-based!

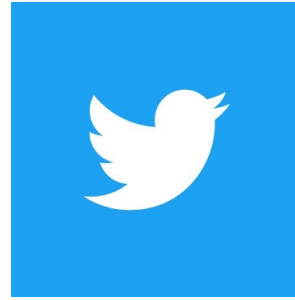


YouTube

Kind of studio-based...



Additional channels



DISCORD

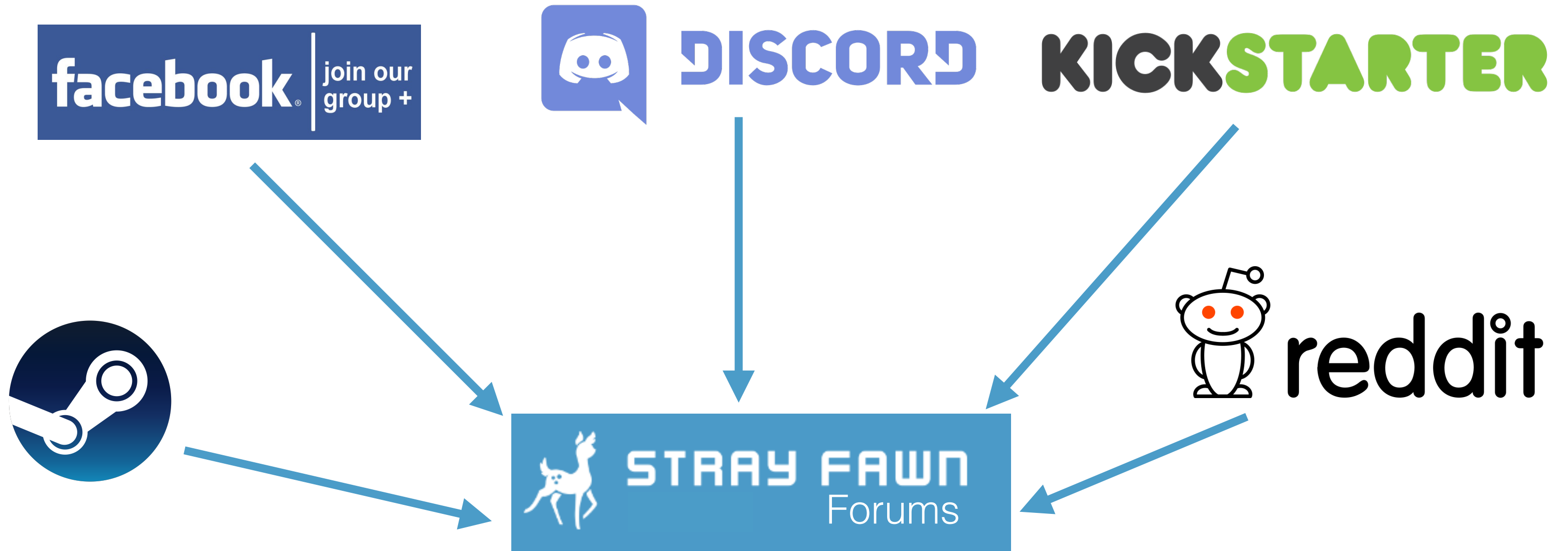
Let's solve the problem...

Let's solve the problem...

...by adding even more community hubs!



Bring them in!



Chosen software

The logo for Invision Community, featuring a white stylized icon of a downward-pointing triangle with a checkmark inside, followed by the text "INVISION COMMUNITY" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, all set against a dark blue rectangular background.

INVISION COMMUNITY

But why not...?



VS



DISCORD

From very loud to...



Forums

[Start new topic](#)

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Two new updates!



The [Nimbatus racing update](#) is now live on Steam!

The [Niche sandbox mode settings update](#) is on the testing branch!

No posts here yet

STRAY FAWN STUDIO



Welcome

New Member Introduction

Come introduce yourself here 😊

368

posts



Ello'

By Subzero

Thursday at 10:22 PM



Off Topic

● **Forum Games**

Talk about whatever you want - different breeds of goldfish, your 1000 hours playtime in Kerbal, etc

1,959

posts



TUG O' WAR

By Snowy Owl

10 minutes ago



Dev Diary

Deer diary, today our studio...

