

EBOOK

Turning organic success into long-term revenue

A practical framework for F2P mobile games to achieve sustainable, long-term revenue growth.



In today's gaming landscape with its myriad mobile marketing challenges, a spark of organic traction can be more valuable than ever. Organic viral traction can be seen in games like Among Us and Getting Over It With Bennett Foddy (streamers), The Battle of Polytopia (unexpected celebrity endorsement), and Farmville (spammy Facebook notifications). Even paid campaigns on platforms like TikTok are deliberately designed to look like user-generated content to try to mimic guerilla marketing.

Ideally, this spark will spread like wildfire through viral marketing alone, meaning you never need to run a paid UA campaign at all. But, most likely, sustained growth will require strategic use of paid user acquisition and an agile approach to monetization. Mobile developers who can weave these strands together are well-prepared for long-term success.

This ebook is designed to illuminate the path from the organic buzz that launches a game, to the optimization of its monetization that lays the foundation for sustained growth, to the strategic deployment of paid campaigns that fuel its ascent. We will delve into case studies, industry insights, and practical strategies that bridge the gap between organic and paid growth, offering developers the knowledge they need to scale their mobile games successfully.

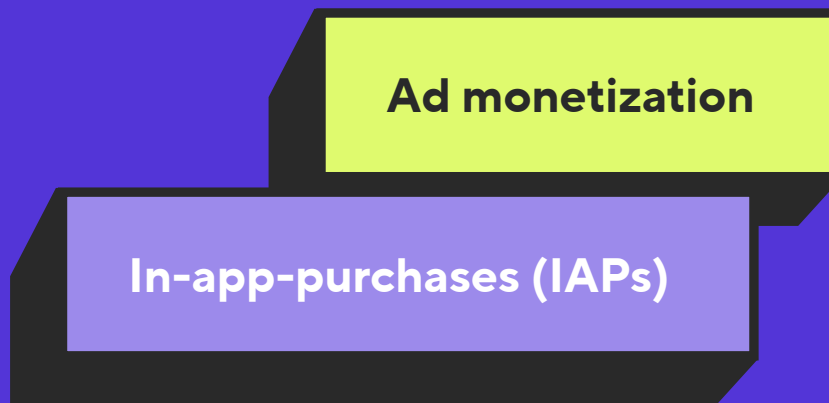
Whether you're a one-person band or a midsize studio, think of this ebook as your roadmap to turning organic success into long-term revenue.

FIRST STEP

Optimize to thrive

Look at the steps that need to be taken to make the most of eventual paid UA before those campaigns are started.

To help increase your LTV, you should focus on the following:



Ad monetization

Ad monetization is by far the most widespread solution for game monetization next to in-app purchases. This is where the player sees ads within a game and the developer earns based on impressions/clicks on the advertisement.

The two primary strategies for enhancing ad monetization are:

Ad mediation optimization

This focuses on fine-tuning the setup of existing Ad mediation platforms and networks.

Game design optimization

This involves creating new ad placements, optimizing ad frequency, and refining reward systems within the game to increase overall engagement and revenue.



Quick wins

Pick the right networks in your Ad mediation setup

Each Ad mediation setup consists of bidding and a waterfall part – that is what we call a hybrid setup, getting the best of both worlds.

Google AdMob defines the bidding setup as when ad sources compete in a real-time auction. The mediation platform asks all ad networks involved how much they're willing to pay for a specific impression at that moment. The ad networks then answer with offers, and from there the ad mediation platform will pick the highest offer.

A waterfall ad mediation setup is where a mediation platform asks each ad network if they are willing to buy an impression for a specific price. If the ad network does not accept, it moves 'down the waterfall'. If the offer is accepted, the waterfall has a winner.

The hybrid setup enables you to always get the highest eCPM (effective cost per mille), resulting in more ad revenue.

