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San Francisco, CA

# Playtesting your Game Economy: on “MARVEL Strike Force”

Haider CW (he/him)  
Director of Economy (Scopely)

#GDC23



# More about me

- Mostly Indian, part Thai, born in Hawaii
- Designing video games for more than a decade
- Currently work on "MARVEL Strike Force"



2009



2018

2022





# Leaders that have inspired me



Pauline  
she/her



Dr. Jess  
she/her



Christian  
he/him



Dave  
he/him



Florence  
she/her



Matt  
he/him



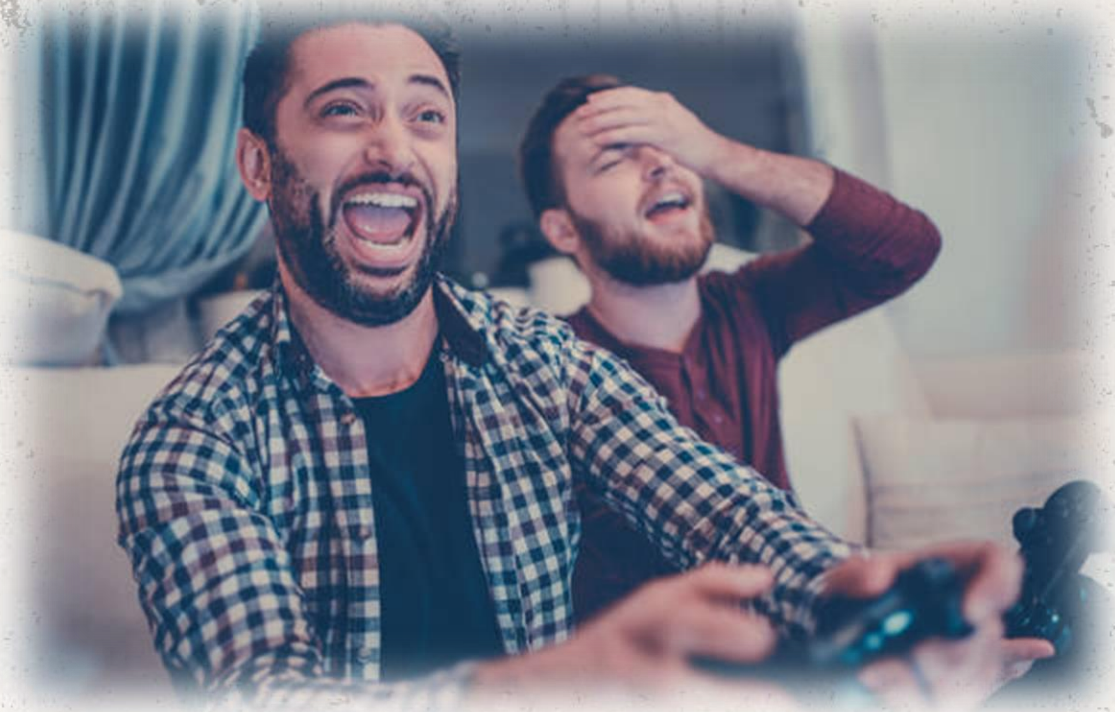


# Rewarding Players





# Player Reactions





# Playtesting your Game Economy





# Playtesting your Game Economy

## 1. WHY



Players have emotions

## 2. WHO



Motivations > Demographics

## 3. WHEN



Start early & fail fast



# WHY





Wisdom +1

# Players have emotions



Geoff Harrison  
he/him





# AI Agent Sim

- AI Agents trained to play the game at scale





# Learnings

## Successes

- High fidelity Econ sim. Great to validate the economy.
- Great to test tech at scale.
- Use varying player skill levels to train the model.

## Opportunities

- Players have emotions. AI Agents aren't a replacement for real players. Don't reduce playtesting.
- Player's sleep. Balance your economy for **10 to 12 hours** of sleep.





