Unlocking World Game Markets From China

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GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE™ CHINA
SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER
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Good Morning

About Myself and Tap4Fun

About Myself

- 32 years old, from Washington D.C.
- Gamer since age 5, when I fell in love with Mario & Luigi
- In China since 2005, working on mobile games with Tap4Fun since 2010
- Leader of Tap4Fun's Creative Department, which houses most of the companys' foreigners
- In it for the international hit

About Tap4Fun

- 4 years old, from Chengdu China (capital of Sichuan Province)
- Focused *only* on multiplayer strategy
- Among highest grossing mobile developers in China (ranked ~30 worldwide)
- In the words of our CEO Kevin Yang: “An international company based in China, not just a Chinese company”
- Also it for the international hit

What This is About

- Sharing our 3+ years of experience and our rise to notoriety
- How to create concepts and develop products for China, or anywhere
- How to market your games to international audiences
- How to adapt culture and products
- My perspective as an expat in China
- Answers to your questions

Quick Numbers on Tap4Fun

500k DAU

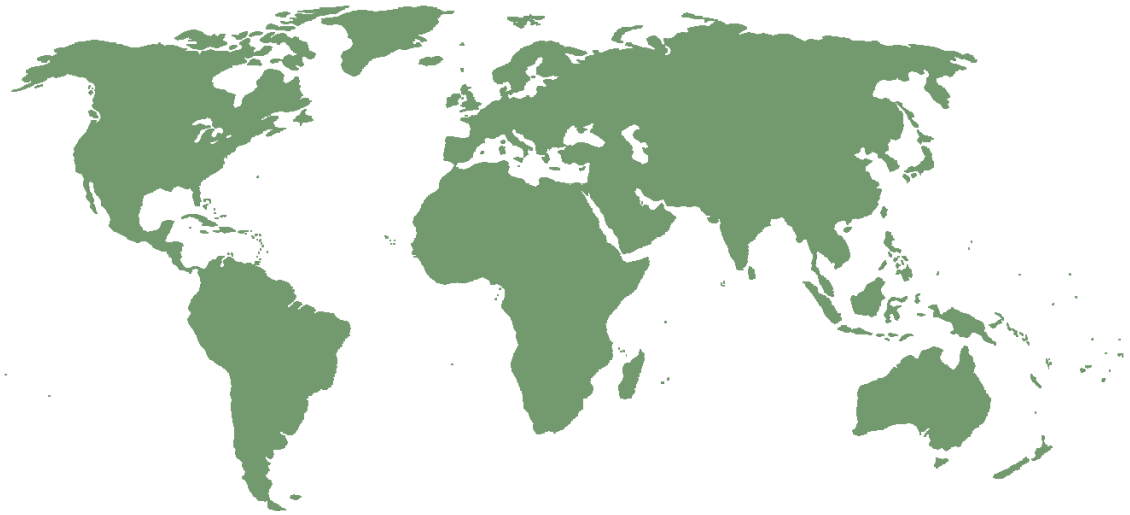
30+ Million Users

8 Games

400 “Tappers”

Our Most Lucrative Markets

- United States
- France
- United Kingdom
- Russia
- Germany
- China



Product Overview

- Build, upgrade, compete with players, and expand your power and influence
- Iterative development cycle, male-skewed demographic
- Common SLG game themes + one or more unique elements per product

