



SOCIAL & ONLINE
games summit

How to Keep an Online World Running After Launch

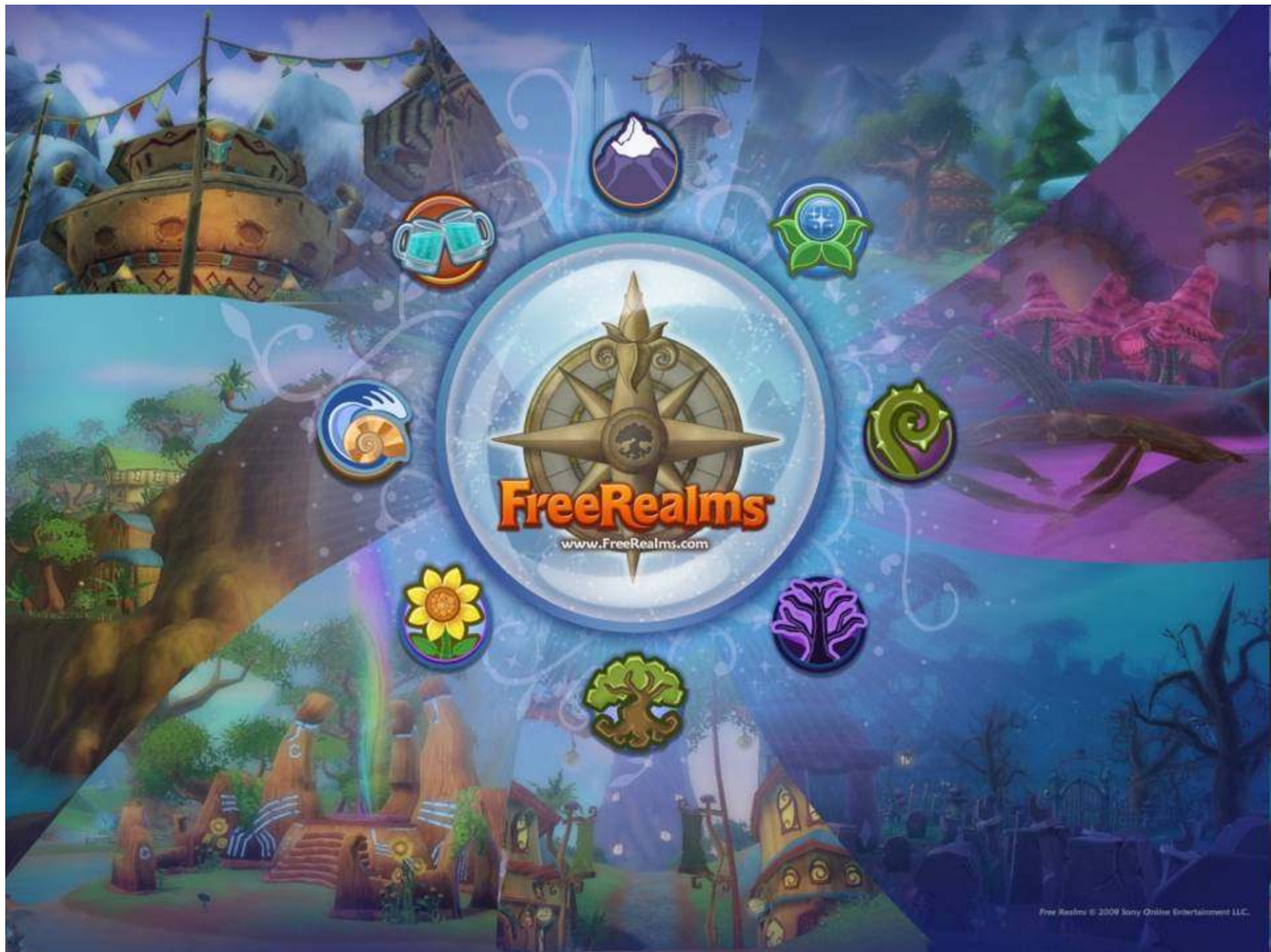
Laralyn McWilliams

Sr. Producer, Sony Online Entertainment



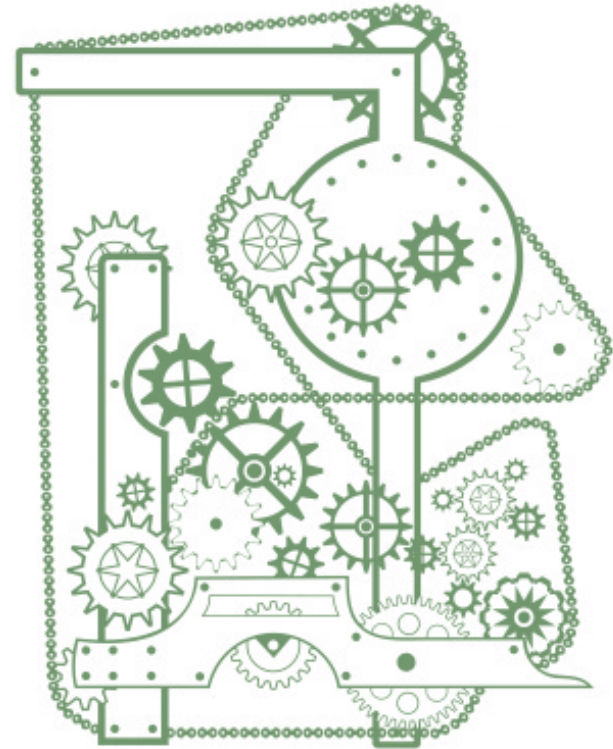
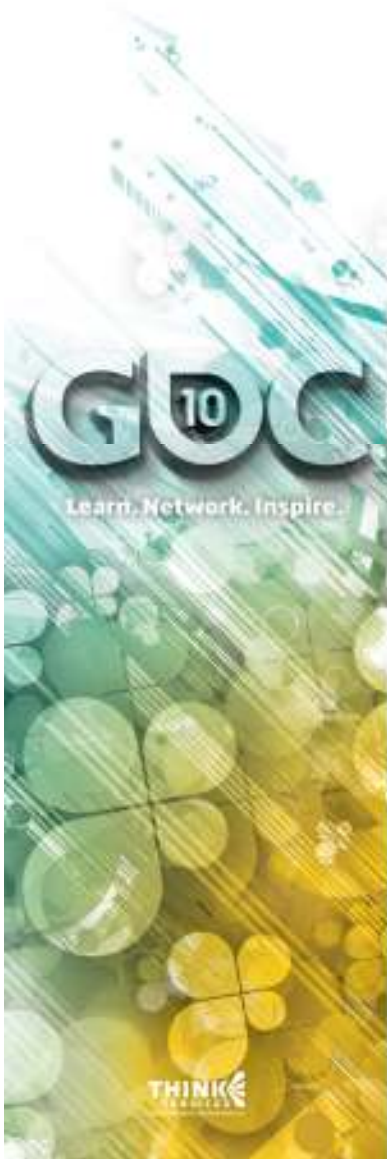
GDC 10

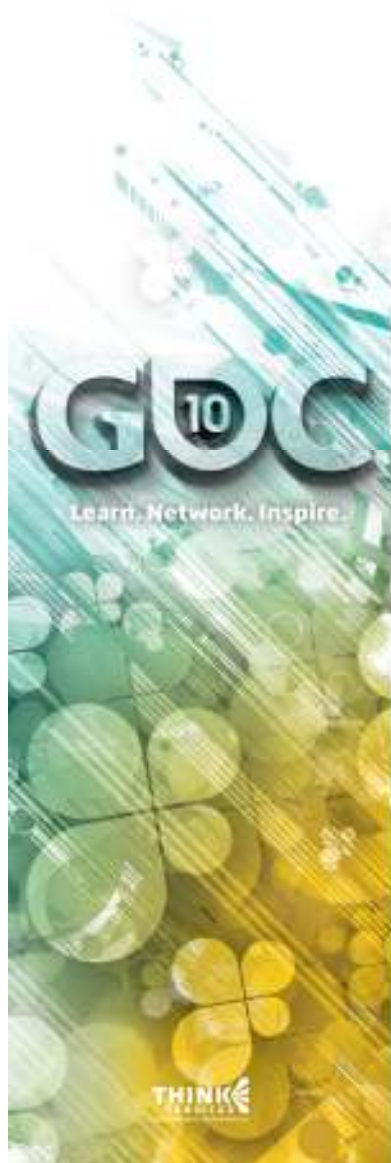
www.GDConf.com



Launch is the Beginning

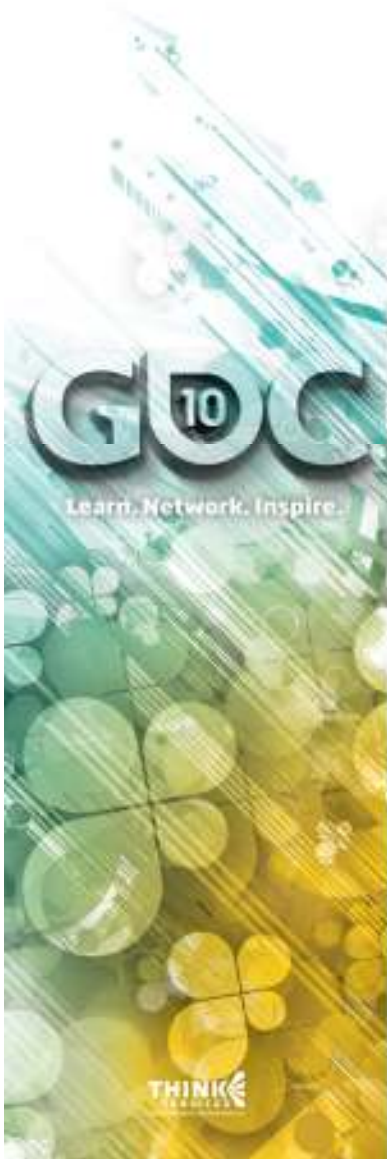
- ③ Design before launch was your best guess
- ③ Learn from the live product
- ③ Some elements can only be balanced
 - ③ In large numbers
 - ③ Over time





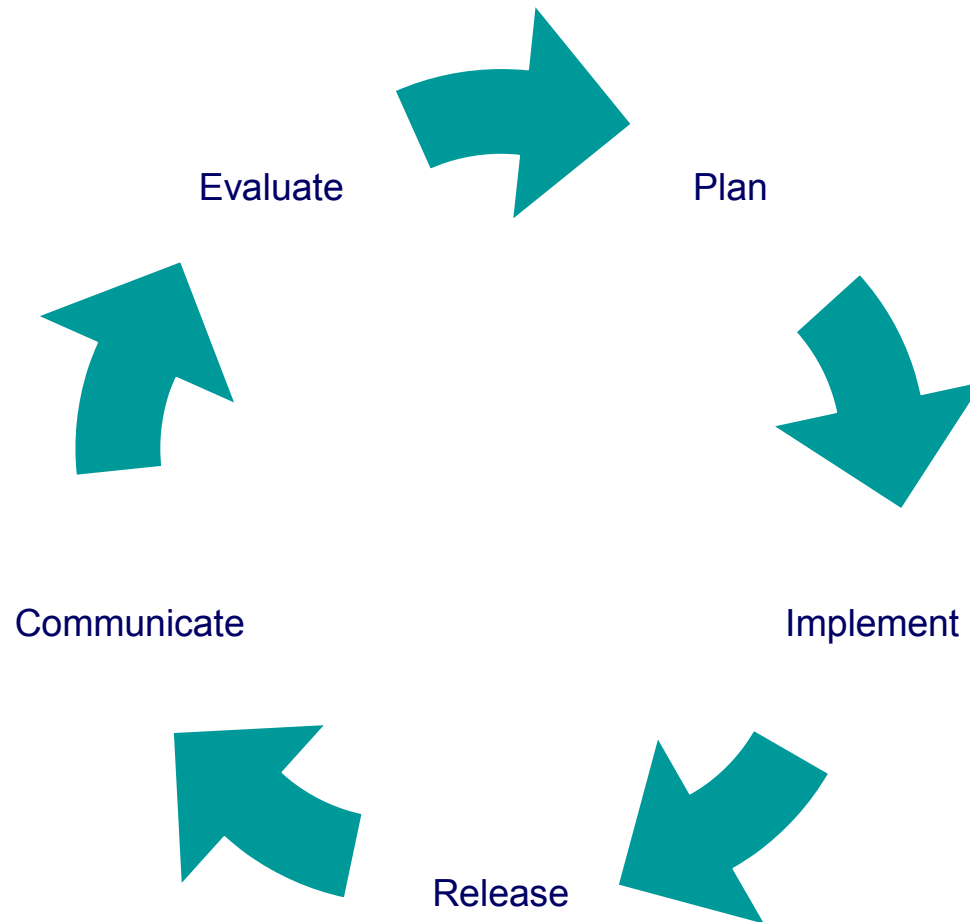
Presentation Goals

- ③ Foundation for live game management
- ③ Incorporate player feedback
- ③ Importance of data
- ③ Examples from Free Realms

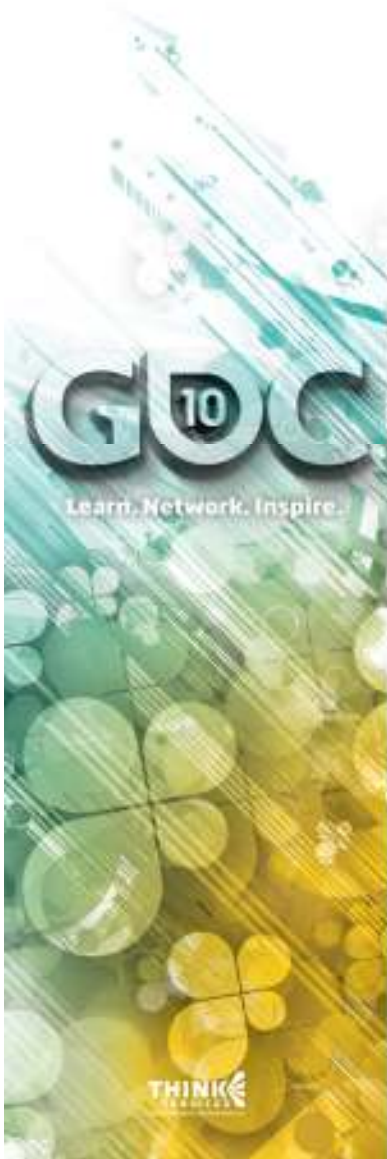
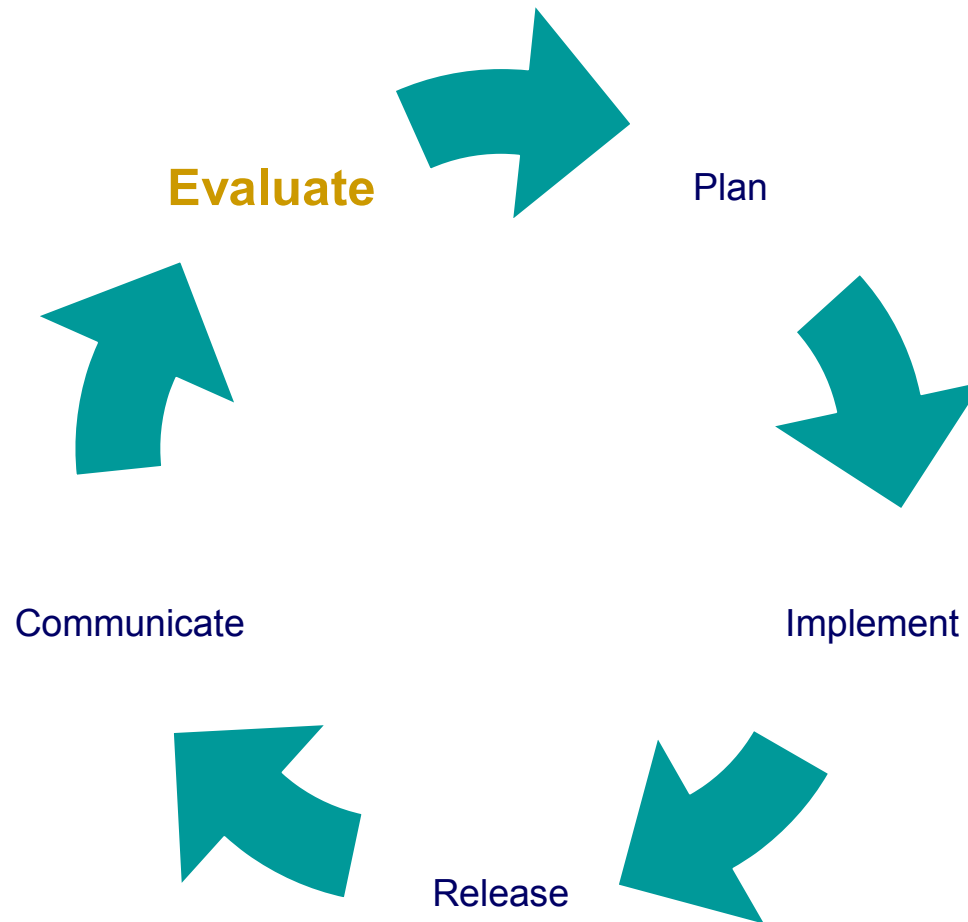




The MMO Circle of Life



The MMO Circle of Life



Two Step Evaluation

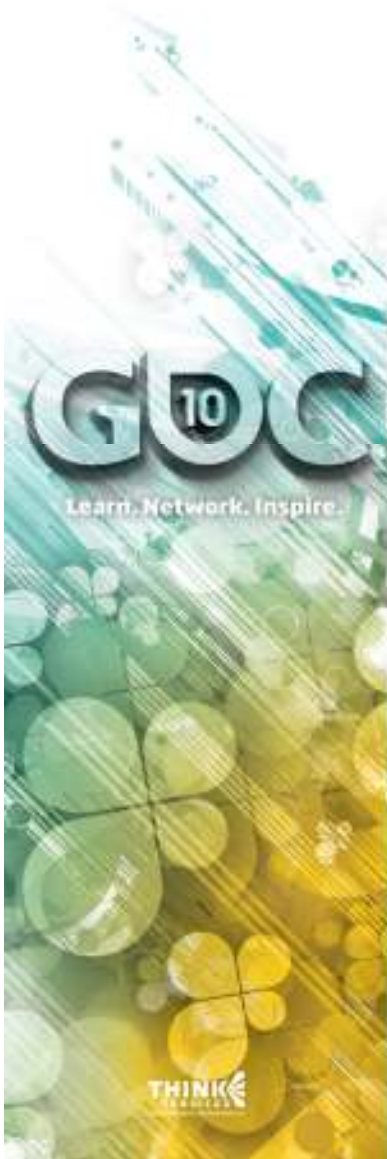
1. Determine the change needed
2. Assess the impact



Two Step Evaluation

1. Determine the change needed

- ③ Delivering a player request
- ③ Fixing a bug
- ③ Repairing an unbalanced or unsustainable system
- ③ Addressing a business need



Information Sources

“What people say, what people do, and what they say they do are entirely different things.”

