



Business case

Name: Mason Lane
Community (UN SD goal): 14 - Life Below Water
Date: 03/10/2021

Proposed Project	aeS
Date Produced	03/10/2021
Background	<p>In December 2020, Adobe Flash was finally discontinued - marking the end to a great many flash-based resources. Now, efforts have been made to preserve these resources; games most of all. However, very few have preserved the plethora of independently hosted learning games. Many educational flash games have been lost - creating a large void of supplemental learning material.</p> <p>This void has been filled primarily by phone applications, which provide fun learning activities for children. However, few schools can provide tablets for their students, but have accrued many personal computers. Further, schools cannot fairly expect children to have smart-phones of their own (though most likely do). As such, the education system finds itself with a large collection of personal computers, but very few android/ios devices. So, we have many android games but few situations for classes to use them. Meanwhile, many of the PC/web-based learning games are lost to the ages.</p> <p>aeS aims to be a new web/mobile platform seeking to provide daily interaction/learning through the form of learning activities/games that the user must frequent. One issue with many environmental learning games is that they are quite often one-and-done activities. You browse the game, learn and never come back. It's very hard to appreciate the importance of an endeavor with these types of games. Infact, many mobile learning games are more "fun" than effective. I hope to foster a community that brings back visitors, who wish to observe the fruits of the game communitie's labors. "winning" the game will be a group effort, and will encourage students to return. Upon returning, we hope to draw their attention back to the SDG at hand with new news/information.</p>
Business Need/ Opportunity	<p>With the loss of many flash games, schools are met with a considerably smaller pool of learning games for children. There are very few browser-based learning games. Meanwhile, few schools can provide android/ios devices for learning (many still depend on dektop/laptop options)</p> <p>Further, there are very few platforms focussed towards SDG 14 that include games to retain attention. Of those that do, many platforms have broken flash tools. Many of these "game" websites are dated and will not draw the attention of children.</p> <p>No mobile or web game is presented in a community-oriented way. These games inform children on sea waste - but do not adequately present the impact that a COMMUNITY can have. A community-based game would better visualize the volume of waste, while also sampling the change they and others can have.</p> <p>These community activities may also be broadened to include other age demographics - and serve as brief awareness games for events or simply a pastime.</p> <p>This vision has been done before, but not with an SDG in mind. While it visualizes the impact of community collaboration - it does not direct that collaboration in any meaningful way. Infact, this platform was only used as a lottery and game announcement.</p>



See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curiosity:_What%27s_Inside_the_Cube%3F

Options

1. Create a number of interactive learning activities & reading materials for children (limited interaction, similar to visual novels)

Create a community driven game which encourages the cleaning of sea waste
Provide supplementary reading material/resources.

Games may grow in number, but will start limited and shallow. Low ceiling.

Link to charities made available (in future this platform could hook with existing funds, or implement its own. It could also monetise certain game elements to be used in further charity work. This way, even players that do not take real personal action may do so financially. Game needs some kind of cyclical reward system once community goal is met. Only active players and frequent contributors will receive cyclical rewards.

To avoid waste, rewards could be in the form of ingame currency for other platforms (funded partially by goodwill donations previously mentioned). Further, goodwill donors will receive greater rewards. This requires some kind of sponsorship, however. Rewards should also not take away from the game's mission of encouraging REAL action - not just digital.

Game will be passive and non-intrusive, like cookie-clicker but with limited daily interaction. Perhaps donors could unlock more actions?

2. Create an independant experience with more learning materials and refined, personal experience. Enable users who ARE interested to enjoy a higher ceiling of activities. small number of personalized experiences (made easier with the exclusion of multiplayer)

Link to charities or other resources as previously mentioned

There will be less need for a reward system as players are on the site through their own volition/interest. Games being independent means that goals/achievements may be accomplished independently and more frequently and without physical/digital rewards (like game currency)

3. Abandon the prospect of interactive learning games, and possibly declare small-scale web-games as ineffective calls to action
4. Focus on mobile-only platforms in anticipation of further android/ios devices being available to many classrooms

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Option one stands to provide the most unique community experience in conjunction with SDG calls to action. However, a game of this ambition will require innovative user retention. This user retention could either be in the form of gameplay - or community rewards. While user retention will create more opportunities for learning, such retention will require more features (likely beyond this mvp). As such, the user retention may not be easily observed in these mvps. In other words, user retention and further iteration will be paramount. On the other hand, community rewards will reduce the needed effort - but require benevolent corporate sponsors, or a robust (but fair) charity/donation system. Assuming this game received the attention it required, it would be THE FIRST charity-based multiplayer game - ever. No popular video game has ever been developed with its primary revenue being used for charity. There are no massively multiplayer non-profit video games.



How/Why isn't there an open-source game whose funds go exclusively to charity? While out of scope, I see this as untapped potential

Option 2 will allow us to circumvent much of the reward system proposed in option 1 - but will lose the community interaction imagined. It will enable larger personalized experiences, but lack a meaningful reward system. User retention will depend on personal interest and gameplay loops. Since it is not community based, the gameplay loop cannot depend on contributions of other users to spur retention. [Here](#) is an excellent example of a fun gameplay loop. While the given activity is fun, it did not achieve the outreach it sought. It was a fun game - but few actually gleaned meaning from it. Both option 1 and 2 may find themselves in the same circumstance as the example game. However, multiplayer is a unique twist that might offer a different outcome for option 1.

Option 3. While I believe traditional learning games are not effective, that could be entirely based on the scope of the project and not the idea itself. Many paid games ARE effective education tools. So while there are few good games about sustainability, that does not mean games are a poor tool vehicle for outreach.

Option 4. While effective, I see no reason not to focus the project available on web browsers. Consider games like Diep.io, which include mobile and browser-based users. As a web game, it would also be easily accessible to classrooms - no installation/store required. Instead, we should develop a browser-based game with mobile support.

Regarding charity donations (out of scope for this project). Since this is a children's activity, I believe it ethical for us to mind that it is likely the parents' who will be donating - not children. As such, it is important that we do not abuse children's experience with transactions. A good solution would be to require guardian approval before opening monetization options. For instance, many paid memberships require that underage accounts be supported by parent/guardian accounts or emails. While I believe it is ethical to give children, parents and adults avenues to charity foundations, we cannot "trick" children into paying with addictive gameplay loops/rewards. That is, when speaking to specific charities associated to the project. If a user creates an account - and therefore knows what our primary charity is - then any imagined "upgrade" they buy ingame would be ethical, I believe. Many games provide avenues for parents/children to spend money (memberships, microtransactions, etc). In this case, it is imperative that they always know what they are inadvertently donating to, however.

Recommendation

I aim to focus on option 1 with option 2 being supplemental (assuming option 1 is successful), additional features. Option 1 will be responsible for establishing the message and should be what people initially come to our platform for.

It may be that games are simply ineffective tools for awareness. They may not be effective calls to action. I believe most interactive games do not drive home the message for children, or adults. This is why I want my proposal to focus hard on visualizing volume/impact. If this project behaves identically to old learning games, I am not confident it will truly make an impact. Hence the community driven aspect.