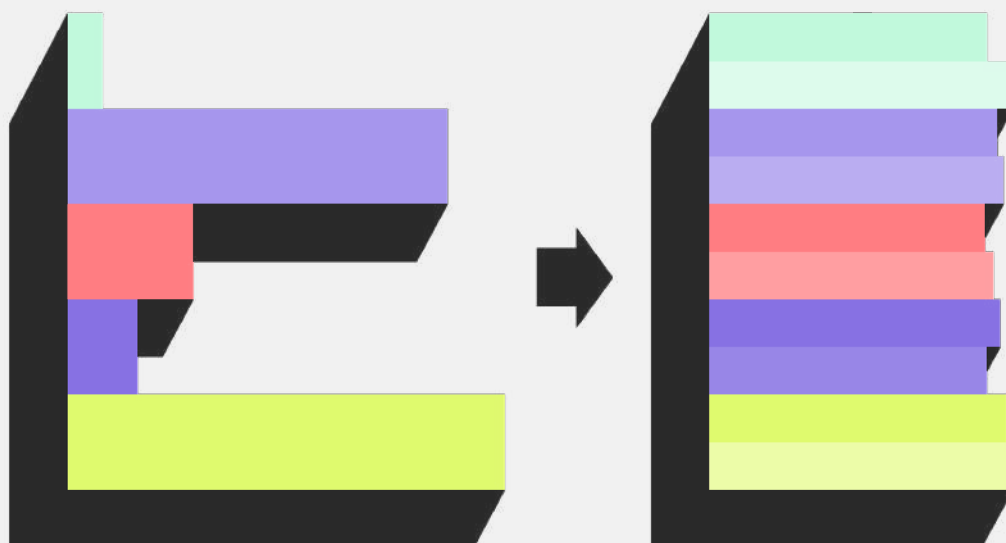
The first thing to assess here is if your game incorporates all major networks and how these networks perform in bidding versus waterfall settings. Top networks typically include AdMob, UnityAds, Applovin, Meta, ironSource, and Vungle. After integrating major networks, attention shifts to minor ones like Mintegral, DT Exchange, Chartboost, AdColony, Tapjoy, InMobi, Pangle.

The total number of ad networks within the setup is crucial. We consider various elements like geolocation and game genre to select the most suitable ad networks, encouraging natural competition and increasing eCPM.

“ While a bidding setup sounds like the logical choice, not all networks perform the best in it. Always A/B test the waterfall and bidding setups for ad networks! ”

Vladimír Baláž
Ad monetization
specialist





Optimize your waterfall zones

Once the right networks are in place, we evaluate if all zones in the manual waterfall are equal in terms of share of revenue. If one zone collects more than 2-3% of total revenue, we suggest adding new zones with higher eCPM levels to distribute revenue more evenly. If they are lower than 0.2 - 0.3% we suggest lowering them even further or remove them from the waterfall.

By implementing these Ad mediation changes you can expect a 10%-20% uplift in ARPDAU from the very first day, in some specific cases, with a single ad network, you can expect as much as a 300% revenue uplift.

Other impactful strategies

Implement rewarded ads

The goal when designing any ad placement is to generate as many impressions as possible. In our experience, a great ad monetization strategy in F2P mobile games should be based mainly on rewarded ads.

The reward should always be tied to the core loop or progression. This means every ad view should move the player closer to their goal or help them progress in the core gameplay.

The rewards need to be delicately balanced throughout the game. If the player receives too high a reward - it destroys future revenue of the game or another ad view (cannibalization).

Experiment with interstitials

Interstitial ads in mobile games are those full-screen ads seamlessly integrated into the game interface. They appear between gaming sessions, such as between levels or during pauses, enriching the gaming experience.

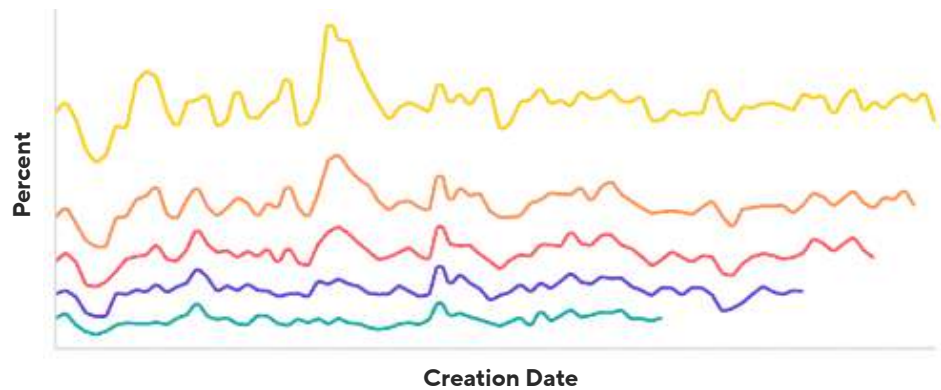
Keep in mind, every game is different - different session durations, different core gameplay durations, different desires and as a result, their players' reactions to the ads and their frequency will be different. You need to test and find the optimal balance between churn and ad impressions to maximize ad revenue.

