Marvel Super Hero Squad Online Postmortem- An MMO For the Whole Family in Under Two Years

Jay Minn & Jason Robar Co-Founders The Amazing Society, a Gazillion Entertainment Studio

> Game Developers Conference® Online 2011 October 10-13, 2011 | Austin, TX www.GDCOnline.com







Who Are We?

INTRODUCTIONS





GUC Online

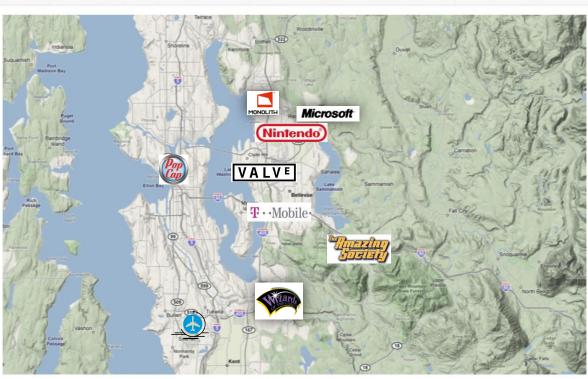


Formed in 2007 Acquired by Gazillion in 2008

Located in the heart of the tech heavy Pacific Northwest of the USA

Microsoft, Nintendo, Valve, Real Networks, McCaw Cellular, Amazon, Google, Verizon, Tmobile, PopCap, Monolith/TimeWarner, etc

Over 140 game industry companies including DigiPen's worldwide HQ





Co Founders

Jason Robar

•17 years of experience



 Director of internal MMOG development, Vivendi Games



 Founded MMOG Game studio in China/USA in 2005 – Studio Ch'in in Shanghai, SLS in Seattle



•Game Group Mgr for Playsite.com





 Microsoft for Windows DirectX game technology, online games and global developer relations for MSN Zone.com





 Creative Director & Director of Retail, Wild Tangent

• 18 years of experience, with over 40 shipped

• Executive Producer at

Secret Lair (acquired by

Jay Minn

titles

Vivendi)



•9 years as independent studio owner

Online



Experienced Team

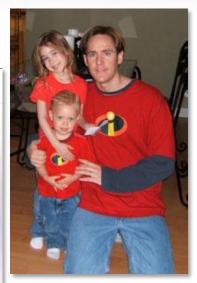
- Avg age: 38 years
- Avg game industry experience: 13 years
- Mostly married with kids
 - 85% married, 65% with kids

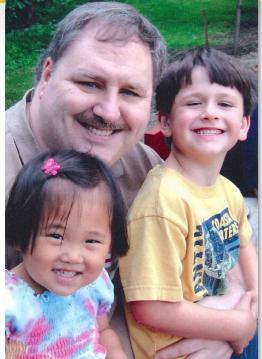
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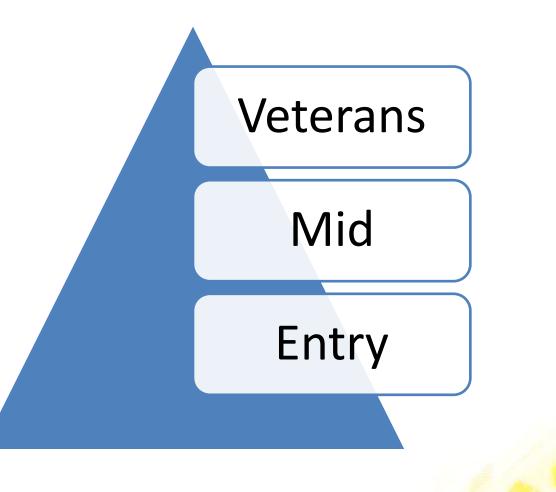


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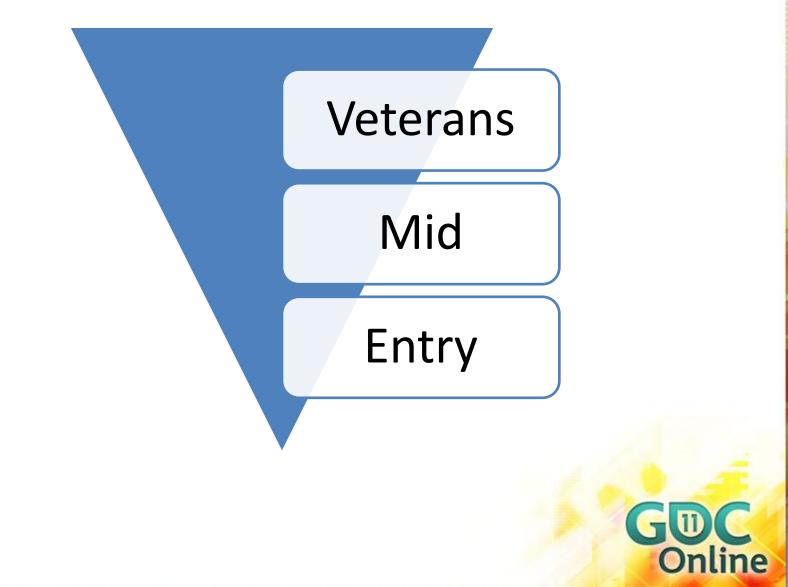
Online