70

posts



I'll be giving a talk abou...

By Lurkily

February 14



Moderators

110



Next Niche week: 1st - 5th...

WHO'S ONLINE (SEE FULL LIST)

Philo, AlecHero, C0ffeebeans, Sephora,
Roger, Snowy Owl, Drake255, Mxpleaf,
Sinfulclliche, **Micha**

POSTS



TUG O' WAR

By Snowy Owl · Posted 10 minutes ago

133



TUG O' WAR

By Mxpleaf · Posted 12 minutes ago

132



Is it a bug?

By Mxpleaf · Posted 21 minutes ago

I never knew about that, i wonder if there is



Is it a bug?

By heyitsgeorgie · Posted 31 minutes ago

wasn't there a thing where a toxic bodied creature's colour depends on

Forums

[Start new topic](#)

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How to make sure people visit the forums

Relinking



Join the official Niche forums

Hi pack :)

We opened our own forum a while ago and have not been active in the Steam forum since then. The only exception is the bug reports subforum, that we check at least once a week.

It would be really cool if you come join us in the official forum ^_^

We hang out there almost every day!

<https://strayfawnstudio.com/community/>

Make sure people know



If you have cool ideas on what we should add next, come and tell us in the [Niche forums](#) ^_^










Hope you enjoy the update!

Would be cool if you come join our forums and discuss with us what we should add to the game next :D

<https://strayfawnstudio.com/community/>

Offer something exclusive to the forum!

	● Gods or best? Suggested by Starnichelings, November 16, 2018	0 votes	11 replies	<input type="checkbox"/>
	● alternative chameleon body Suggested by BirdsAreCool, December 28, 2018	14 votes	2 replies	<input type="checkbox"/>
	● More spit/derp snout variations Suggested by Basil, February 27	23 votes	15 replies	<input type="checkbox"/>
	● Changes to the New Genes Suggested by Skysplash8, Tuesday at 12:17 AM	16 votes	4 replies	<input type="checkbox"/>
	★ customizable bios for nichelings? Suggested by medicine cat, October 24, 2018	60 votes	9 replies	<input type="checkbox"/>
	● Hybrid Genes for Existing Entities and How to Obtain Them (from Rabbils to Apes) Suggested by Pokestardragacraft, May 5, 2018	47 votes	11 replies	<input type="checkbox"/>
	● More Fur & Eye colours Suggested by NyssaDerp, March 3	17 votes	15 replies	<input type="checkbox"/>

Be available and show it

WHO'S ONLINE (SEE FULL LIST)

Philo, Stormwolf2018, Suzu97,
AlecHero, Larouxia, Micha

Posted 14 hours ago

Where's @Philo? I want to know what these are or were.

Customization

Announcements

Important Niche announcements, such as updates and community votings.

Follow5

Mark forum as read


Start new topic

SORT BY

★🔔 New version 1.1.7 on tester branch

By Philo, Tuesday at 10:08 AM


8 replies
370 views

 kitsune1652
Yesterday at 03:07 AM

★🔔 Niche update 1.1.6 now on the testing branch! 1 2

By Philo, March 1


43 replies
2,526 views

 Jojo
Tuesday at 10:00 AM

★🔔 Community Voting results - These features will be added in the next update! 1 2

By Philo, August 2, 2018

43 replies
9,215 views

 Finnwinter
February 5

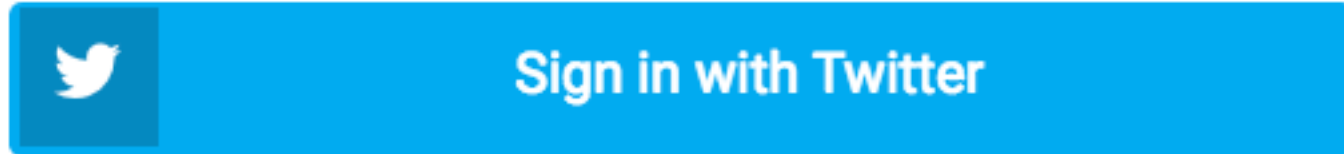
Devs



Use plugins to make sign-up easier

Get started faster

Connect via one of these sites.