Interstitial ads are well known for increased churn, decreased retention, and UX because they interrupt the flow of the game and are generally an intrusive form of advertising. This can significantly decrease ad revenue and even hurt iAP revenue.

Do not reward players too much because it may negatively impact your game economy. At the same time, if the ads are not rewarding enough, the users won't watch them. Balance is key.



Retention Dx Trendline



Watch the retention rate and the number of shown ads carefully to find the sweet spot where you maximize LTV through an increase of ad ARPDAU while minimizing the retention curve decrease. We use SuperInsights to do just that.

Leverage user segmentation

Not all ads are relevant to all players. Rewarded ads are “good for everyone”. But interstitials and banners on the other hand are not. For that reason, we tend to show interstitials only to non-payers and non-reward watchers.

Things to be aware of

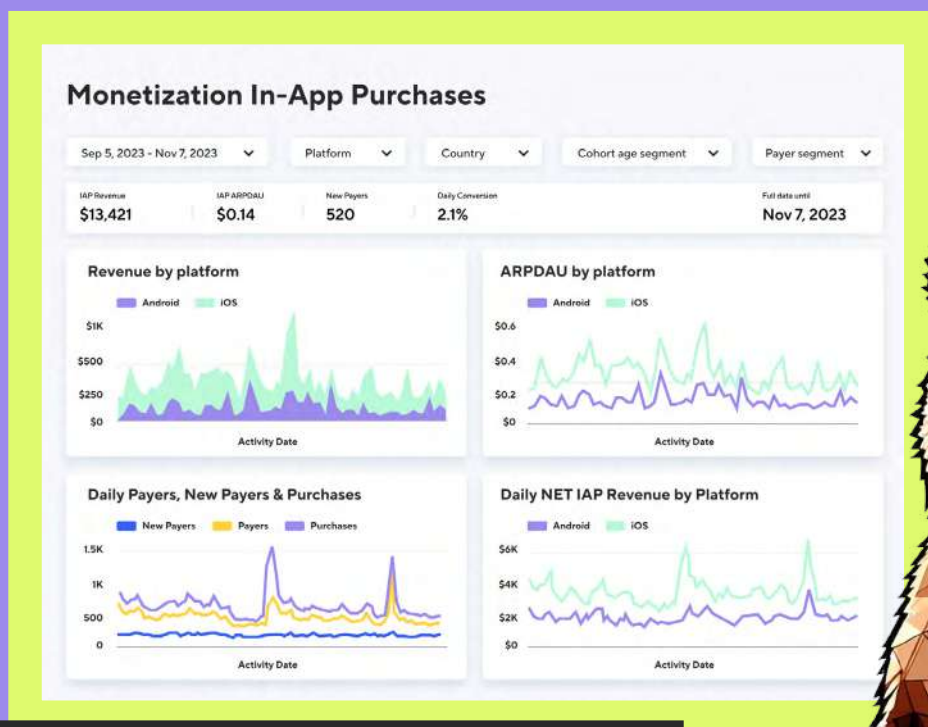
DO NOT Copy ad placements from other games, create your own, and fit them into your game’s unique economy and design.

Always consider the impact of ads on the user experience. Excessive or poorly placed ads can lead to user frustration and increased churn rates.

In-app purchases

In-app purchases enable players to buy virtual goods, upgrades, or premium content directly within the game. Understanding the mechanics and strategies behind in-app purchases is essential to optimize revenue streams effectively.

We evaluate their performance based on factors like game genre, audience, player segmentation, the number and timing of IAPs, and pricing policies. For this purpose, our analytics engine SuperInsights provides specific dashboards to monitor IAP performance and identify areas of improvement.



Quite often, implementing higher tiers of IAP packages can instantly result in significant instant improvements, while a game rich in resources can benefit from custom offers tailored to specific player segments.



Quick wins to boost IAPs



Special offers

Special offers can contribute the most to revenue gains. But to create compelling offers, the ad designer must know their game and audience well – at SuperScale, we always follow the data.

