FarmVille's Golden Goose

Mike Perry – Executive Producer
Abhinav Agrawal – Director of Product

Mike Perry
FarmVille Executive Producer

- 20+ year game industry veteran
- PC, Console, Handheld, Mobile, Web, Online
- Producer, Designer, Programmer

Speaker Bio: Abhinav Agrawal

- Director of Product, FarmVille
  - Accountable for DAU and Revenue of the game

- Previous:
  - Product Manager @ Amazon EC2
  - Engagement Manager @McKinsey

- Education:
  - MBA from Harvard
  - BSE from Princeton

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FARMVILLE

FarmVille – June 2009

125,000,000 Apple Trees planted

280,000,000 Foals born

2,800,000,000 Trees planted

16,900,000,000
White Grape crops planted

Typical FarmVille Player

Top 25 Facebook Games by MAU

October 2012

Rank	Game	Developer	MAU	MAU Change	(Last Month)
1	ChefVille	Zynga	48700000	23,200,000	25,500,000
2	Zynga Slingo	Zynga	48600000	35,400,000	13,200,000
3	Texas HoldEm Poker	Zynga	39400000	3,900,000	35,500,000
4	Bubble Safari	Zynga	30200000	-1,000,000	31,200,000
5	The Ville	Zynga	24000000	-25,300,000	49,300,000
6	Diamond Dash	Zynga	20600000	1,100,000	19,500,000
7	FarmVille	Zynga	18300000	100,000	18,200,000
8	CastleVille	Zynga	18200000	1,900,000	16,300,000
9	SongPop	FreshPlanet	18100000	800,000	17,300,000
10	FarmVille 2	Zynga	18000000	18,000,000	0
11	Bubble Witch Saga	King.com	17500000	-700,000	18,200,000
12	CityVille	Zynga	17000000	-2,700,000	19,700,000
13	Candy Crush Saga	King.com	15200000	1,100,000	14,100,000
14	Words With Friends	Zynga	13400000	-1,000,000	14,400,000
15	Angry Birds Friends	Rovio	12600000	-400,000	13,000,000
16	The Sims Social	EA Playfish	12400000	-2,700,000	15,100,000
17	Dragon City	Social Point	12100000	900,000	11,200,000
18	Tetris Battle	Tetris Online Inc.	11200000	-1,000,000	12,200,000
19	Pool Live Tour	Geewa	10200000	-600,000	10,800,000
20	Hidden Chronicles	Zynga	10000000	-500,000	10,500,000
21	Bejeweled Blitz	EA Popcap	8000000	-300,000	8,300,000
22	SimCity Social	Electronic Arts	7800000	-5,600,000	13,400,000
23	مزرعة السعيدة	Halfquest	7600000	-400,000	8,000,000
24	Monster World	wooga	6900000	0	6,900,000
25	Bubble Island	wooga	6800000	-600,000	7,400,000

❄ AppData™

Inside Social Games 2012   Data from AppData.com

Top 10 Game, Three Years After Launch

Still Top Grossing Game on Facebook… *TODAY*

How did we do this?

FarmVille Year 1

- Explosive growth
- Peak DAU 32mm
- Player excitement followed DAU
- Monetization followed players

FarmVille Year 2

- Began typical Social Game DAU curve
- Revenue trend potential to be in-line with DAU and player expectations
- Question: how to change inevitable trajectory?

Focus on DAU

- Choices to alter DAU trajectory:
  - New Installs – Not possible with 300mm+ current installs
  - Reactivators – Only one chance for a first impression
  - Retention – Surprisingly difficult, but a recent focus

Focus on Players and Revenue

- ## Who was leaving Farm?
  - ### Casual, non-payers
- ## Who's staying
  - ### Remaining players are active, engaged, and see value in what the game provides

- ## Focus on ARPPU
  - ### Provide good gameplay value to highly-engaged players

What Engages Players?

Engaged paying players are buying virtual goods

- "LE" = Limited Edition items
- Buying directly via our marketplace
- Paying to skip tasks that have LE rewards or unlock new LE
- Prefer content with clear themes

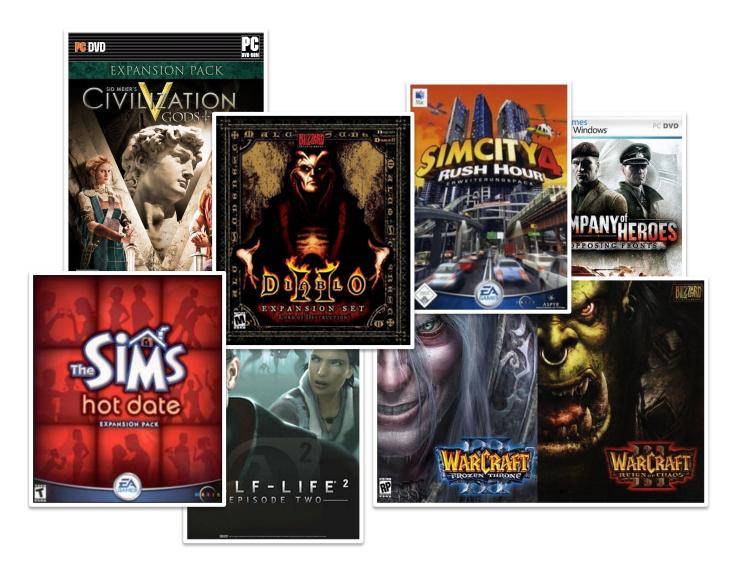Breeding systems and "Mastery" reinforce collectability