More useful plugins!



@Moderator

This is quick test to see if our new feature is working 😊

Group mentions! This will be used for preview branch testing mostly 😊

For the next update, we will have a Niche Tester group.



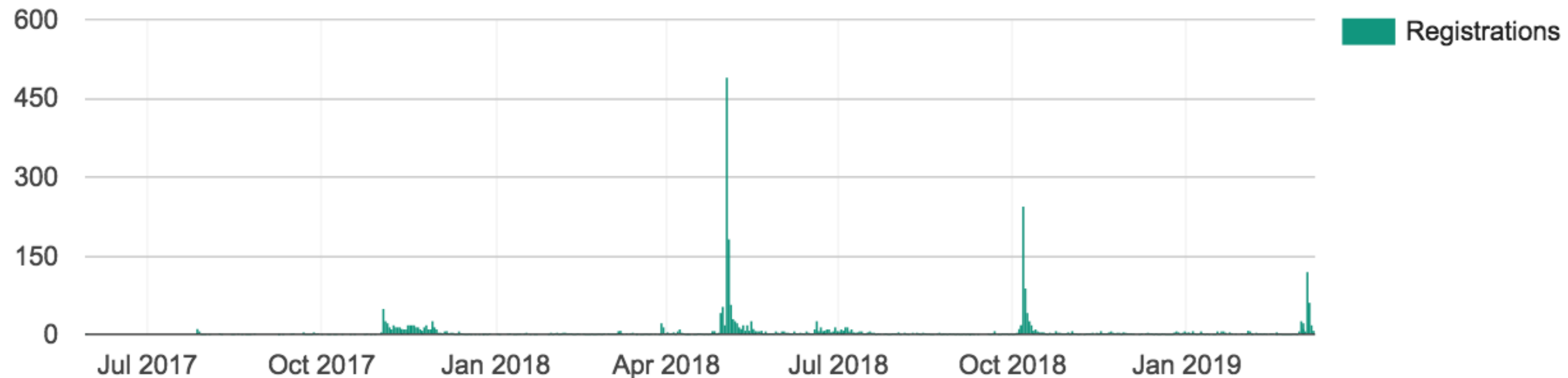
☒ Send me news and updates

☐ I agree to the Terms of Use **REQUIRED**

Run give aways!

In order to celebrate the release of the new update, we'll run a give away for everyone who can't afford the game.

If you want to win a Steam key, head over to our forums and [join the raffle](#).



Help people become friends



Omggg so beautifull! 🥰💕💕💕



Let's have a nicheling beauty contest!

Help people become friends

● What time is it? By Renio2490, Monday at 02:39 PM	13 replies 83 views		bannergirl411 Thursday at 01:00 AM	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Cookie Clicker By Aetherskye, Monday at 11:36 PM	15 replies 71 views		Skysplash8 Wednesday at 03:18 AM	<input type="checkbox"/>
● "Hey, you look like _____!" By Basil, Monday at 11:43 PM	12 replies 104 views		Goggles-kun Wednesday at 01:00 AM	<input type="checkbox"/>
★ Interesting Biology stuff By Philo, April 10, 2018	14 replies 830 views		pebbleheart.the.med.cat Tuesday at 11:34 PM	<input type="checkbox"/>
★ am i the only one? By eve_dawwn, Monday at 02:02 AM	4 replies 66 views		pebbleheart.the.med.cat Tuesday at 11:31 PM	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Hamilton the Musical By Brokenshock, February 9	5 replies 106 views		eve_dawwn Monday at 02:01 AM	<input type="checkbox"/>
★ ? Favorite Animal Poll 1 2 By DangerousDodo, April 24, 2018	25 replies 826 views		Subzero Sunday at 11:14 PM	<input type="checkbox"/>

Numbers

- **3700 people registered in our forums**
- **1000 newsletter signups gathered by plugin**
- **15 - 60 people online at the same time on a regular day**

Conclusion

Thank you very much!



STRAY FAWN *studio*

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philo@strayfawnstudio.com