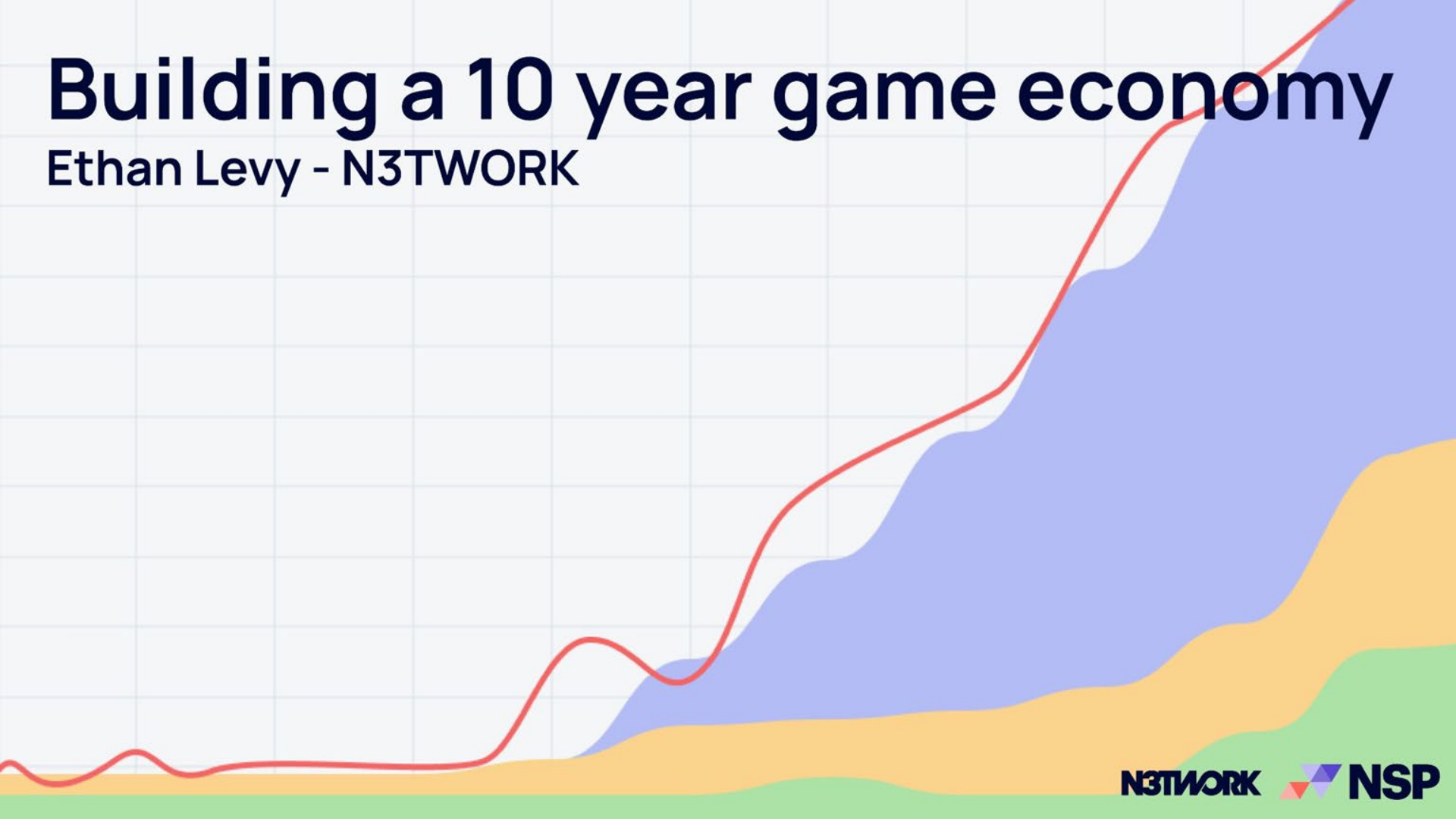


# Building a 10 year game economy

Ethan Levy - N3TWORK



N3TWORK

NSP

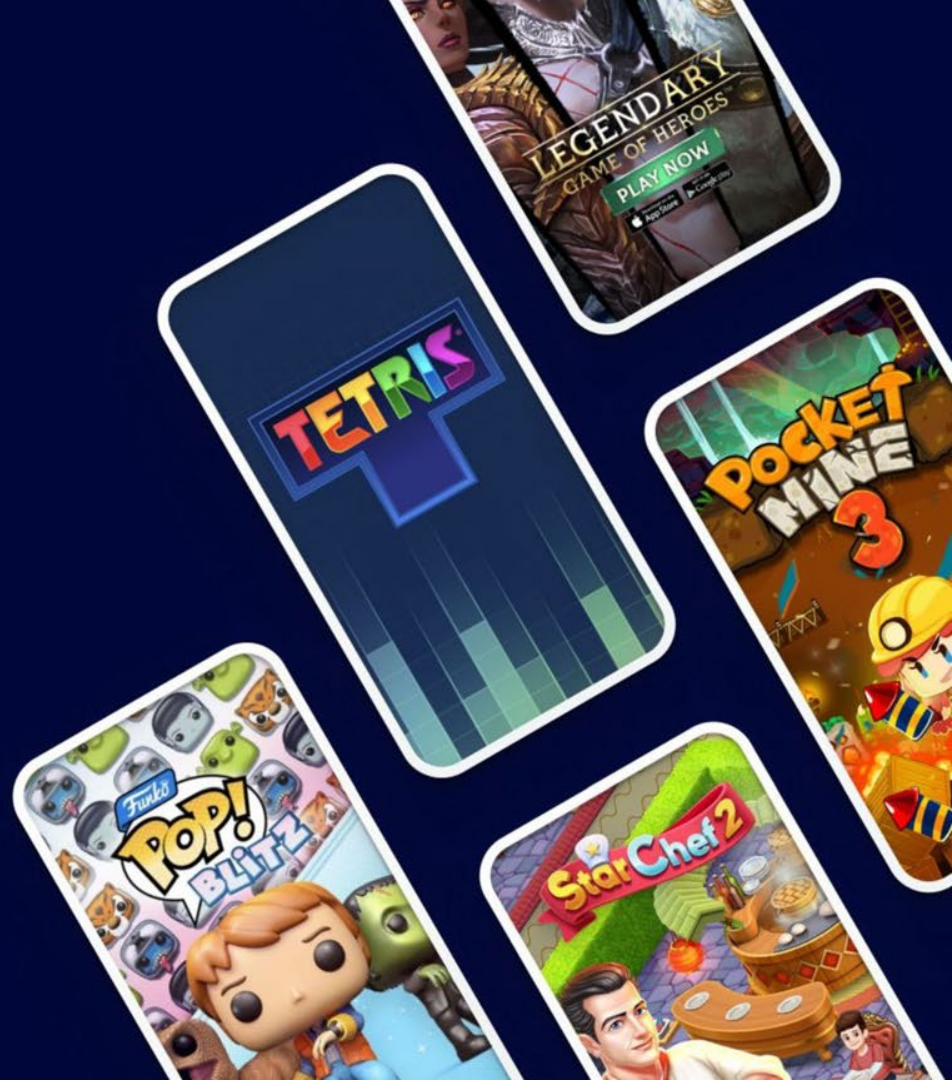
# About Me





The most powerful user acquisition, retention and monetization platform in the world.

FROM  
**N3TWORK**





# Motivation for this talk



# Motivation for this talk

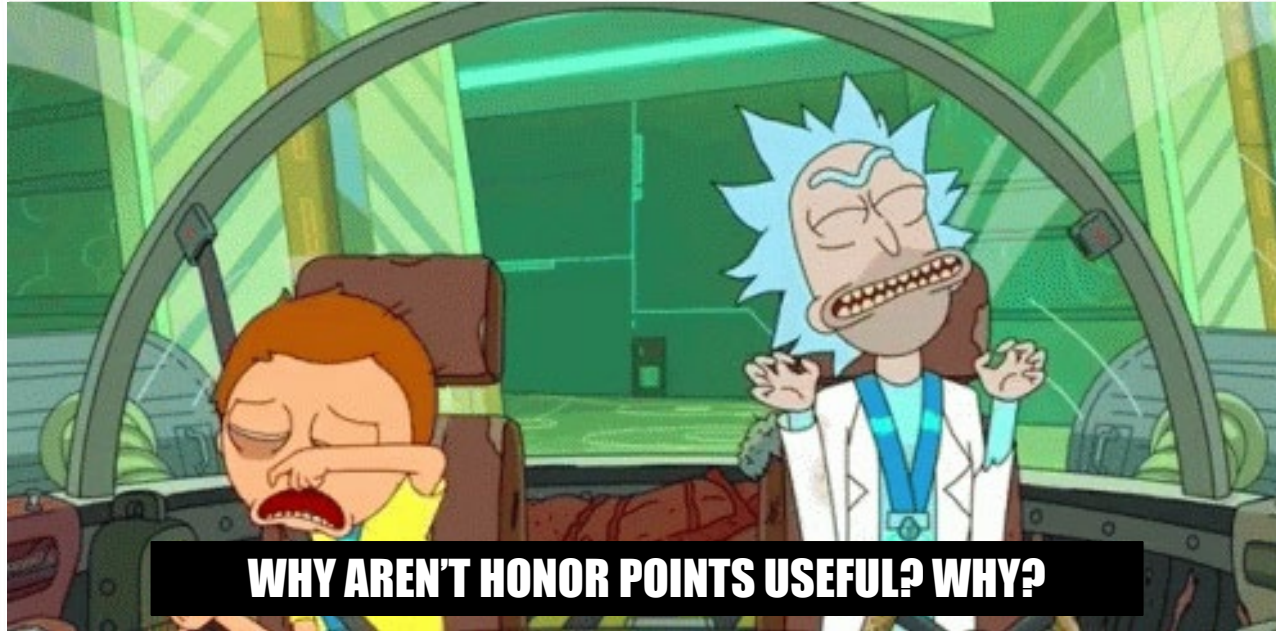
N3twork has scaled Legendary to more than \$250 million in revenues, and it has spent perhaps \$150 million in user acquisition money. And now it has begun to scale Tetris and [Funko Pop! Blitz](#).

# Going 5 years strong



- We're a month away from the 5th anniversary of WWL
- I should be thrilled with our success...