# WHO





Wisdom +2

# Motivations > Demographics



Dr. Jess Tompkins  
she/her

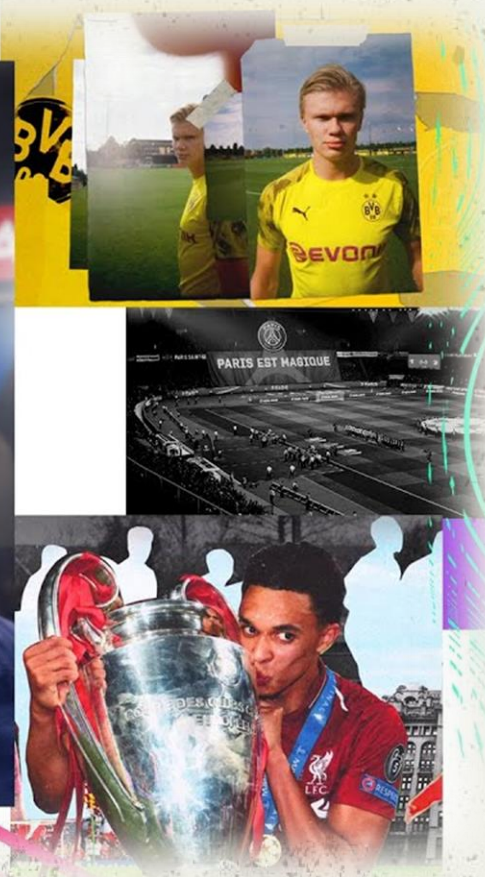
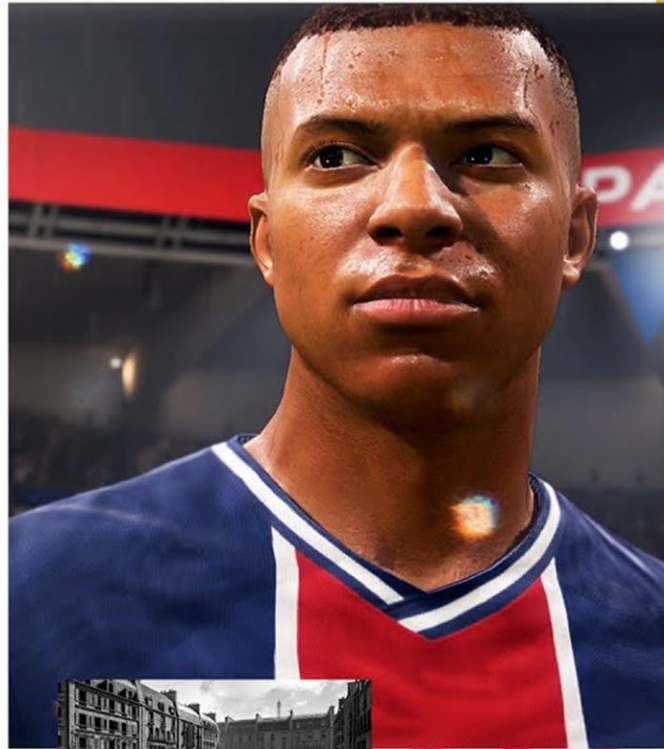




# I am not into Sports or Racing games

- Marketing keeps trying to sell me sports & racing games
- I fall under a certain demographic

**EA SPORTS FIFA 21**  
**OFFICIAL  
REVEAL  
TRAILER**





# I am into Romance & RPGs

- Facebook's AI shows me appropriate ads





# Learnings

## Successes

- Behavioral & Motivational Segmentation to build Player Personas
- Typing surveys to recruit players based on their motivations
- Recruiting play-testers based on the games they play

## Opportunities

- Can use more diversity in our play-testers: *Women, LGBTQ+, People of Color*
- We can set representation & hiring goals for diversity
- We can use diverse channels to recruit players. *Example: Discord, etc*