Some people think ads for special offers cause a drop in retention. They don't. They may be annoying for specific type of players not likely to spend, but not as significant as the revenue bumps you're likely to receive from them. A/B test it.

Find as many offer triggers in your game as possible – and try to tie them in with moments of joy, such as reaching a milestone, unlocking a new mechanic or winning a boss fight.

Special offers can also relieve a player from a pain point, like running out of in-game resources or losing their army.



Shop interface

Encouraging regular visits and presentation

Create incentives for players to visit the shop regularly by offering free items each session. Highlight essential items prominently.

Value and price strategy

Arrange items based on perceived value, with the best deals at the top and soft currency offerings at the bottom. Use shop items as price anchors for special offers, ensuring the most expensive items offer the best value.

Enhancing shopping experience

Create a positive shopping experience with animations, graphics, and sound effects to make the shop enjoyable for players.

Think of your shop and special offers as a mall. You should try to appeal to all segments of paying customers, otherwise, you may not meet some of their expectations and lose money as a result.



Subscriptions

Subscriptions are what we like to call, “IAP support”. They can bring added revenue streams, but be mindful of how you implement them so you don’t cannibalize your IAPs.

There are multiple categories of subscriptions which can be used in different genres of game to appeal to different player segments. Here are the most popular.

Classic subscription

The player gains access to the full feature set of the game (usually this is how the game is supposed to be played and balanced). When you implement a classic subscription model, always make sure it improves gameplay experience sufficiently to justify the cost, though not so much that it ruins the experience for those playing without the subscription.

Battle pass/season pass

Once players purchase a battle pass, they get an opportunity to unlock different rewards and new content. This lasts for a set amount of time, for example, 15 days or 30 days. These are common in games with vanity items (e.g. skins) as their main source of revenue, but also in games that want to maximize revenue from the lower spectrum of payer segments.

VIP systems

The main difference between the classic subscription system and the VIP system is the added tiers of complexity to gaining it. With the classic model, you pay a recurring subscription and gain all the things at once, but with VIP systems, you fill up a progression gauge and gain VIP levels.

Where this system comes into its own is by monetizing the whole spectrum of payers, from low-tier spenders to whales.

Other impactful strategies

\$ Regional pricing

Try testing different prices on IAP products in stores for different countries.

Select countries with lower purchase power and lower prices of IAP products in their stores. Don't be afraid to try as much as a 50% price cut. When done right, you can expect a bump in IAP purchases with a boost in the overall revenue.

"We've seen as much as a 30% uplift in ARPDAU, after implementing regional pricing"

Ian Marsh, Nimblebit

🕒 Use segmentation with tailored IAPs

How do you serve the right offers to the right players at the right time? The secret lies in segmentation. Consider player traits such as engagement, preferences, and buying habits, to create a complex segmentation model.

Automating the process of offering personalized IAPs daily is the next step. At SuperScale, we're using our personalization engine, which can learn players' behavior and spending patterns, and configure game assets into unique offers for each player.

The results? 50,000 tailored offers daily to the right players, resulted in a remarkable 23% increase in player spending and an impressive 11% boost in overall game revenue.



Summary

It's important to consider monetization from the very beginning of the development. Not every monetization feature fits your designs, so pick carefully. Start by finding the most valuable monetization features that fit within the game design – then create a roadmap to implement them, one by one.

After some time, you'll start to see bumps in your ARPU and LTV. Remember, game development is like scientific research – you need to test and iterate often. It takes time and the only constant will be change.

The same applies to your monetization strategy. Keep iterating, brainstorming, and searching for inspiration in other games. Once your feature set is complete, try out player segmentation and other data analytics tools for even higher bumps in revenue.

SECOND STEP

Time to acquire

It's now harder than ever to target higher-quality users, especially compared to just two or three years ago.

Finding the right user acquisition strategy for your game may seem daunting at first glance, but it just became harder, not impossible.