Product Overview

Island Empire

2011

Galaxy Empire

2011

King’ s Empire

2012

Spartan Wars

2012

Global Threat

2013

Galaxy Legend

2013

Product Overview

2014 release, currently in public beta on Google Play and iOS in limited markets

Product Overview

Upcoming 2014 Release, pre-release name Reign of War

How and Why to Develop Game Concepts for World Markets

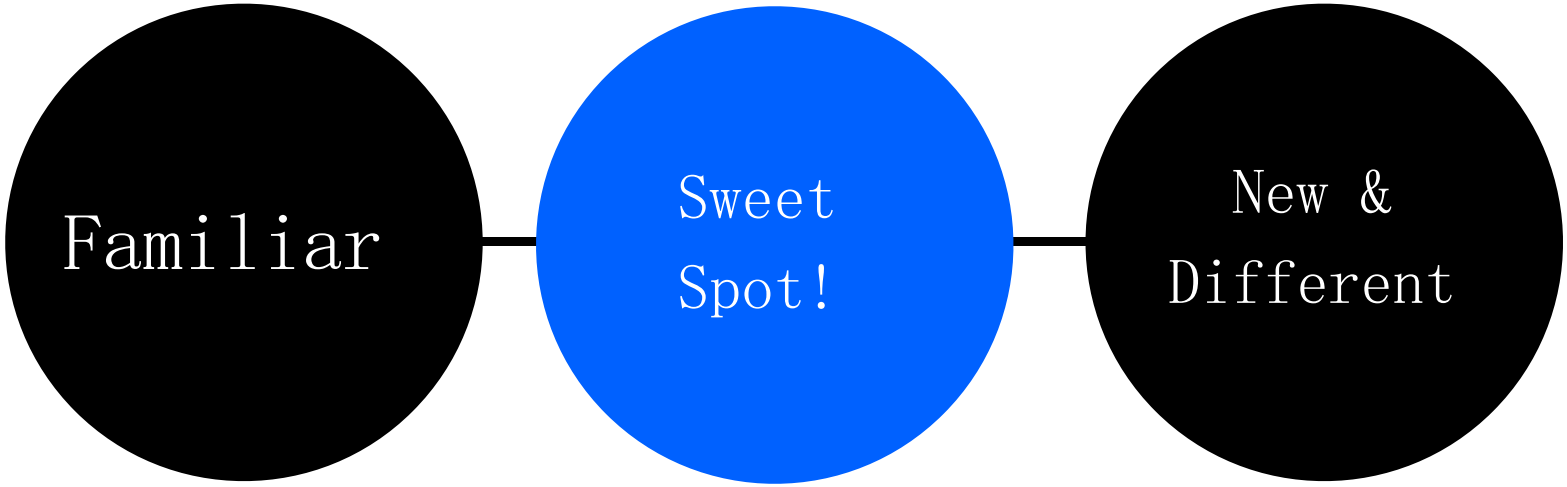
Worldwide Market Relative to China

- China is huge and growing fast. No doubt about it.
- 4/10 of the top apps are owned and published by Tencent. Difficult to find success in China
- Other BRIC countries developing nicely, especially Russia. US, UK, Germany, France, very stable.
- 黑卡

Concept Creation

- Simple ideas. “Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication” – Davinci (1977 Apple slogan, too)
- Evaluate team ability and determine your level of risk tolerance
- Familiarity + “a hook”

Concept Creation



Danger:
Clone territory.

Danger:
Alienating.

Concept for International Audiences

- What ideas are understood and appreciated by world cultures?
- What cultural precedent is there for your concept?
- What cultural bias to you bring to your concepts? Examples: China & Sanguo, Japan and anime, me and prohibition era concept

Liquor Empire

“Build a 1930’s underground empire and reign as Kingpin over your organized criminal network”

What is the Prohibition Era?

- Believing it was a crime against God, in 1920 the United States made alcohol illegal, causing an underground alcohol culture to explode
- At the same time, Mussolini expelled thousands of members of Italian organized crime, who immigrated to NYC and Chicago

Visual Inspiration

- Familiar mafia setting
- Unique, old school Prohibition Era setting
- Alcohol-driven game economy
- Historical reference

Why didn’t it work?

A lot of concepts won’t work. That’s normal.

Onto a concept that did work…

Spartan Wars

- A concept from Feb. 2012: a Spartan-themed game of conquest
- The Spartan theme, with Greek mythology, was fresh and suited the SLG gameplay aesthetic
- Do people understand Sparta? They do, because of one movie.

300

Finding “Roads”

The movie 300 planted “the seed” that made this theme relatable and familiar.

It paved the “cultural road” to Spartan Wars.

The Thin Line Between Inspiration and Copyright Violation

The Risks and Rewards

- Successful identification and use of a cultural wave
- The risks of crossing the line: legal action, removal from the app store, ridicule
- China & IP protection
- What real inspiration means, how to teach and train it

Defining Plagiarism

"the act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person."

Intellectual property includes artwork, ideas, stories, themes, and more. Inspiration is encouraged and stealing is penalized.