# WHEN





Wisdom +3

# Start Early & Fail Fast



Christian Dailey  
he/him





# User Research + Game Economy

## Conception

Player  
Personas

Time to  
Beat

## Pre-Pro

Relationships  
between  
Rewards

Moment to  
Moment  
Pacing

## Prod

Player  
Progression

Learning  
Curve

## Live

**SOURCES:**  
Buffing Game  
Mode Rewards

**SINKS:**  
Major Reward  
Beats



# Live Economy Philosophy

## 1. Playtest



Treat every update like a playtest

## 2. Iterate



Be humble & open to feedback

## 3. Buff



Don't take away rewards from players



# HOW





Wisdom +4

# Players Journey Framework



Haider CW  
he/him





# MARVEL Strike Force

- Team Based RPG
- Game about collecting heroes from the MARVEL Universe

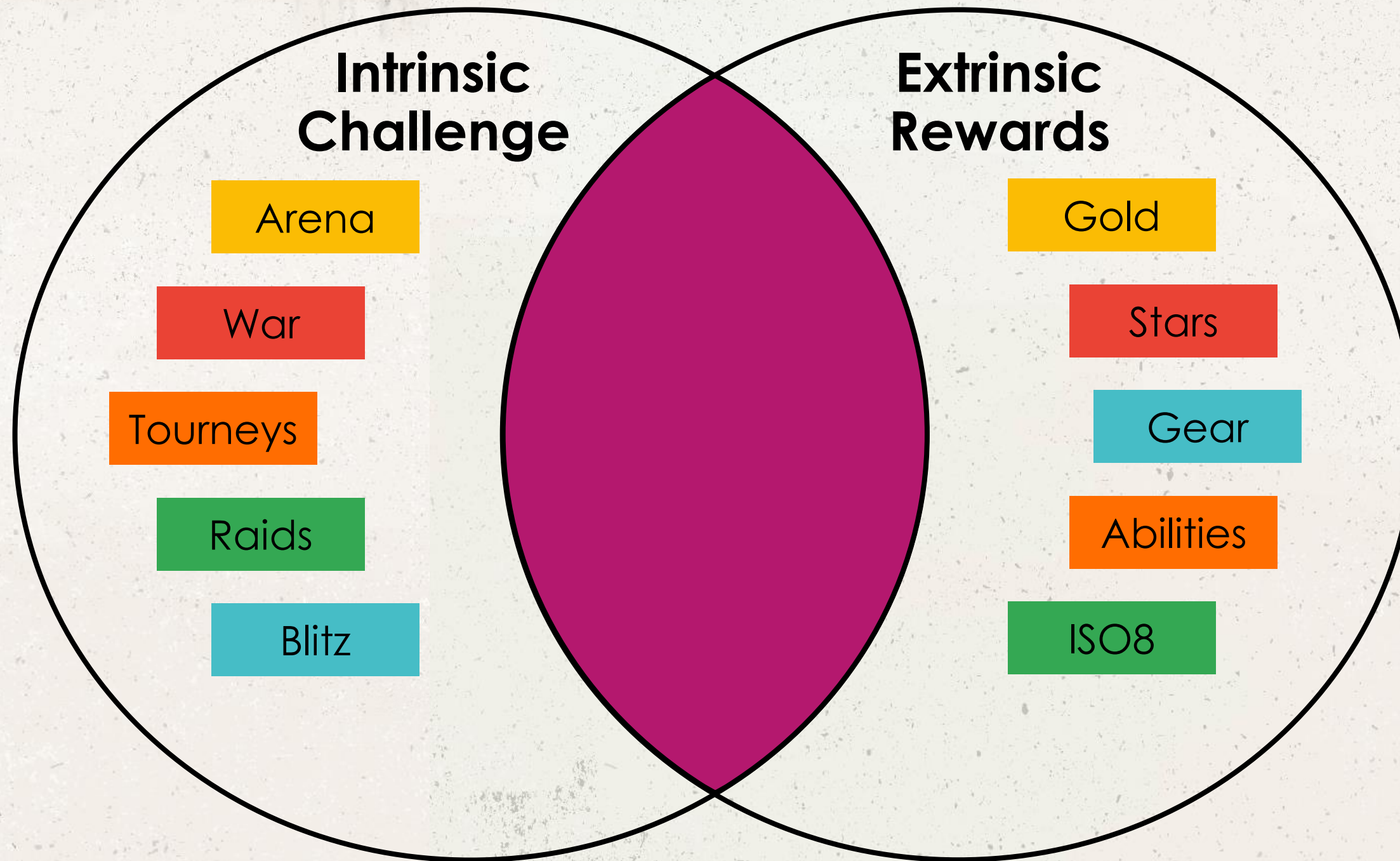




