

6

Powerful Lessons from Games Research

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interpret

My Career



TÚAW

joystiq



EEDAR

npd

interpret



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Games Research is...



The practice of using scientific **methodologies** from all kinds of different fields (sociology, data science, engineering, psychology, economics, communication) to gather information...

In order to solve game design, marketing, and business problems.



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Here are...

6

Powerful Lessons from Games Research

1. Research leads to insight
2. How to predict fun
3. Memories are made of this
4. Characters are what they we remember
5. Interest is where the old meets the new
6. Communication is the key

Broadly applicable
insights to show how
game researchers
think that can help
you make and market
better games



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Lesson 1

Research Leads to Insight

Research

- Uses a **methodology** to gather and analyze data (important because the method must be clear and repeatable - everyone can agree on it and the result)
- Can involve numeric data (quantitative) or descriptive data (qualitative)
- Can lead to conclusive business insights (including validation and guidance)



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Which type of level should we make?

- ☐ Cheaper and easier to make
- ☐ CEO's kids love snow
- ☐ Reddit seems to like desert
- ☐ Don't monetize as well

Play Time = Monetization



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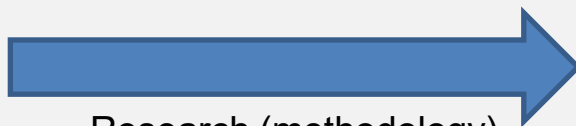
Snow Played Hours
Average: 12.985



Desert Played Hours
Average: 32.065

Insight: Average Desert playtime is 3X higher, so make more Desert levels!

Problem
(random,
unorganized
information)



Research (methodology)

Insight!
(better decisions)



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Lesson 2

How to Predict Fun



**FAIL
FAST
AND
FOLLOW
THE FUN**

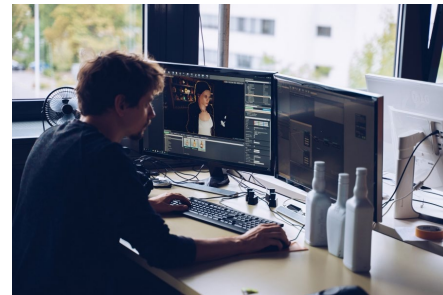
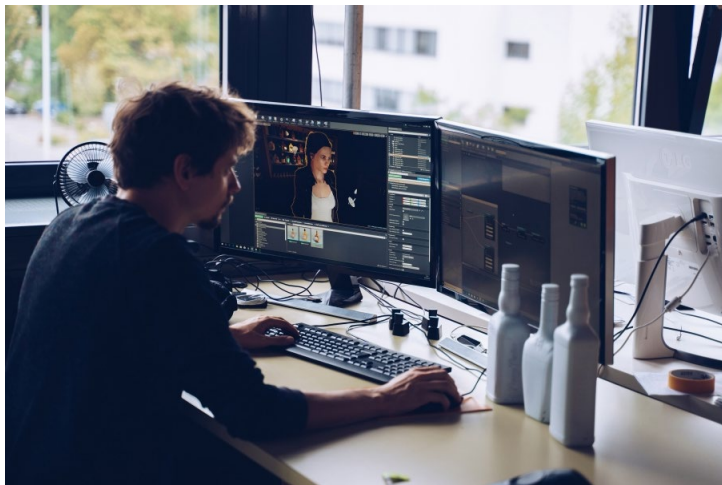
- **Marc LeBlanc's workshops**
- **Dan Nanni's "How We Designed Gameplay for LawBreakers" in the GDC Vault**
- **Game Maker's Toolkit on YouTube**