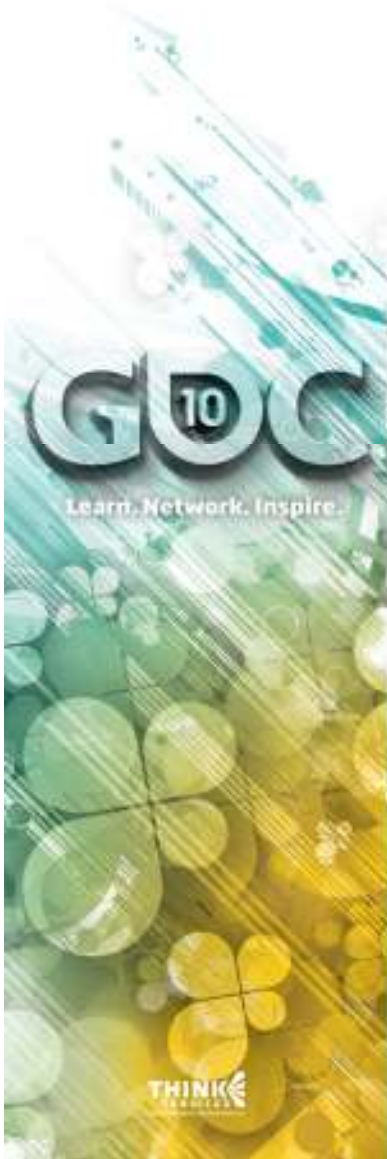
--Margaret Mead

- ③ Two main data types
 - ③ What people **say**
 - ③ What people **do**
- ③ Understanding what people **do** is usually more important



Defining “People”

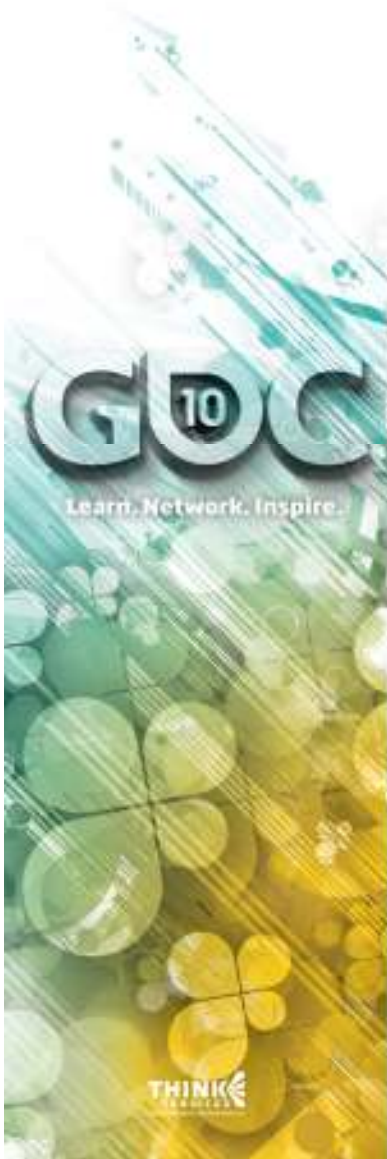
- ⌘ Players
- ⌘ Bloggers
- ⌘ Press
- ⌘ Team
- ⌘ Executives



Giving Players a Voice

- ③ Find ways for players to communicate with you
 - ③ Forums
 - ③ /bug, /report
 - ③ Conventions and fan gatherings
 - ③ Fan site kits





Minority Report

- ⊗ Only 10% of players post on the forums
- ⊗ Few specific personality types
- ⊗ Doesn't work with casual players
- ⊗ Significant barriers with kids under 13



Giving More Players A Voice

- ③ YouTube and screen shot upload
- ③ Online chat with GMs
- ③ Polls and ratings in game UI
- ③ Surveys when you finish a play session
- ③ Market research restricted to active players
- ③ Special fan clubs
- ③ Special events & parties

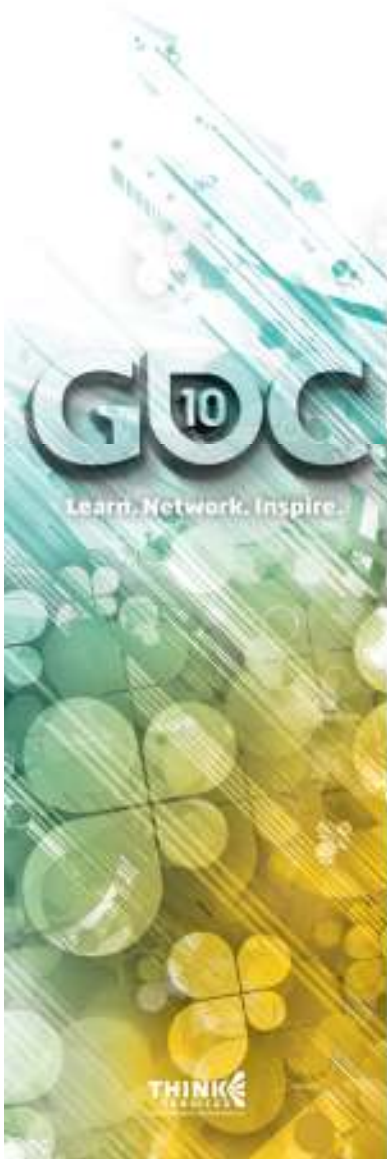
Feedback Context

- ③ Keep the source in mind
- ③ Keep the personality in mind
 - ③ Hard-core player
 - ③ Specialist player
 - ③ Holding a grudge
 - ③ Furthering an agenda
 - ③ Not core demographic



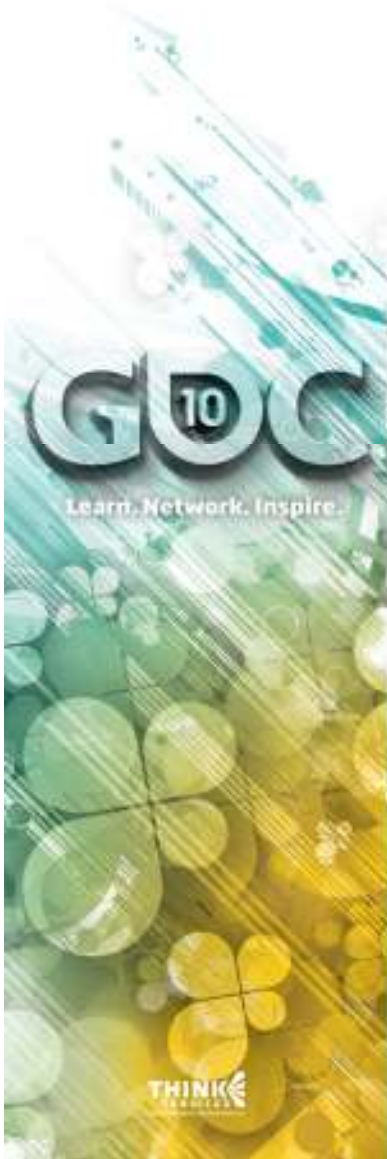
Evaluating Opinion

- ⊕ Is what the person reports true?
- ⊕ Does this person represent a large number of other players?
- ⊕ He's expressing a genuine feeling even if he's inaccurate



Player's Advocate

- ③ Looks at the game experience through the player's eyes
- ③ Helps the team move from development to customer service
- ③ Team member(s) appointed to the role
 - ③ Usually designer
 - ③ Aim higher in the org chart depending on
 - ③ Your organization
 - ③ Target demographic versus company strengths



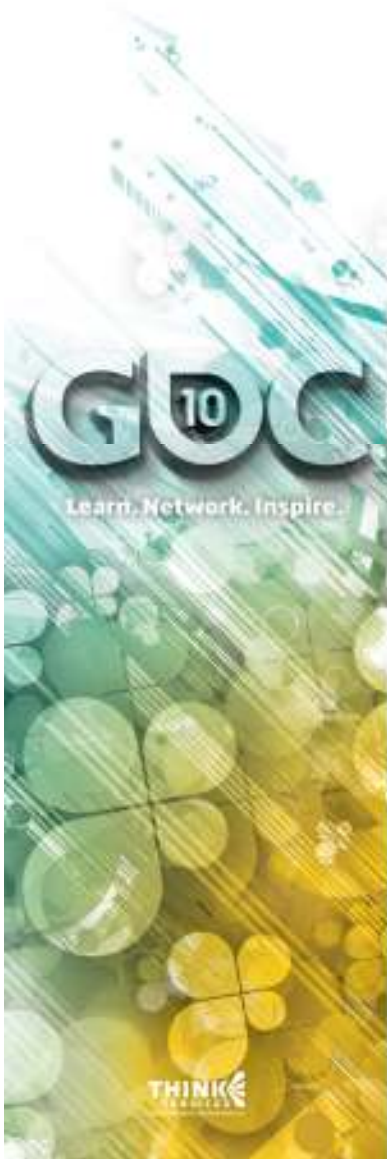
Formalize The Advocate

- ③ Encourage the advocate to stand up for players
- ③ On the development team
 - ③ Not customer service or community
- ③ Sanity check all decisions
- ③ Acknowledge that this position will cause some tension



Two Step Evaluation

1. Determine the change needed
2. Assess the impact
 - ⊗ Any change brings risk
 - ⊗ Running a live game is risk management



Assessing Impact

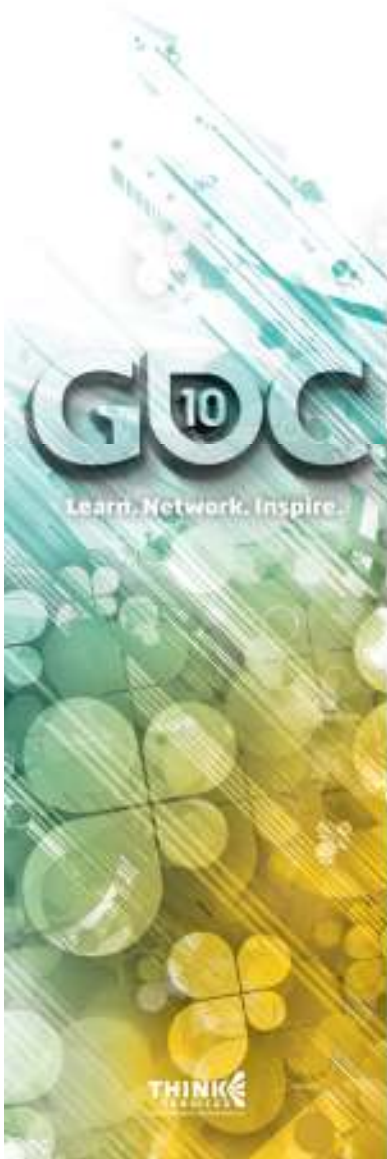
⌚ Balance the three needs:

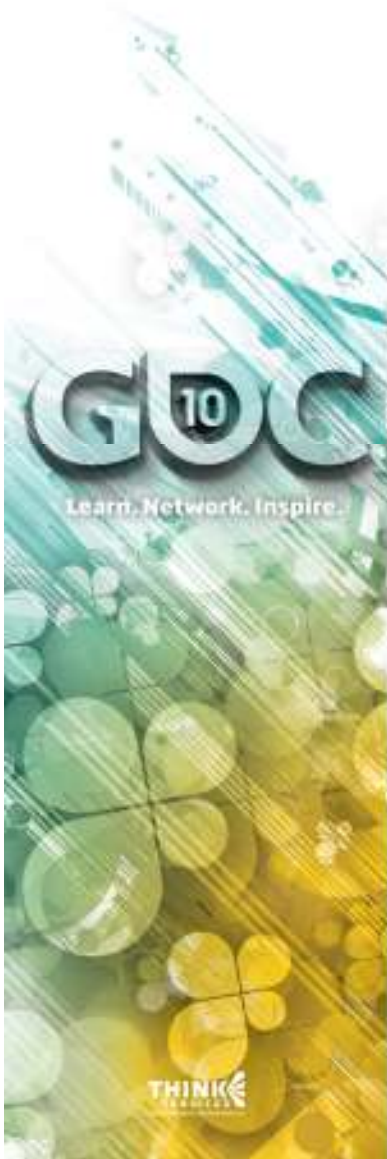
- ⌚ Protect the business
- ⌚ Protect the team
- ⌚ Protect players



⌚ Keep in mind:

- ⌚ Players invest time as well as money
- ⌚ Micro-transactions add complexity





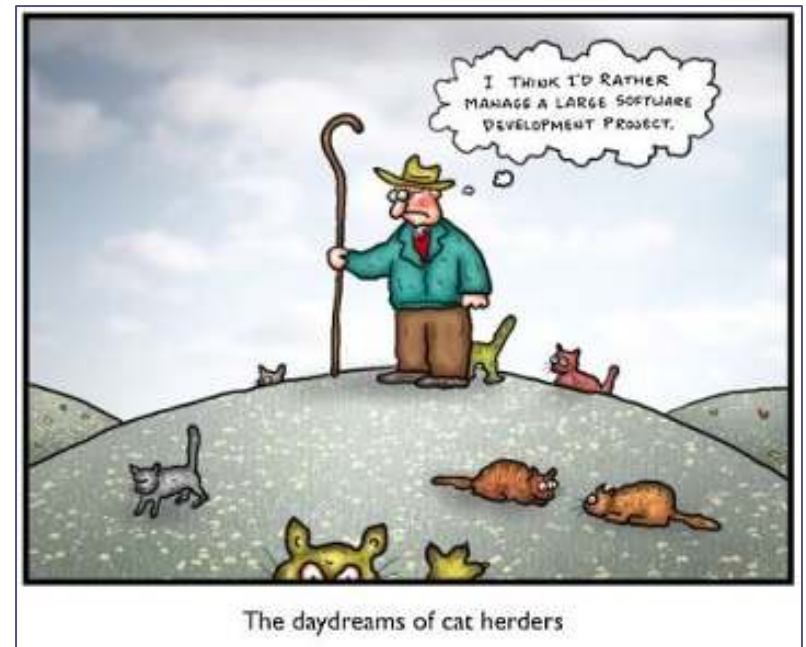
Risk Management: Players

- ⊕ Affect items players already purchased or earned
- ⊕ Set any players back
- ⊕ Affect how it feels to play the game
- ⊕ Change success strategy
- ⊕ Affect one type of player more than others



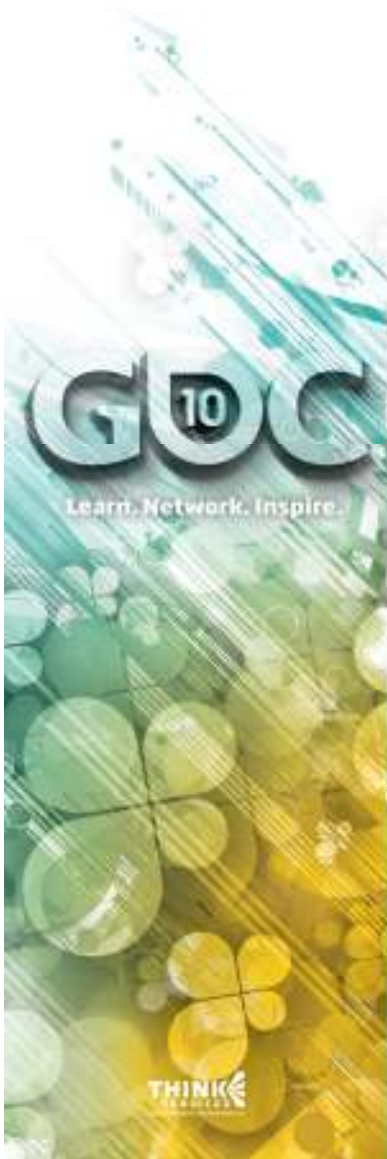
Risk Management: Team

- ⊕ Impact of the change on other features
- ⊕ Lack of clear design or success criteria
- ⊕ Overburdening and overtasking
- ⊕ Diverting focus
- ⊕ Effect on morale