The Challenge

- Create a new, major, predictable event for engaged/paying players
  - Combine the power of LE, cadence, and feature themes together
  - Excite our engaged players
  - Rally the team with a unified vision
  - Dramatically stimulate revenue
- What existing models exist for this?

Learning from Traditional Expansion Pack Models

- Single strong theme and fiction
- Extend gameplay, not reinvent
- Low cost for players, high ROI for dev teams
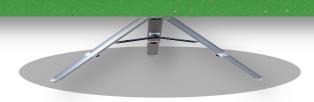- Targeted towards core, existing players

Process

- Vision
- PM Questions / Focus / Scoping
- Design / Production
- Results

Design Goals

- Give players a new place to collect and decorate
- Introduce new ways to play FarmVille
- Introduce new gameplay challenges
- Reveal delightful moments to players
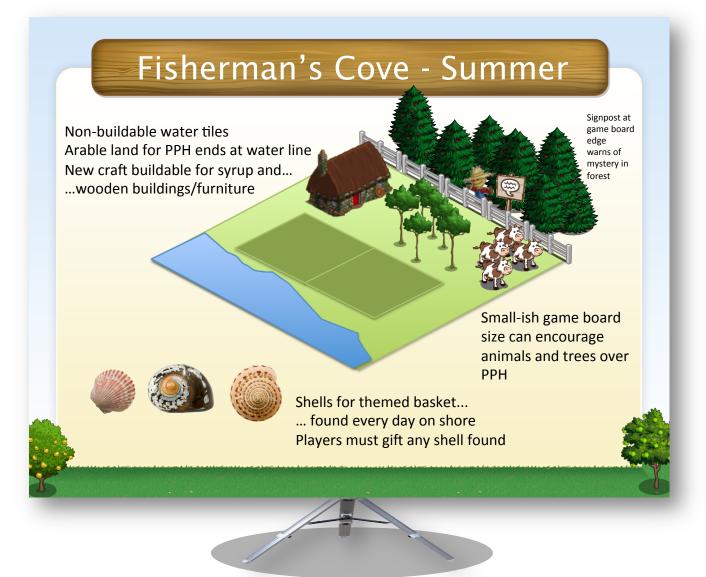- Tell a story that engages players over several weeks

Farming, New England Style

Maple Syrup
Fishing
Fall Colors
Craftsmen
Close Communities
+
Witches & Ghosts!

Fisherman's Cove - Summer

Non-buildable water tiles
Arable land for PPH ends at water line
New craft buildable for syrup and...
...wooden buildings/furniture

Signpost at game board edge warns of mystery in forest

Small-ish game board size can encourage animals and trees over PPH

Shells for themed basket...
... found every day on shore
Players must gift any shell found

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by zynga

Fisherman's Cove – Fall Event

Terrain changes color for fall in October
Inspire players to update new deco
New trees appear for craft recipes
Big delight moment

New fall-themed basket items appear on shore…
…every day

Fisherman's Cove – Fish Farm

Farm expands in one large block, unlocks fishing cove

Players can "farm" water…
…just like crops
"Nets" are like Seeds in Market
Catch specific types of fish

Buildable Pier, required before players can fish
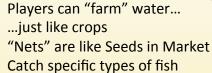Buildable Boathouse unlocks…
…New Water Vehicles – Fishing Boats
Water deco items (Houseboat, Buoy, Fish School, Dolphin)

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Fisherman's Cove - Village

"Urban" Village
unlocks as a single plot

Urban farming with restricted PPH
Room for new LE theme buildings/trees
Rooftop garden – exclusive new crops
LE Deco cars, trucks, trains

Fiction / Story Outline

(Example storyline, real one will be better)
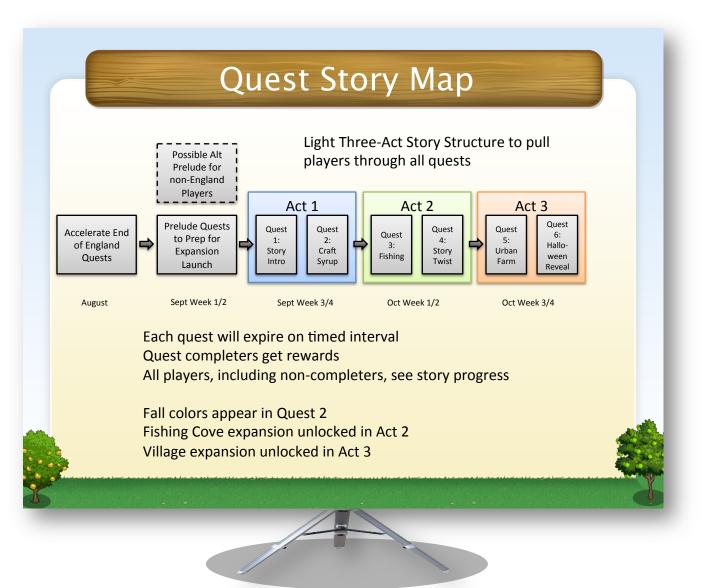
"The Legend of Fisherman's Cove"