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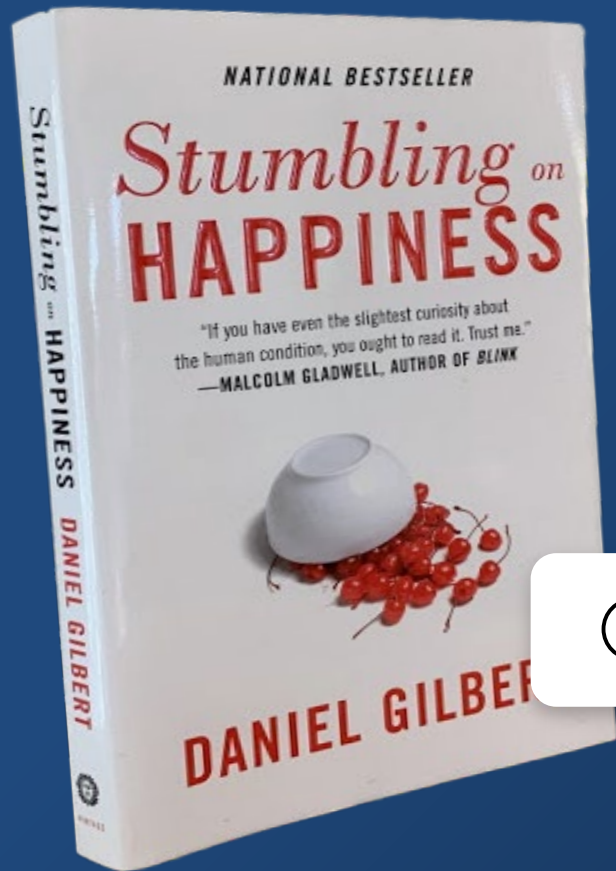
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Following the fun is almost impossible.



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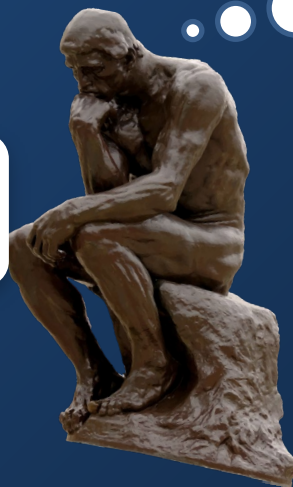
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We humans are bad predictors of future happiness.



Memory



Would I like?



Imagination



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**Ask someone else.
(who's just been there)**

**Focus Groups and
Playtests**



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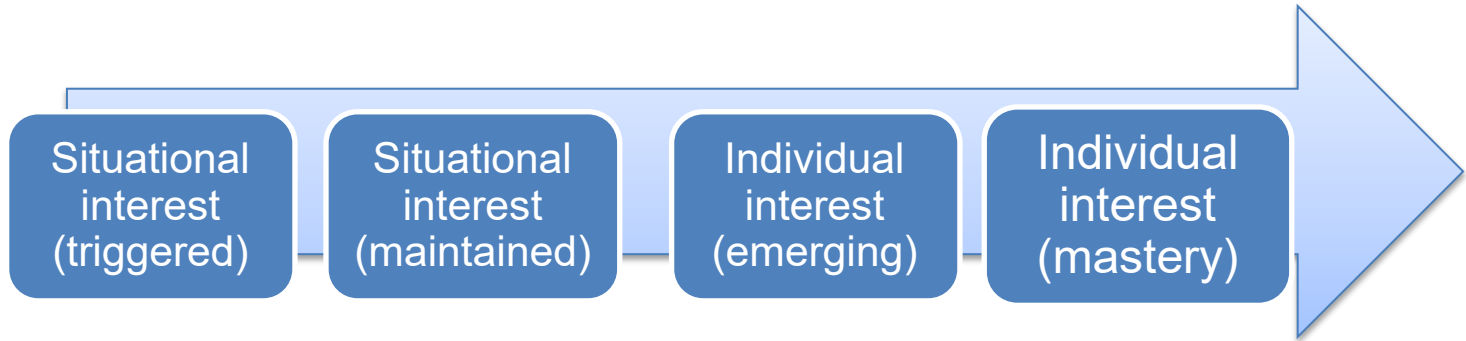
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We can also observe **memory**, which is tied to interest.

What we remember, we are interested in,
and what we're interested in, we remember.

K. Ann Renninger and Suzanne E. Hidi
“The Four Phase Model of Interest Development”



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Lesson 3

Memories are Made of This

We're **bad predictors** of future happiness, because we rely too much on our **memory** and **imagination**. *Both are inaccurate.*