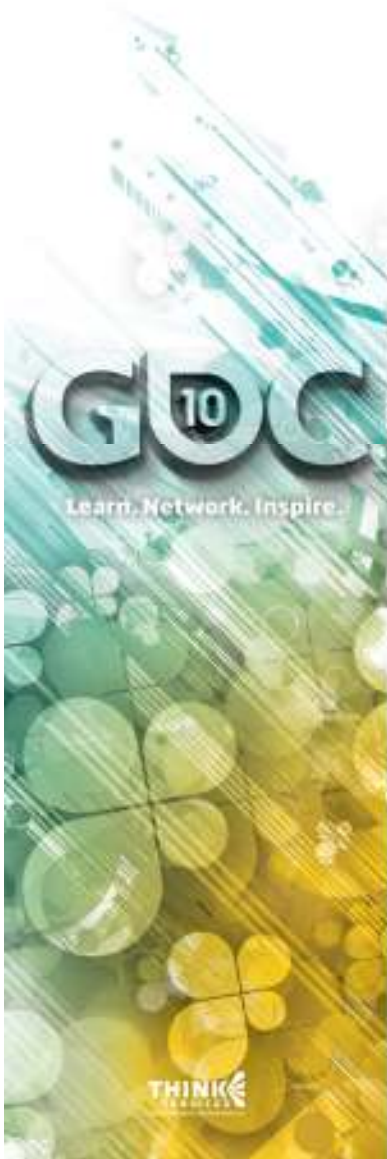
Risk Management: Business

- ⊕ Affect the revenue stream
- ⊕ Stall player retention
- ⊕ Change financial landscape
- ⊕ Cannibalize other products or teams
- ⊕ Preclude later changes



Backlog

- ③ Put all changes into a single list with no dates
- ③ Assess severity of issues by number of customers affected
- ③ Gather and attach data for each issue
- ③ Include data in the implementation plan
- ③ Establish clear criteria to judge success
 - ③ Player opinion
 - ③ Revenue
 - ③ Press
 - ③ Data



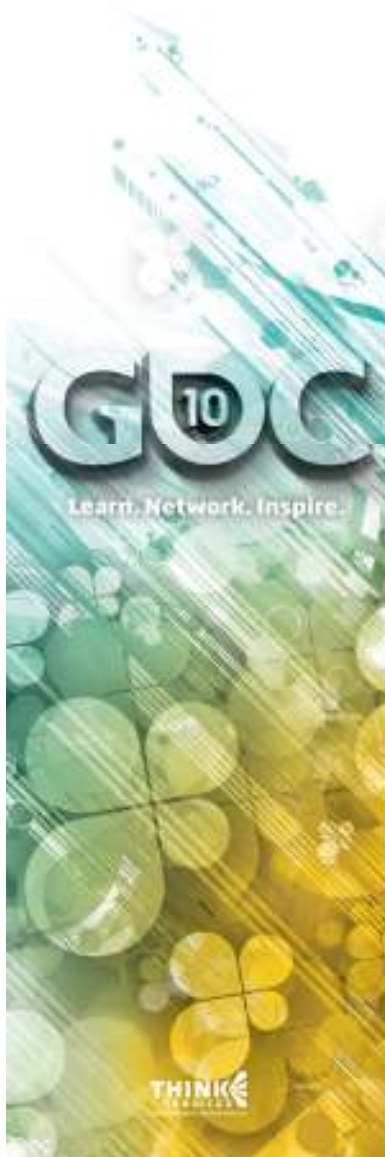
Choice Paralysis

⌚ Too many voices!

- ⌚ Players
- ⌚ Bloggers
- ⌚ Press
- ⌚ Team
- ⌚ Executives



The Source of Truth



File Edit View Insert Format Help

racing.txt - WordPad

Date: 2010-02-10

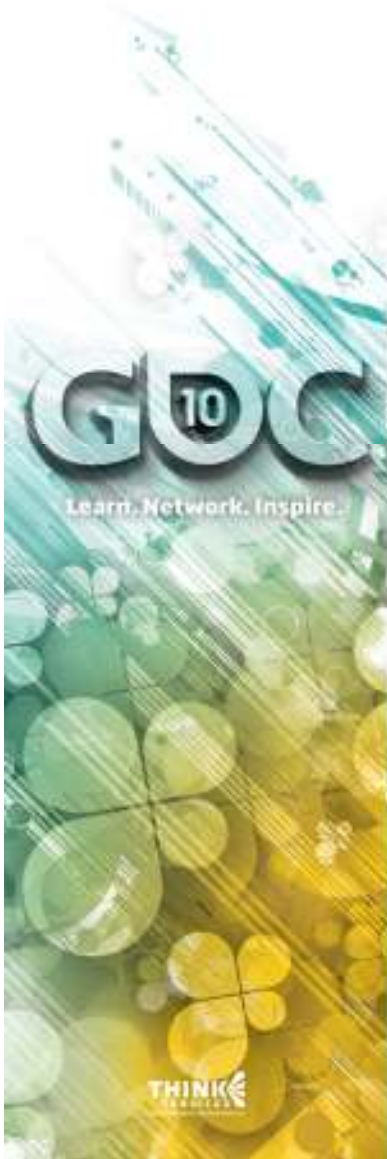
ID	Type Name	Total	Unique	Avg	SUCCESS				FAILURE			
					Count	Percent	TIE Avg	TIE Med	Count	Percent	TIE Avg	TIE Med
246	DDD Taking the Wheel	2065	514	2.54	1291	62.52%	261.79	270.00	774	37.48%	264.45	265.00
247	DDD Break 'er In	275	212	1.30	197	71.64%	166.92	169.00	78	28.36%	260.26	266.00
248	DDD License to Drive	325	184	2.09	108	33.54%	270.75	267.00	214	66.46%	273.51	267.00
249	DDD Routine Maintenance	111	70	1.59	53	47.75%	183.45	189.00	58	52.25%	214.57	235.00
250	DDD Wear and Tear	112	51	2.20	39	34.82%	268.95	267.00	73	65.18%	245.41	266.00
251	DDD Spare Parts	48	28	1.71	28	58.33%	208.71	209.00	20	41.67%	316.30	299.00
252	DDD Dealing Damage	45	26	1.73	21	46.67%	268.62	265.00	24	53.33%	242.67	265.00
253	DDD Arena Revenge	45	22	2.05	17	37.78%	330.18	335.00	28	62.22%	377.18	356.00
254	DDD Seeking a Sponsor	24	20	1.20	20	83.33%	177.05	181.00	4	16.67%	265.75	266.00
255	DDD Defeating Diggs	91	31	2.94	14	15.38%	321.79	306.00	77	84.62%	266.73	295.00
256	DDD Only the Strong	39	18	2.17	4	10.26%	317.25	265.50	35	89.74%	222.37	265.00
257	DDD Turf Tussle	11	5	2.20	5	45.45%	266.00	266.00	6	54.55%	102.50	83.50
258	DDD Taking on The Tank	35	11	3.18	5	14.29%	294.20	294.00	30	85.71%	233.40	291.50
259	DDD Paws & Claws Smash-a-thon	11	4	2.75	3	27.27%	269.67	266.00	8	72.73%	202.25	264.00
260	DDD The Odd Audition	19	4	4.75	2	10.53%	218.50	218.50	17	89.47%	265.35	266.00
261	DDD Stunt Double	6	3	2.00	2	33.33%	264.50	264.50	4	66.67%	209.25	207.00
262	DDD Action!	11	4	2.75	3	27.27%	230.33	242.00	8	72.73%	169.50	157.00
263	DDD Martin' Crews: Act II	6	3	2.00	3	50.00%	175.33	193.00	3	50.00%	264.00	264.00
264	DDD Encore!	14	4	3.50	2	14.29%	226.00	226.00	12	85.71%	223.17	236.50
265	DDD Down and Dirty Derby	6	2	3.00	1	16.67%	261.00	261.00	5	83.33%	239.00	263.00
266	DDD Not One, Not a Few	1	1	1.00	1	100.00%	265.00	265.00	0	0.00%	0.00	0.00
267	DDD Tangletrack Trio	5	2	2.50	2	40.00%	266.00	266.00	3	60.00%	221.33	232.00
268	DDD Thunder Falls Crash for Cash	8	3	2.67	1	12.50%	217.00	217.00	7	87.50%	265.57	265.00
269	DDD Mildwood Derby 1000	2	1	2.00	1	50.00%	254.00	254.00	1	50.00%	261.00	261.00
270	DDD Frost Ridge Invitational	4	2	2.00	1	25.00%	413.00	413.00	3	75.00%	415.33	415.00
272	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1243: Target Acquired	846	534	1.58	358	42.32%	223.62	210.50	488	57.68%	231.74	224.00
273	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1749: Ready to Redline	570	186	3.06	83	14.56%	193.57	192.00	487	85.44%	201.10	198.00
274	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1750: You Want To Go Fast?	159	70	2.27	48	30.19%	217.73	186.00	111	69.81%	170.47	188.00
275	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1752: Mildwood Sprint Challenge	30	24	1.25	23	76.67%	78.17	79.00	7	23.33%	103.14	71.00
276	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1753: Mildwood Endurance Challenge	35	28	1.25	22	62.86%	182.41	182.50	13	37.14%	191.85	195.00
277	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1754: Dominating at Mildwood	139	36	3.86	70	50.36%	187.79	182.00	69	49.64%	160.55	185.00
278	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1757: Sacred Grove Cup: Mildwood	12	7	1.71	5	41.67%	172.00	172.00	7	58.33%	113.29	91.00
279	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1756: A Treacherous Track	54	23	2.35	22	40.74%	142.82	138.50	32	59.26%	167.22	138.00
280	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1758: Redline Returns	63	20	3.15	18	28.57%	132.22	132.00	45	71.43%	117.18	130.00
281	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1760: Icy Perfection	120	24	5.00	13	10.83%	129.85	129.00	107	89.17%	132.56	130.00
282	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1762: Frostridge Sprint Challenge	60	17	3.53	12	20.00%	66.25	45.00	48	80.00%	48.08	47.00
283	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1763: Frostridge Endurance Challenge	19	12	1.58	9	47.37%	151.56	151.00	10	52.63%	137.10	156.50
284	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1764: Dominating at Frostridge	91	18	5.06	17	18.68%	153.00	154.00	74	81.32%	140.01	156.00
285	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1765: Sacred Grove Cup: Frostridge	32	6	5.33	2	6.25%	116.00	116.00	30	93.75%	108.70	116.50
286	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1766: Age Before Beauty	35	12	2.92	4	11.43%	145.25	144.50	31	88.57%	142.32	146.00
287	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1768: Settling the Score	8	6	1.33	6	75.00%	147.50	145.00	2	25.00%	145.50	145.50
288	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1770: High Speed Chase	33	8	4.12	7	21.21%	145.71	144.00	26	78.79%	154.69	146.00
289	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1772: Thunder Falls Sprint Challenge	9	7	1.29	6	66.67%	66.00	65.00	3	33.33%	145.33	135.00
290	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1773: Thunder Falls Endurance Challenge	7	7	1.00	6	85.71%	179.17	175.50	1	14.29%	947.00	947.00
291	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1774: Dominating at Thunder Falls	92	16	5.75	16	17.39%	178.75	174.50	76	82.61%	124.00	113.00
292	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1789: Sacred Grove Cup: Thunder Falls	2	2	1.00	2	100.00%	133.50	133.50	0	0.00%	0.00	0.00
293	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1777: Burning Up the Track	28	5	5.60	5	17.86%	174.60	165.00	23	82.14%	100.43	102.00
294	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1779: The Showdown	12	5	2.40	5	41.67%	166.40	165.00	7	58.33%	131.29	129.00
295	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1781: The Right Stuff	13	6	2.17	3	23.08%	165.33	165.00	10	76.92%	99.50	91.00
296	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1783: Tangletracks Sprint Challenge	6	3	2.00	2	33.33%	90.00	90.00	4	66.67%	94.75	89.50
297	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1784: Tangletracks Endurance Challenge	7	4	1.75	1	14.29%	157.00	157.00	6	85.71%	147.17	168.00
298	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1785: Dominating at Tangletracks	14	3	4.67	9	64.29%	163.00	161.00	5	35.71%	126.80	139.00
299	Raci KartRacer - Quest # 1790: Sacred Grove Cup: Tangletracks	5	2	2.50	2	40.00%	157.00	157.00	3	60.00%	112.00	153.00

For Help, press F1.

18/81

It's All About Data

- ③ First pillar of live product management
- ③ One of the most powerful and least understood tools
- ③ Data can tell you **what** is happening
- ③ Data can tell you **why** things are happening



Raw Data

- Server adds to a tally each time an event occurs

Game	#	Description	ID
Checkers	21	Checkers	17
Checkers	68	Checkers	1
			18
Chess	20	Chess	9
Chess	65	Chess	1
			10
Combat	149	Frostfang Snarlers!	58
Combat	30	Tavern Cellar	42
Combat	79	Hack 'n' Slash	38
Combat	31	Hot Springs Haven	37
Combat	37	Bixie Hive	35
Combat	118	Cracked Claw Caverns	28
Combat	97	Robgoblin Camp!	26
Combat	111	Robgoblin Creek!	22
Combat	174	Frostfang Growler!	22
Combat	176	Robgoblin Pondblasters!	19
Combat	119	Sheep Watch	18
Combat	164	Snakes in a Maze!	17
combat	173	Petty Yetis!	15
Combat	168	Robgoblin Troublemakers!	14
Combat	112	Hooligan Brawling Club!	13
Combat	27	The Bat Cave!	12
Combat	117	Den of Secrets	11
Combat	32	Robgoblin Treasure Trove	10
Combat	46	Danger Peaks	10
Combat	143	Bixies Gone Wild!	10
Combat	96	Troll Summoner Madness!	9
Combat	177	The Angry Bear!	9
Combat	81	King of the Ring!	9
Combat	1036	Kai's Challenge	8
Combat	217	Pixie Hunters!	8
Combat	12	Arachnia's Lair	8
Combat	93	Band of Robgoblins!	7
Combat	94	Robgoblin Adept Trouble!	6
Combat	134	Thugawug Bumbler!	6
Combat	146	Tormented Spirits!	6



Processed Data

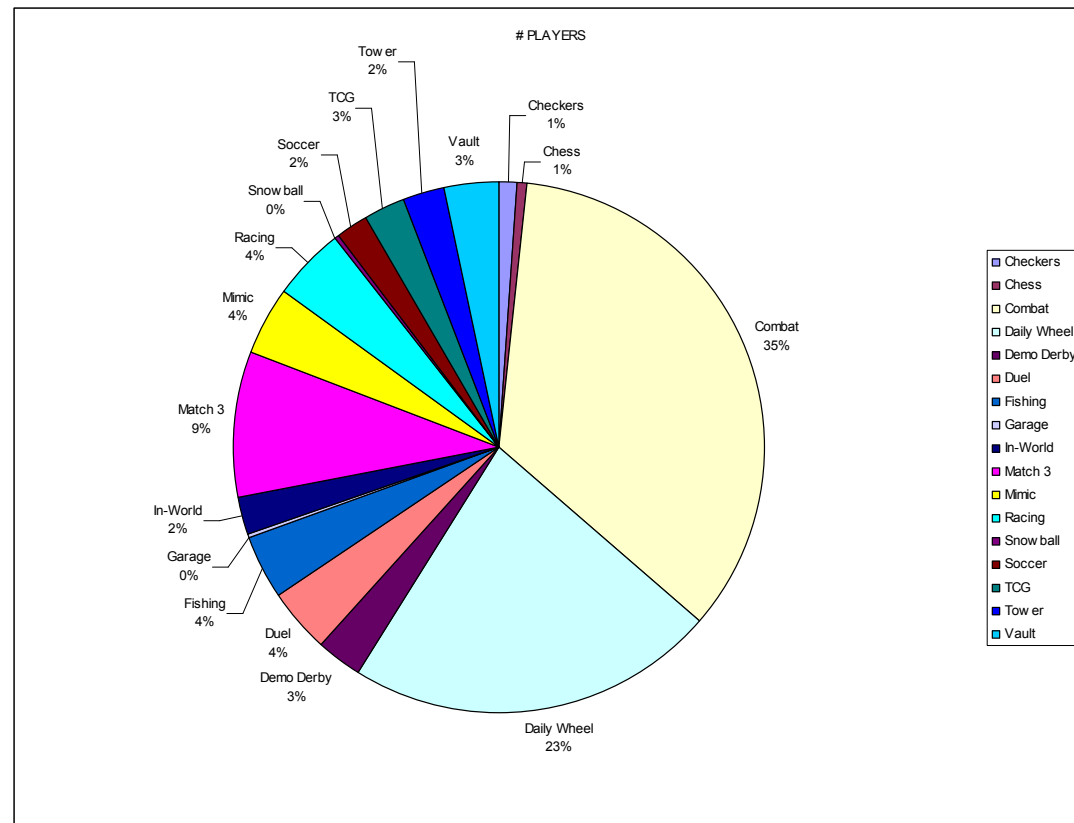
- Raw data is aggregated and sorted by criteria



MINIGAME	# PLAYERS
Checkers	18
Chess	10
Combat	615
Daily Wheel	397
Demo Derby	47
Duel	69
Fishing	68
Garage	6
In-World	36
Match 3	160
Mimic	73
Racing	79
Snowball	5
Soccer	33
TCG	46
Tower	41
Vault	60