# Economy Design Fundamentals

- Building relationships between rewards

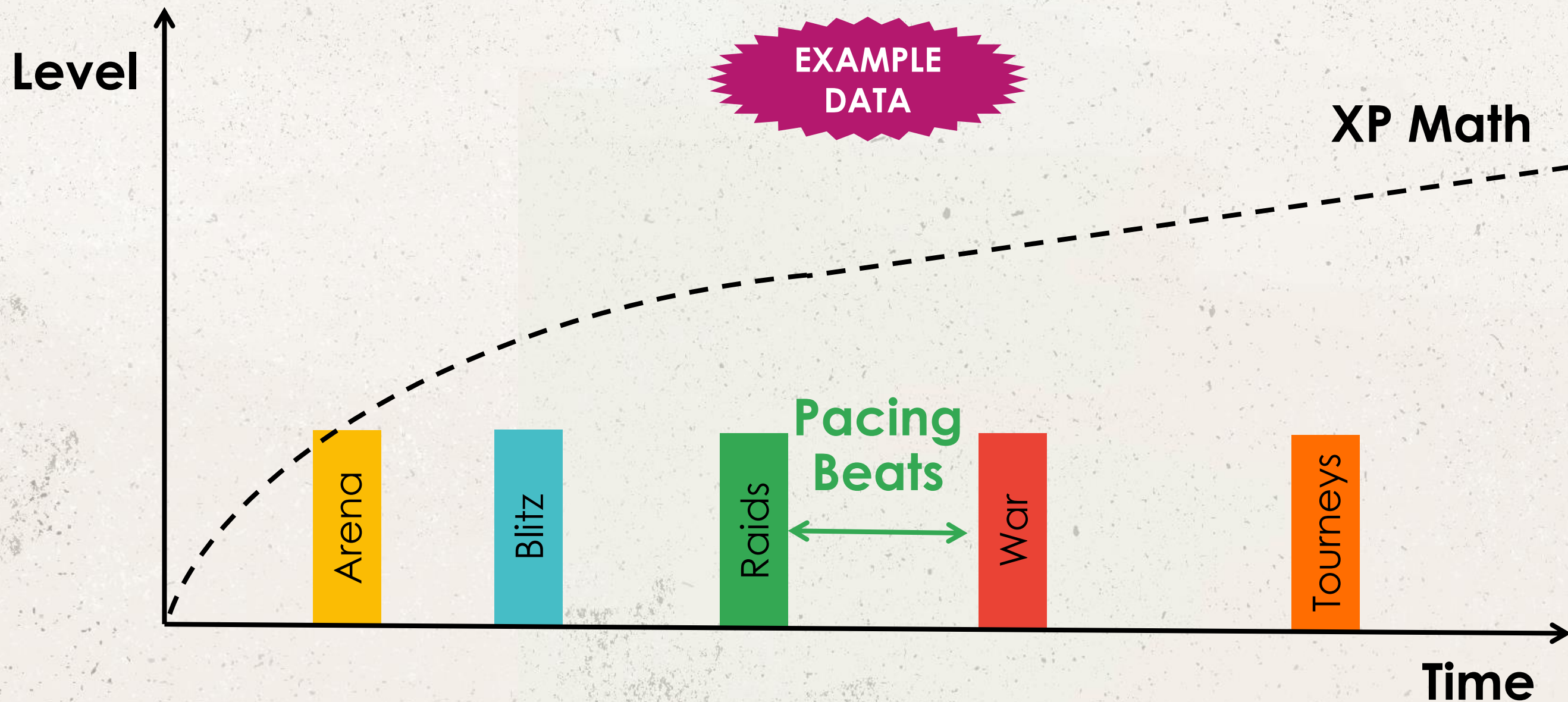
Pre-Pro





# STEP 1: Pace Milestones

- Players don't see your math behind the XP Curve
- They feel how it paces out milestone beats that are meaningful to them



Prod





# STEP 2: Set Design Goals

- Set measurable design goals at each milestone
- Set targets, playtest & iterate

System	Engagement Type	Weekly Goals
Arena	Time	As a player I spend X mins in Game Mode
War	Time	
CC	Time	
Raids	Time	
Blitz	Time	
Arena	Play	As a player I make X attacks this week
War	Play	
CC	Play	
Raids	Play	
Blitz	Play	
Arena	Winning	As a player I win X attacks this week
War	Winning	
CC	Winning	
Raids	Winning	
Blitz	Winning	
Arena	Ranking	The highest arena rank bucket I reached was X
War	Ranking	
CC	Ranking	
Raids	Ranking	
Blitz	Ranking	