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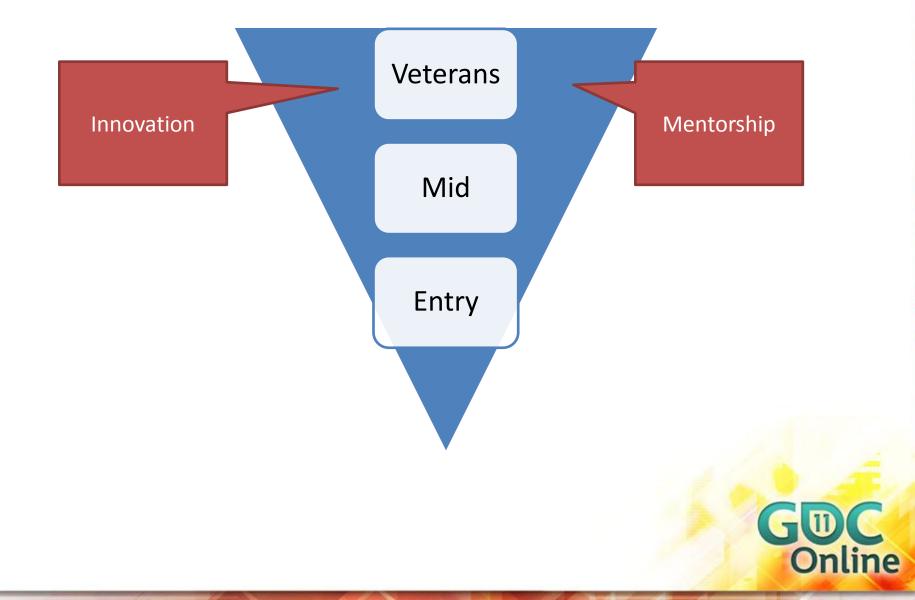




The Amazing Society

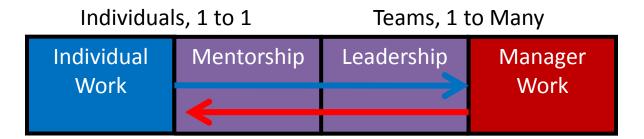


The Amazing Society



Why "The Amazing Society"

- Amazing individuals
 - Individual work, mentors, leaders
- Working as a team, a "Society"
 - Managers as leaders and mentors too



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Intro Clip

MARVEL SUPER HERO SQUAD ONLINE



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Marvel Super Hero Squad Online

THE PROJECT - GOALS



Bring Marvel to Kids







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Making Games for Kids

TARGET AUDIENCE



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Boys: Ages 6 to 12

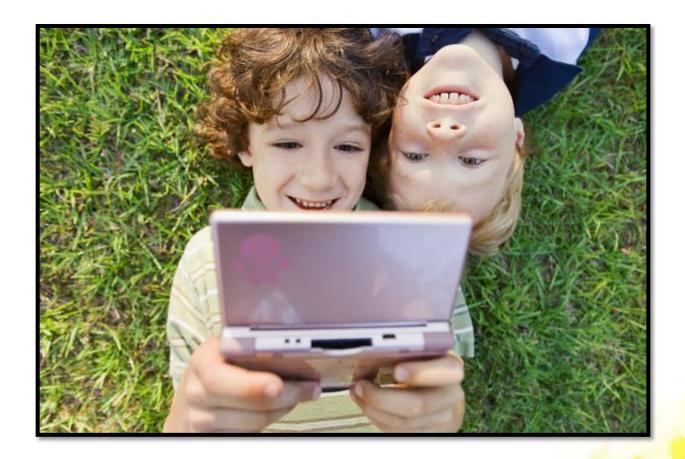




1st to 6th Grade



What are they Playing?





Online

Pokemon - collection





Handheld Games

Online

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LEGO Star Wars IP based co-operative combat



Online

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Club Penguin Online PC virtual worlds



Online PC Games

GUC Online

Secondary Target Audience

- Parents (
- Crazy Fans







How Did We Do?

• 10 out of 4 (<u>really</u>)



- GOOD Continuous Focus and Usability Testing throughout pre-production and production
 - Every month we had kids come in and play
- BAD Post Launch we lost this discipline until we got to Korea.