Report

- 🕒 Graphs and charts convey the results at a glance

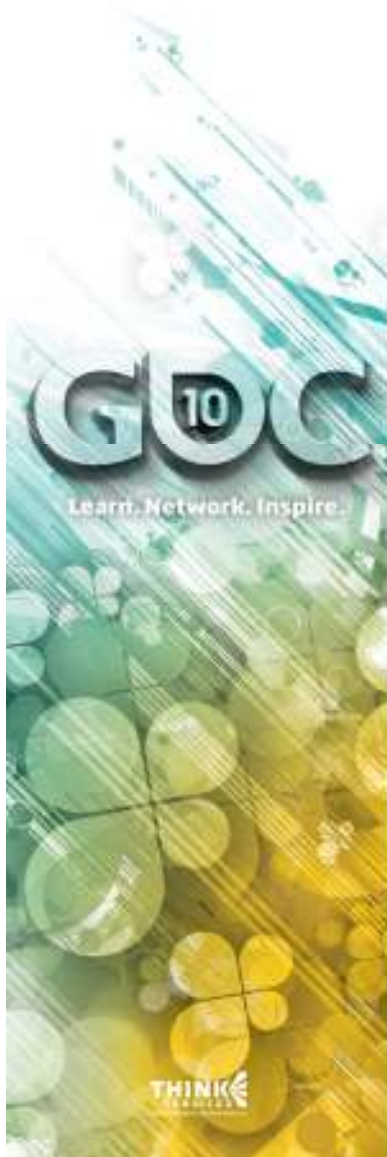




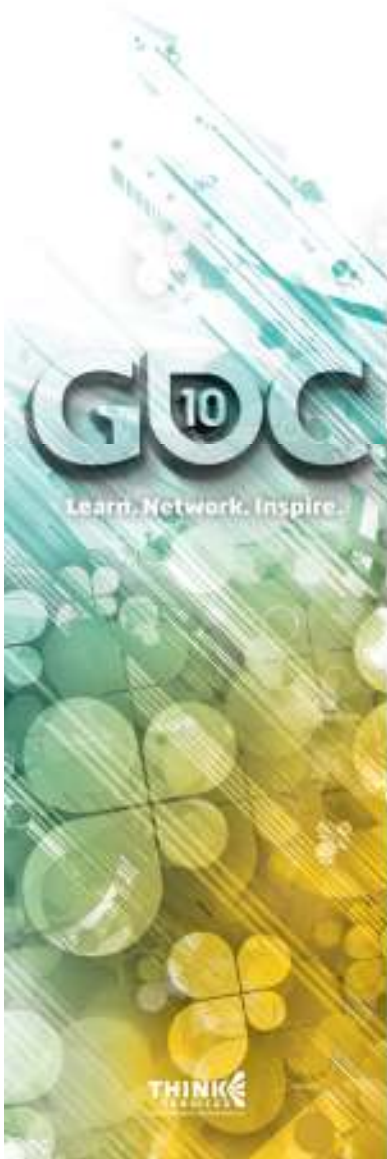
Collecting Data

- ⌘ Real-time
- ⌘ Logged
- ⌘ Marketing & Research

Real-Time Data



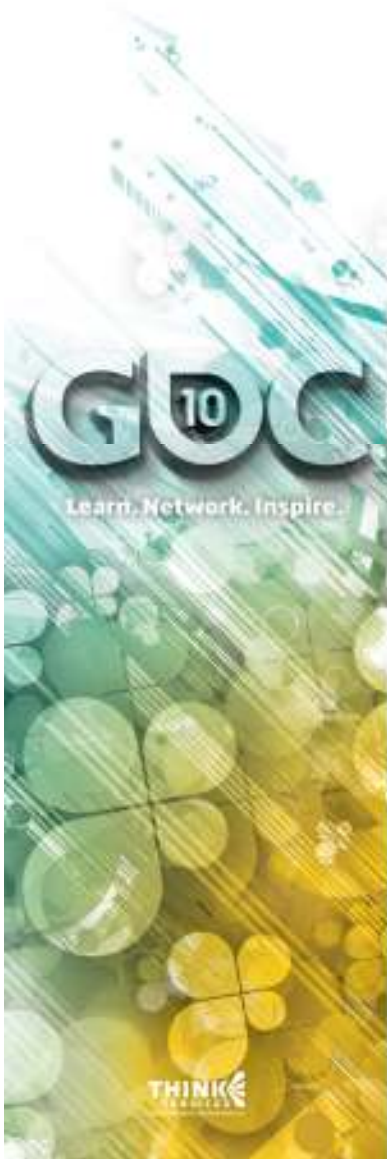
Logged Data



- ← Mounts
- ← Housing
- ← TV Ads Stop
- ← Service Interruption
- ← TV Ads Start
- ← Launch

Other Types of Data

- ③ Focus tests
- ③ Usability tests
- ③ Single player logs
- ③ Camera “snoop”



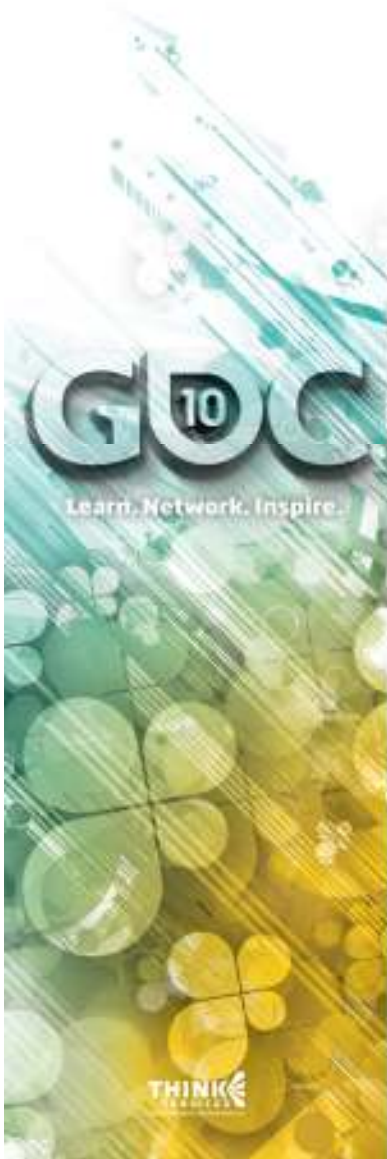


When to Gather Data

- ③ Implement logging as soon as you have a client
- ③ Include ways to generate impression data in the client
 - ③ Player-driven
 - ③ Like/dislike + comments field
 - ③ Event-driven
 - ③ Tallies and averages

Sample Data Questions

- ③ How many items does each player buy?
- ③ What hair style is the most popular?
- ③ Where do players go to socialize?
- ③ Which dungeon has the best rewards?



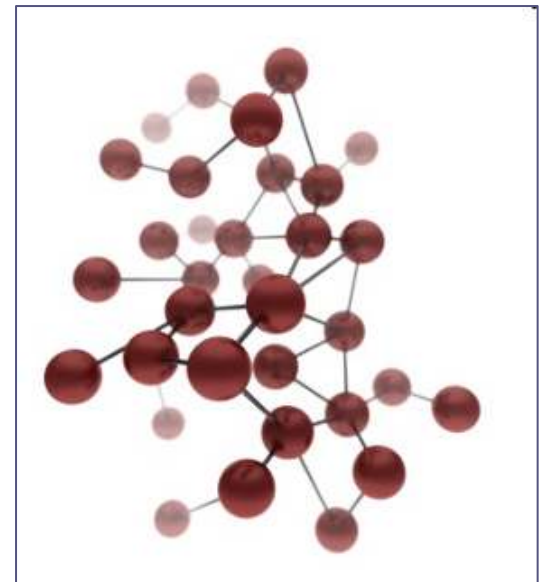
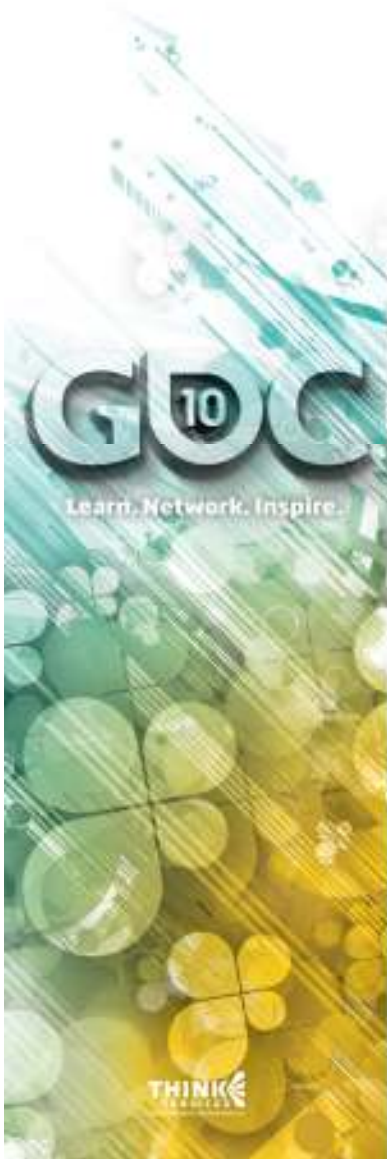
Refining The Questions

- ③ How many items does each player buy?
 - ③ View by day, week, month, LTD
 - ③ Which items are most and least popular?
 - ③ Which item categories are most and least popular?
 - ③ Are we trending up or down in sales?
 - ③ Are there specific colors that are most popular?
 - ③ For a specific item?
 - ③ Across all items?



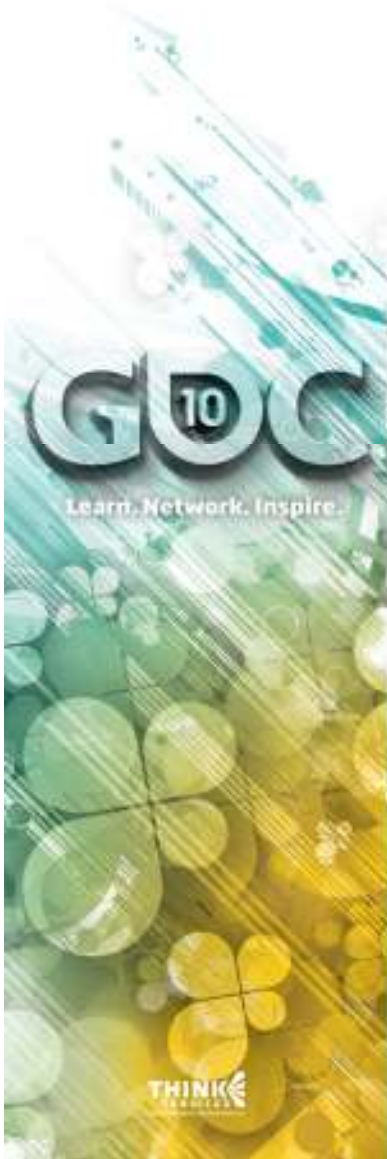
Making the Leap

- ③ Correlative data is where you information you can use!
- ③ Get all data into the same format and same database
- ③ Start making connections



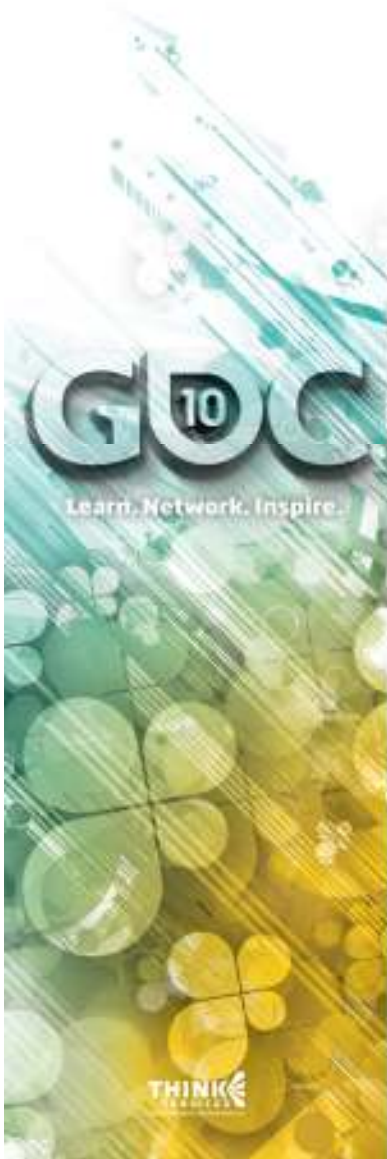
Easy Connections

- ③ How many items does each player buy?
 - ③ View by gender, age
 - ③ View by top player class
 - ③ View by character age
 - ③ View by account age



Trickier Connections

- ③ How many items does each player buy?
 - ③ Tendency to buy after a certain experience?
 - ③ Tied to in-game events or promotions?
 - ③ Players who quit more or less likely to have purchased items before the last session?



Example: Speedy Kicks

- ⌚ Speedy Kicks boots gave too much of a boost
- ⌚ Could be stacked with speed boost from a pet
- ⌚ Pushed the max speed boost too high, too soon





Game Genus

Games: Commentary and Analysis.

Tuesday, September 15, 2009

Do casual gamers care about fairness?

The Rudolfo's Speedy Kicks nerf

Do players of casual games care about fairness and equal treatment? Or are they so blasé that they remain unaware of any disparity in treatment that might give some players an advantage? Can publishers of casual games get away with deliberately withholding information in order to keep players ignorant and happy? With the case of the Rudolfo's Speedy Kicks item nerf in its game [Free Realms](#), [Sony Online Entertainment](#) (SOE) may be on the way to finding out.

Summary

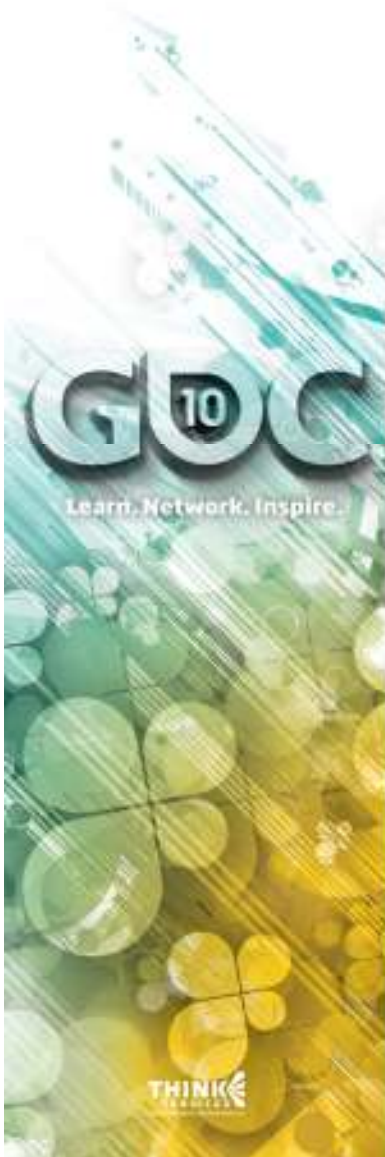
A somewhat hard to get item, Rudolfo's Speedy Kicks offers a speed boost to a player wearing it. SOE reduced the speed boost on the item, and then after the predictable complaints, restored the original speed boost, but *only for players who already had the item*. Thus players with the old item have **an advantage in all the timed minigames** where it may be used. Among other disadvantages, players with the inferior version of the item will never be able to reach the top spots on the leaderboards for those minigames.

Subsequent posts from the Community Relations Manager (CRM) for Free Realms revealed that it was a deliberate decision to create two classes of players: those with the faster original item, and all other players who will receive the new slower item. While complaints from disadvantaged players have caused the CRM to avoid conducting events that might involve use of the item, the relatively mild uproar hasn't caused SOE to resolve the issue and restore fairness and the equality of players.

SOE sells items within Free Realms via microtransactions that confer advantage to the buyer. Players seem to have accepted this since any disadvantaged player can opt to spend real money to buy the item. In the case of Rudolfo's Speedy Kicks, players with the inferior version have no recourse. As the issue is still being played out, it's too early to know how customer satisfaction will be affected.