Inspiration Encouraged

Gerard Butler in
300

Inspiration Encouraged

App Icon for Spartan Wars, developed by Tap4Fun

Inspiration Encouraged

Theft Penalized

Artwork for Magic: The Gathering, created by Jason Chan for Wizards of the Coast

Theft Penalized

Event banner artwork in King’s Empire

Theft Penalized

Build a Legacy

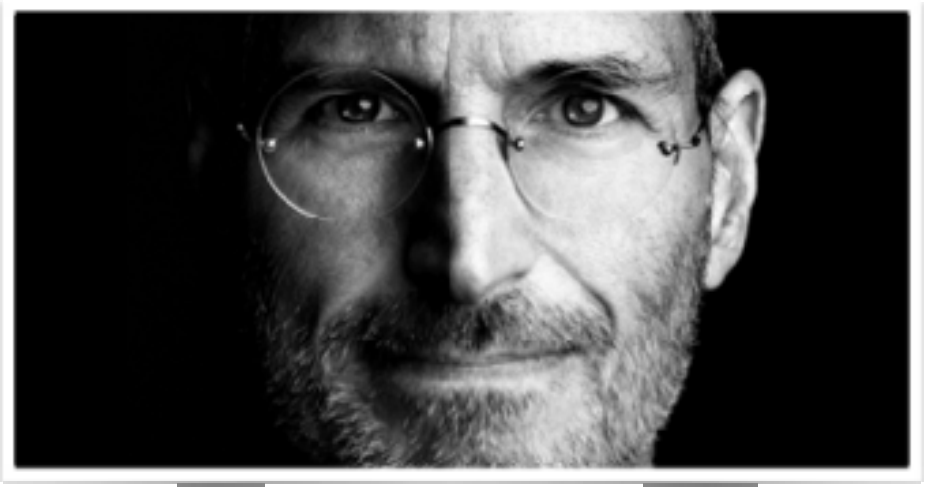
Warren Buffet says:

“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and 5 minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you will do things differently.”

Build a Legacy

Steve Jobs says:

"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower"



Mistakes Are Part of Success

"We have this culture of celebrating failure," explains Paananen. "When a game does well, of course we have a party. But when we really screw up, for example when we need to kill a product -- and that happens often by the way, this year we've launched two products globally, and killed three -- when we really screw up, we celebrate with champagne. We organize events that are sort of postmortems, and we can discuss it very openly with the team, asking what went wrong, what went right. What did we learn, most importantly, and what are we going to do differently next time?"

– Supercell CEO Ilkka Paanlanen

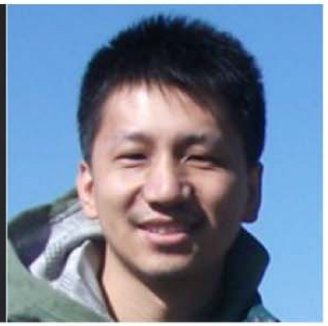
Think About Building Long Term Value

Creative Department

Within Tap4Fun, we have a department which reviews all creative materials in every game, including artwork, characters, story, sound effects and music, and game titles