...but I'm haunted by what could have been



# Hindsight is 2020...



**Copy  
PAD**



**Innovate  
PAD**



**10 Year  
Vision**

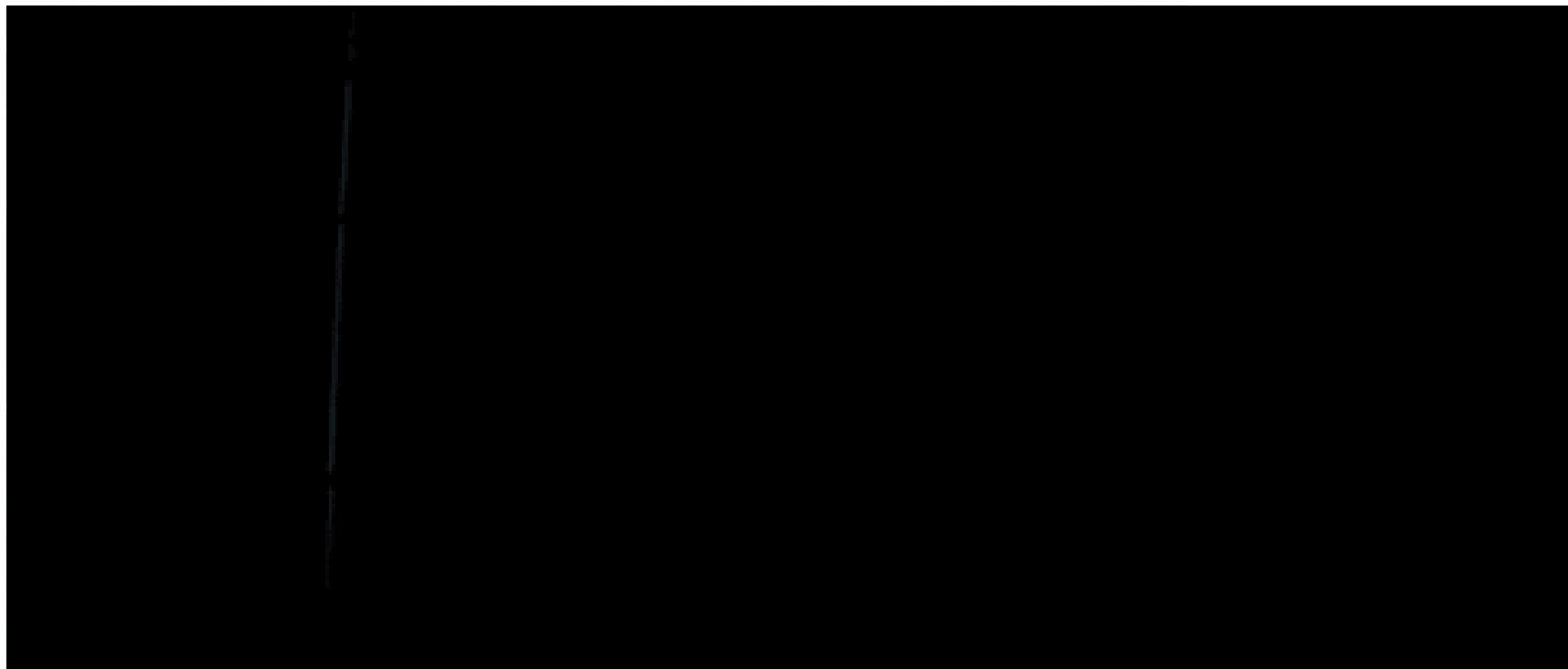
- Legendary is plenty successful
- But better design practices
- 10 year vision
- Better hygiene
- Would have yielded an even better outcome