Gather Data Fail

- ⌚ Didn't look at data before we made the change
- ⌚ Very few players had earned the Speedy Kicks...
 - ⌚ ...but they were some of the most vocal players in the game



Return to FreeRealms.com Forums Home Forums Logout

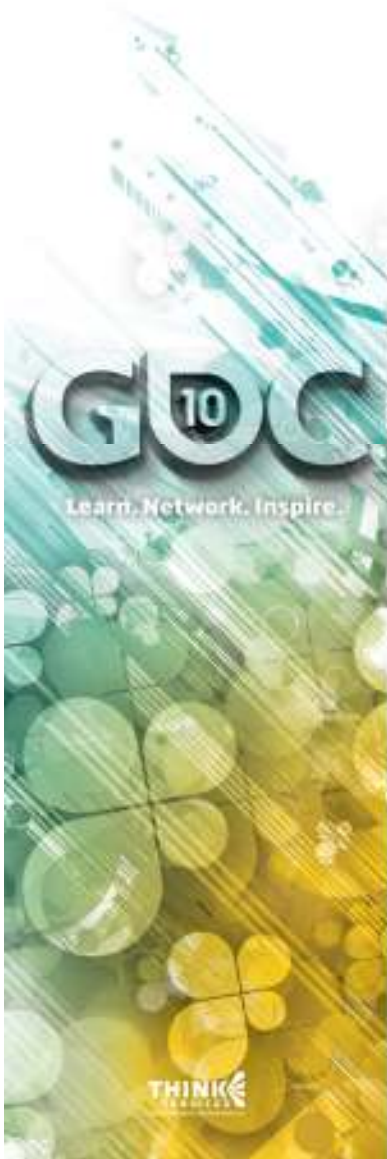
Search Recent Topics Member Listing Back to home page My Profile My Bookmarks Private Messages

Search Results: 558 messages were found

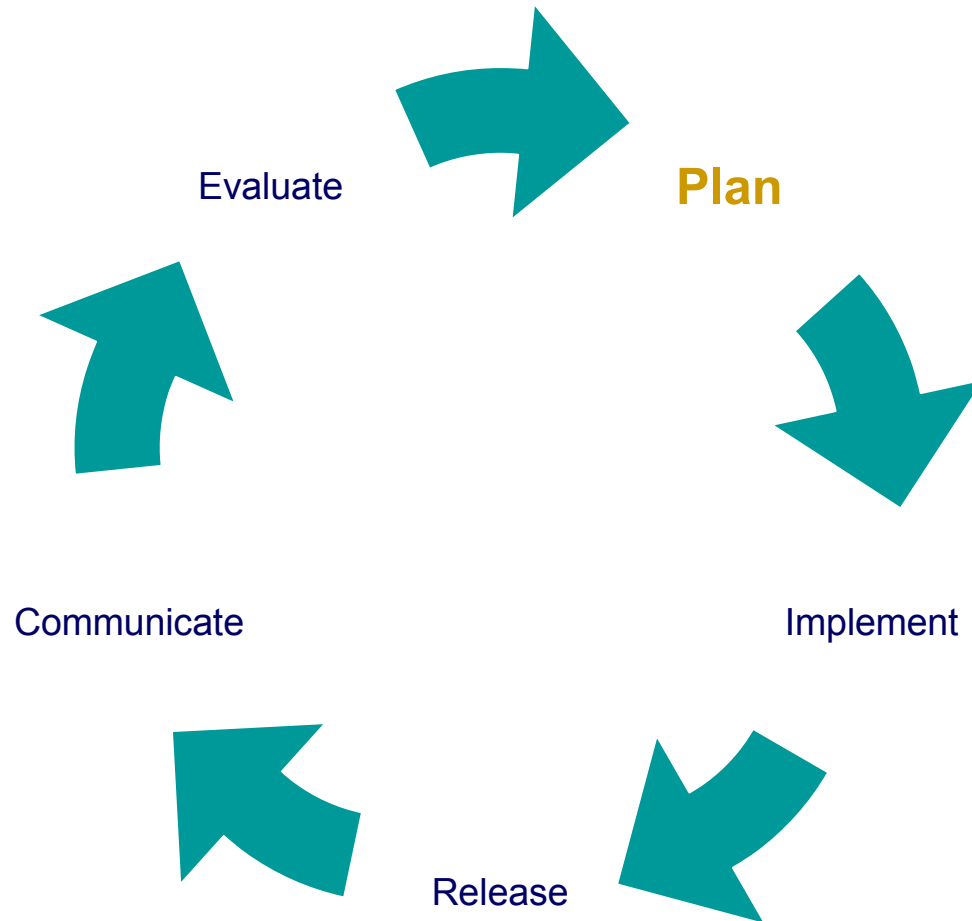
Go to Page: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, ... 14 Next

Free Realms Forums

Category	Forum	Topic	Subject	Author	Total Votes	Post Date
Free Realms Game Discussion	Free Realms Discussion	Speedy Kick!	Re:Speedy Kick!	Princesses2	0	08/18/2009 13:15
Free Realms Game Discussion	Free Realms Discussion	Speedy Kick!	Re:Speedy Kick!	Cybera	0	08/18/2009 09:42
Free Realms Game Discussion	Free Realms Discussion	Speedy Kick!	Re:Speedy Kick!	harmless00000	0	08/18/2009 17:34
Free Realms Game Discussion	Free Realms Discussion	Speedy Kicks	Speedy Kicks	stb123	0	08/18/2009 15:10
Free Realms Game Discussion	Free Realms Discussion	Speedy Kick!	Re:Speedy Kick!	Emo	0	08/18/2009 11:09
Free Realms Game Discussion	Trade, Collections, and Item Gaining Exchange	Postman	Postman	h000000	0	08/22/2009 18:09
Free Realms Game Discussion	Free Realms Discussion	Raidah's Speedy Kicks Berfed	Re:Raidah's Speedy Kicks Berfed	Tarfo	0	08/19/2009 21:06
Free Realms Game Discussion	Free Realms Discussion	Speedy Kick!	Re:Speedy Kick!	Hik	0	08/18/2009 09:45
Free Realms Game Discussion	Free Realms Discussion	Raidah's Speedy Kicks Berfed	Re:Raidah's Speedy Kicks Berfed	h000000	0	08/14/2009 14:10

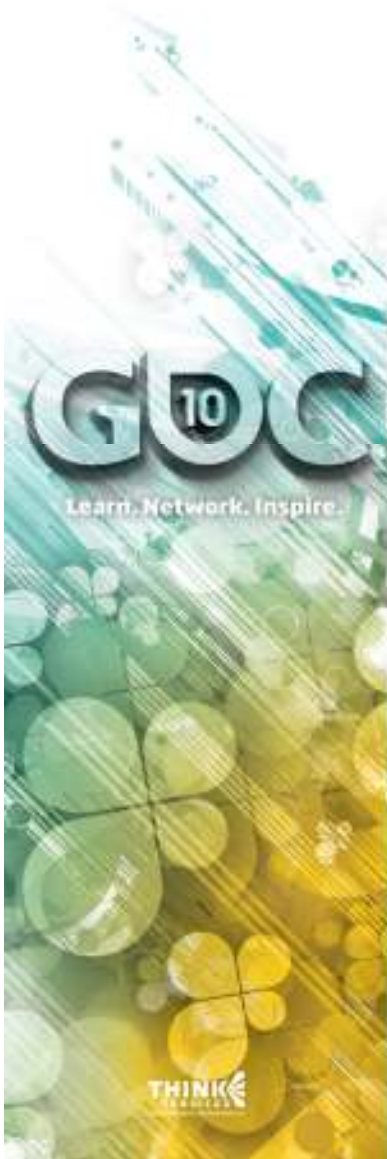


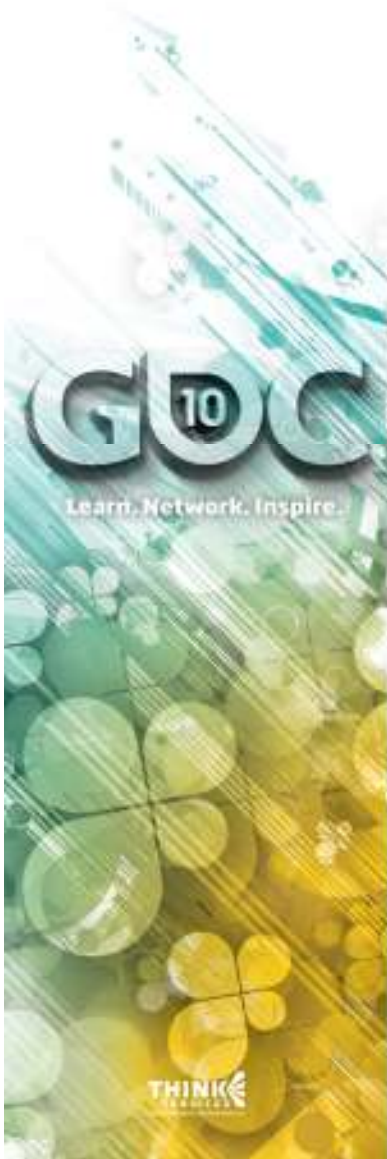
The MMO Circle of Life



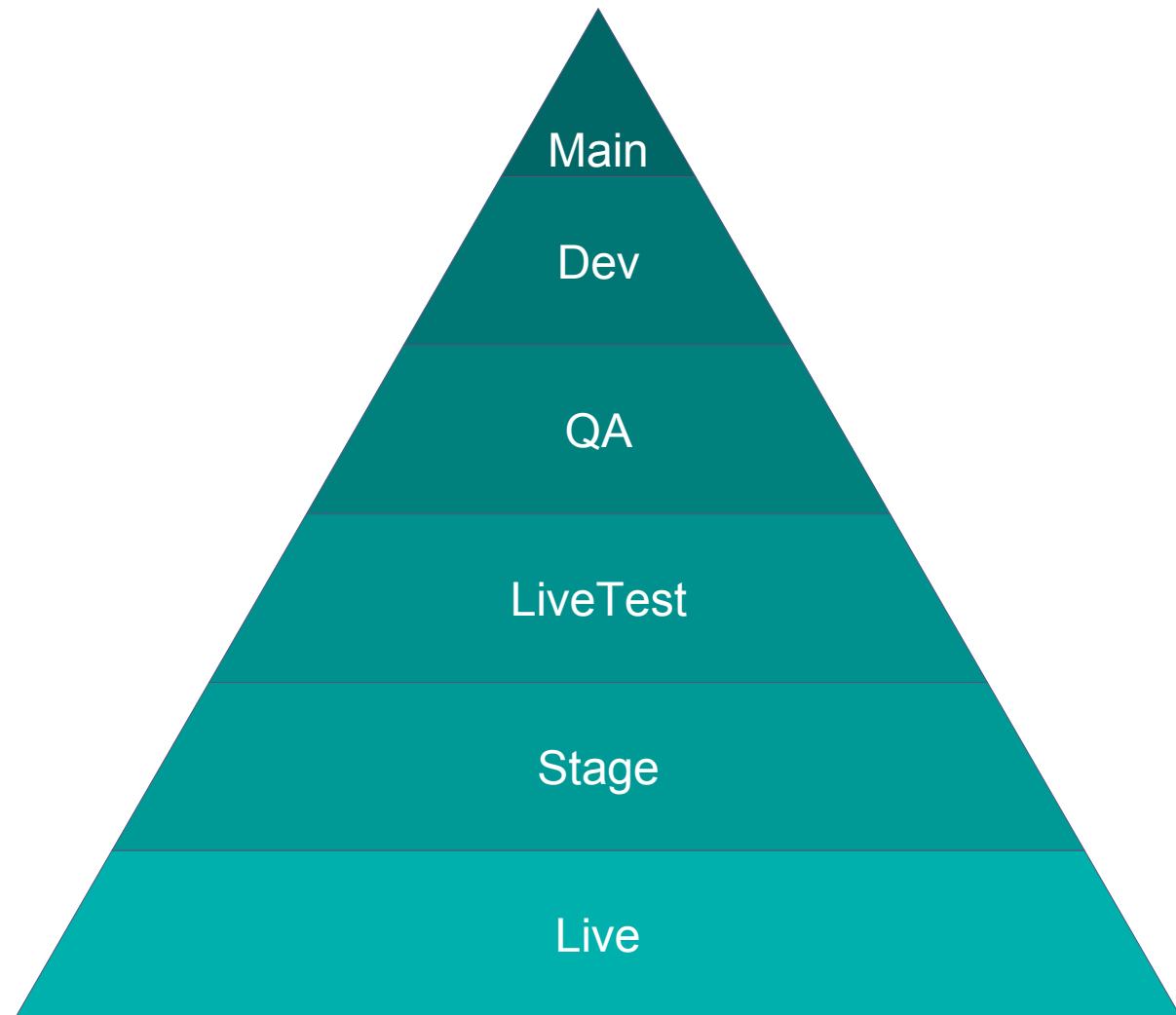
Change Management

- ⌚ Second pillar of live product management
- ⌚ Two ways to look at it:
 - ⌚ Change vs. environment
 - ⌚ Change vs. product





Free Realms Servers





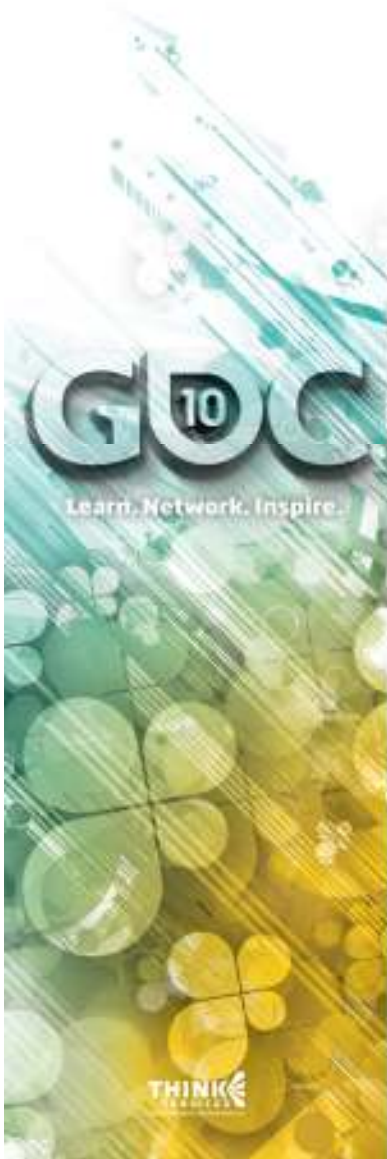
Server Environments

- ⌚ Migrate updates through the chain of servers
- ⌚ Track changes against each environment
- ⌚ Directly patch any environment



Change vs. Product

- ⊗ Product has thousands of moving parts
- ⊗ Any change in one part can affect another
- ⊗ Some changes can be bundled
 - ⊗ Dependencies
 - ⊗ Efficiencies
 - ⊗ Expediencies



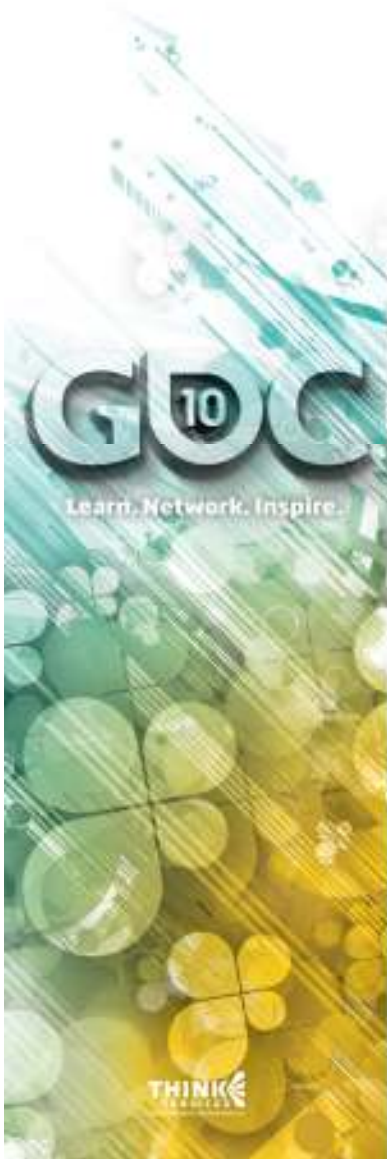
Example: Tinting System

- ⌚ At launch:
 - ⌚ All items had pre-set color
 - ⌚ Distinguished tier and rarity
 - ⌚ Distributed according to tier
- ⌚ Players wanted to tint items



Item Tinting Data

- ③ Most vendors were used by less than 20% of our players
- ③ Most players were below level 10 in at least half their jobs
- ③ Power and overall appearance were a stronger sales driver than color for microtransactions
- ③ Worked in competitive products with similar demographics
- ③ Based on this, we were confident in the change



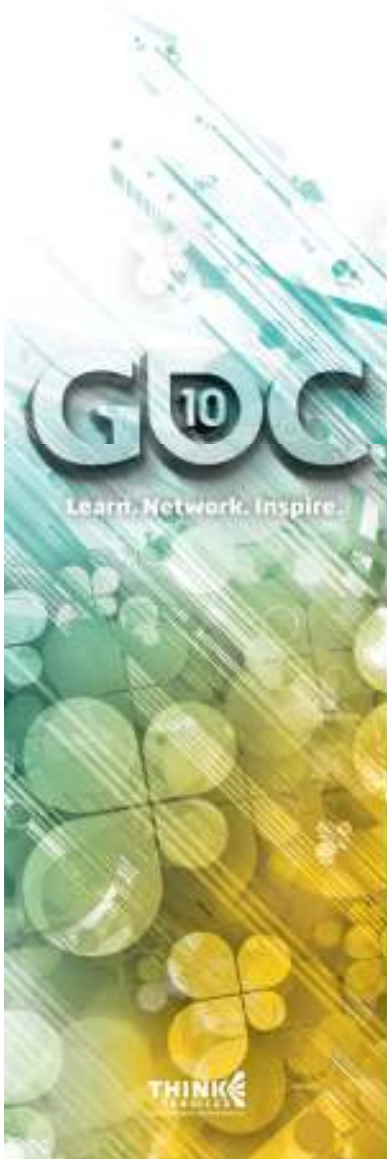


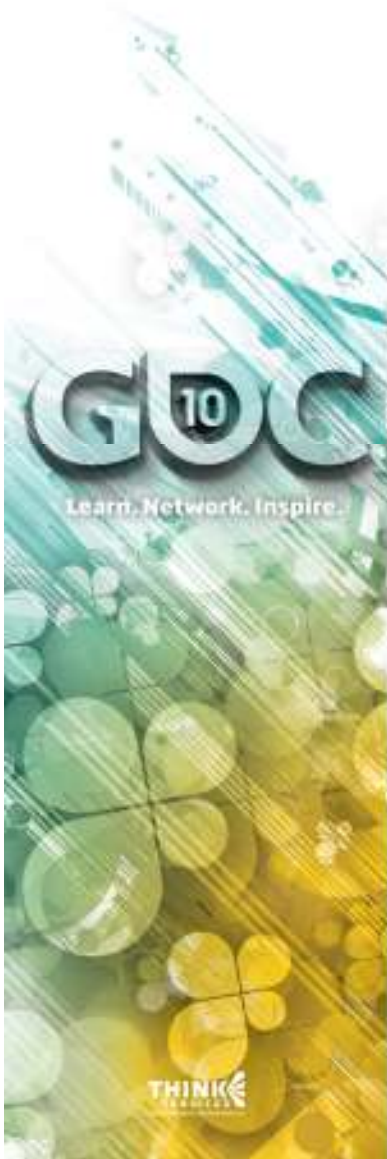
Item Tinting: Planning

- ⊕ Complete migration of item data to a new format
- ⊕ Involved three departments (art, design, code)
- ⊕ Packaged with other item changes to ease the load on dev and QA
- ⊕ But...