The Promise and Desire for Breaking Into China

Successfully Developing and Launching Games in China



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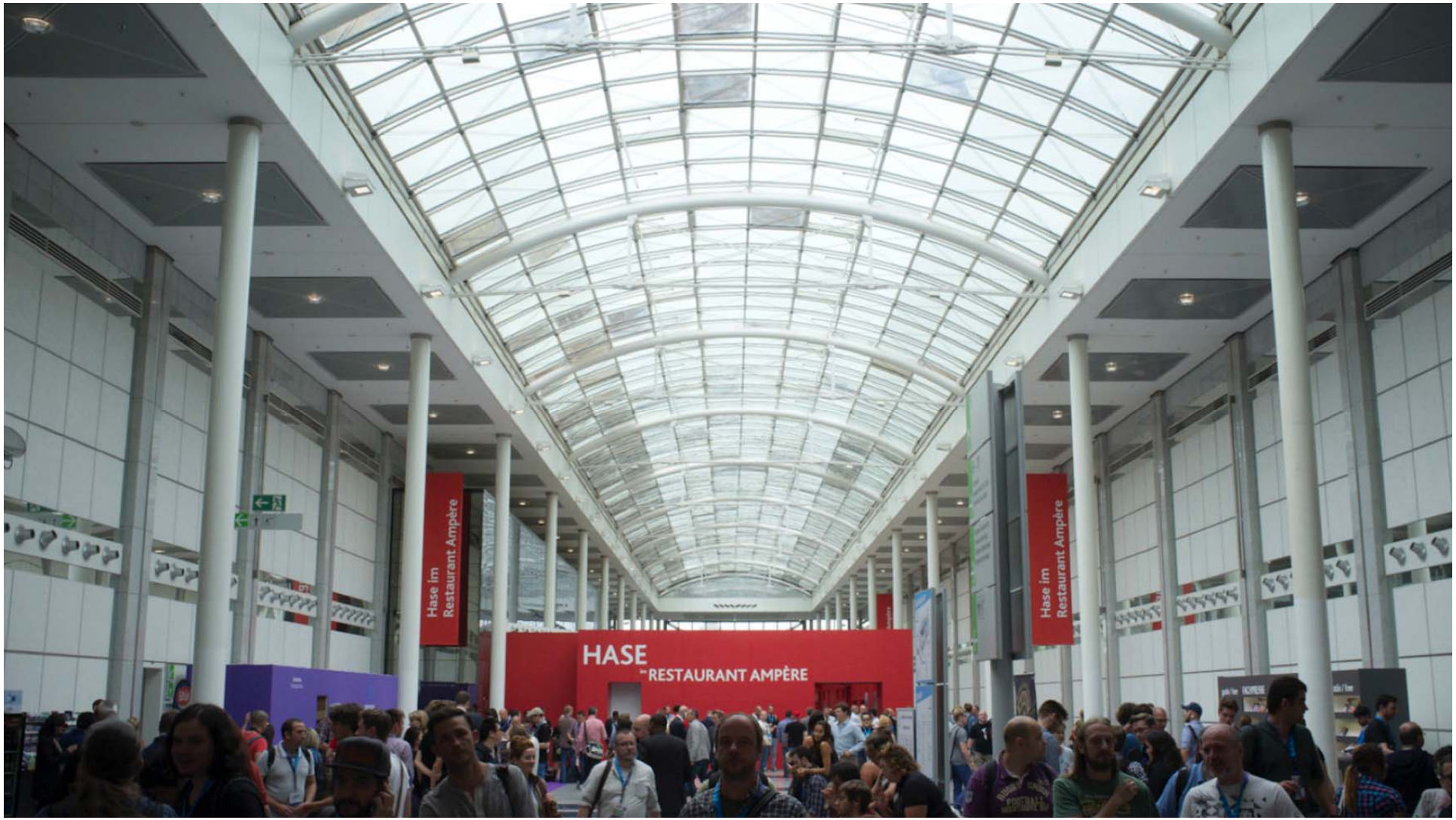
Breaking Through the Perception of China

gamescom
Celebrate the games!

ASSASSIN'S
CREED
ROGUE
ASSASSIN'S
CREED
UNITY


Hase im Restaurant Ampère
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International Games Fair @ Gamescom

ukti.gov.uk/greatbritain
LittleBigPlanet
Media Molecule
CREATIVITY
IS
GREAT
BRITAIN

中国展团
China Pavilion
成功案例
草精灵
THE GRASS ELVES
内蒙古敖勒骄子文化

巨人移动
GIANT MOBILE
乱炖英雄
KungFu BBQ
Amazing eastern-styled turn-based side-scrolling MMORPG, with the Chinese classics'storyline, various systems, and miscellaneous fun gameplay.
啪啪啪
GIANT, YOUR GATEW

IRAN COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES FOUNDATION

Monkey King Online

- Based on the Journey to the West franchise popular in China
- 3D isometric browser-based MMORPG, along with hundreds of similar titles in China and Korea
- Doesn’t only fall flat in the West, gets notably ridiculed

“Monkey King Online Isn’t a Game”

- Review on MMOFallout.com
- Brought to my attention on Facebook by a game developer
- Raises an important point: you cannot take popular games in China and simply port them to the rest of the world. The cultural gap is too great.