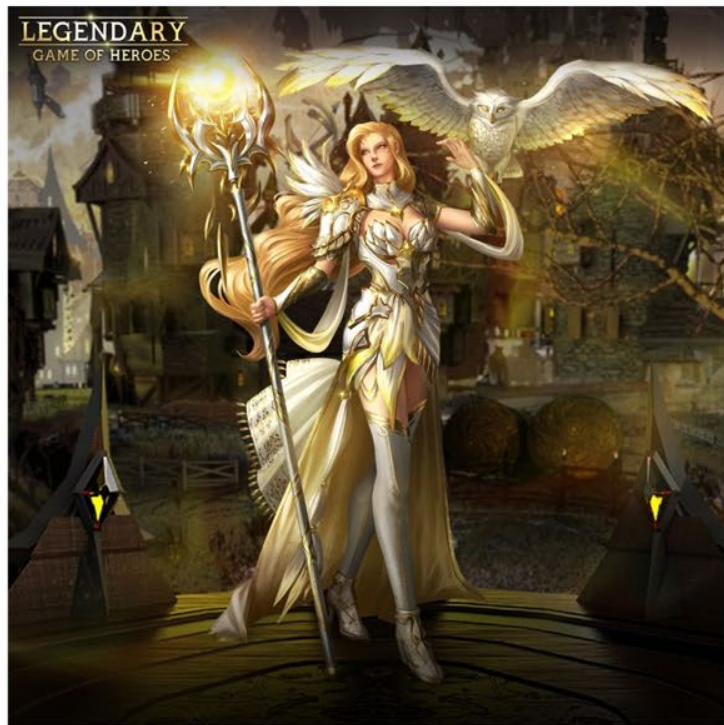
# Building a 10 year game economy

or... how I would approach a new F2P game in 2021

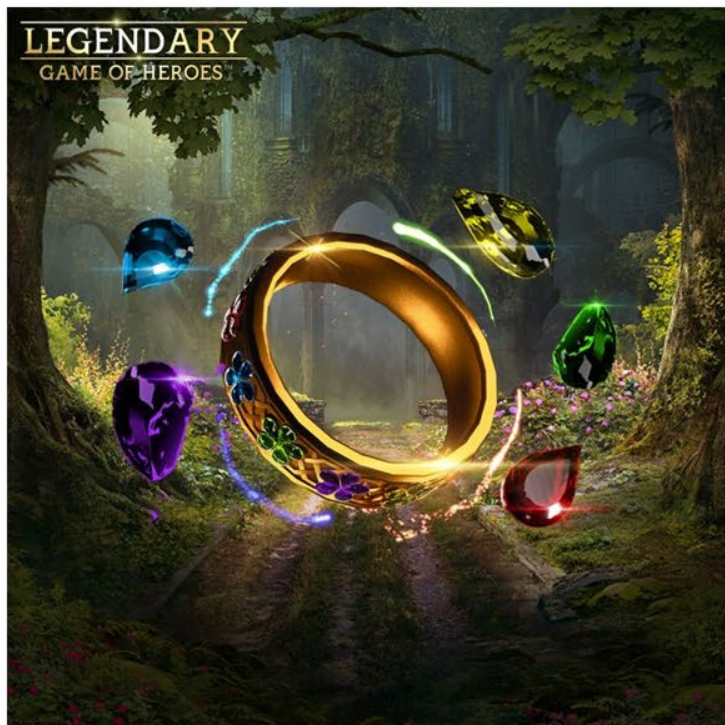




There are many elements about Legendary's design that haunt me...



We have over 1,800 characters...



We have gear that never filled it's true potential...



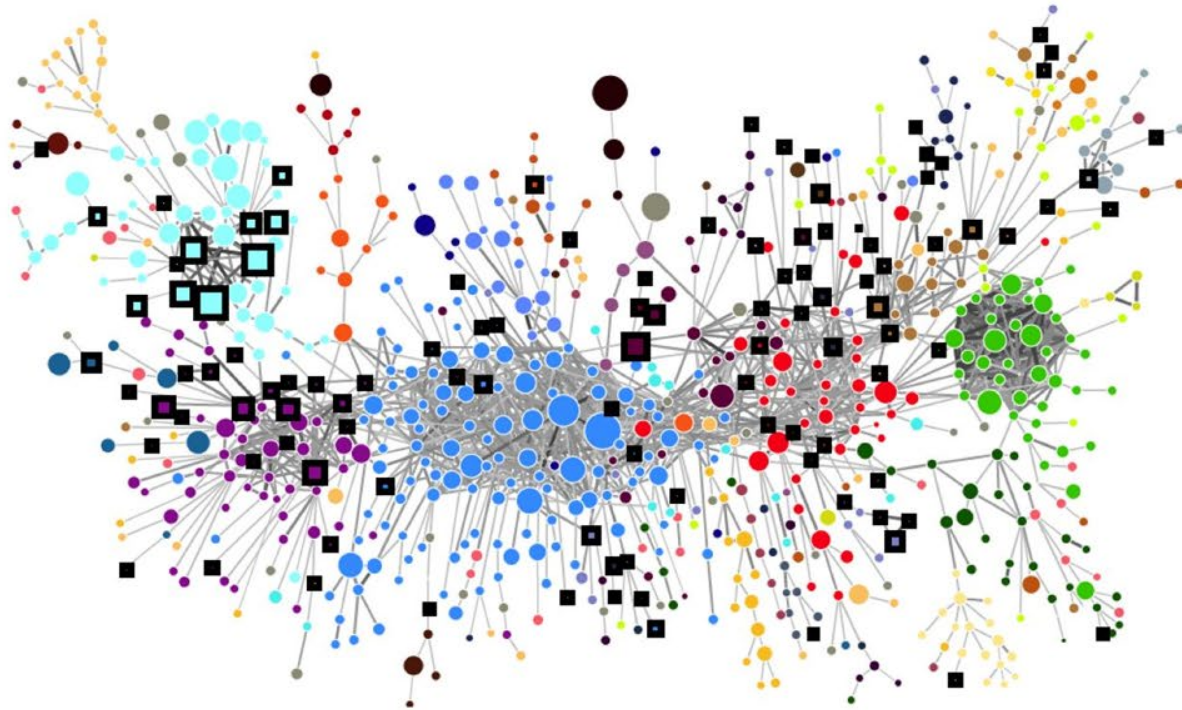


We have a mountain of currencies...



We have eldergame modes that could have been stronger...





Years of additions have made it overly complex for NUU...



**REUSE  
REDUCE  
RECYCLE**

We dispose of event content after it's used...





New players are competing against overwhelming odds...



LiveOps continues to do a world class job with the tools they have...

# HOW TO BRUSH YOUR TEETH



USE A SMALL AMOUNT  
OF TOOTHPASTE



BRUSH THE OUTSIDE SURFACE  
OF ALL TEETH USING CIRCULAR MOTION



BRUSH THE OUTER SURFACE OF ALL TEETH  
USING UP AND DOWN MOTION



REPEAT FOR INNER SURFACE  
OF ALL TEETH



BRUSH THE CHEWING SURFACE  
OF ALL TEETH



BRUSH THE TONGUE



RINSE OUT YOUR MOUTH  
USING WATER



CONGRATULATIONS!

But better design hygiene in year 0 would lead to an even stronger year 5+



There's a lot of small decisions I wish I could do over.