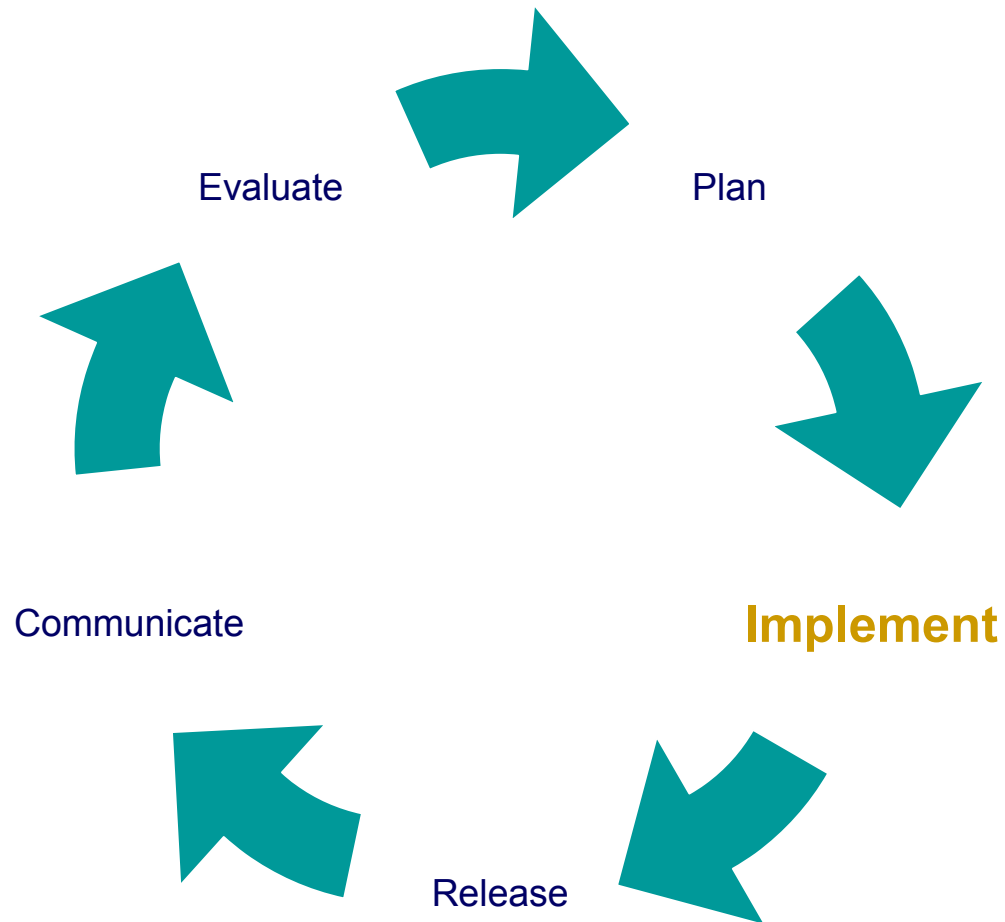
Change Management Fail

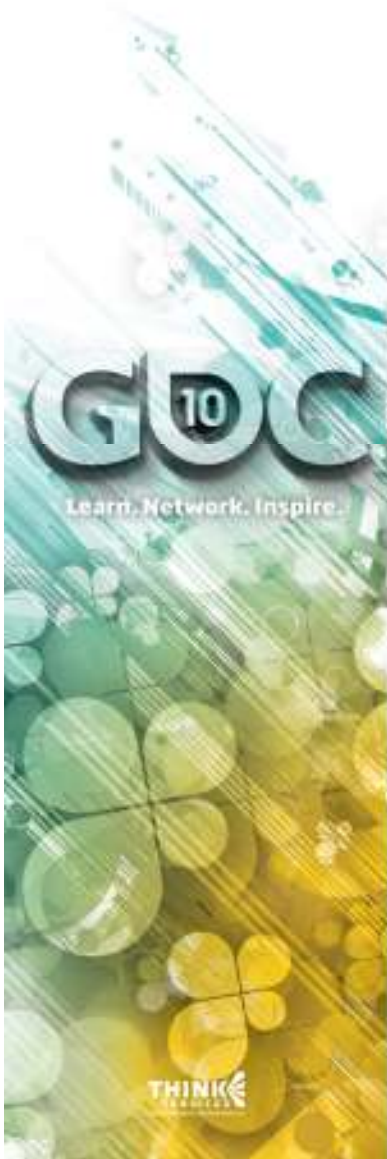
- ⊕ Didn't walk the change through all the elements it would affect
- ⊕ Artists and designers didn't realize they were choosing new base tints
- ⊕ Broke a rule of risk assessment:
 - ⊕ Will it affect items players already purchased or earned?



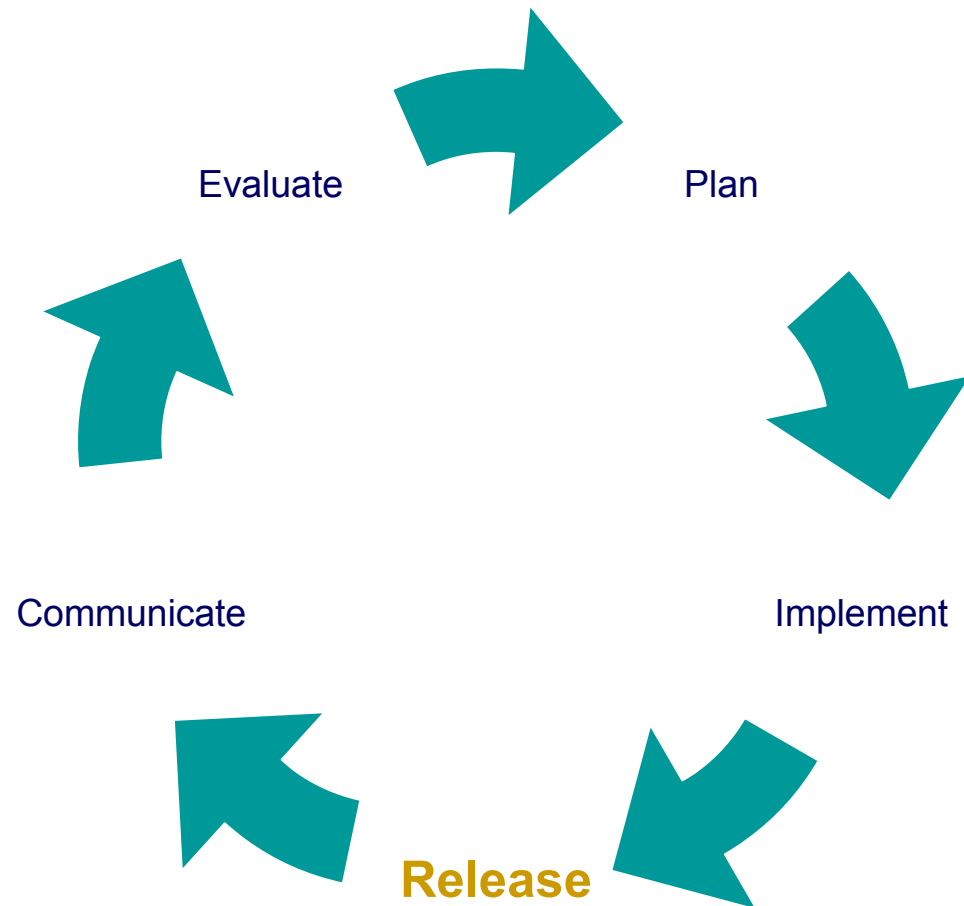


The MMO Circle of Life



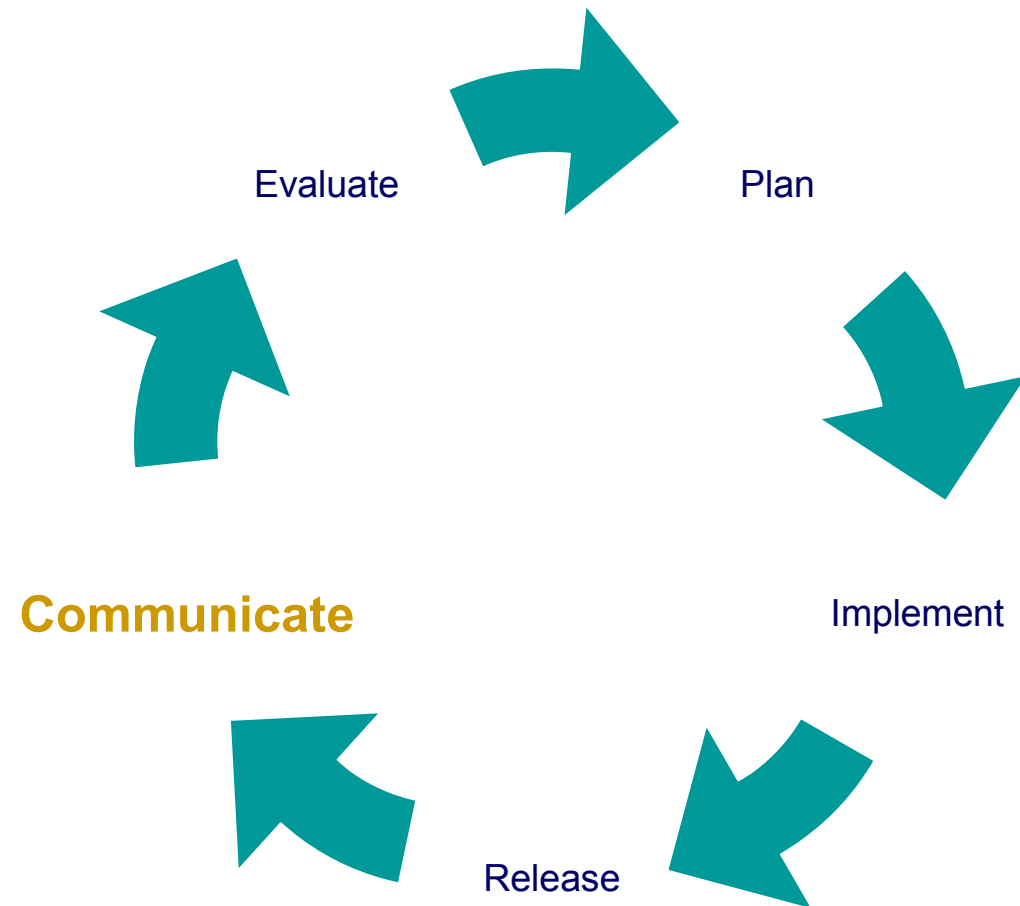


The MMO Circle of Life



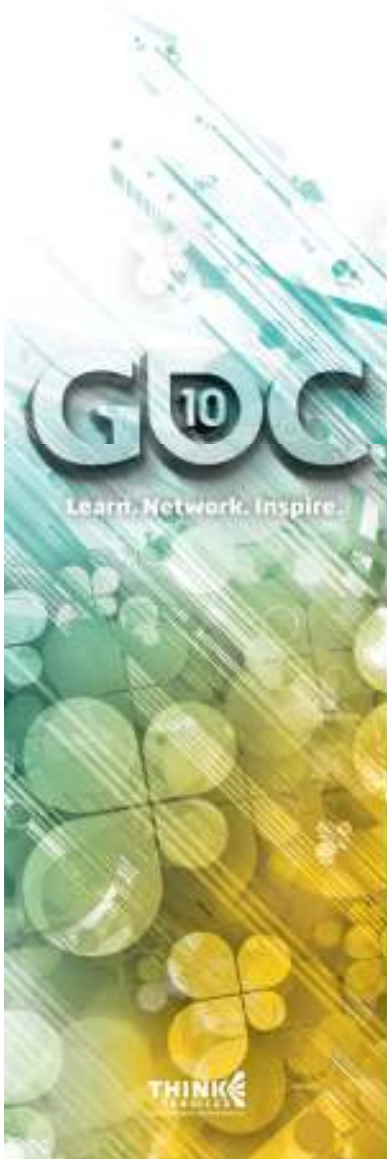


The MMO Circle of Life

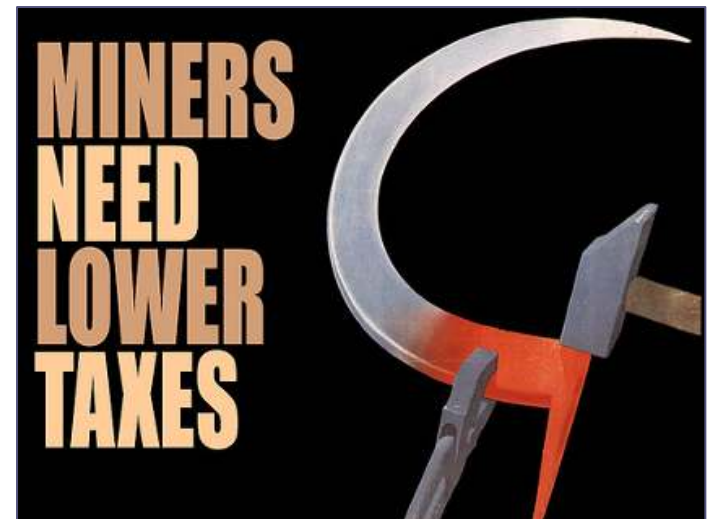
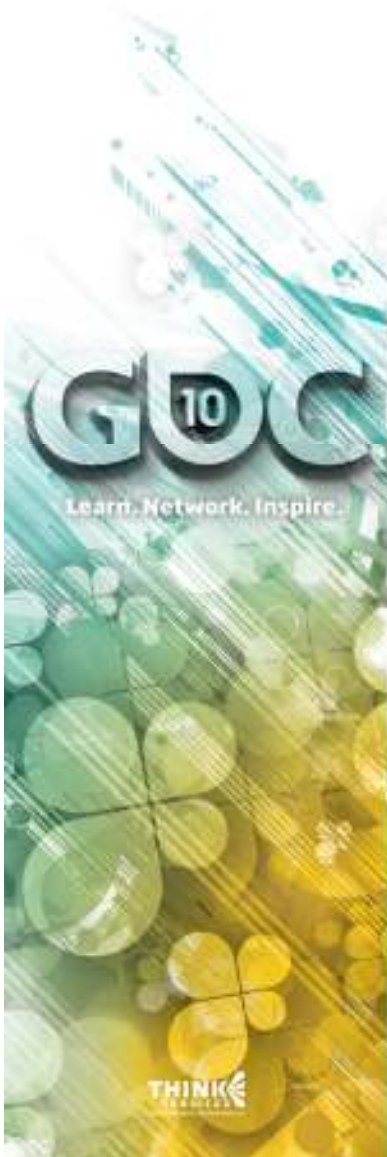


Change is Scary for Players

- ⊕ Resist and hate change
- ⊕ Can't see the big picture
- ⊕ Don't have all the facts
- ⊕ Only care about their own experience
- ⊕ Would rather get more and pay less

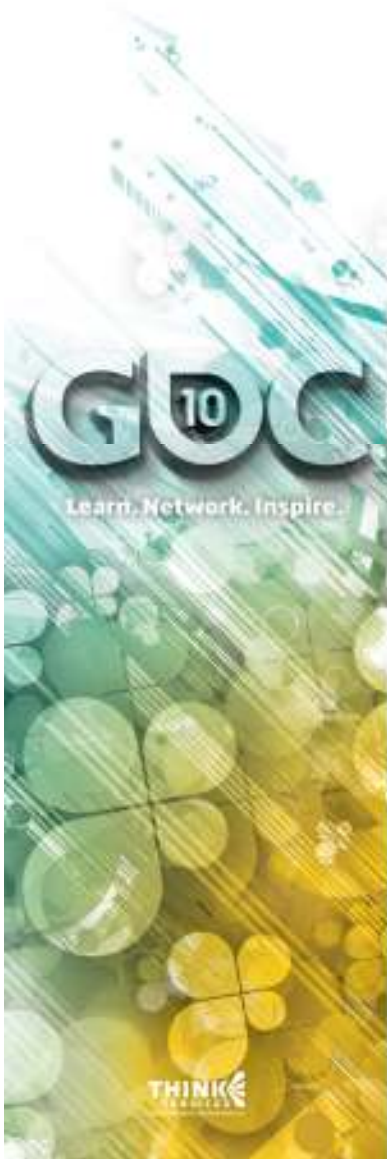


You Ruined My Life!



