**Casual Game Design**

Time Management

In a time management game, everything is a timer that is counting down until the player loses. Lots of management games are successful by using repetitive tasks that are realistic and the player can relate to, a good place to start is to find a task/job that can be broken down into multiple smaller tasks that can act as a timer. “And the familiar content is key to Dinner Dash’s success”. (Trefry 2010).

As is done in Dinner Dash they take a restaurant and break it down into tasks such as:-

* Seat Customer
* Wait for customer to be ready to order
* Take order
* Tell Kitchen
* Wait for food to be cooked
* Take food to table
* Wait for food to be eaten
* Take check
* Clean table

As each task is completed the timer will be increased slightly, if the player lets one of the timers drop to 0 the customer will leave unhappy, if too many customers leave then the player cannot progress to the next level. This kind of game can be thought of as similar to the spinning plate that *Trefry* also talks about.

There are other games that build on the time management mechanic by adding another mechanic onto the game. An example of this is *Cake Mania* which adds a matching mechanic into the frey. This increases the complexity of the game and increases the chance that the player will make a mistake and lose the game. Because of the matching mechanic the game feels slower and more contemplative than Dinner Dash’s frantic rush.

Attention Management

Real time strategy and turn based strategy games force players to track and manage multiple different units this causes the player to keep their attention on the game to make sure no units go missing or die while off the screen. Other types of games capture the players attention by constantly throwing more elements at them until they have too much to deal with that they are not able to keep up with the game. “They throw as many elements as they can at you and see what point you simply can’t keep up with the game” (Trefry 2010 p147)

*Insaniquarium* is a good example of an attention management game, however this game allows you to control the difficulty of the game by adding in more fish to make the game harder of allow the fish to die off. You are not penalised for allowing the fish to die, it just means if you want more you’ll have to spend more of the in-game currency to purchase more.

The game has a simple clicking mechanic where the player clicks around the scene and the game recognises what the player intends to do.

* If the player clicks on a fish, some food will drop into the scene
* If the player clicks on an alien it damages it.
* If the player clicks on a coin, it adds money to the players “wallet”

The game starts to feel difficult because all of this will be happening at the same time, so the player will have a lot going on at one time. This is similar to the player starting to juggle and there is someone standing to the side of them continuously throwing more balls for the player to manage.

*Flight control* is another attention management game, but also uses the time management aspect to create a rising and falling tension throughout the game, the player has to draw a line from the aeroplane to the correct landing strip. At the start of the game it is easy to manage but as the game progresses the player will have to make sure that they are paying attention to all parts of the screen.

Management games appeal to players as humans have a playful desire to play puppet master and have all the power in a world they control. However, designers must also work carefully to correctly build up pressure and release it to keep the player engaged, because once the player feels the game is too easy they will get bored, lose attention and stop playing. They also rely heavily on familiarity to be successful, such as *Dinner Dash* being a restaurant setting, *Cake Mania* is a retail shop, *Insaniquarium* is about feeding fish and *Flight Control* is helping aeroplanes land. This make the game intuitive and allows the player to instantly understand what is happening within the game but rewards must be offered in direct proportion of the game, reward ratios is something we as a team will be spending time looking into.