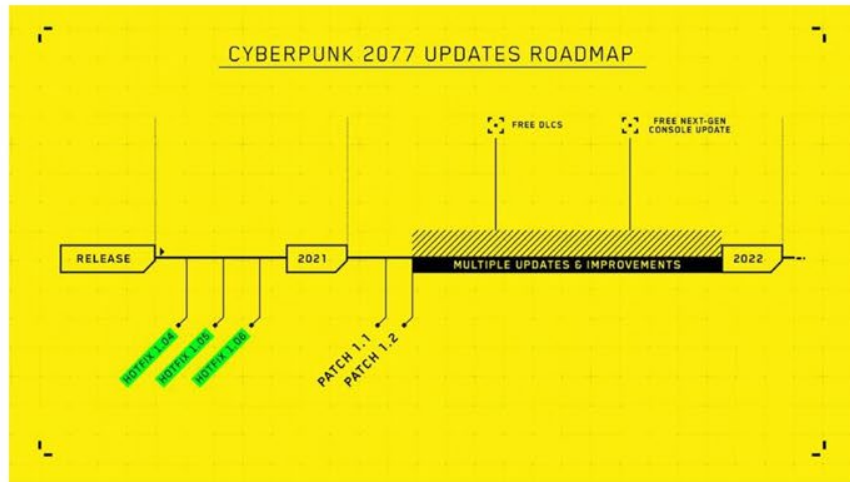


# How it started

Priority	Category/Epic	Feature	Description
A0	Heroes	Catalysts and Evo	Rules around how catalysts/evo work, as well as how catalysts are combined to craft higher level catalysts
A1	PvP	PvP spec	Working on this today
A1	UX	Cardification	How can we reinforce card metaphor as much as possible? Both in purchasing (everything is card pack) and in visual presentation (everything is card)
A1	UX	Card opening reference	A reference on Hearthstone's awesome card pack opening
			Reward attack not combos Special tiles feel arbitrary - How are skills triggered & messaged? - how are special tiles triggered and messaged Game too slow Right level of board fx Other polish
A1	Battle	Match game revisions	
A0	Heroes	Hero list for launch	List of heroes
			Needs to answer a number of questions: * how many heroes for launch * how many skyshards are needed * how many backgrounds are needed per affinity? * # of unique skills?
A0	PvE	Level design roadmap	
A1	Best Friends	Best friends	Finish the Best Friends spec
			A place in game we can send targeted groups or all players image, copy and redeemable items. Game systems can also use the message center to send rewards to the player.
A1	News and Settings	Message center	
A0	Gacha	Gacha	How does the gacha screen and opening card packs work?
A0	Heroes	Affinity Visual Guides	1 page visual guides for each affinity
A1	Heroes	Hero Skills	Need to design hero skills and leader abilities
A1	Heroes	Leader Skills	Need to design hero skills and leader abilities
			To add challenge to the board, we'll want to give enemies abilities that affect the board or players. For instance, an ability where when attacking, the enemy locks 3 gems on the board so that they cannot be moved or used for the next 3 turns. Abilities like these will make boss and event battles special.
A1	Heroes	Enemy/Boss Abilities	
			After digging into how things work over the past week, there are a number of changes I need to how things are scripted so I can deliver a quality level design. This includes changes to how heroes are tuned, how enemies are tuned, how item drops work and how levels are formed, as well as some stats that currently aren't hooked up.
A3	Level Design	Tuning system changes	
A2	PvE	Drop tables	How do these work in PvE

- Joined in April of 2015
- Took stock of the build
- Sat down with PAD
- Made a list of specs
- Wrote the specs, based largely off PAD
- 7 months later we soft launched

# We had a rough roadmap...



- There was a lot of F2P experience on the team
- We knew the tentpoles:
  - Event harnesses
  - Daily Dungeons
  - Guilds
  - PvP
  - Gear
  - Crafting
  - Etc

# But no activity & economy map...



- When it came to long term activities and economy, we were building the plane as we went
- We didn't have a clear vision for where we were going over the long term
- Here's roughly how I'd build that out...

# Activity buckets

SOLO

PvP

Social

Alliance

Co-op

Elder Game

Mid Game

Early Game

Introduction

Over the next few years, what are the styles of activity players will engage in?



# Activities

	SOLO	PvP	Social	Alliance	Co-op
Elder Game	Roguelike Dungeon	PvP Season Arena	Guild Wars	Alliance Wars	Co-op Duels
Mid Game	Events	PvP Events	Guild Events	Alliance Event	Co-op Dungeon
Early Game	Daily Dungeons	PvP Arena	Party Dugeon		
Introduction	Campaign				

What do we want players to do? Can we describe each in 3 bullet points?