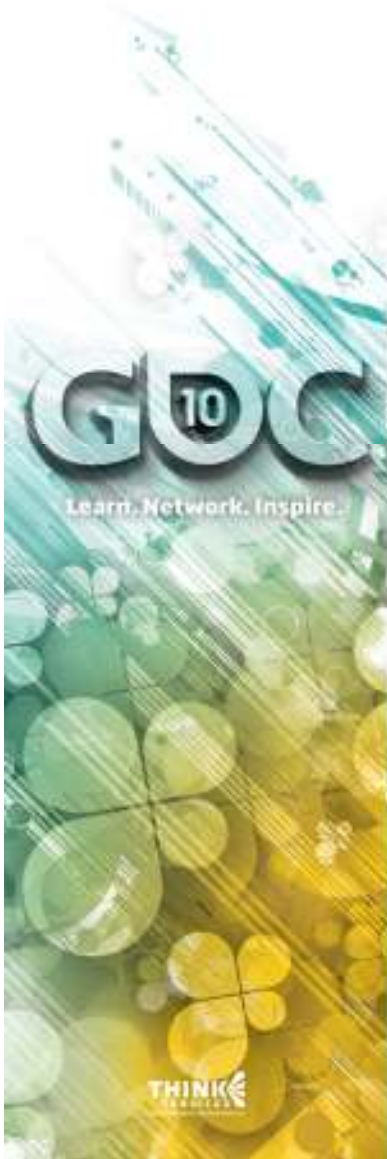
Talking About Changes

- ③ Three types of change communication
 - ③ List
 - ③ Rationale
 - ③ Comprehensive communication strategy
- ③ Carefully consider when to announce changes to players



Talk Before Release

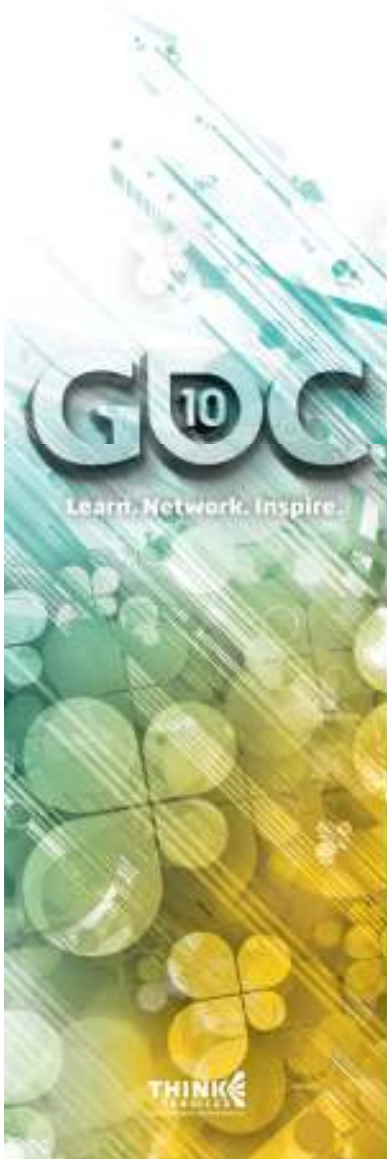
- ③ New feature
- ③ Player request
- ③ Bug
- ③ You made a mistake
- ③ You have solid data you can show players



Talk After Release

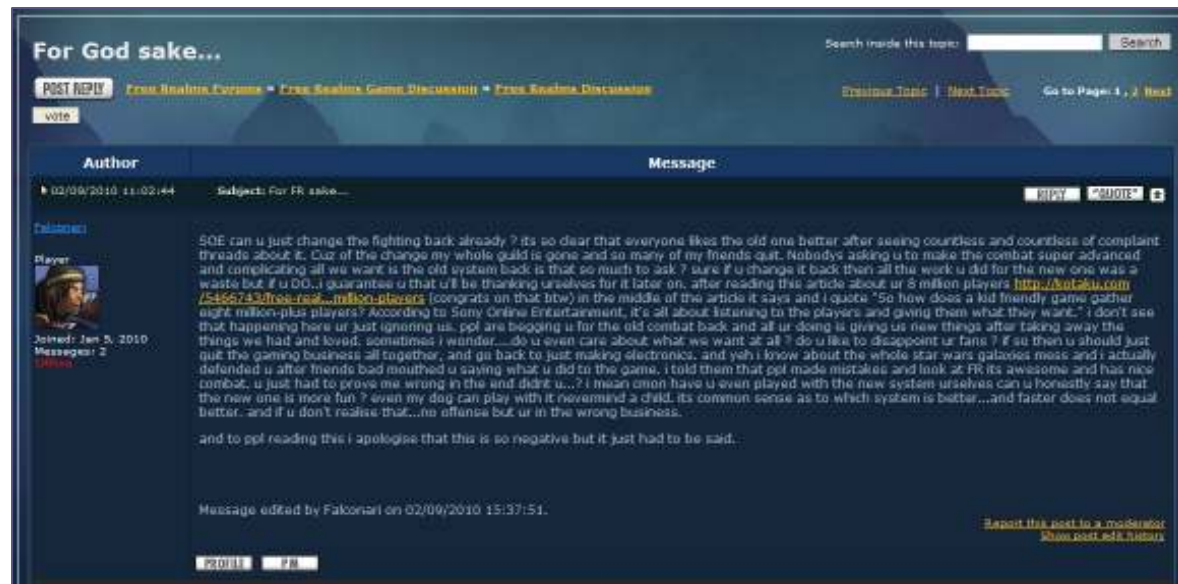
- ③ Changes items players bought or earned
- ③ Stopping an exploit
- ③ Unpopular change that's unavoidable
 - ③ With explanation when players will understand
 - ③ Without explanation when they won't

• By Royal decree, we are phasing out Treasure Tickets to prepare for changes to the Royal Vaults. Tickets will no longer be awarded for any in-game activities. You may spend your remaining tickets in the vault or sell them for coins. Tickets can be sold in the Coin Shop or by speaking to Gulsh outside the Royal Vaults.

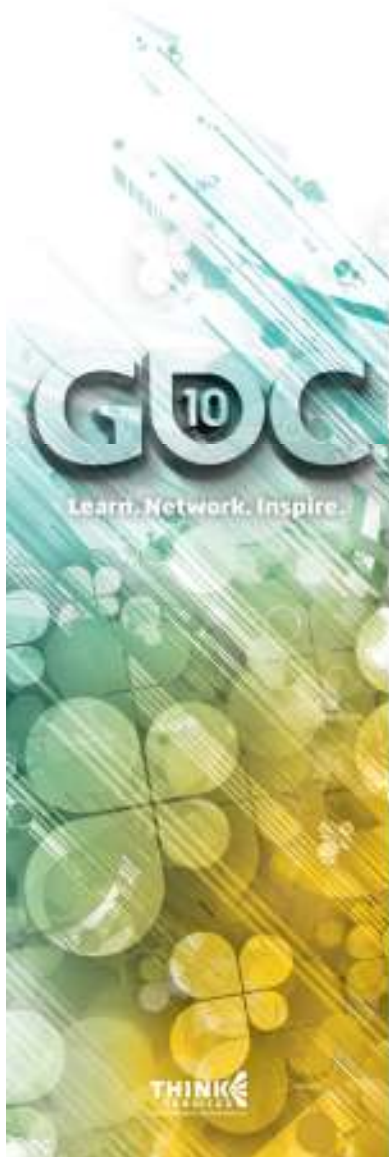


Never Talk When...

- ③ You may roll the change back later
- ③ It exposes an exploit method
- ③ You can't (or won't) discuss the data behind the change



Communicating Via List



Today is the day of our HUGE December update. There's lots of great new stuff to see and do in *Free Realms*. Here are the details on what we're adding to the game!

Highlights

- *Free Realms* Snow Days are here!
- Now you can own and decorate your own house!
- Major changes were made to Combat!
- Check out the new Fishing mini-game!
- There are new pets on the Marketplace!
- Launch yourself into the sky with Launch Pads!
- Join your friends at Private Parties in Pixiewood, Lakeshore & Nettleseed or check the Activity Calendar for upcoming dress-up Parties and Events!
- Use the Game Guide to get to mini-games, battles, Card Duels and more with one click!

Marketplace

- Items can now be purchased in a variety of colors from both the Marketplace and Coin Store.
- There are a slew of new and exotic pets on the Marketplace: Dragons, Unicorns, Pegasus, Dinosaurs, and more!
- Check out the Marketplace for new Snow Days clothes and items!
- To start the new TCG quests, purchase the Shattered Past quest packs and talk to Sir Wellington in Briarwood, outside of Vale of Ancients.
- Most job specific stat items (wearables, wieldables, shards, accessories, etc) have been removed from the Marketplace.

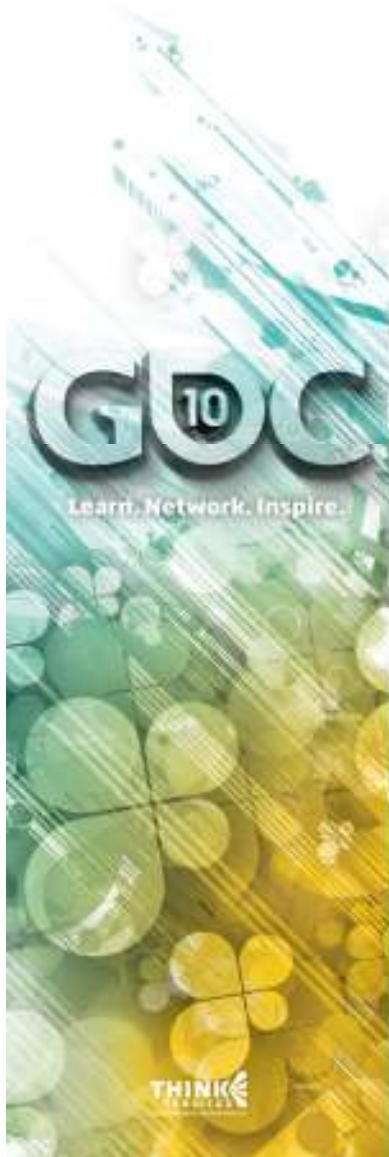
Snow Days

- Snowhill has been decorated with winter cheer and there are new activities and quests to try.
- Talk to Candi Ivy near the Gifting Tree in Snowhill to help protect the presents from a wicked gang of Robgoblins!
- Throw snowballs at your friends in Snowhill – pick one up from a pile in Snowhill!
- Play team vs team in Snowball Fights – talk to Calvin Coldcastle to start a game!
- The Snow Days Daily Prize Wheel has been added – spin the wheel every day for your chance at cool prizes!
- There are tons of new holiday items on the Marketplace including outfits, decorations for your house and special Reindeer pets that are available for a limited time only

Housing

- Members get a free house as well as awesome bonus furniture and decorations (like balloons, a dresser and chairs & a table)!
- You can buy additional houses from the Marketplace! Preview a House to walk through a fully furnished House and yard!
- Call out all your pets at once and decorate your new place to show off your style with furniture from the SC Marketplace or the Coin Store.
- Free players get a free apartment and can invite a guest over! Members can have A LOT more friends visit – how many people can you fit into your place?
- Housing items have been added to The Daily Prize Wheel; give it a whirl to see what you'll win!

Communicating Via Rationale



SAMPLE ALL JOBS

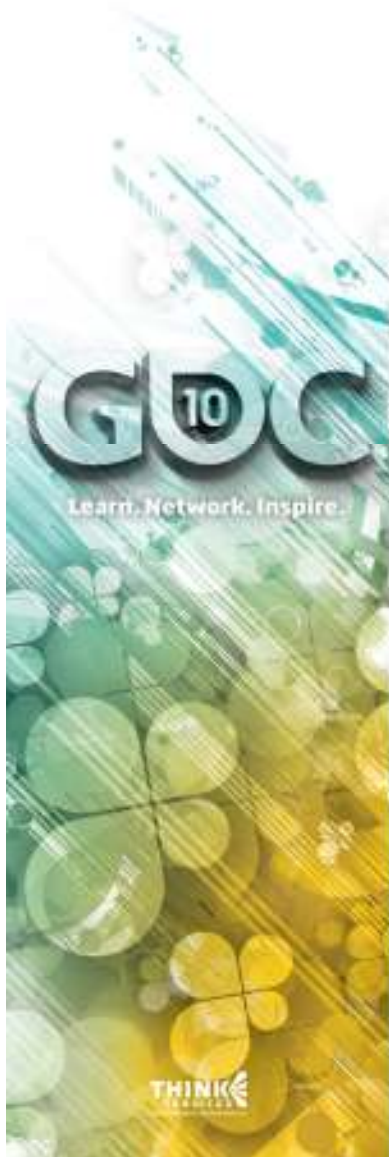
Right now, you have to be a member to play many jobs in the game, like Wizard and Blacksmith. You asked if we could find a way to let you sample those jobs to see if you like them. In November we're set to update *Free Realms* with a new job structure that lets you play any job in the game to level 5 for free! Once you hit level 5, the job will be designated as Members Only. This lets free players try out every job in the game! As a thank you to our original and loyal players, each character created before November 1st will still have all of the free jobs playable for free, just like it is today. So if you've got a level 18 Ninja and you've been working on those last few levels, no worries—that character will still have Ninja available for free, all the way to level 20. Remember though, if you delete that character, you'll lose the special access to any such free jobs!

Adventurer and Card Duelist jobs are going to continue to be free to play jobs all the way up to level twenty (20) for all characters, regardless of the date they were created.

EASIER SHOPPING AND SELLING

There are a ton of merchants all over the world of *Free Realms*, and it can be really hard to find just the right outfit. We're adding a Coin Shop to *Free Realms*, launched from the same button that opens the Marketplace. You'll be able to browse almost all of the items available for coins, and buy them just as easily as you can shop with Station Cash! We also listened to your requests and we are working on an auction house that will let you sell your items to other players. The Coin Shop is scheduled to be available by the end of this year, and the auction house is set to be live in early 2010.

Communicating Via Strategy



AOL | MAIL | Yes right also for: Jystiq, WoW and More

MASSVELY
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We're hiring columnists! Allods responds to item shop concerns Free Realms gets new mounts Influential women in MMO development

Free Realms to introduce new job, pets, player housing and more

By Shawn Schuster Nov 3rd 2009 at 5:00PM
Filed under: Galleries, Screenshots, MMO Industry, Player Housing, Free-to-play, Casual, Free Realms, Massively Interviews, Kids

The world of *Free Realms* is about to get a bit bigger this holiday season as even more content is being added and improved for the game. According to *Sony Online Entertainment's* Creative Director for *Free Realms*, Loralyn McWilliams, the game is about to see a new job, new job structure, new pets, player housing and more added by mid-December.

We caught up with Loralyn to get a few more details on the upcoming improvements before the first stage of these updates goes live this week. Follow along after the jump for the complete interview, and in our gallery below for some exclusive screenshots of the new content.

Breaking news

- A red-letter day for Second Life, Second Life 2.0 viewer and more
- Gods & Heroes returns from the dead
- Allods Online responds to player concern over cash shop
- Free Realms introduces T-Rex and flying dragon mounts
- Cheyenne files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, severs ties with Gary Whiting

Featured stories

- An interview with the most influential women in MMO development: Part 3
- Massively interviews Bill Roper on Champions Online's Revelation update
- A Miss-Mannered Reporter: All the community news that's fit to print
- A red-letter day for Second Life, Second Life 2.0 viewer and more
- An interview with the most influential women in MMO development: Part 2

Massively Features

FEATURED GAMES

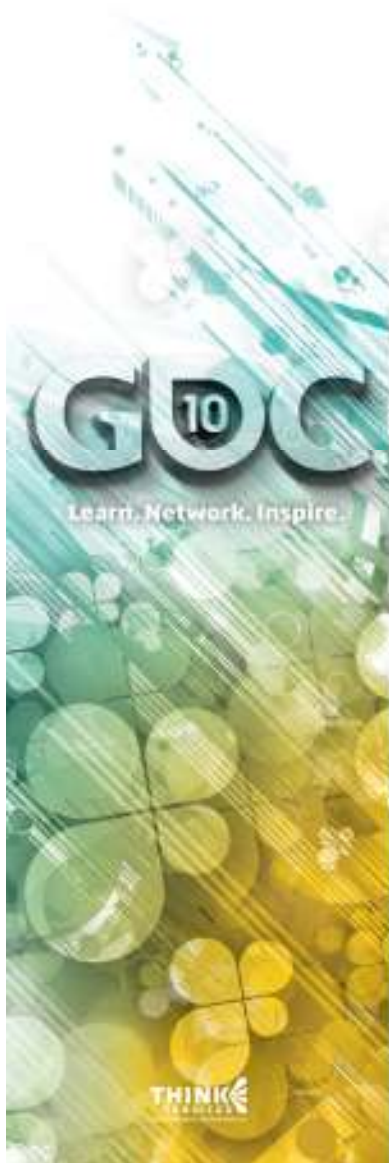
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UPCOMING GAMES

Strategic Plan of Attack

- ③ Coordinate with Marketing, Community, and Customer Service
- ③ Stage changes in combination with good information and PR
- ③ Spread changes likely to cause a negative reaction over the course of months
- ③ If you can, include any data that supports the results
- ③ Include at least one positive item in every update
- ③ Have Community and Customer Service ready for damage control





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star wars holiday special
star wars junkie
Star Wars Kid
star wars name
Star Wars Nerd
Star Wars Party
Star Wars Prequel Trilogy
Star Wars Rap
Star Wars Syndrome
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1. star wars galaxies

109 up, 23 down

[buy star wars galaxies mugs, tshirts and magnets](#)

Star wars galaxies - or SWG - An MMORPG that was good up until the CU came in, then they brought in the NGE which totally ruined the game. Well, it destroyed the gam - it's now a totally different game. *sigh*. Now you can be one of 9 characters *raises an eyebrow* before you could be anything, I was TK/Ent which was fun - now it's crap so I cancelled my account.

In short - Used to be a good MMORPG now it's not, however nothing else even comes close to the character creation!

-Star Wars Galaxies-

MMORPG = Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game

CU = Combat Upgrade

NGE = New Gaming Enhancements

TK = Teras Kasi

Ent = Entertainer

[mmorpg](#) [soe](#) [sony](#) [lucas arts](#) [star wars](#) [swg](#)
by [Ririne](#) Jan 2, 2006 [share this](#)

2. Star Wars Galaxies

41 up, 5 down

[buy star wars galaxies mugs, tshirts and magnets](#)

Once a great game that was extremely fun with both PVP and PVE. Then, the monkeys working for SOE decided to totally screw the game and ass rape the customers. Now its a horrible game that doesn't even deserve the title SWG.