EXAMPLE  
DATA

Prod





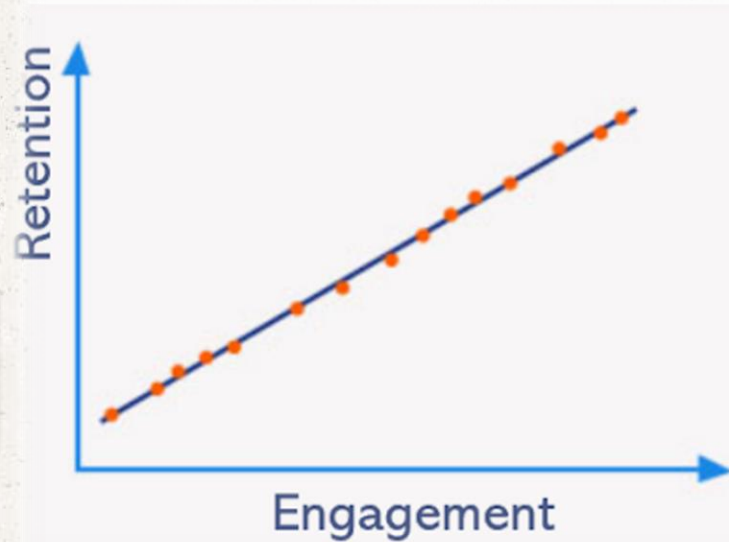
# STEP 3: Correlate to Retention

- Mastering Retention is important

EXAMPLE  
DATA

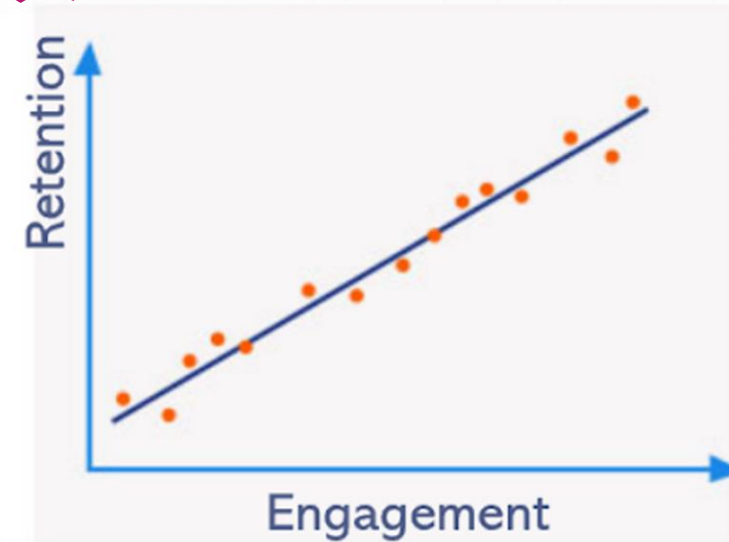
