

Advanced Game Design

F2P Economy

Lecture 3. Sessions Design
Nikolay Naumenko

Overview

- ▶ Session control in general
- ▶ Beginning, middle and ending of sessions
- ▶ Means to control
- ▶ Energy and timers

DISCLAIMER

- ▶ Used in some companies
- ▶ Open to discussion
- ▶ Cover major thumb rules and can be used as guide
- ▶ Doesn't work 100% of cases

Session Control

- ▶ **Habit creation**
 - Create good experience to reinforce habit of player
- ▶ **Content delivery**
 - Too give enough content to player
- ▶ **Put on friction curve**
 - Make progression feel ok
 - Though it slows down

Session Control. Usage in Industry

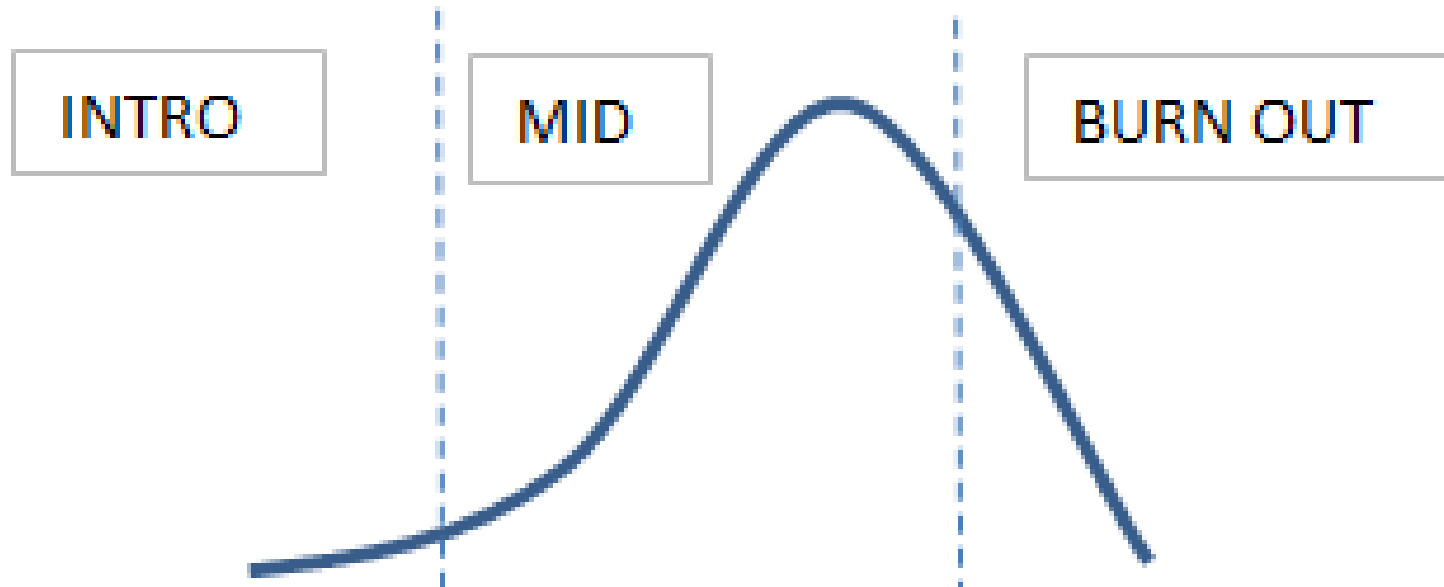
- ▶ **Hardcore games don't control much**
 - Soft methods as Save Point
 - In MMO games due daily bonuses
- ▶ **Early F2P done as monetization feature**
 - Energy based monetization
 - Finish session before player want to finish
- ▶ **Now used more and more**
 - Create user engagement
 - Less monetization more bonuses

Session Experience (I)

- ▶ Thumb rules:
 - Some progression each session
 - Don't "overheat" player (too much to do)
 - Not many drastic changes from previous session
- ▶ Different approaches to create experience
 - Catch for next session (early experience)
 - Fulfillment of job done (later experience)
 - Player leave game with goals on

Session Experience (II)

► Emotional curve



Intro to session

- ▶ Messaging
 - Can be welcome message
 - Summary of things done
- ▶ Starting positions
 - Always the same – easier to get habit
 - Exception can be done, but can create frustration when long pause has been taken
- ▶ Tips
 - During loading as example
 - Re-inforce player

Intro to session. incentive

- ▶ Reward for entering
 - Gatcha!
 - Daily/weekly/session reward
- ▶ Reward for first action
 - Collecting resources
 - Other bonuses for action
 - Special battle
 - Special level/mission



Core loop

- ▶ **Must be looped at least once**
 - In order to create habit
 - Make clear action–reward feedback for player
- ▶ **Depended on simplicity number of times**
 - More simple game loop is less it should go thru session
 - *EXCEPTION*: some simple core loops aren't prominent and can be repeated (and need to be) more and more

Non core loop activities

- ▶ Control only what relate to progression
- ▶ Check if it can exploit progression and session design



Meta game. Out of gameplay

- ▶ Should not be considered as part of the session
- ▶ But only session result should affect progression stats
- ▶ Design should be done accordingly

Burn out(I)

▶ **Diagnosis**

- While testing (lose focus, no flow)
- If sessions are long and retention is low

▶ **Simplicity**

- Game could be too repetitive for audience
- Lack of challenge, over-smart the game