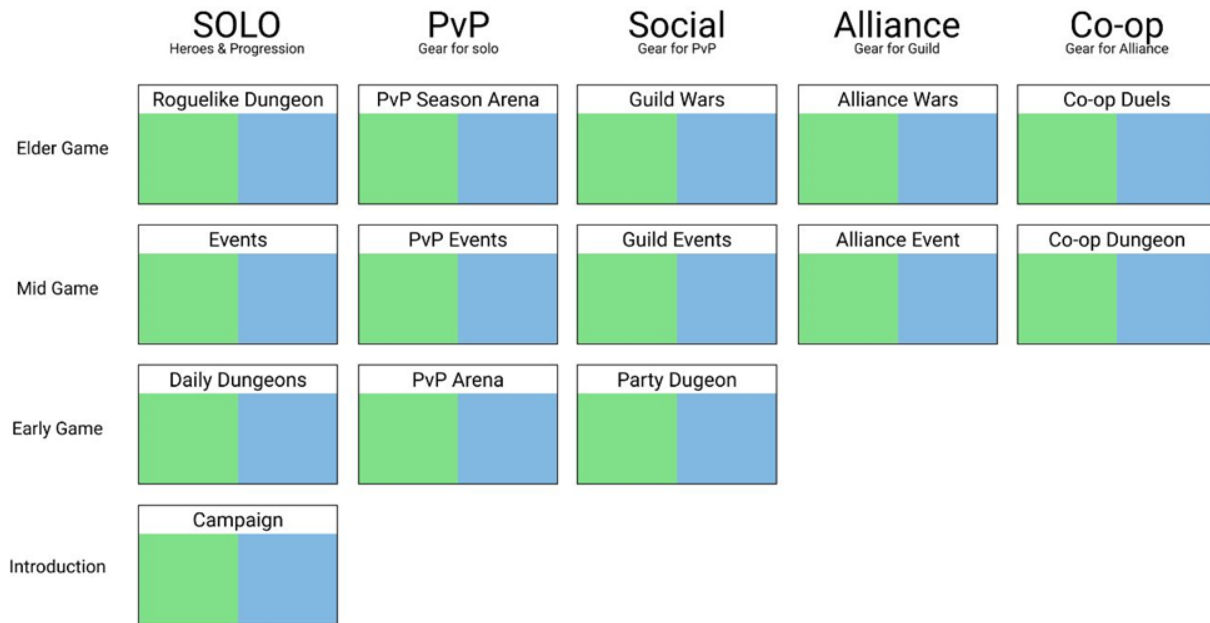
# Drill Down - PvP Arena



## PvP Arena:

- The player can spend energy to play a PvP battle
- They match asynchronously against another player based on ELO score
- At the end of each day, they get a payout based on their PvP League and standing in that league

# Reward Lane



Can each activity type have a unique incentive?

# Sinks and Taps

	SOLO Heroes & Progression	PvP Gear for solo	Social Gear for PvP	Alliance Gear for Guild	Co-op Gear for Alliance
Elder Game	<b>Roguelike Dungeon</b> Limit Keys   Hero Tokens Affinity XP Energy	<b>PvP Season Arena</b> Limit Keys   Fame Solo Gear Tokens Gear XP	<b>Guild Wars</b> Heros Troops   Fame PvP Gear Tokens Gear XP	<b>Alliance Wars</b> Heroes Troops   Fame Guild Gear Tokens Gear XP	<b>Co-op Duels</b> Limit Keys   Fame Timed Alliance Gear Troops
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Early Game	<b>Daily Dungeons</b> Limit Keys   Affinity XP	<b>PvP Arena</b> Energy   Solo Gear	<b>Party Dugeon</b> Limit Keys   PvP Gear		
Introduction	<b>Campaign</b> Energy   XP Heroes				

What are players spending and earning? How do we keep currencies to a minimum?



# Interrogate Currencies



Majors		Value	Change	1M ATM
1) EURUSD		12.032	-0.048	11.112
2) USDJPY		10.285	+0.652	10.140
3) GBPUSD		8.705	-0.100	9.240
4) AUDUSD		12.933	-0.712	12.300
5) USDCHF		12.860	-0.092	12.097
6) USDCAD		10.980	-0.335	10.200
7) Americas				

- The standard model:
  - Soft currency (gold)
  - Hard currency (gems)
  - Energy
  - Player XP
  - Activity based energies
  - Activity store tokens
  - Recycle currency
- Is each currency necessary?
- Does it have a clear purpose in the system?
- How is it relevant to the d1 player?  
d30? year 1? year 5?

# Interrogation - Energy



- **Why do we need energy?**
  - Energy limits the amount of free progress a player can get per day in campaign and PvP
- **Is energy relevant over the lifecycle?**
  - d1 players need energy so they can earn the campaign rewards
  - d30 players need energy so they can earn the hard campaign rewards
  - Year 1 players need energy so they can earn the god campaign limited time rewards
  - Year 5 players need energy so they can qualify for the top PvP Season Arena league by playing the PvP Arena

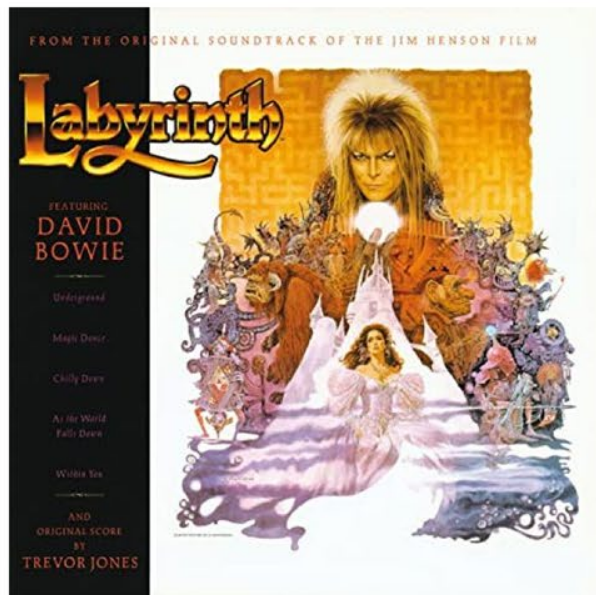
# Interrogate Activities



- Does this activity give me a unique way to play?
- Are there rewards the player can only get by engaging with this activity?
- Does this activity have a meaningful monetization vector?
- Is this activity relevant to the d1 player? d30? year 1? year 5?