Raids

Large positive  
correlation



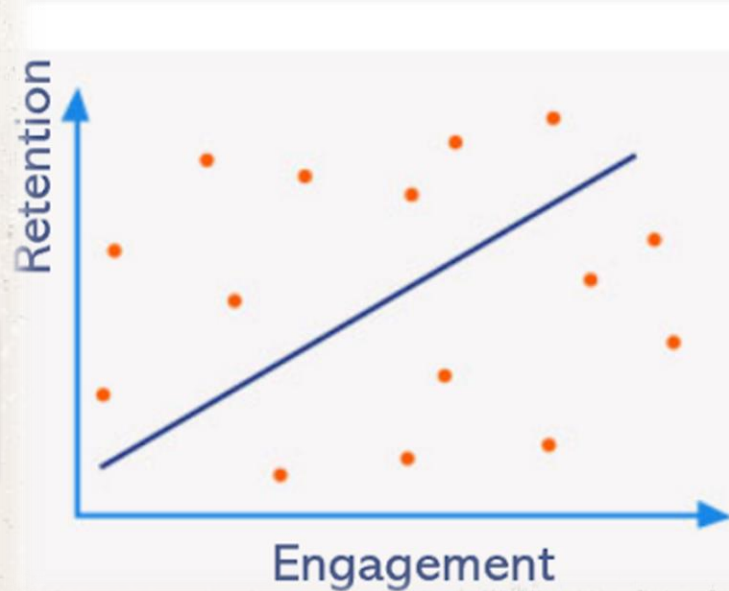
War

Medium positive  
correlation



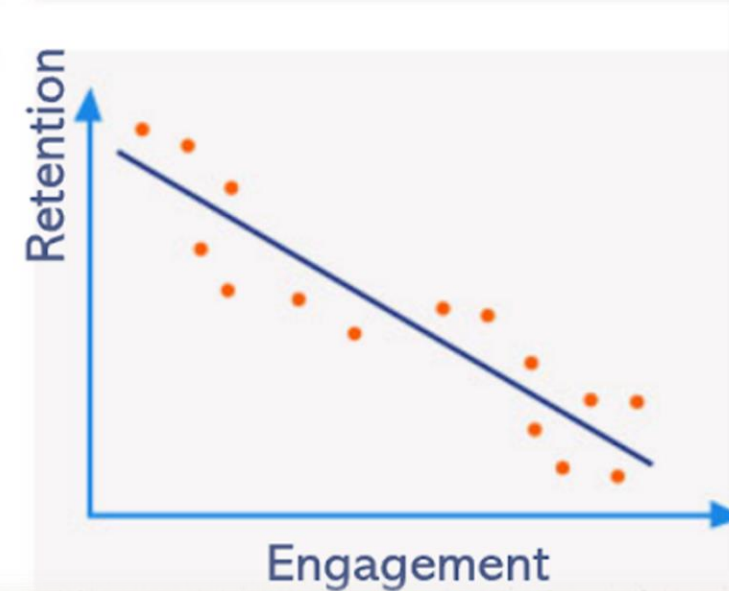
Arena

Weak  