TIME TO ACQUIRE

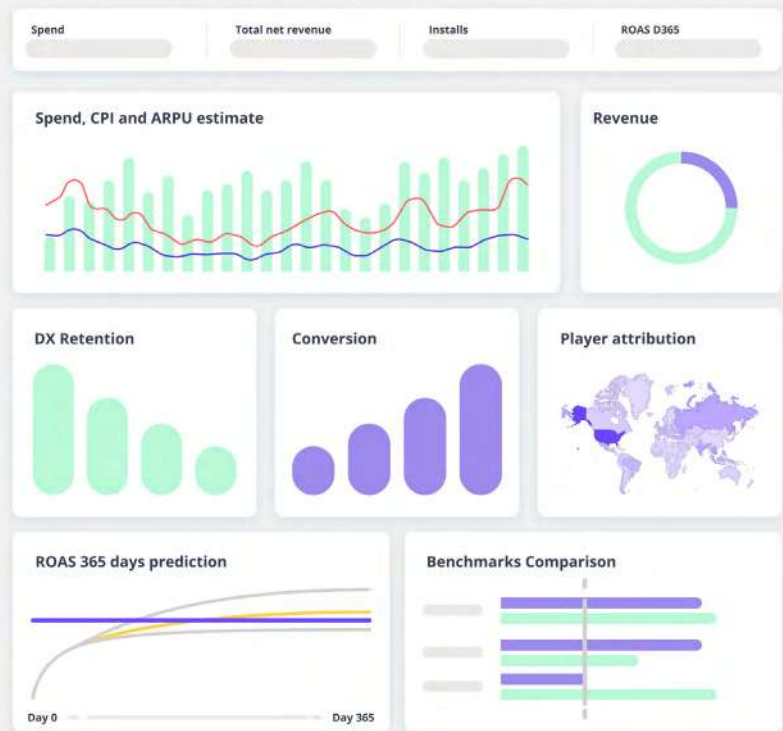
There are a few best practices that can help you get the most out of your UA efforts. One of, if not the most important component is to **learn about your users and optimize your UA through data**. This allows you to understand which users have the highest value and how you can increase your ROI as well as other KPIs.

At SuperScale we use our analytics engine, SuperInsights to create the UA channel diversification strategy best suited to your game based on current industry benchmarks.

Through SuperInsights, we can determine the 'actual' best-performing creatives/campaigns to an unmatched degree of accuracy post-IDFA.

Whether you're currently using SuperInsights or not, we've crafted a simple 3 step framework for sustainable, profitable UA campaigns:

User Acquisition Performance Overview



We've crafted a simple 3 step framework for sustainable, profitable UA campaigns:



Assessment

Before initiating Paid UA campaigns, it's crucial to assess a few things. Consider the following:



Know your target audience



Plan your available budget



Your data accuracy





Know your target audience

Market intelligence platforms offer valuable player data and create segments based on user demographics, even providing free quarterly market reports if you're on a tight budget. Testing audience segments on a small budget before scaling up can still be effective while keeping an eye on emerging targeting trends within your game's genre and among competitors is crucial.

For example, while puzzle games were once dominated by older female players, the demographic is shifting with more males and younger players showing interest.



Plan your available budget

If done right, above ad monetization and IAP tactics led to an increased LTV, making your upcoming UA campaigns more effective. When planning your initial UA budget, there are a few things worth considering:



Your average revenue per download

this has a direct impact on your possible cost-per-install

Estimated CPI

try researching cost-per-install benchmarks for games similar to yours

Seasonality

everyone's UA performance differs based on the time of year. January is usually the cheapest month, while November-December is the most expensive one to acquire but special events and updates can boost LTV significantly

Creative production

rule of thumb is to allocate approximately 10-20% of the whole monthly marketing budget to the creative production. Creative fatigue is a real thing and can compromise your whole UA strategy publishers with a single source of truth within their own data lake.

Beginning your first UA campaign with limited data?

Designating approximately 10% of last month's revenue is a straightforward approach. Yet, keep in mind that a minimum budget of \$500 is advised for a fruitful learning phase and to set CPI benchmarks. Additionally, achieving a specific number of installs during this phase may require stretching your budget further, influenced by factors like genre and creative quality.

Consider beginning your paid UA efforts on platforms like Meta and TikTok. These platforms offer greater flexibility and don't necessarily demand hefty budgets to get started.

Allocating insufficient budgets on larger networks (e.g., Unity, Vungle, IronSource) proves ineffective. Budgets below a certain threshold, such as \$20k per month, may hinder campaigns from surpassing the learning phase, making investments in such networks inefficient.