“Monkey King Online Isn’t a Game”

“This game is mediocrity at its finest, to the point where I’d much rather not even talk about the finer details on just how bad it is. Mix a horrible user interface that is full to the saturation point with shiny buttons and a constant stream of rewards to keep your attention, and big numbers very early on for the kiddies. The game throws everything but the kitchen sink at you, a barrage of tasks that are exactly the same in all but name.”

“Monkey King Online falls into the lowest tier of MMOs in terms of quality. They are pumped out by the hundreds every year in China and Korea with a few making their way westward thanks to publishers like R2 Games. Isometric free to play games that are heavy on the cash shop and so self-aware of how mind numbingly boring, uncreative, and unintuitive they are, that the game revolves around mechanics that allow it to play itself.”

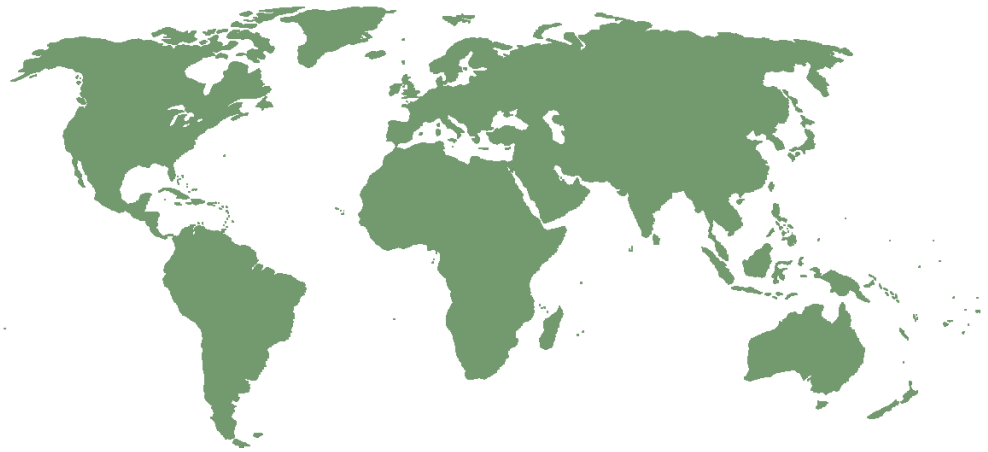
The Importance of a Name

- Change your name and see 20x as many downloads
- Our A/B testing process: different accounts, no other variables changes (icon, description, FTE, publishing date)
- ASO = Keyword volume + competition
- Google Play vs App Store

	B	C	D	F	G
1	201卡牌游戏的英文名字	201卡牌游戏的中文名字	RTS游戏的英文名字	RTS游戏的中文名字	你的名字是?
2	hero on road	炉石传说卡通版	Pirate IsLand	海盗传说	施关民
3	Dragon Conquer	龙之征服	Islands War	海岛战争	李鹏
4	DRAGON-HEART FANTASIA	龙心幻想曲	LEGEND OF HORD	掘城战记	谭精卫
5	The dream of dungeon	地城之梦	Reign of Chaos	混乱之治	沈力
6	Jack's Fantastic Adventure	Jack奇幻大冒险(假设MC叫Jack)	Island Craft	海岛争霸	倪文斌
7	dragon tranner	训龙传说	controller	统治者	胡克武
8	Seal Of Dragon	龙之印记	Age Of Sea Empire	海皇时代	宁忠亮
9	The Great+主角名	绿野大冒险	Neverland	海岛王	黄璐
10	dream quest	梦境传说	island hero	海岛英雄	kevin
11	war of magic card	魔卡战记	war of castles	攻城掠地	李洪洲
12	Dream Quest	梦境传说	Island Drifter	海岛争霸	Lana
13	dream quest	梦境传说	isle of great sea	海岛之治	余皓昱
14	Dream Quest	梦境传说	Island Hero	海岛英雄	Andy
15	Dream Quest	召唤传说	Hero's Path	英灵之路	Clark
16	Dream Quest	梦境迷征	Hero Isle	英雄岛	Jericho
17	《Dream Quest》	《追梦之旅》	Islands War	群岛战争	何青
18	Dream Quest	梦幻英雄传	hero's path	酋长向前冲	张宇
19	英语太差了，想不出来~	梦之幻境	不清楚世界观不会~	不清楚世界观不会~	王云风
20	Dream Journey	梦幻征途	Seize islands	海岛抢夺战	钱万刚
21	Dream Quest	梦之路	Island Empire	海岛帝国	党树奇
22	Dream Quset	寻梦	IOC-Island of Clash	海岛战争	张志
23	Dream Adventures	梦境冒险	Tribe Legend	部落英雄	王沁雯
24	Dream magic	魔法梦	Resource War	抢夺之源	杨柯
25	DreamQuest	梦想求索	Hero's Path	英雄之道	Charlie
26	card's mind	卡灵	island war	海岛保卫战	Nada