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Easy for Kids, Fun for Grown Ups

GAME DESIGN



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Be the Marvel Hero



Infuse Play Into Everything





Core Feature – Game World



Core Features – Combat



• Team up to face off against iconic Marvel villains



Core Feature – Headquarters



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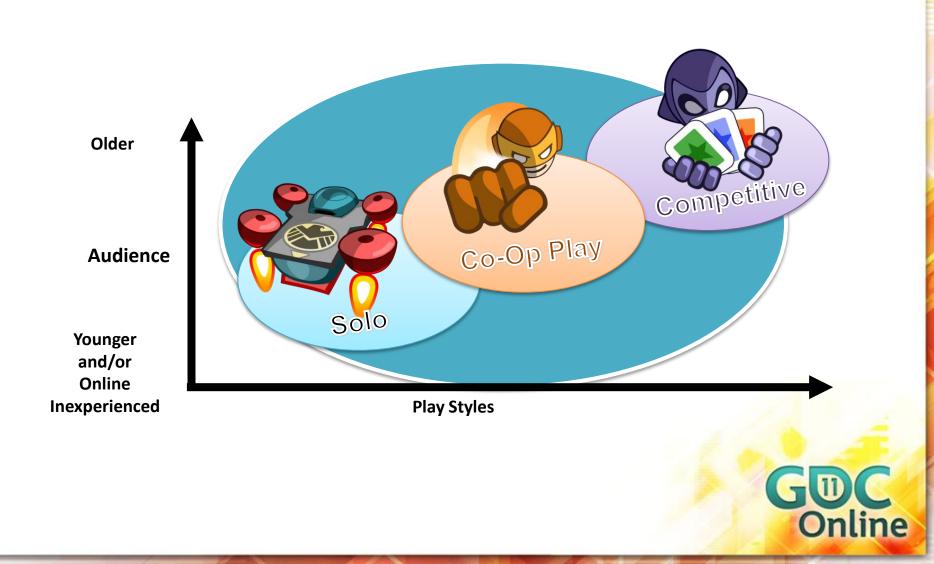
Core Feature – Card Game



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RANGE OF PLAY STYLES



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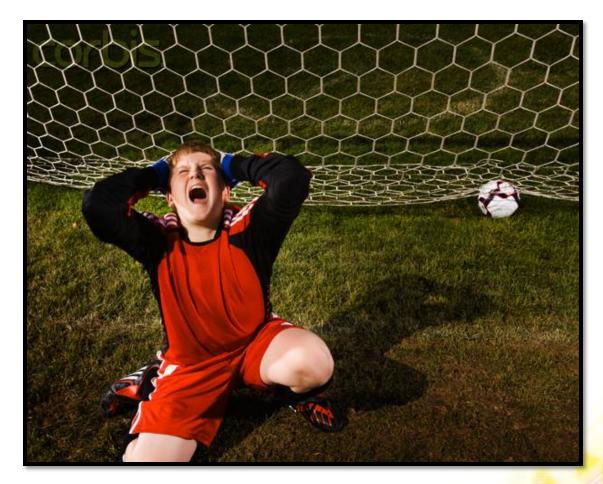
They want to succeed!



C.

Online

They can take failure very personally...



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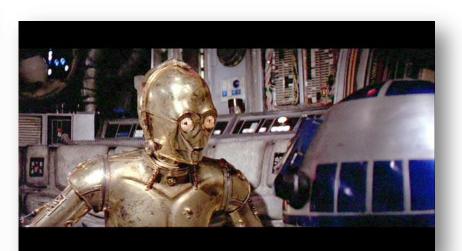
Impossible to Fail



MOTTO! - Let the Wookie Win

• If it's too easy for you, it's still to hard







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Easily lost without strong direction



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Online

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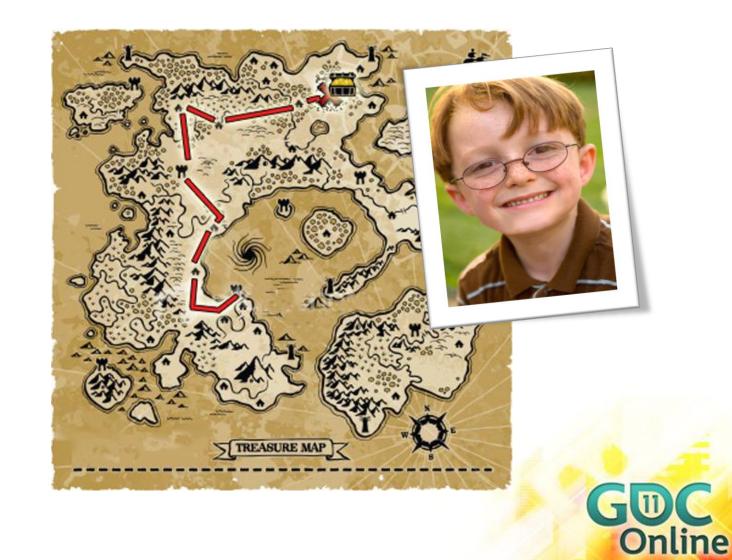
Kids Love Repetition