# Interrogation - Roguelike Dungeon



What is Roguelike Dungeons purpose:

- This activity will put your full hero collection to use by gating your progress based on each hero's health
- Players will earn hero tokens that, over months, will allow them to buy specific heroes
- This activity will promote owning a large stable of highly leveled heroes
- This activity will scale infinitely in difficulty. No matter your player age, you will want to engage in order to collect chase heroes or duplicates needed for evolution



# Building a 10 year game economy

Let's revisit some Legendary design decisions



# Hero/Enemy Stats



- Like PAD - Heroes & Enemies have different stats
- Pooled vs individual health
- Scale of damage is significantly different
- Skills are different
- Battle is asymmetrical
- We have 3 stats
- Damage formula has a lot of multiplication
- When we sell event heroes in gacha, we are essentially selling DPS
- Result - PvP and GvG designs are kludgy

# Symmetrical Battle is Key

	SOLO Heroes & Progression	PvP Gear for solo	Social Gear for PvP	Alliance Gear for Guild	Co-op Gear for Alliance
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Early Game	<b>Daily Dungeons</b> Limit Keys   Affinity XP	<b>PvP Arena</b> Energy   Solo Gear	<b>Party Dugeon</b> Limit Keys   PvP Gear		
Introduction	<b>Campaign</b> Energy   XP Heroes				

Result: The power economy and battle formula need to be symmetrical with greater stat depth

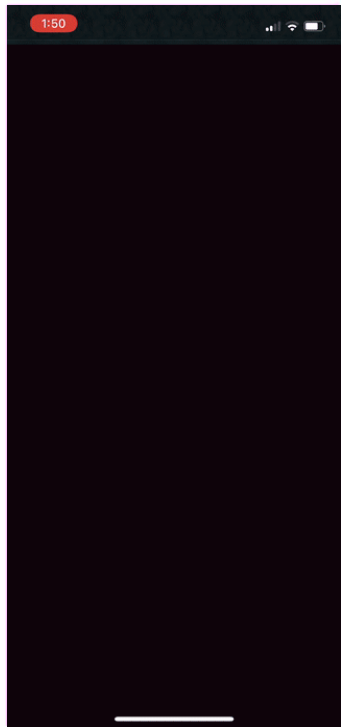
# Power Progression



- 1,800+ beautiful characters
- 5 affinities
- Progression vectors - level, evolution, awakening
- Hero properties - ATK, Recovery, Health, Leader Skills, Battle Skills, Event Edge Skills, GvG Skills, Passive Skills, Empowered Skills...
- Upgradable gear is equipped at the team level
- ATK is the only meaningful stat
- Campaign heroes are worthless for the mid-game+
- Result - chase heroes have limited forward utility



# Fewer Heroes with more Utility



- More stats & distinct value to each stat
- Get more progression from each hero - change the evolution & awaken economy
- Additional progression vectors - fixed skills per hero with skill leveling, gear per hero not team, troop skills for consumable based elder games
- Result - create significantly fewer heroes with longer term progression and utility for players

# Honor Points



- We launched with a handful of currencies and added more over time
- Honor Points are the currency you get when a player who has added you to their friends list or guild member uses your hero in combat
- They are used to open the Honor Pack
- We spam your inbox with Honor Point messages
- The Honor Pack has limited utility for mid-game+
- We haven't added more taps for Honor Points
- Result - Honor Points/Packs are not delightful, they're a chore

