

Design Post-Mortem Report

Positive Reflections

Effective Iterative Playtesting

The iterative playtesting process significantly improved the game by refining mechanics and addressing player feedback. Transitioning from a fixed-direction board to a hexagonal tile-based board added strategic depth and flexibility, making gameplay more engaging. This approach ensured continuous alignment with player expectations while leaving room for future refinements.

Improved Player Interaction

Revisions to tile mechanics, such as the updated -2p tile, successfully increased player interaction. By shifting its effect from self-penalty to targeting the nearest opponent, players were encouraged to engage with one another, fostering competition and tension.

Additionally, the original rule that limited attacks to every three turns was replaced with a mechanic allowing attacks at any time, further enhancing player dynamics. These changes enriched the strategic choices available to players and aligned with the goal of creating a more dynamic and competitive experience.

Enhanced Dramatic Elements

A key strength of the final design was the thematic integration of the "black hole" concept. Players start as a **Primordial** Black Hole and evolve through stages to become a **Supermassive** Black Hole, which effectively captured the desired player fantasy. The addition of thematic tile effects, such as Cosmic Dust granting points and Dark Matter requiring level checks, further reinforced the theme, making the game more immersive and engaging.

Negative Reflections

Limited Prototyping Diversity

During the early stages, prototypes focused mainly on digital board designs, with less emphasis on physical models. While physical prototypes were introduced later, incorporating them earlier could have provided valuable hands-on testing opportunities.

For instance, physical tiles or game pieces might have helped identify issues like tile

similarity or resource distribution more efficiently. Balancing the use of both digital and physical prototypes throughout the process would have allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of design options and accelerated improvements.

Lack of Visual Differentiation for Player Levels

The player pieces do not visually reflect their levels, making it difficult for players to intuitively track progression or compare statuses during gameplay. Distinct designs for each level could enhance clarity and engagement.

Missed Opportunities for Enhanced Interaction

While the -2p tile mechanics improved player interaction, the overall design lacked additional dynamic systems for influencing opponents, such as resource-stealing or alliance-building mechanisms. Adding these elements could have fostered richer social dynamics.

Conclusion

The design process successfully integrated a compelling theme, fostered interaction, and refined strategic depth, laying a strong foundation for the game. Future iterations can focus on adding visual clarity for player levels, expanding interaction mechanics, and introducing more diverse design elements to further enhance player experience and accessibility.