Directing Kids to the Fun



Directing Kids to the Fun



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Short Play Sessions



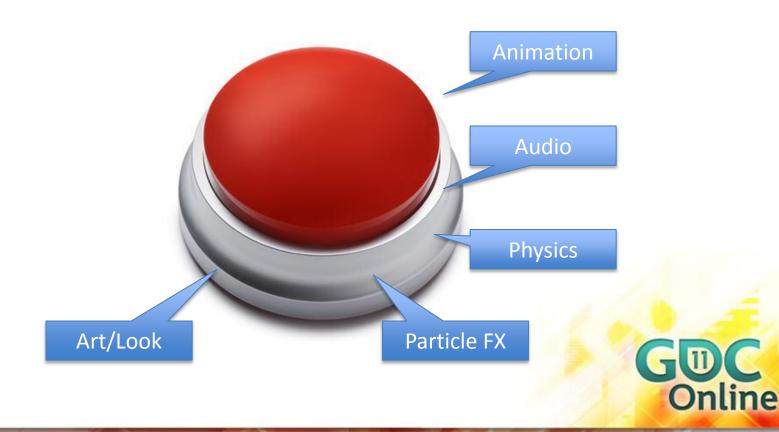
Rapid Level Progression





MOTTO! - What Happens When You Push the Damn Button?

- 10,000 hour MMO is built one click at a time...
- Dagekikan



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Monetization Design

500 Gold

1,025 Gold

2,215 Gold

5,775 Gold

10,575 Gold

19.975 Gold

095

095

\$ 6.995

S 8995

x 209



Hybrid Model

Subscription

- Monthly Gold
- Earn Gold Through Play
- Exclusive Characters
- Sneak Peeks

MTX

- Just buy some gold
- No item sales

Turns out there are people who hit this.

Online

How Did We Do?

- GOOD Game is Monetizing. Hurray!
- GOOD Age Demographic matches our guess
- BAD Content is burning fast!
- BAD Did not finish MTX by launch
- BAD Unfinished Directed Play
- INTERESTING Got the crazy fans who became our \$500 customers. Vocal minority.



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Fast to Market – Buy Not Build

TECHNOLOGY



Unity VS Lightspeed

Unity: 51 Lightspeed: 49 Sunity

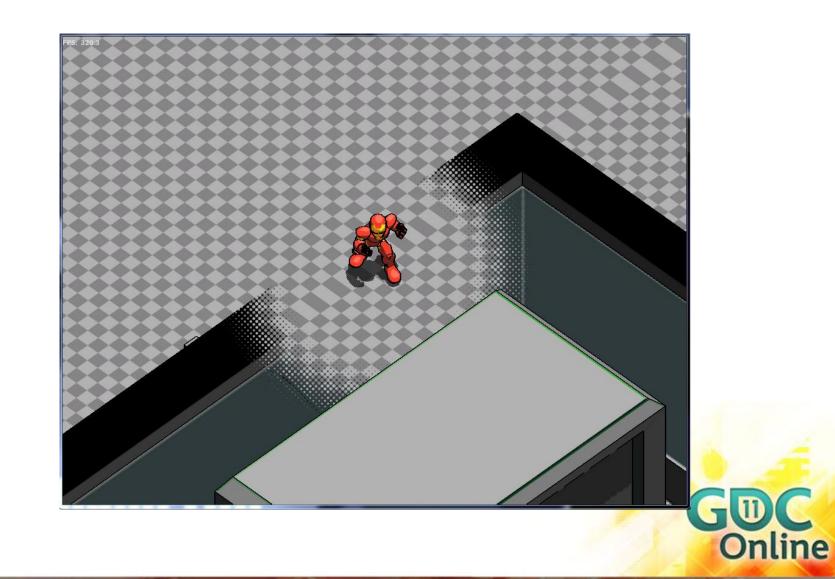


Picked Unity and had a game play demo up in 2 weeks.

Every game feature demoable in 6 weeks

Chose our benefits and problems

<u>Demo</u>



Unity Pros and Cons

Pros

- Awesome Tools
- Web Player
- Reasonable Price
- Future iOS, Android, more

Cons

- UI
- Asset Server
- Waiting for Updates



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Invisible Matchmaking

No Sharding Friend List Focused

Turning Point

Web Embedded Only

Vs

Standalone



- Unity Cache
- Full Screen
- Video Options



Online

Platform & Web

- LOT Harder Than We Thought
- The Website IS a Part of the Game
- Integration with PlaySpan

SUPERHERO SOIIRD	Buy Sale! 2,215 Gold for \$17.95 for \$17.95
Care and	
	Pay with Credit Card
	Card Number:
	Security Code: Expiration Date: 10 2011
	Save credit card info for future purchase
	Continue
Terms and Conditions	

How did we do?

- GOOD Decision to go with Unity
- GOOD Web ONLY, no standalone
- BAD Underestimated Platform and Web
- BAD Sub Only At Launch
- BAD UI in Unity is very difficult
- BAD Downtime for team managing 16GB of Data in Unity Asset Server

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Most Important First 5 Seconds

ART CHOICES



Quick History of Art Choices

Joy of established IP – Not a lot of messing around

• Technology considerations

• Capture the FUN!