"Wow, Star Wars Galaxies is a great game!"

"Was a great game, now its just a lumpy pile of crap"

[swg](#) [soe](#) [sony](#) [mmo](#) [star wars](#)
by [Gwidion](#) Sep 27, 2006 [share this](#)



Example: Speedy Kicks

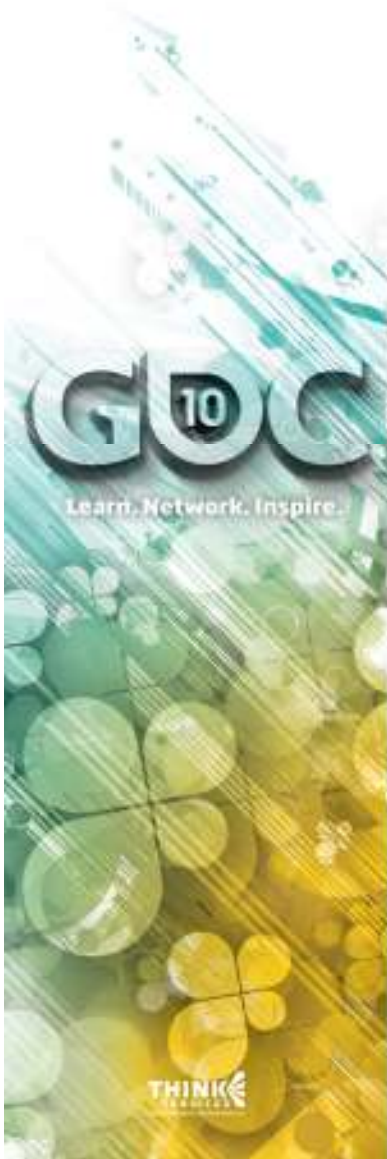
- ⌚ Reset the Speedy Kicks item to the original stats
- ⌚ Created a new Speedy Kicks item with reduced speed
 - ⌚ Existing players had old Speedy Kicks
 - ⌚ New players who finish the collection get slower Speedy Kicks



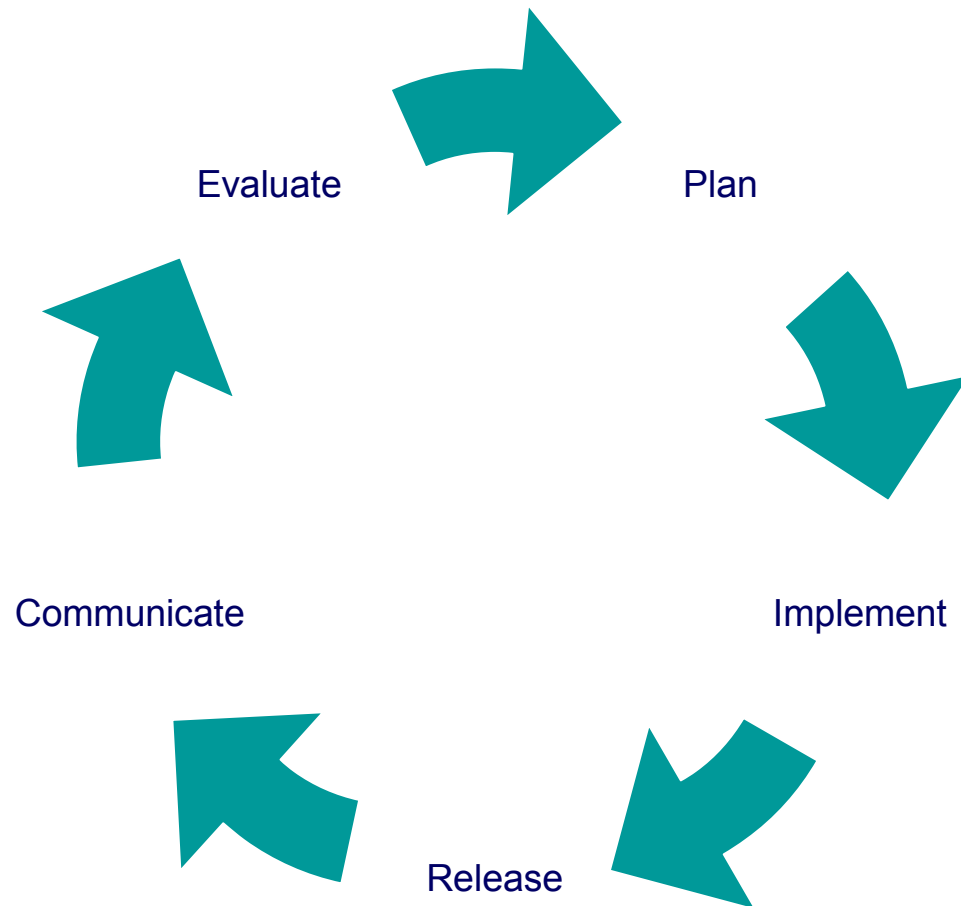
Example: Pricing Changes

- ⊕ Players complained even though we reduced prices
- ⊕ “I spent 2000 coins last week for an item that’s now 500 coins!”
- ⊕ Customer Service solution





The MMO Circle of Life



Process Example: Job Sampling

⌚ At launch:

- ⌚ Free jobs (10) can be played from level 1-20 with no limitation
- ⌚ Members Only jobs (5) can be played from level 1-20 only by Members

⌚ After change:

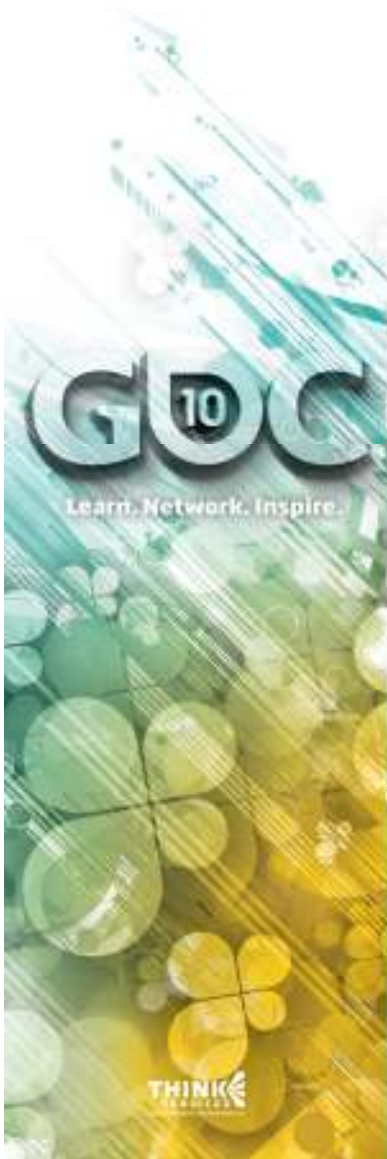
- ⌚ All jobs are available through level 4 for free players
- ⌚ All jobs lock to Members Only from levels 5-20



Process Example: Evaluate

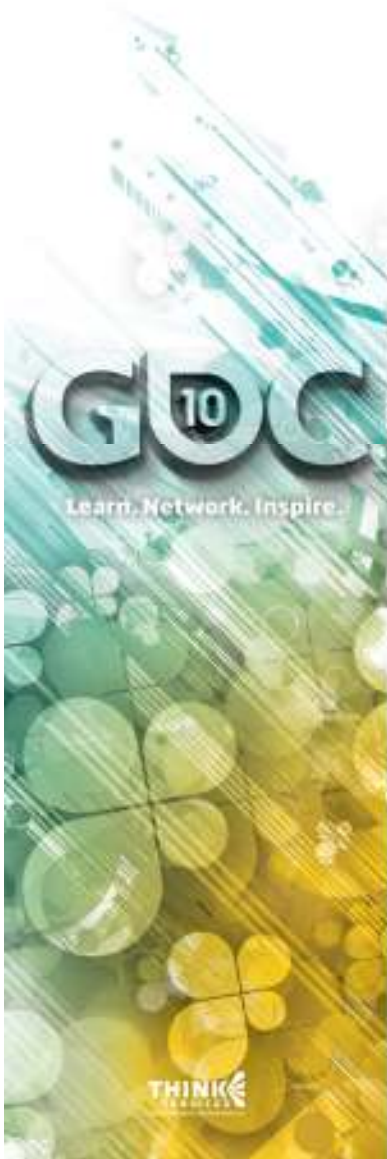
④ Change types

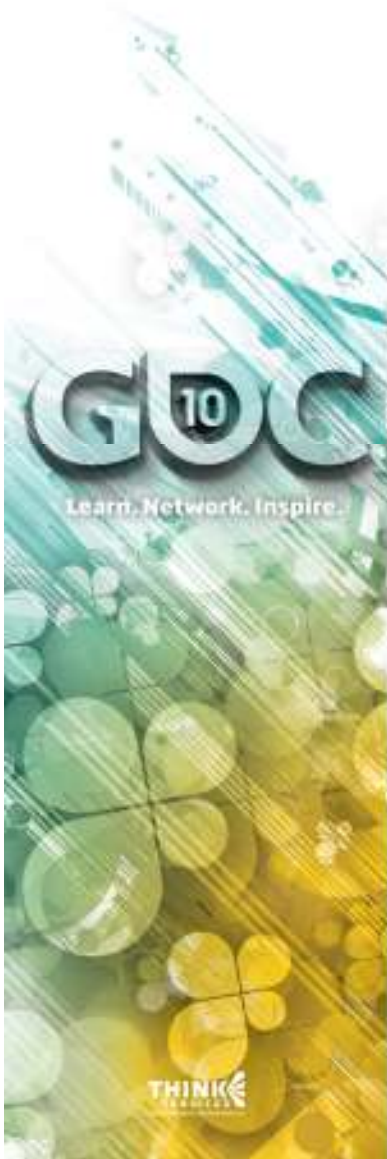
1. Delivering a player request
2. Fixing a bug
3. Repairing an unbalanced or unsustainable system
4. Addressing a business need



Job Sampling: Evaluate

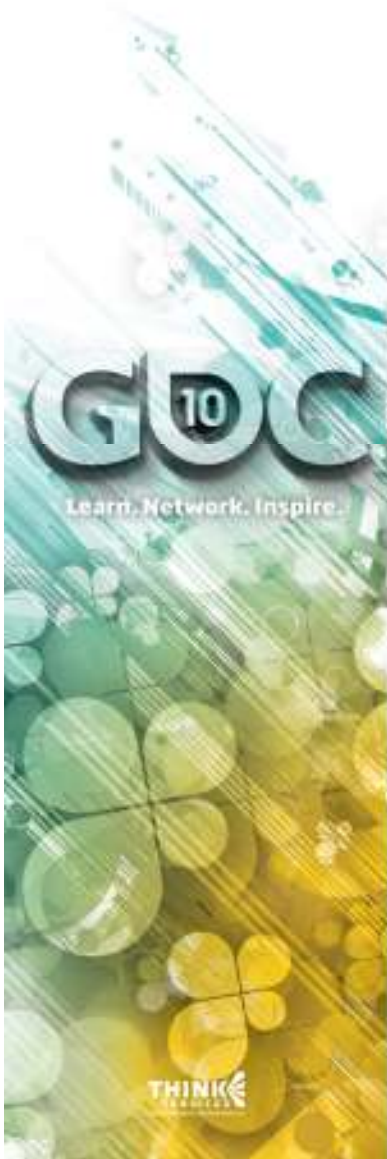
- ③ Listening to players
 - ③ “I can’t tell if the Members Only jobs are fun because I can’t even try them.”
 - ③ “I’ve played with my son for over 100 hours and haven’t spent a dime!”





Job Sampling: Data Assessment

- ③ Clear segments of population
 - ③ Members
 - ③ “Free consumers”
 - ③ Level 10+ in most free jobs
 - ③ Moderate microtransaction spend
 - ③ “Free dabblers”
 - ③ Level 2-4 in a several free jobs
 - ③ Low to no microtransaction spend
- ③ Revenue failure/opportunity with the “free consumers”



Job Sampling: Impact Assessment

- ③ Fundamental change to the way the game works
- ③ May affect:
 - ③ Revenue
 - ③ Retention
- ③ Player Impact
 - ③ “Free consumers” are immediately affected and unhappy
 - ③ All free players benefit by being able to sample all the jobs (a player request)
 - ③ Potential legal issues with existing players
- ③ Potential for negative press
- ③ Lots of work for the team and QA

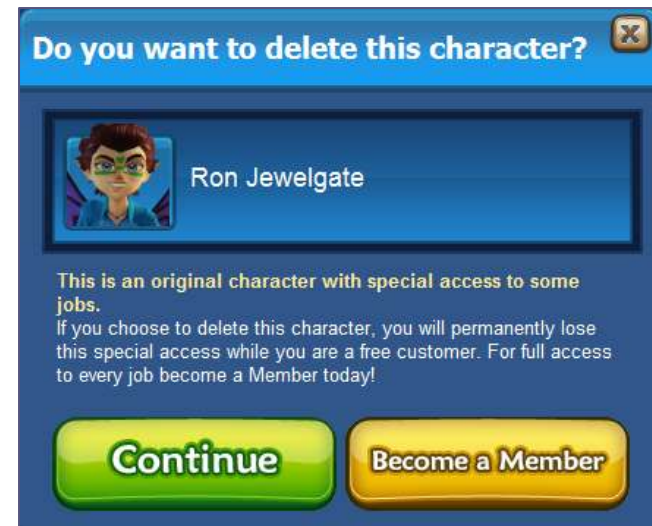


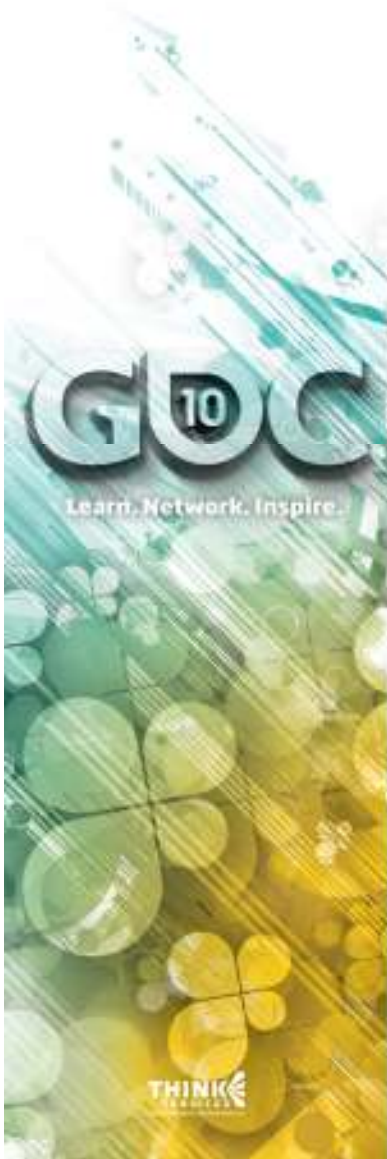
Job Sampling: Change Management

- ③ Held Main and Dev environments for 8 weeks
- ③ “Grandfathered” existing characters into the old system
- ③ Careful documentation of changes for QA
- ③ Usability tests 4 days a week for a month
- ③ Many tweaks and redesigns of user interface
- ③ Changes included web site and marketing materials
- ③ Combined with several top player requests to make sure it was in a series of positive updates

Job Sampling: Communication

- ③ Concept of “Original character”
- ③ Blog post
 - ③ One item on a list of new features
 - ③ Included player requests to “sample” jobs
- ③ FAQ posts
 - ③ Forum
 - ③ Website



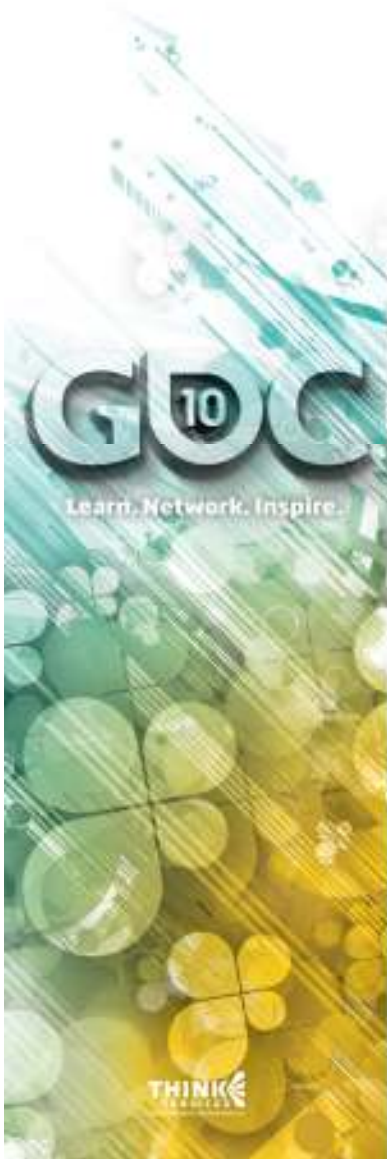


Job Sampling: Damage Control

- ⊕ Overall content for the updates was perceived positively
- ⊕ Negative forum posts about Job Sampling were generally lost in the sea of positive posts
- ⊕ Revenue clearly benefited from the change
- ⊕ Retention also benefited

Summary

- ③ Two pillars of live product management:
 - ③ Data reporting
 - ③ Change management
- ③ Don't be afraid to experiment to gather data
- ③ Listen to players... but get the data!





SOCIAL & ONLINE
games summit

How to Keep an Online World Running After Launch

Laralyn McWilliams

Creative Director, Sony Online Entertainment



GDC 10

www.GDConf.com