▶ **Too complicated**

- Getting tiered (15 minutes for mobile, 1.5–2 hours for PC and console)

Progression requirements (I)

- ▶ **Not as much session design as progression**
 - Requirements added to make progression smooth and predictable
- ▶ **Hard Blockers**
 - No possibility to cross
 - Not in the middle of the session
 - Player may not come back
- ▶ **Variations**
 - Requirements to build something
 - Paywalls and inviting

Progression requirements (II)



Progression requirements (III)

▶ **Soft blockers**

- Can give frustration
- Should be crossable next time
- Clear feedback

▶ **Examples of Soft blockers**

- Boss adapted to be beaten only with some level of items
- Economical balance – cannot continue because some resources what depends on real time

Session ending (I)

- ▶ **Soft. Without conditions**
 - No requirements
 - No progression of the player
 - Can be added suggestions as milestone
- ▶ **Early players can exploit the game**
 - Quite before habit is formed
 - Find it repetitive
- ▶ **Solution – don't let progress**
 - Player gain less progression resources (XP)
 - Key missions only given in limited amount

Session ending (II)

- ▶ **Hard ending. Force to finish session**
 - Player cannot play (due lack of energy or life)
- ▶ Time should be properly estimated
 - Much harder to find good timing
- ▶ Monetization of session control
 - Possibility to monetize, usually simple games such as casual puzzles
- ▶ Easy to make as designers, but more chances players will hate it

Triggers to come back (I)

- In game periodicity with real time



Trigger to come back (II)

- ▶ All initial session incentives features
 - Gatcha!
 - Daily/weekly rewards
 - Daily missions
- ▶ External timers and obligations
 - Friends request (kind of working)
 - Notifications
 - Activities such clan wars or similar (social)

Energy system. Classic

- ▶ Old style, but still works some times



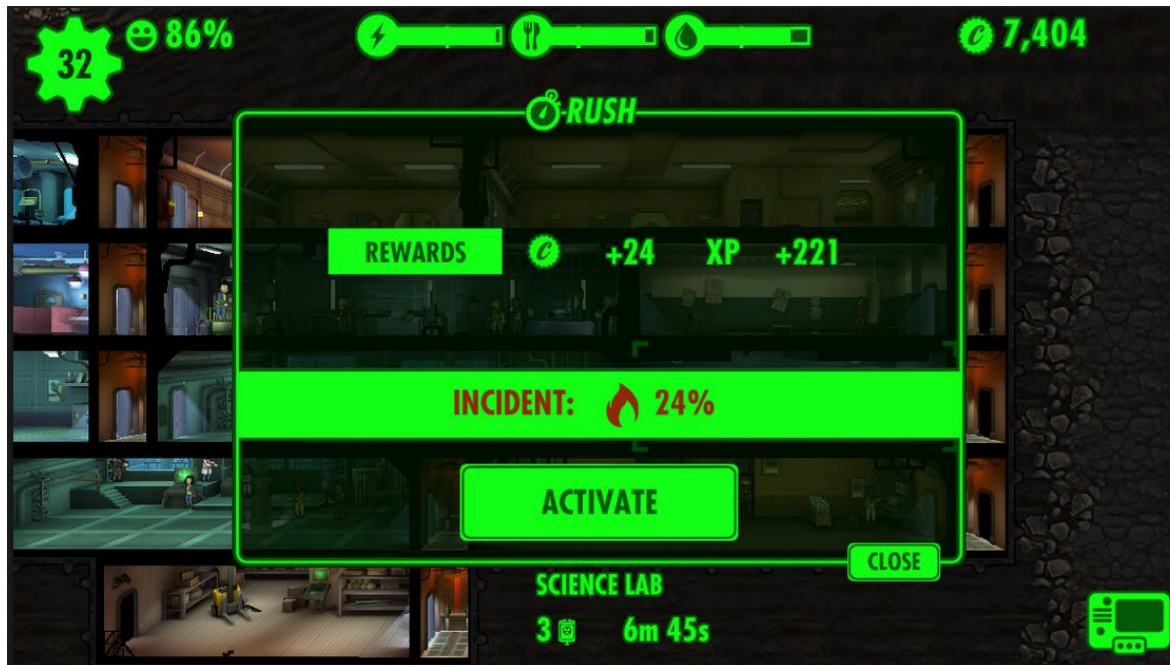
Energy system. Live

- ▶ Similar to energy, but create feeling of control over your session



Energy system. Pseudo

- ▶ Let's hide energy from player
 - Fallout shelter
 - Chain of resources as energy



Timers. controlled by player

- ▶ Player set timers. Manage session time and progression



Timers. fixed

- ▶ Fixed by designers. These timers are most used currently due to its natural feeling, and monetization possibilities



Energy vs Timers

- ▶ Evolution
 - Energy → Timers → Pseudo Energy
- ▶ Usage
 - Most of control build around, can't be removed
- ▶ Bad experiences
 - Problems with Energy
 - Feel of control
 - Stressful limitation
 - Problems with Timers
 - Always growing
 - Frustration at last stages of the game

Bad control

- ▶ Visible
- ▶ Out of theme
- ▶ Forced a lot

Comparing with hardcore

- ▶ More players freedom
 - Pre-paid games relay on overall experience more then to session-to-session one
 - Deeper gameplay, more things to master
- ▶ Trusting player
 - Player learn about game by them self
 - They willing to come back by them self

Idea of toy and meta game

- ▶ Toy is forever
- ▶ Meta game is long or money