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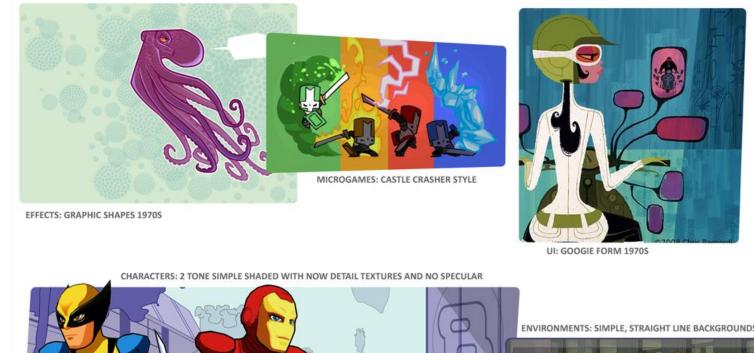




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Online

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ENVIRONMENTS: •COMIC INSPIRED •LOW DETAIL TEXTURES •BLACK OUTLINE (PROBABLY NOT THIS DRAMATIC)













MICROGAMES: •PUSH COMIC LOOK EVEN FURTHER •B&W PANELS AND COLOR PANELS





UI: •COMIC PANELS •HALF TONE EFFECTS •TEXT FORMS BACK

D Online





MICROGAMES.: •SOLID TONE VECTOR STYLE

ENVIRONMENTS: •AMBIENT OCLUSION MAPS •STYLIZED FORMS





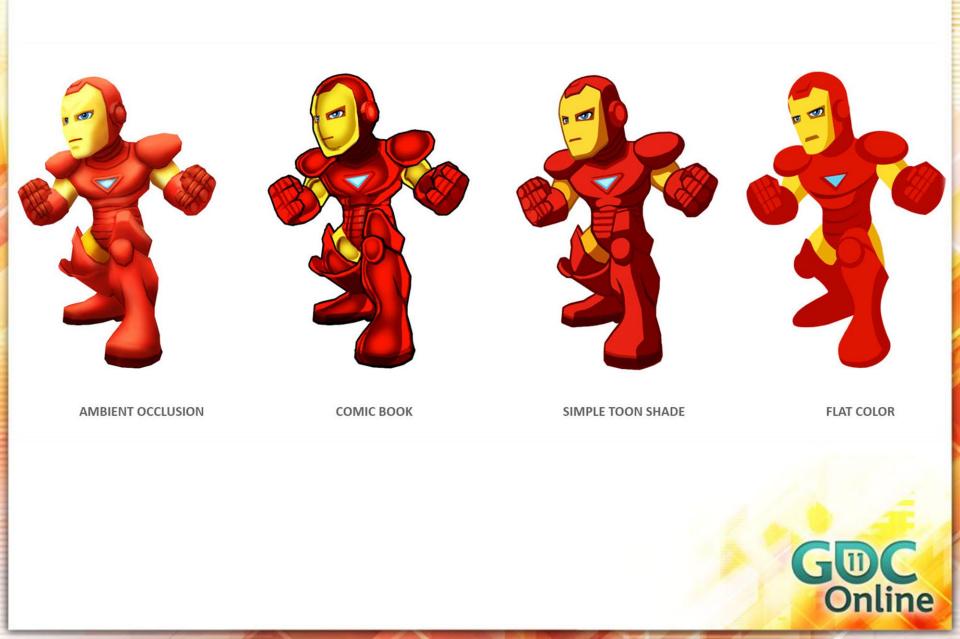


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EFFECTS: •BRIGHT EMISSIVE BASED HERO EFFECTS •DISTANCE BASED BLUR



•3D MICRO SCALE









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How Did We Do?

- GOOD Beautiful game, awesome animations, happy customers
- GOOD Marvel Team and Fans very happy with the look
- GOOD Game works fine on low end machines
- BAD Burned time on art driven features that ended up only for the highest end machines

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AGILE PRODUCTION



Discipline of Scrum

- 2 Week Sprints
- Epics for the Quarter
- 50 Sprints to Launch
- Small teams
- Take the time for the overhead
 - Planning
 - Sprint Reviews
 - Retrospectives

October 2011

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23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Online

Stickies and Excel Not Good Enough

Rally Software FTW!