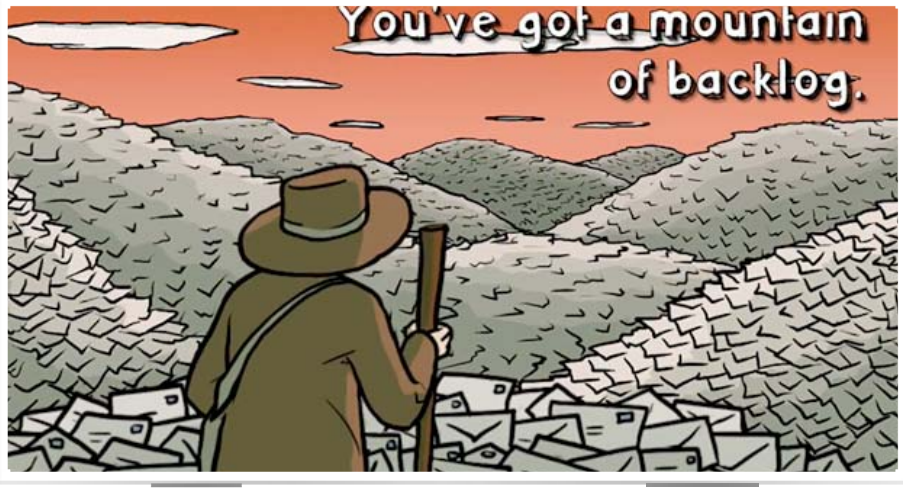
Localizing Your Game

- Which countries do you localize in?
- Investment & development costs
- Experimental campaigns in emerging markets: data analysis
- Tap4Fun & Arabic: Island Empire & Spartan Wars
- How Tap4Fun has localized
- Our latest localization efforts (moderators)
- The importance of support



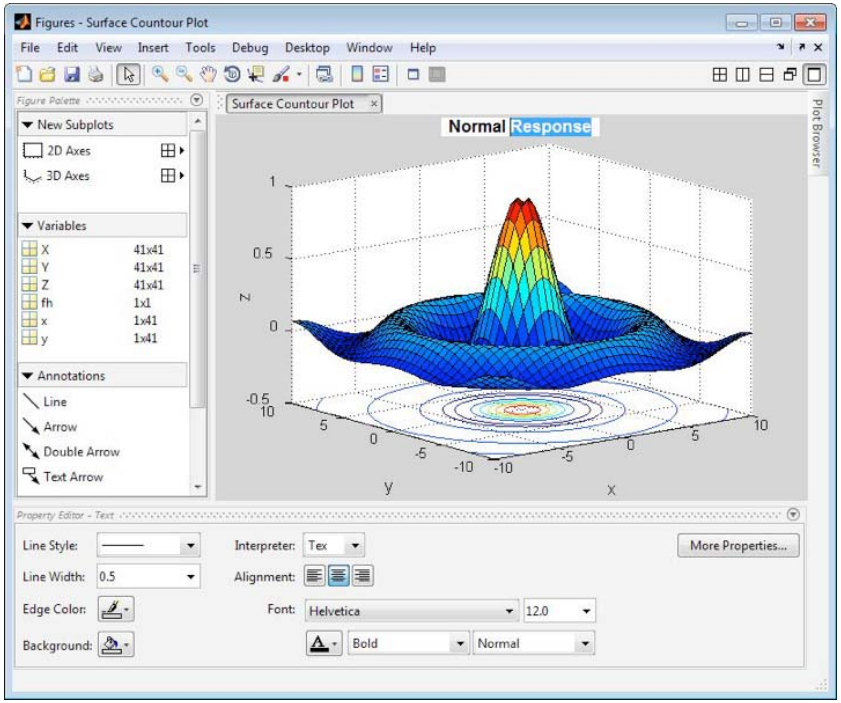
Providing Support

- 11 localizations for Spartan Wars: English, Spanish, Russian, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean, Traditional & Simplified Chinese
- Up to 3,000+ tickets per day shared among multi-lingual support team
- Constantly hiring language majors for support team
- Why this is important: the kind of players who create support inquiries & supporting “whales”



