**Long Term Engagement Lessons From Animal Crossing: New Leaf**

Animal Crossing: New Leaf came out a few weeks ago and one thing that amazes me about this game is how I’m still playing it almost every day, and I’m not the only one! People I follow on twitter and tumblr are still talking about the game and posting photos of their new haircut or furniture in the game. I have played a number of casual games in the past and I usually don’t make it past a couple of days. In previous Animal Crossings I have also felt the urge to come back and play over and over again, although not quite as much as this newest installment. What about Animal Crossing keeps me and many others coming back? Here are a few of my theories after taking a while to think about it.

First is the collections aspect of the game. Collecting is the major game mechanic in Animal Crossing, whether it’s collecting bugs and fish for the museum, collecting clothes to change your outfit, or furniture for your house, Animal Crossing is all about collecting. Often there are no explicit rewards for this collecting, except for the museum where you can get badges and upgrades for the museum and also fill up the museum with your finds and read about them. However many of the rewards for collecting are implicit, it is just the player who wants to fill out their encyclopedia or catalog to say they did. The great design behind getting players to come back in this regard is you can’t collect everything all at once, even if you spent all day playing. There are bugs and fish only available during certain seasons of the year. Stores only stock once a day and only 4 fossils can be found each day. Also there are even longer term steps that hold you back, such as stores only upgrade after you fulfill certain requirements, and even then they often take a week or 2 after the previous upgrade to upgrade again. However these waits are always achievable so you never feel like anything is out of reach eventually.

**Looking Back: Diddy Kong Racing**

A few months ago I got into watching speed runs of old games and one that got my attention was a speed run of Diddy Kong Racing. I decided to go back and play the classic title for the Nintendo 64. I remembered having a blast playing it and also that is got pretty difficult in the later stages of the game (which the speed run makes look all too easy). So I loaded it up and instantly got transported back to 1997. The music and the characters are so memorable and happy it’s hard not to love the styling of this game. I started playing and

**Orange**

Orange (working title) is a puzzle game similar to a game like Plinko or Peggle. It is currently being developed for Facebook in Flash using the Starling Framework. Using the Starling Framework and Adobe AIR’s ability to compile for multiple platforms there are plans to release the game on iOS, Android, and Blackberry if time and resources permits.

Currently the basic game engine is in place and many of the features are in place. The next major step in production is to create the level editor which will be used to design levels for the game, as well later will be used to create user generated levels. After the level editor is completed there will be more features added and different modes of play. Then the art and sound will need to be addressed. As you can see the game is very early in development but we are already having a blast playing around with it. Check back in the future for more updates.

**RPG Run**

RPG Run is an endless runner with RPG elements and character selection. It was a prototype made while I was at EastSide Games. It was made for android using Flash and the Starling Framework. I made it on my own time with a co-worker to show the idea off at their “Swill and Spill” an event where employees pitch games to become the studios next project. In the end the prototype didn’t end up proving the idea because of my lack of experience with this kind of game as well as using a 2d game instead of a 3d game which would make playing the game and experiencing the levels much easier as we found out later.

Making this prototype really taught me a lot about using different frameworks and best practices for game programming such as the use of object pools. Also one goal of the prototype was to make sure it was responsive so I learned about making the code efficient as well as custom gesture control; however the gesture control is still something I would need to work on. All art was taken from EastSide Games’ art assets or created by Jon Chew.