Amaz	ing Society	r													Proje	ect Program	Setup	
Superhero Squad I a Welcome Jay Mi											Minn Hel	lp Logout						
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+		JS16905	General Audio and Cha	aracter Polish				D			6.0	6.0	0	Audio	Grant Rob	erts	2 🔮 😢	
+	÷	JS16896	As a player, I want to h	ear sound for Ultin	nate Comics Spider	-Man		D			1.5	1.5	0	Audio	Grant Rob	erts 🔋	💅 💕 😫	
+		JS16897	As a player, I want to h	ear updated sound	d for regular Spider-	Man		0			0.5	0.5	0	Audio	Grant Rob		2 🛃 🖻	
+		JS16893	LS 10.0 General Webs	ite Asset Requests	s			D	PCA		11.0	0.0	0	Website	Christin Ov	erton 🔋	💅 🛃 😢	
+	÷	JS16892	Submit NP for GLS app	proval				D	PCA	2.0	2.0	1.0	0	Arcade	Chris Vano	ver 🚦	2 💕 🖹	
+	T	JS16798	ART - As a Developer,	I have the necessa	ary icons needed fo	r implementing	the Daily Award syste	m. D	PCA	5.0	24.0	0.0	0	Feature	Franz Fe		🕈 💕 🖹	
+	\Leftrightarrow	JS16767	ART - As a Developer,	I have processed a	art for implementing	the Daily Awar	d feature.	D	PCA	3.0	20.0	0.0	0	Feature	Franz Fe	isi 🥛	💅 💕 😫	
+	÷	JS16849	IMPLEMENT - As a De visuals.	eveloper, I have up	dated the Daily Bug	le Newspaper t	o contain the Daily Aw	ards D	PCA	3.0	17.0	10.0	0	Feature	Franz Fe	isi	2 😒 🖻	
+	÷	JS16851	IMPLEMENT - As a De server.	eveloper, I have the	e Daily Awards secti	on using data c	oming down from the	game D	PCA	5.0	13.0	12.5	0	Feature	Franz Fe	isi	2 2 2	
+	-	JS16190	ART & IMP - As Arcade	e Team, we need a	an icon for Night Pat	rol to be used in	n the Arcade Gadget.	D	PCA	2.0	11.5	1.5	0	Feature	Franz Fe	isi 🥛	2 🛃 🖻	
+	÷	JS16689	ART & IMP - As Amazi more like I'm buying sil		improved icons for t	he Buy Silver c	atalog items, so that it	looks D	PCA	1.0	2.5	1.5	0	Feature	Jay Min	ų 🕻	2 2 2	
+		JS16857	IMPLEMENT - As a De hooked up.	eveloper, I have an	implementation of t	he "Their Squa	d" page that is ready t	o be D	P C A 🛅	5.0	19.5	11.0	0	Feature	Franz Fe	isi	2 🔮 😢	
+	÷	JS15389	IMPLEMENT - As a pla want to.	ayer, I want a full so	creen button within	the Unity Player	r that I can use whene	ver I D	РСА	1.0	2.6	0.0	0	Feature	Christin Ov	erton 🚦	2 🛃 🖻	
+	+‡+	JS16288	IMPLEMENT - As a pla	ayer, I want to know	w how much progres	ss I have made	on collecting my hero	tokens. D		5.0	20.0	20.0	0	Feature	Christin Ov	erton 🔋	2 💅 😫	

MOTTO! - Fail Fast

• Failing is fine but please have the courtesy to do it quickly





Rebooting a Sprint

- Very painful
- Only happened a handful of times
- Major pivoting of resources to deal with "catastrophes"

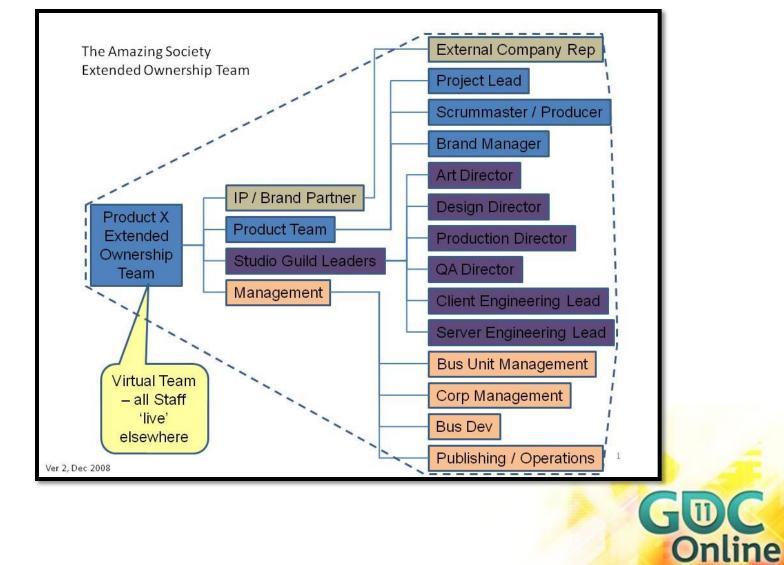
• Team decides this!