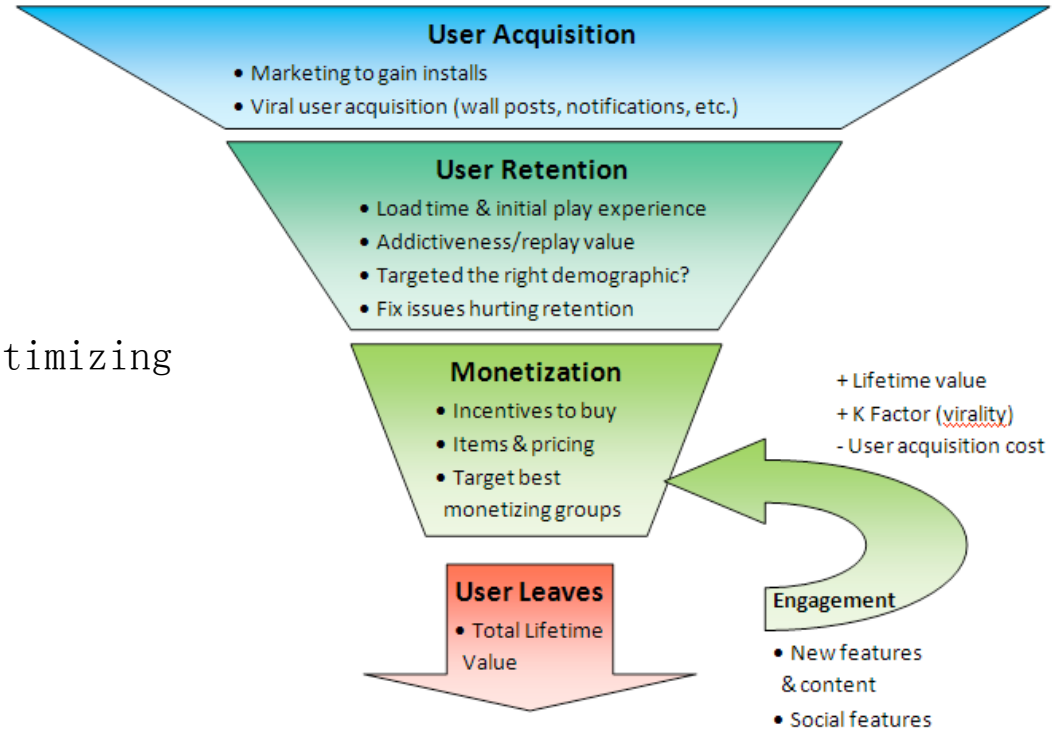
Data Analysis

- “Dive into the data” to find out exactly what’s happening
- Tap4Fun’s ocean of lost data & our corrected path
- MathWorks’ MATLAB (Matrix Laboratory)
- Monetization funnel



Monetization Funnel

- Finding weak links
- Constantly analyzing and optimizing
- Endgame = High LTV



User Acquisition

- Should I buy users?
- Rising CPI
- Incentivized installs and user value
- Conventional thought is that you have to buy users, but that's not always true
- Galaxy Legend vs Empire trilogy
- Recent example of success without marketing

Educate Yourself (Globally)

- Use international sources to learn more about the game industry, and find specific info for your niche (mobile, console, strategy, indie, etc)
- GDC San Francisco is an amazing experience, but the GDC Vault can provide much of the same value for cheap or free
- Many websites!