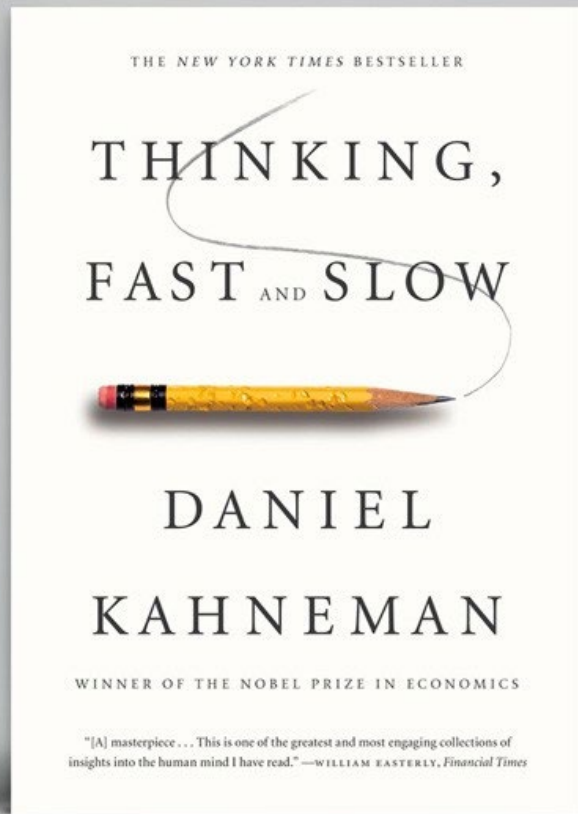


Memory is also
(specifically)
inaccurate.



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Two Selves



Our past memories are most influenced by:

1. Peaks (highest or lowest)
2. End (final moments)



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Two Trials



Painfully cold water: **60 seconds**

Slightly warmer

Painfully cold water: **90 seconds**



80%

of the people who reported feeling the slight warming **chose to do the 90-second trial again.**

They chose **30 more seconds of pain** because their memory of the 90 second trial was slightly better, because **the end** was better (peak also matters).

Their memory led them astray!



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- Memories are affected by the peak and the end of an experience
- Peak: What's the most spectacular, notable moment (and is it positive?)
- Ends: MP matches, runs (roguelikes), chapters, sessions
- Demos, vertical slices and prototypes

Adjust the **peak** or **end** of an experience, and you can adjust the **memory** of playing it (and someone's **interest** in it).



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Lesson 4

Characters Are What We Remember



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**“How do
I make my
characters
feel
authentic?”**



(brand/license/game/service/offering)