Your data accuracy

The success of your campaign hinges entirely on the accuracy of your data. The off-the-shelf MMP (mobile measurement partner) setup does NOT provide a reliable way to properly evaluate UA on iOS. Our solution delivers a more holistic approach with industry-leading data analytics being at the core of everything, uncovering the full data picture, and providing publishers with a single source of truth within their own data lake.

Preparation

Once UA campaigns are initiated or already underway, it's crucial to remain mindful of several key factors to monitor the performance of your UA efforts:

-  Define clear hypotheses
-  Identify suitable platforms and Ad networks
-  Determine target countries and regions
-  Estimate your Cost Per Install
-  Allocate budget strategically
-  Develop compelling Ad creatives
-  Make the most out of the App Store
-  Core principles of a successful ASO strategy





Define clear hypotheses

Develop clear hypotheses for your UA goals, such as increasing app installs, improving player engagement, or boosting revenue. This will impact your overall strategy significantly and will influence how you evaluate the performance of your efforts.



Identify suitable platforms and Ad networks

Evaluate platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Google Ads, and Unity Ads, considering audience demographics, ad format effectiveness, and targeting options. Identify ad networks that align with your campaign objectives defined in the previous steps.



Determine target countries and regions

Prioritize countries and regions with high potential for user acquisition and revenue generation. Consider factors such as market size, competition, and user demographics. You can access relevant data from MMPs or industry reports provided by ad networks.



Estimate your Cost Per Install (CPI)

Analyze historical CPI data, competitor benchmarks, and projected conversion rates to estimate the CPI required to achieve your UA objectives on each platform and in each target region. Once more, turning to MMPs or industry reports can be a valuable starting point for sourcing relevant data.



Allocate budget strategically

Allocate your UA budget strategically across platforms, networks, and regions based on expected ROI and performance metrics. Consider testing smaller budgets initially to gauge performance before scaling up.



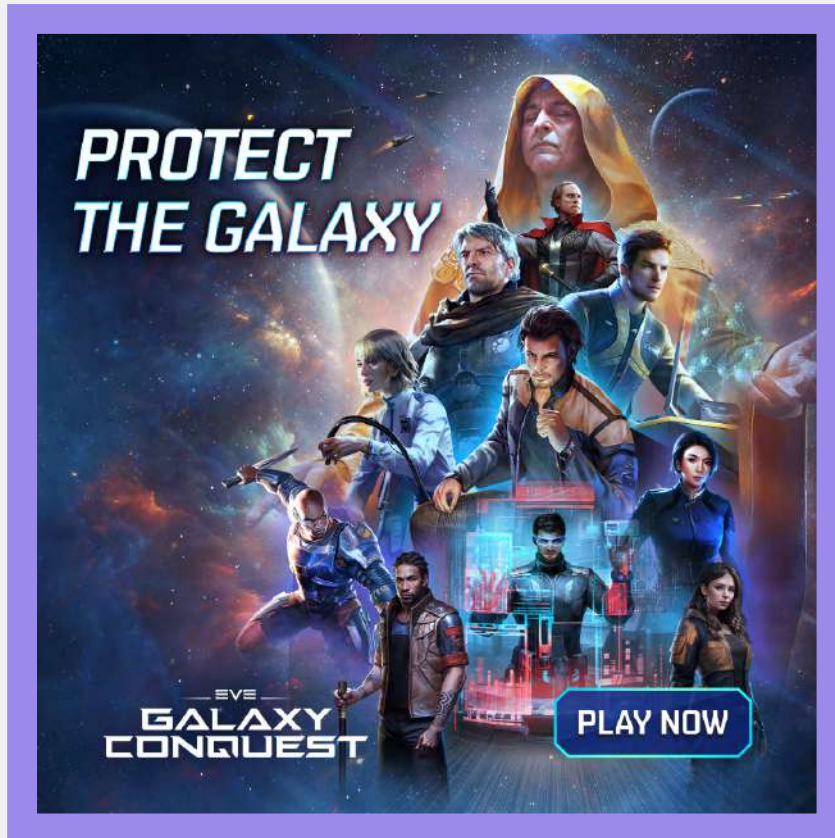
Develop compelling Ad creatives

Video or static creatives are crucial and currently, the only true way to get valuable users to a game. They're usually the first contact of your future players and your game. They need to showcase your features in the best way possible and catch the viewer's attention in never-ending scrolling behavior.