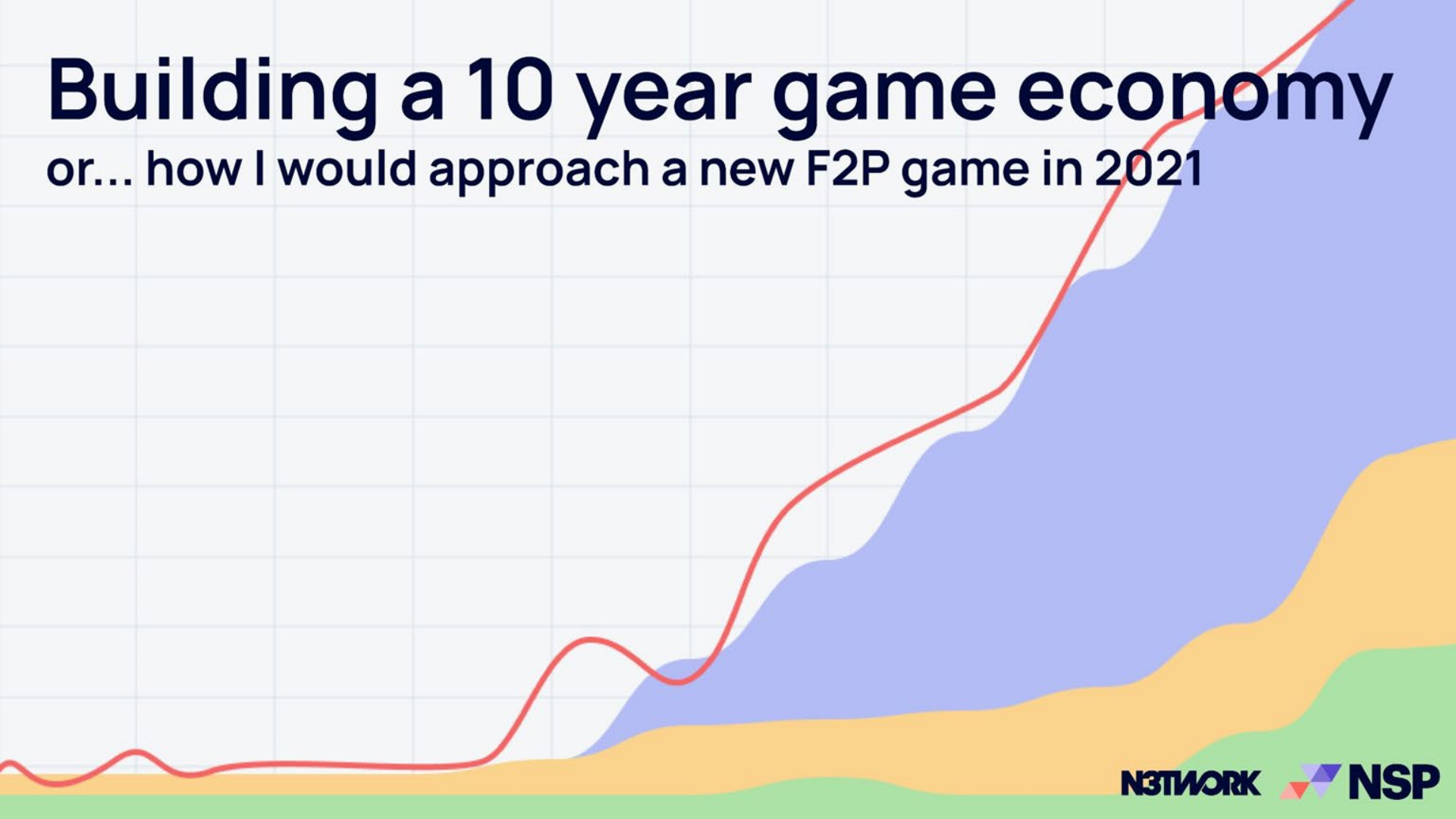
# Honor Points Revisited



- Honor Points are awarded for all social interactions - friends, guilds, party dungeon & co-op
- Make an Honor Point store with limited quantity daily content
- Sell high cost, elder game relevant items on a timer as part of events
- Add an asset class (cosmetic) purchasable only with Honor Points
- Result: Honor Points are useful and delightful

# Building a 10 year game economy

or... how I would approach a new F2P game in 2021





# When do I know I'm building a 10 year economy?



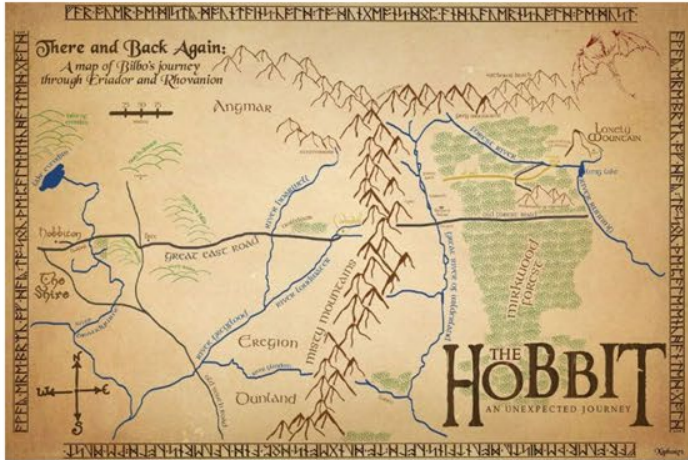
- This exercise could easily leave one with analysis paralysis
- Timebox it - perfection is not the goal
- An Economy/Activity map is all about good F2P design hygiene
- It is a tool that helps you slow down and make high quality, long term decisions

# In success...

	SOLO Heroes & Progression	PvP Gear for solo	Social Gear for PvP	Alliance Gear for Guild	Co-op Gear for Alliance																				
Elder Game	<table><tr><th colspan="2">Roguelike Dungeon</th></tr><tr><td>Limit Keys</td><td>Hero Tokens Affinity XP Energy</td></tr></table>	Roguelike Dungeon		Limit Keys	Hero Tokens Affinity XP Energy	<table><tr><th colspan="2">PvP Season Arena</th></tr><tr><td>Limit Keys</td><td>Fame Solo Gear Tokens Gear XP</td></tr></table>	PvP Season Arena		Limit Keys	Fame Solo Gear Tokens Gear XP	<table><tr><th colspan="2">Guild Wars</th></tr><tr><td>Heros Troops</td><td>Fame PvP Gear Tokens Gear XP</td></tr></table>	Guild Wars		Heros Troops	Fame PvP Gear Tokens Gear XP	<table><tr><th colspan="2">Alliance Wars</th></tr><tr><td>Heroes Troops</td><td>Fame Guild Gear Tokens Gear XP</td></tr></table>	Alliance Wars		Heroes Troops	Fame Guild Gear Tokens Gear XP	<table><tr><th colspan="2">Co-op Duels</th></tr><tr><td>Limit Keys</td><td>Fame Timed Alliance Gear Troops</td></tr></table>	Co-op Duels		Limit Keys	Fame Timed Alliance Gear Troops
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An Economy Map will help you make long term decisions that delight your players and strengthen your economy - even if it doesn't last 10 years in production

# TL;DR



- Establish a high level vision for 10 years of activity
- Ensure your minigame supports that vision
- Minimize currencies
- Maximize progression depth
- Charge each activity, each permanent good, each consumable and each currency with a clear and unique utility

# Here's to five more years...



Legendary's already a massive, \$250m+ hit...

... but I believe it could have been even bigger by using the tools in this deck in year 0.

Next time, we'll have even better design hygiene. We will slow down, take the time to make sure we're making thoughtful, long term decisions and avoid spinning out trying to make perfect decisions.



# Questions?

Contact me - [ethan@n3twork.com](mailto:ethan@n3twork.com)

Follow me - [@FamousAspect](#)

Thanks for watching

I'd love to see your game!