MOTTO! - I'm Not Good Enough For Me

- Everybody is a movie director
- Everybody is a composer
- Everybody is an architect
- Everybody is a game designer



Extended Product Owner Team

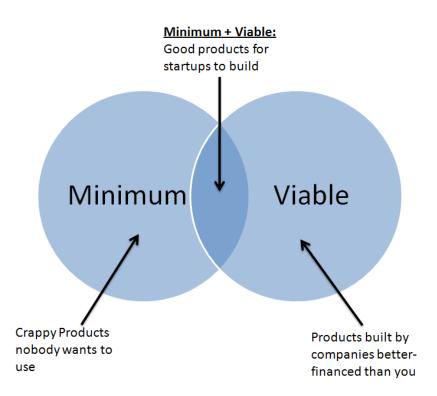


MOTTO! – Ship The MVP then Iterate

• Minimum

Viable

• Product



Get something out and then iterate

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Launch





Online

MOTTO! - We Ship We Win

- Turns out it takes a bit of time.
- Not a Field of Dreams
- Must have Marketing & Distribution



Marvel Consumer Events After Game Launch







Avengers Spiderman 4 May 12 Summer 2012

Our online events and expansions to mirror the 2011/12 movies and events of the Marvel brand





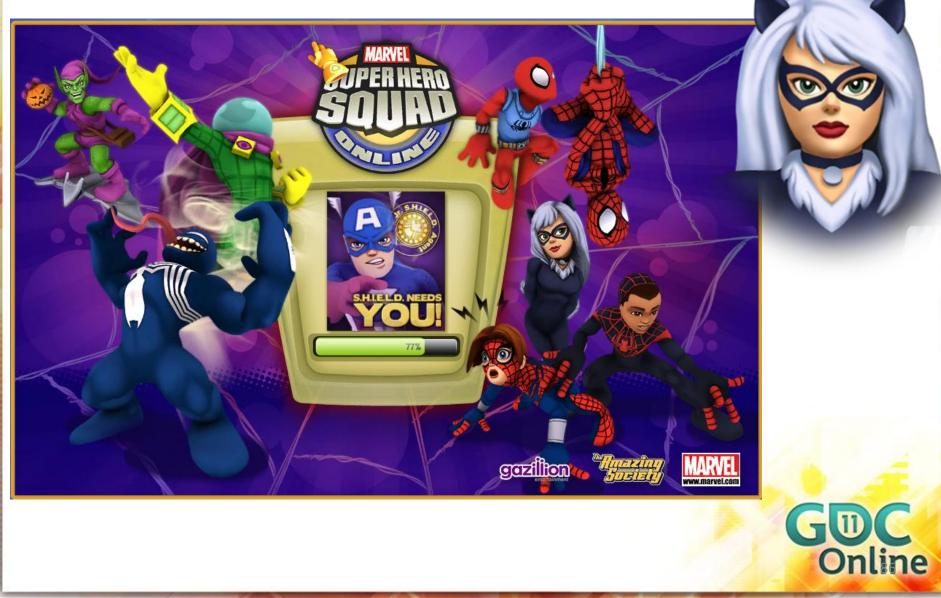


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Captain America

SHS

Spider-Man Month



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GOnline

The Game Today

How Did We Do?

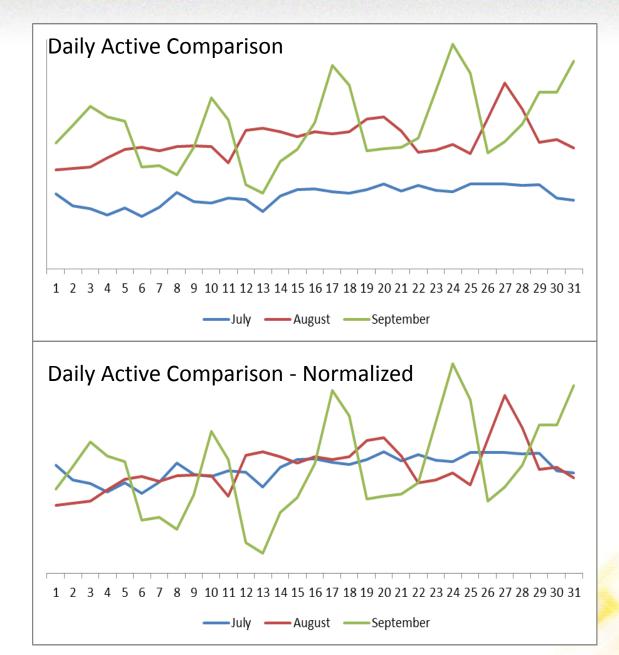
- GOOD We got the game live!
- GOOD Hit the media beats for all major summer movies and new Spider-Man
- GOOD Kids know names of even obscure Marvel heroes after playing the game
- BAD We lost the discipline of Priority Poker post launch in exchange for Rapid Response
- BAD Rush to hit Movie times made us release critical bugs

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Metrics

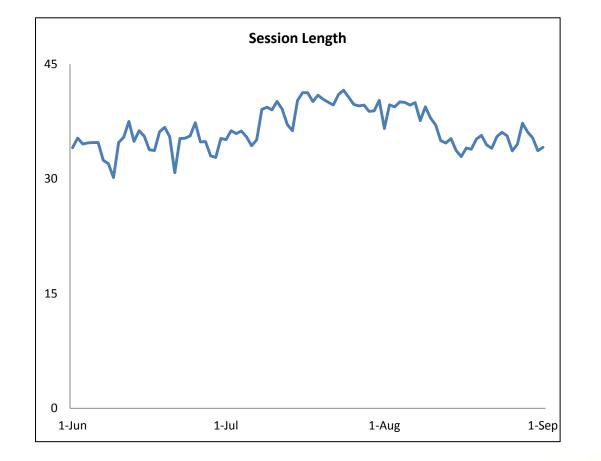
WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?