In the gaming world, successful creatives are simple and believable, with a clear idea and call to action that makes people want to click on them and install the game.

Core principles of creative production:

- 1 **Data saves you time and money** – With correct data, you can better develop a creative strategy and therefore, avoid wasting the time of your creative team. Instead of random tests of multiple creative concepts, use data to guide you.
- 2 **Apply learnings regularly** – Allowing you to build new creative ideas and push your production quality forward



Things to avoid:

- 1 **Don't apply a winning creative from one UA channel to all channels** – Different channels have different audiences i.e. a video that works on Instagram will most likely not work as a rewarded video on ironSource.
- 2 **Don't use the same creative strategy for both Android and iOS** – Creative performance differences between platforms have significantly increased post-IDFA. The push to broader targeting resulted in higher-quality creatives being used, especially on iOS.
- 3 **Don't ignore creative fatigue** – Your champion creative can carry performance for around 6-10 weeks. If you don't do frequent creative tests and apply methods for developing and finding new champion creatives, your marketing efforts will eventually fail.



Make the most out of the App Store

App Store Optimization (ASO) is a crucial aspect of mobile app marketing aimed at improving an app's visibility and discoverability in various app stores, such as the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Similar to search engine optimization (SEO) for websites, ASO involves optimizing various elements of an app's listing to increase its chances of ranking higher in search results and attracting more organic downloads.

Be both descriptive and concise with the title of your app

The title that your game has in your chosen app store won't just impart (hopefully) useful information to potential players – it can also play a strong role in your ASO.

It was easier to be descriptive with the titles of apps in the Apple App Store, back in the days when a 255-character limit was in place. Apple has since shortened that to just 30 characters, which makes it more challenging to come up with a title that is compelling, distinctive, and keyword-optimized. However, it's not an impossible task; getting the balance right is simply another part of the art of ASO.

Incorporate well-chosen keywords

You will need to research keywords for use in your game's app store listing and decide on which ones to prioritize, based on factors such as search volume data, keyword relevancy, and how much competition there is for the keywords you're thinking of using.

Describe your mobile game in a clear and compelling way

Writing the perfect description for your app in the app store will be an art in itself. Remember that you won't be writing an essay here – the task is to seal the deal, so you should be concise and persuasive.

Get the visuals right in your app store listing

Include visually appealing screenshots that draw attention to your game's key features and give the potential customer a good sense of what it will be like to play your game. Be sure to A/B test the creatives on your listing to help minimize guesswork when it comes to the best-performing screenshots.

Other ASO areas to consider

Several factors go beyond just visuals and keywords. Some of the more important ones include:

- **Localization** – Something that is often overlooked because it can be time-consuming for games operating across a range of geos with different languages
- **Permissions** – Game/app permissions should be as minimal as possible and should only request permissions necessary for the functionality
- **Ratings & Reviews** – These speak for themselves, people trust people and so the more positive your ratings are, the better the game is portrayed to new users. Games should try to incentivize users to leave reviews – that is of course if community sentiment seems positive



Core principles of a successful ASO strategy



1 Prioritize regular testing:

Make sure to regularly test ASO elements such as icons, screenshots, promo videos, and text. This consistent testing helps keep your app optimized for maximum visibility and conversion in app stores.

Recently, a simple change of icon resulted in a 90% install uplift for one of our partners!

2 Focus on revenue-driving countries:

Understand how your app performs in top revenue-driving countries to target your ASO efforts effectively.

3 Continuous ASO Testing:

Continuously test ASO elements like icons, screenshots, promo videos, and text to maintain and improve conversion rates. Given the competitive nature of app stores, ongoing testing is crucial to support UA efforts and ensure sustained success.

Optimization

Once UA campaigns are initiated or already underway, it's crucial to remain mindful of several key factors to monitor the performance of your UA efforts:

-  UA channel analysis
-  UA Impact metrics
-  ROAS predictions
-  Traffic & Monetization trends
-  Regional analysis





UA channel analysis

Understanding where your game performs the best is crucial. It helps in gaining insights into the game and its marketability. At SuperScale, we delve deeper into the LTV/ROAS curve analysis per channel, country, and platform. We ask questions such as:

- What is the ROAS D(x) to understand different curves on platforms/networks?
- How does the benchmark per platform/network/country look like?

How do we do that?