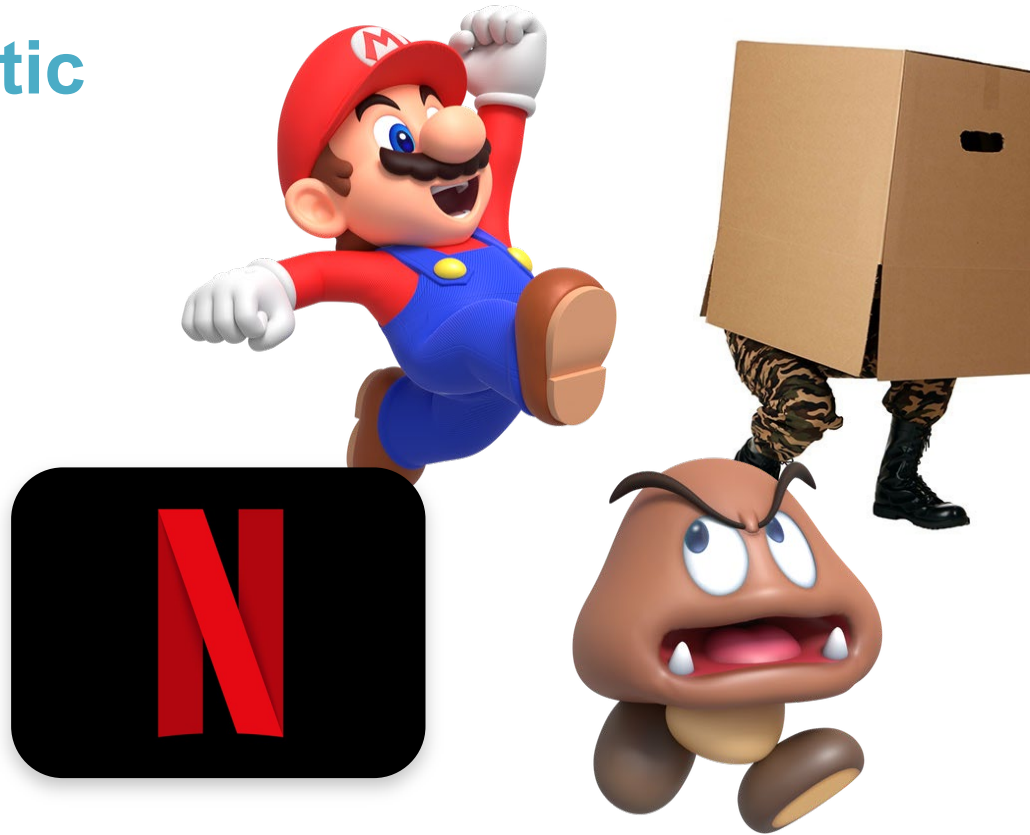


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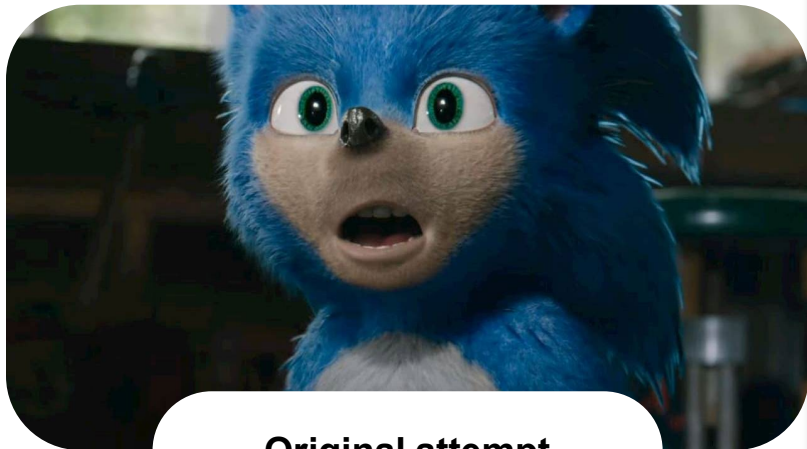
Characters **feel authentic**
when they do what we
remember them doing.

- The Mere Exposure effect: Familiarity breeds liking
- Brand reactions require recognition