correlation



Blitz

Small negative  
correlation



Live

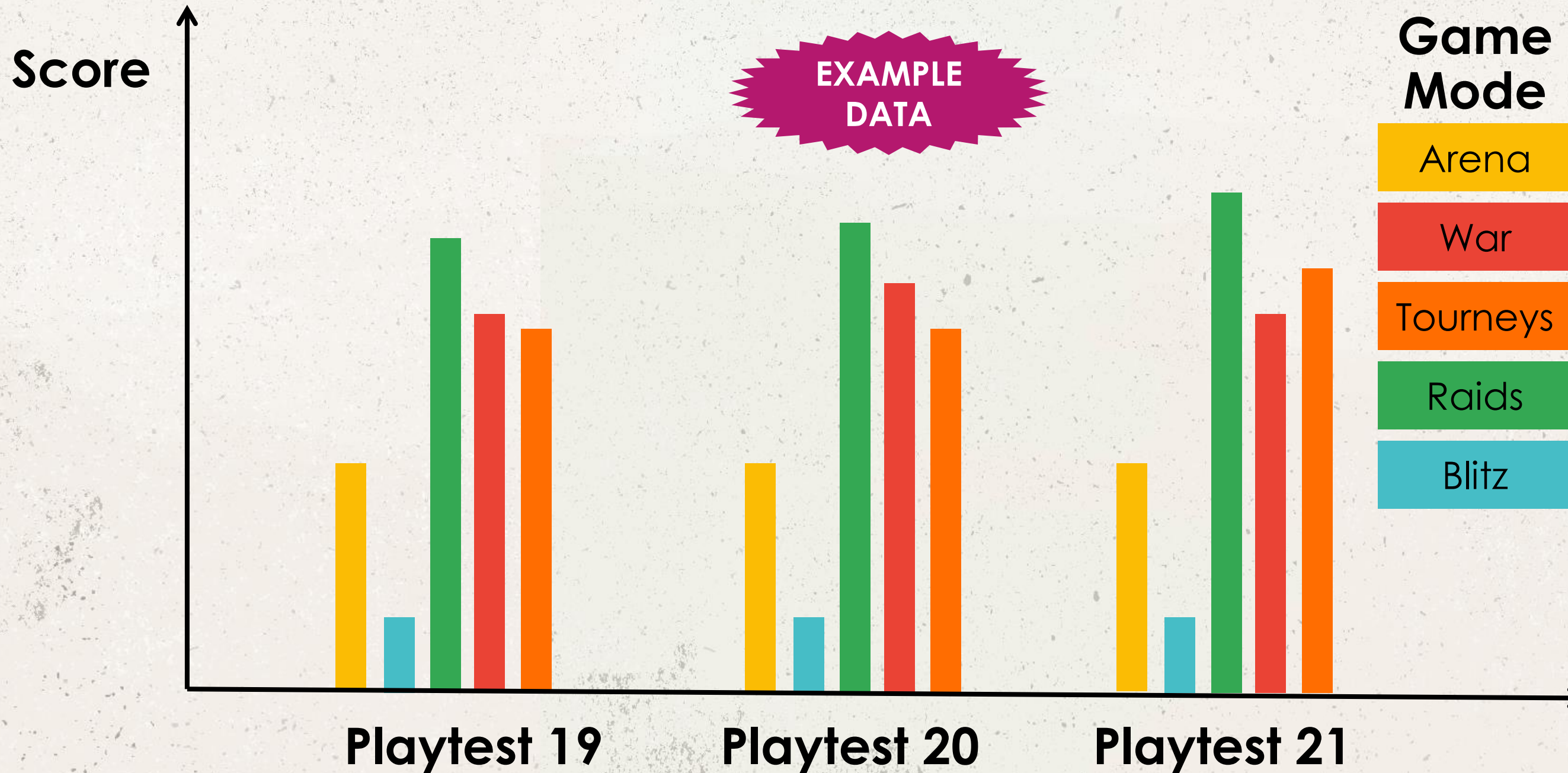




# STEP 4: Use Qual Insights

- How rewarding do you find Y game mode? Why?