You guessed it - **SuperInsights'** User Acquisition module.

Each network optimizes differently in terms of key performance indicators such as D7 MAX and D14 IS. For games with rapid monetization, allowing 7-14 additional days for optimization on these networks is common practice.



UA Impact metrics

Monitor total spend and assess the proportion of players acquired through UA, considering its influence on organic traffic and overall player engagement.



ROAS predictions

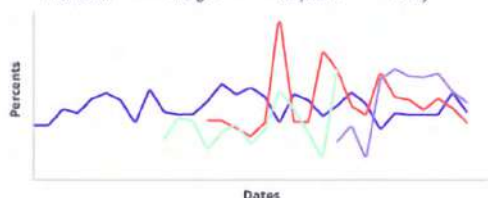
Utilize reliable predictive models to estimate Return on Ad Spend (ROAS), factoring in-game monetization curves, current and historical CPI versus Lifetime Value (LTV), and financial projections for business-level profitability.

OPTIMIZATION

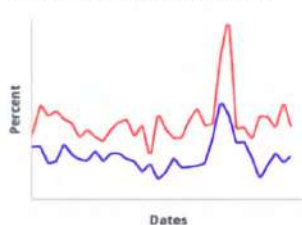
SuperInsights' return on ad spend (ROAS) predictions give you highly accurate forecasts, not just on the campaign tactics that will bring you more players – but also long-term game revenue and which strategies, channels, creatives are bringing the most profit.

ROAS D28 by UA channels

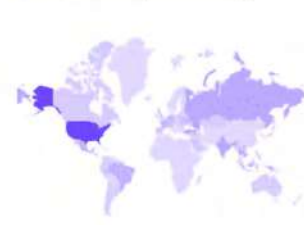
Facebook Google Snapchat Unity



ROAS D28 by Platforms



ROAS D28 by Country



Within a few days, you know when to expect revenue to rise, and by how much, up to a year ahead – so you know when you'll break even and see a profit from your game. You can also see the exact channels, creatives, and tactics that are driving overall game earnings, and respond quickly, reinvesting or culling what's not working right away. This means better results, with less time and spend.



Traffic and monetization trends

Analyze organic traffic trendlines and assess their correlation with your UA efforts. Track ARPDAU monthly, applying a 21-day Moving Average (MA), and monitor Revenue Per Download (RPD) trends to evaluate monetization performance over time.



Regional analysis

Segment UA performance metrics by geographical regions such as the US, Tier 1 countries, and the Rest of the World (ROW) to identify opportunities for optimization and growth.

Summary

In conclusion, our campaign analysis methodology combines rigorous benchmarking, metric scrutiny, and strategic optimization techniques across various channels to drive optimal results and facilitate scalable growth. At SuperScale, we offer market-leading insights and services tailored to mobile games of all genres and sizes. Reach out to us to learn more about how we can support your success.

In today's mobile gaming landscape, an initial boost of organic traction is invaluable to marketing efforts. It can also be overwhelming, with many developers trying to replicate organic success with diminishing returns, or leaping blindly into paid user acquisition without a proper strategy.

This ebook provides a comprehensive roadmap to turning organic success into long-term revenue by putting in place the necessary building blocks as well as seizing quick wins. Though some elements may sound technically daunting, most can be implemented with simple free or free-to-start tools, including but not limited to SuperScale's.

Why is organic success so powerful? Because it shows that you've already done the truly hard part and made a great game. We're here to support and steer as you maximize your game's revenue potential.

About SuperScale

At SuperScale, we help game developers like you maximize revenue from your titles. We're a strategic Game Management partner with a business model which enables us to work in true partnership with game developers. Our partners keep full control of their invaluable IP, while SuperScale supports its expansion on fair, flexible terms with tailored publishing solutions. We take a long-term view, thinking up to 5 years ahead to future-proof our partners' success.

SuperScale is best-known for our Game Management solution. It's a one-stop-shop publishing solution for mobile game developers and publishers, covering all the key components to boost profits and free up your resources. This includes Game Design & Live Ops, UA Analytics, Game Analytics and Growth marketing, all powered by our own tech called SuperPlatform.

Our market-leading insights and services can be tailored to mobile games of all genres and sizes. Reach out to us today to learn more about how we can support your success.



YOUR GAME MANAGEMENT PARTNER