Summer vs. Back to School Saturday peaks

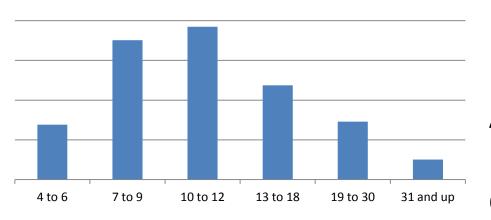
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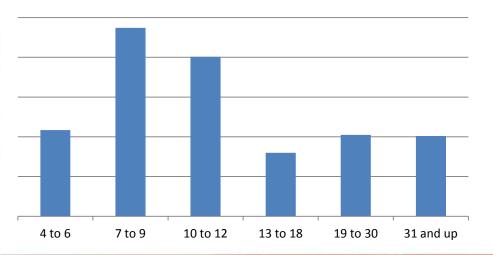


Post Launch Demographics

Registered



Payers Ages

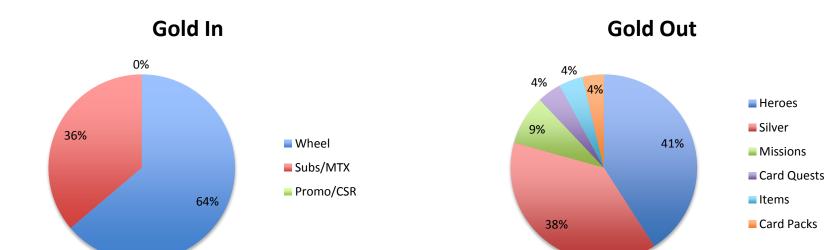


Adults have higher conversion rate.

Children and teens have higher active rate and make up the bulk of all paid users.

Online

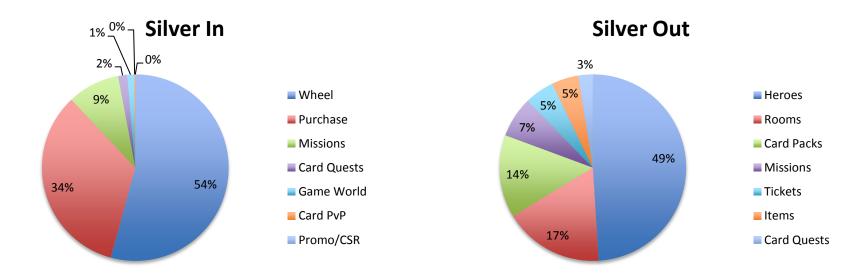
Gold Economy



- Subs/MTX share up 3%
- 38% of all gold converted to silver

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Silver Economy



- 34% of all silver purchased with gold
- Hero share up 14% as users used the bulk of purchased silver to buy silver heroes

Don't Lose Your Mojo! The Local Maxima Problem

Current



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Trust Your Feelings...

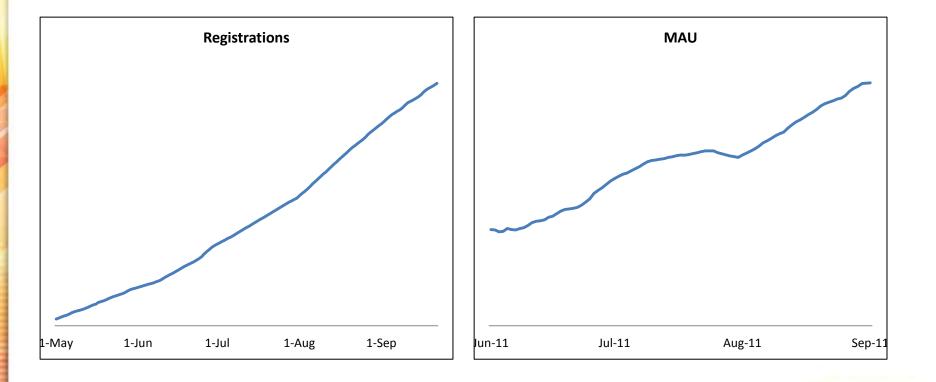
Using the Force



Management is worried...



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How Did We Do?

- GOOD Discipline of Metrics Driven Development
- GOOD Increasing growth rates
- BAD Where is time for iteration?
- BAD We stopped talking about FUN!

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Continuing Operations

FUTURE OF SQUAD



Halloween!



Halloween!



Halloween!



C.

New Challenge System

Challenge Button



Complete Challenges



9 FREE Heroes as Rewards



Eventually Players will Earn them All











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AND MANY MANY MORE!





AND MANY MANY MORE!



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THANK YOU!!!!





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QUESTIONS?