Live





# STEP 5: Triangulate Insights

Live

Design  
Intuition



Haider CW  
he/him



Tommy Kim  
he/him

Quant  
Data



Angela Nguyen  
she/her

Qual  
Insights



# Players Journey Framework





# If you remember nothing else...

## 1. Playtest



Treat every update like a playtest

## 2. Iterate



Be humble & open to feedback

## 3. Buff

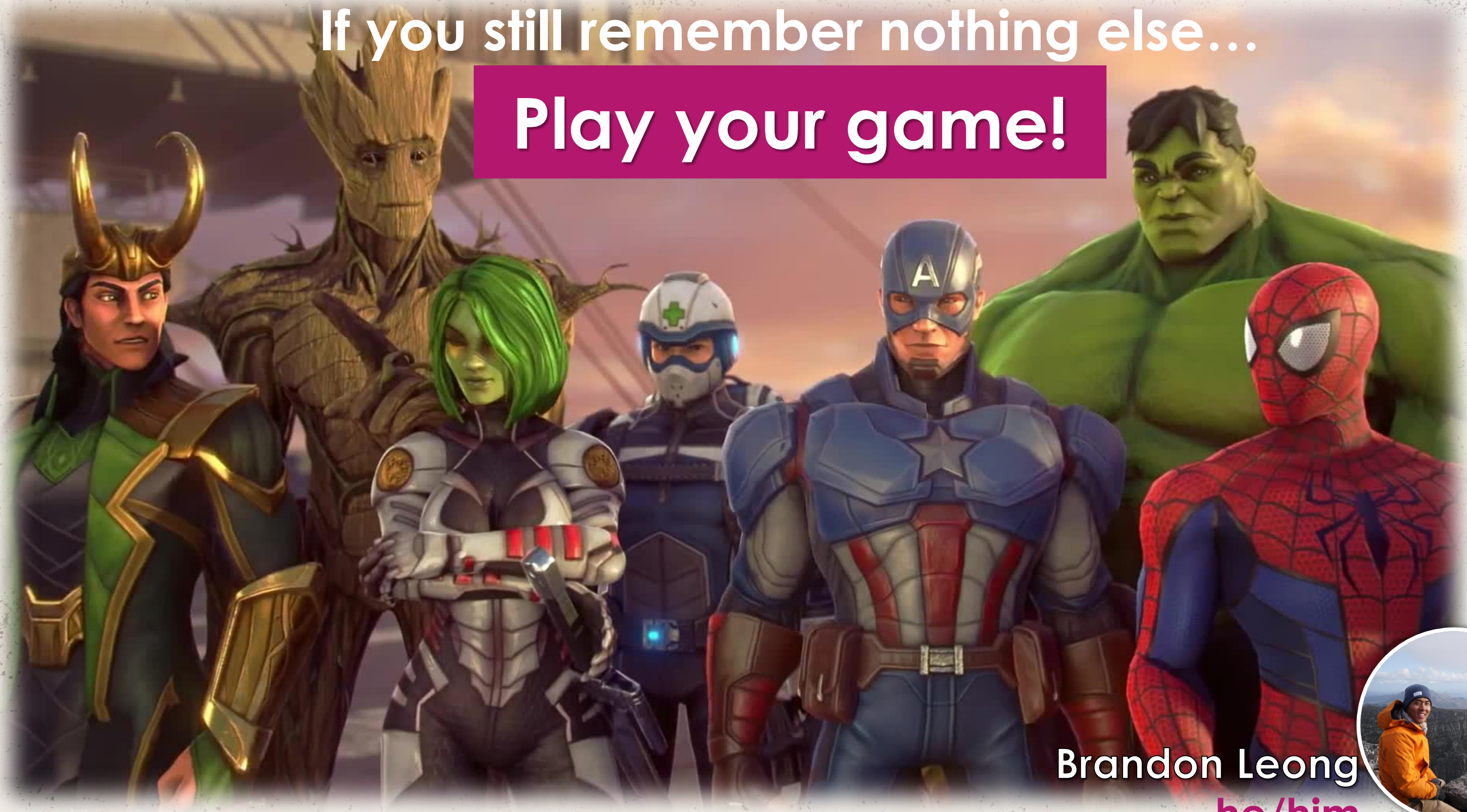


Don't take away rewards from players



If you still remember nothing else...

**Play your game!**



Brandon Leong  
he/him