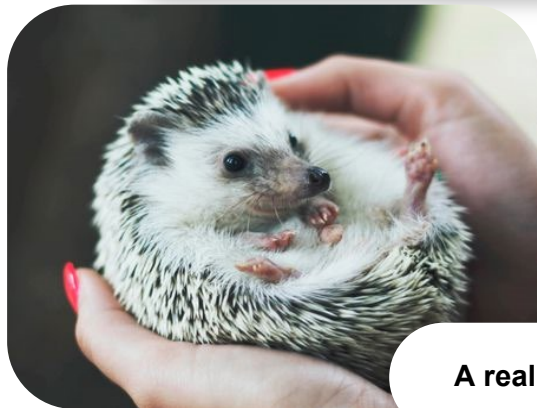


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Original attempt



A real hedgehog



Highest Grossing Video Game
Movie of All Time

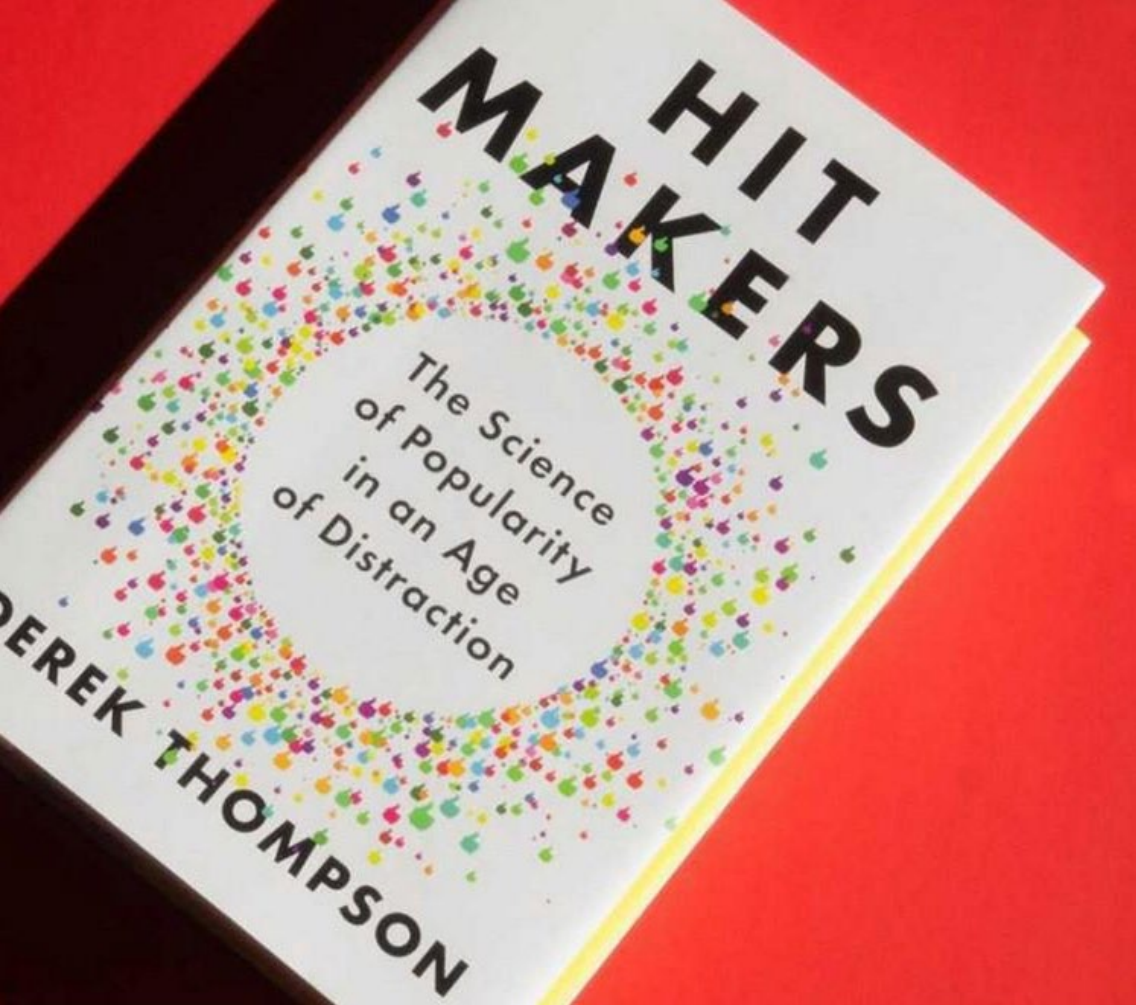


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Lesson 5

**Interest is
Where the Old
Meets the New**



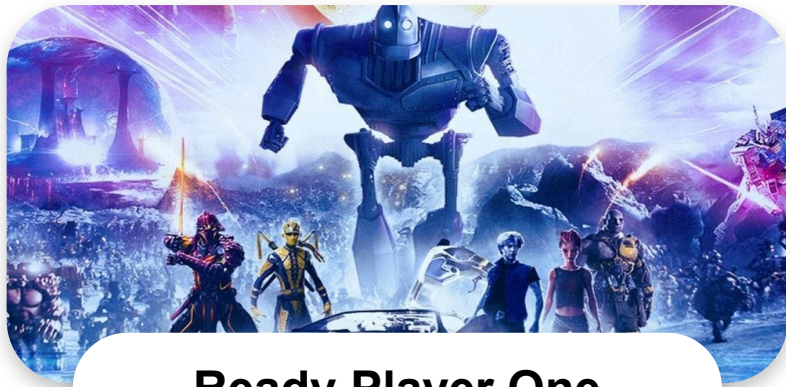
Familiarity isn't
enough...

Combining the
familiar with the
innovative is
what creates hits
that connect
and resonate.



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Ready Player One



The Mandalorian



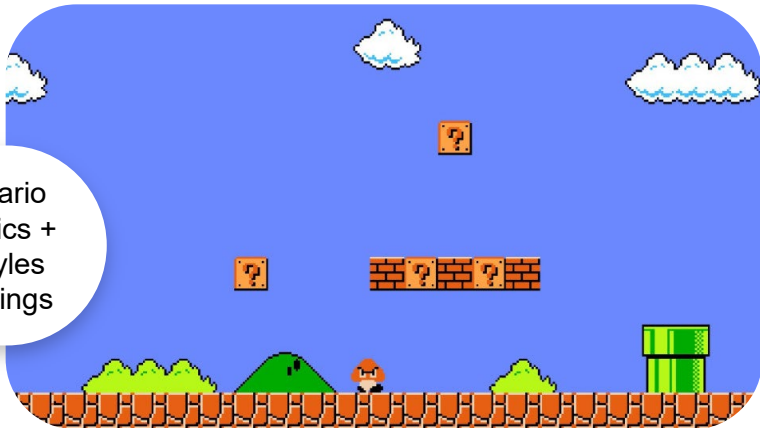
Marvel Studios



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Core Mario
mechanics +
New styles
and settings



