

Marketing a Game at Launch

WRKSHP shares how it built an audience in the lead-up to Battle Camp's worldwide launch, and how it attracted hundreds of thousands of players with limited marketing resources.

This is the first time in history where literally everybody is gaming enabled in the sense that now everybody has a device to play games 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And so all the barriers to entry have kind of collapsed to get into games, and we were super excited about that. We played all the games that we could possibly play on the App Store to get a feel for what the market looks like.

And then think to ourselves about what are games that we really wish existed that didn't exist. And our conclusion was there weren't a lot of massively multiplayer online games. Definitely none that were mobile first and definitely none that were monster catching. We kind of identified a hole in the market, and then we built a product to serve that hole. Once we understood the need that we were trying to serve, it made it extremely easy for us to define the marketing position around Battle Camp.

The most important thing for us before launch was building an active, engaged, passionate, fanatical community pre-launch before launching globally. We think of our user segmentation kind of as concentric circles so that most in your core are your hardcore fanatics. These are people who for us, are like on forums saying like, "I want a mobile monster catching MMO." And then as you go out, it gets broader and broader. The broadest could be someone who just likes games.

So when we think about rolling our product out to market, we always think about hitting the innermost concentric circle first. The point of

marketing is to find users who really want to play your game. They'll be on forums.

They'll have Facebook groups. And so they would've been self-organized communities that you can tap into. It's not like they're all going to be on Twitter or they're all going to be Tumblr. To be honest, they're going to be everywhere.

Be like, "Hey, I'm working on this game. Can you give me feedback?" And listen to them and iterate that product until that fanatic loves it.

And when that fanatic loves it, they're going to tell their fanatical friends, and then it will start growing. Scaling from like 5 to 500,000 is shockingly easy.

But getting that first 5 to truly love the product, that's actually what's hard.

Constraints are the mother of creativity. When you don't have resources, you're forced to be creative and think of interesting approaches that other people aren't taking.

So in terms of how we leverage free channels to increase the distribution of Battle Camp, the main thing we did is we focused on viral features. Every time users encountered a social experience, we wanted to make sure they had the opportunity to share that out with their friends and their families. It was everything from things that are obvious, like battling people, or creating a troop with people, or sending a message to someone. To less obvious, like I just changed my avatar outfit.

And to do it, it's one tap; they don't have to leave the game. At launch, the App Store is often going to be the first time users engage with your application.

So it's really important to get the icon and the text right. So we would go through and look at what were the core things about the app that our users cared about, whether it was about monsters or dragons or the puzzle game, and incorporate that into the icon and iterate and test through that. The creative marketing artist and the performance analyst sat side-by-side through pre-launch through launch and through post-launch.

It was important for us to be able to iterate quickly on all of our marketing ideas.

As well as to give feedback to the marketing artists themselves on what's performing and what's not performing. The first install is really intimidating and really hard to get. And a strategy that was really effective for us was paid user acquisition. If you have some amount of money, it doesn't have to be a lot, literally a couple hundred dollars, save it, and when you're ready for people to play the game, spend it on paid user acquisition. That's how you can get initially very quickly your target audience to like try the game. And it doesn't take a lot.

You need 20 to 40 users per release to kind of get some data on how people perceive it.

And at some point, everything works together. I don't think there's a single magic bullet. I think the product needs to work with the viral features, which need to work with some paid user acquisition, which needs to work with the community management and support. But it does take time and it does take work.

It's reassuring to hold onto that true north of hey, I know there are people that want this and I just have to find them and get them what they want.