Website to check out:

- Gamasutra
- Games Industry International
- Deconstructor of Fun
- What Games Are
- Lost Garden
- Thoughts on Game Design
- All Work All Play

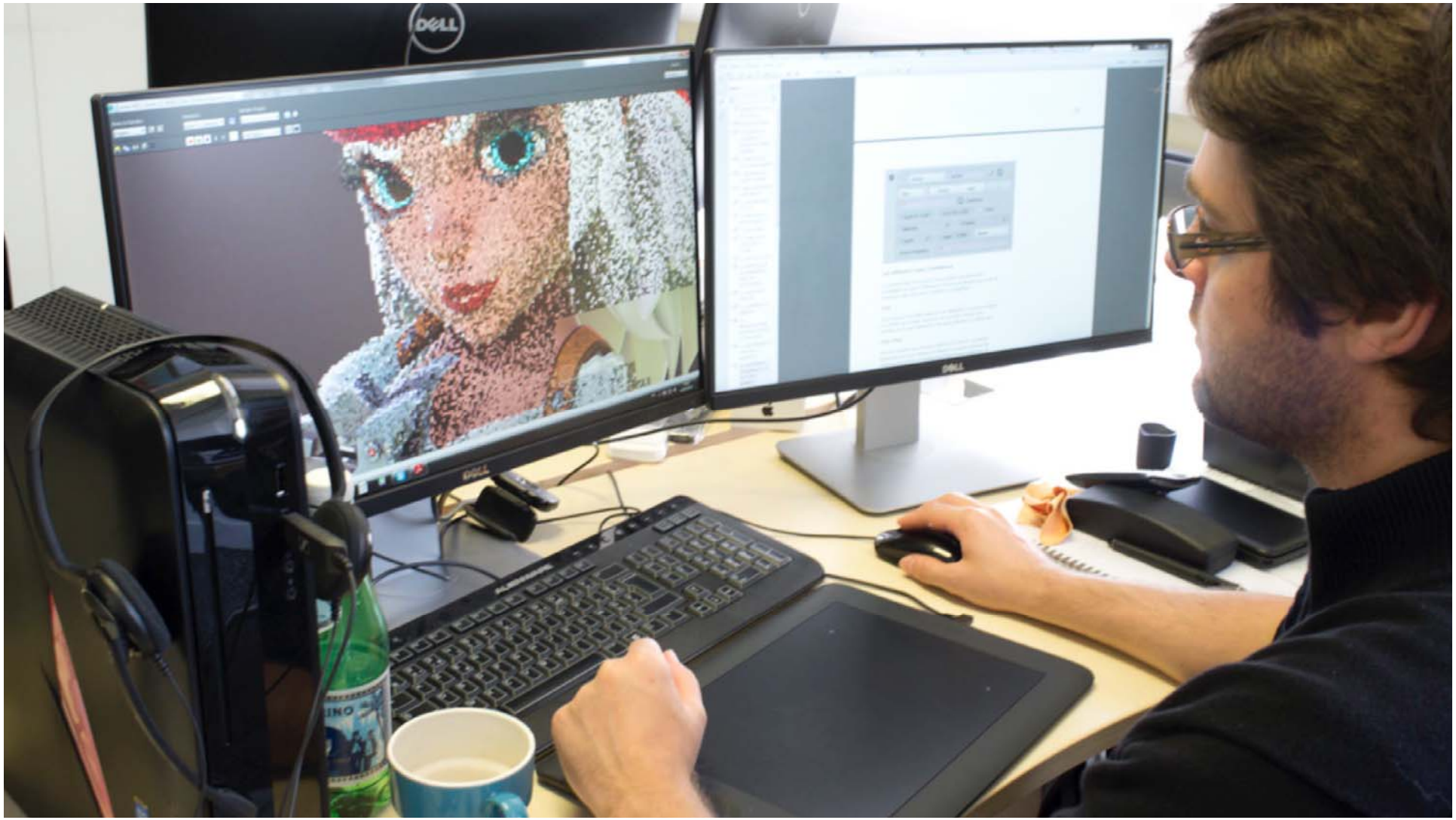
Embracing Diversity and Tap4Fun in Paris

Tap4Fun Paris

- Why open an international office?
- The importance of diversification and internationalization
- “Tap4Fun cannot be a Chinese company, it must be a company headquartered in China”
- Finding the world’s best talent

Nokia and Diversity

- Nokia’s board: same, same
- No one wants to be Nokia, but everyone wants to learn from Nokia’s example
- Always challenge yourself, always expand and move forward



Thanks, and I’d love to hear your questions.

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