Structure and
aesthetic in 2D +
Big 3D cinematic
storytelling



Classic setting and
structure + Modern
open world and physics
system



Crafty, voxel, survival,
multiplayer of mechanic
of Minecraft + Norse
Mythology on a
comeback



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Familiar

(comfort, nostalgia, known, history)



Innovative

(new, exciting, discovery, progress)

Memory



Interest!

Imagination




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Lesson 6

Communication is the Key

-
1. Research leads to insight
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- 

6. Communication is the key.

Games research is about **creating effective communication.**



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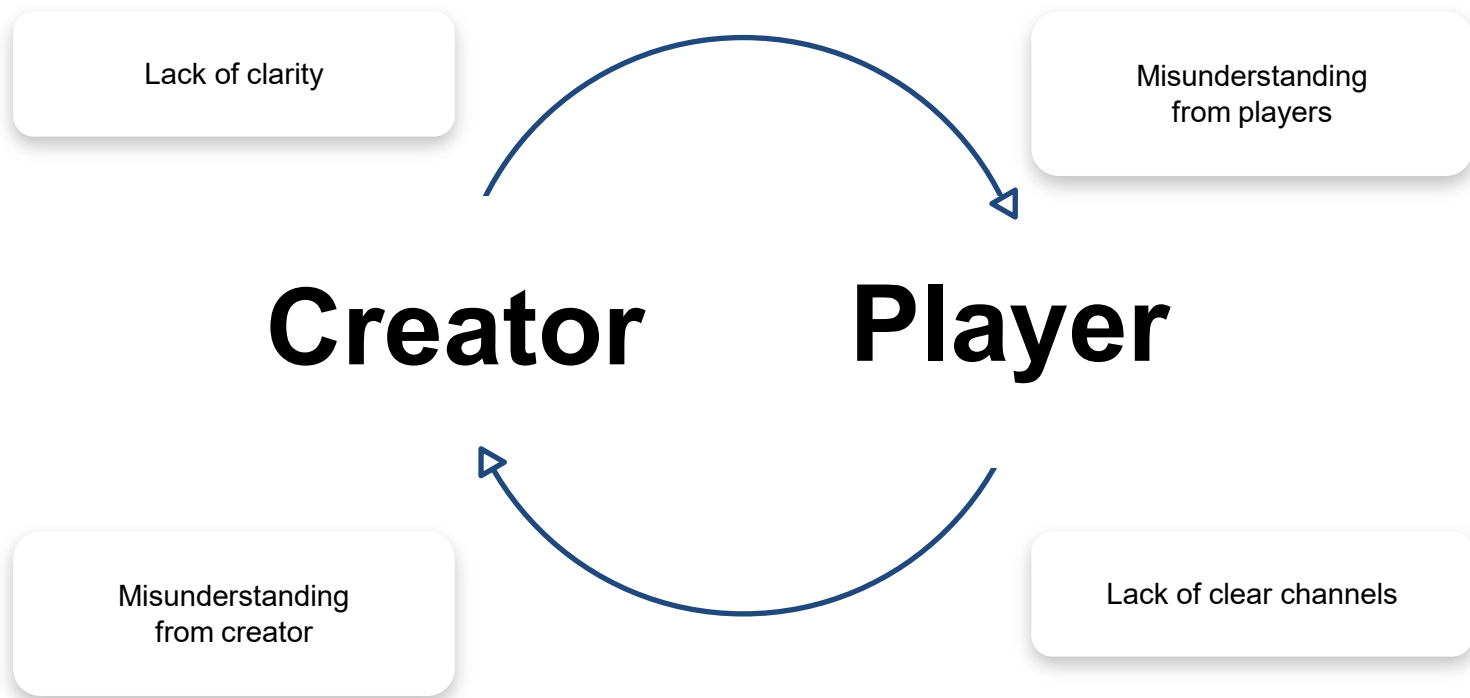
“What is the one thing you’d like to tell the developers of this game?”

“Listen to your community.”



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Thank You

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