- Duke returns, promises new adventure, visit to cousin in America
- Intro from Duke's cousin, New England Fisherman, warns of odd events, points to sign in forest
- Duke goes missing, Fisherman suggests hunting for clues
- Clues reveal existence of witches and ghosts in Fisherman's Cove forest
- Duke discovered in forest – became friends with witches and ghosts, ready to celebrate holiday
- Happy Halloween!

- … (foreshadow next holiday quest series)

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Quest Story Map

Light Three-Act Story Structure to pull players through all quests

Possible Alt Prelude for non-England Players

| Accelerate End of England Quests | → | Prelude Quests to Prep for Expansion Launch | → | **Act 1** Quest 1: Story Intro / Quest 2: Craft Syrup | → | **Act 2** Quest 3: Fishing / Quest 4: Story Twist | → | **Act 3** Quest 5: Urban Farm / Quest 6: Halloween Reveal |

August   Sept Week 1/2   Sept Week 3/4   Oct Week 1/2   Oct Week 3/4

Each quest will expire on timed interval
Quest completers get rewards
All players, including non-completers, see story progress

Fall colors appear in Quest 2
Fishing Cove expansion unlocked in Act 2
Village expansion unlocked in Act 3

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Critical product decisions to make expansion successful

Vision

- Beautiful terrain: Cove + water + autumn theme
- Decoration focus
- Engaging story incorporating holidays

1   Making the vision a reality

2   Core Gameplay Implications

3   Marketing and Adoption

4   Pushback

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1 Making the vision a reality

Water terrain ended up being too hard to implement

Design Vision:

Coastal Farming
* Farm on water: water crops
* Interact with water

1. No concept of different terrains

2. Would touch 2+ year old code

3. Ultimately, looked like a very low RoI feature

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1 Making the vision a reality

Solution – water on the farm's edge

UPGRADE

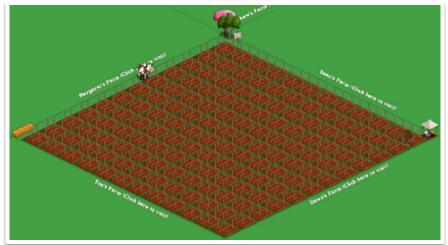- 80% lower development cost
- Completing the cove provided aspiration challenge + virals/revenue

1   Making the vision a reality

Design called for getting players to focus more on decoration

…and less like
the farm below

More like the
farm above…

1   Making the vision a reality

Investigated several options to encourage decoration

A

Eliminate crops entirely

Pros:
• Clean solution
• Would definitely achieve the aims

Cons:
• Extremely risky for game as a whole - farming is the game!
• Crops also contribute to farm's look

B

Limit value of crops

Pros:
• Not as heavy handed

Cons:
• Many players not motivated by coins/XP – mastery is the core goal

C

Incentivize decoration

Pros:
• Purely driven by player motivation

Cons:
• Significant development effort
• Not many incentives to give out in the game
• Risky – may not achieve the aims

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1   Making the vision a reality

Ultimately we chose to limit total arable land

Lighthouse Cove

35

To preserve space for our village, a farm this size supports 35 plots. Expand your farm for more plowable land!

Okay

Guaranteed space that could only be decorated

Provided even stronger motivation to expand the farm size

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1 Making the vision a reality

Launched a large *themed* content pack on Day One

1   Making the vision a reality

Launched a large *themed* content pack on Day One

1 Making the vision a reality

Launched a large *themed* content pack on Day One

TREES!

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1   Making the vision a reality

Launched a large *themed* content pack on Day One

1   Making the vision a reality

We re-used our quest system to narrate the story

2 Core gameplay implications

And decided to retain the same currency

Virtual currency:
- FARM CASH
- Only 1 per level-up
- Purchase for rest

In-game currency:
- COINS
- Earned via game actions
- Can also be purchased

Key decision drivers:
- Saved significant dev time
- Coins not a significant % of revenues
- Easier for players to grok
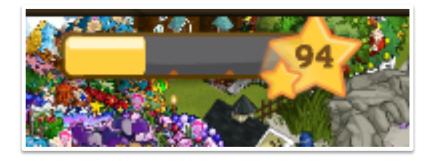
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…and the same leveling curve & aspiration

Key decision drivers:

- XP and level curves not big motivators for players

- Did not want to fragment user base – progress in expansion should count to overall progress

2   Core gameplay implications
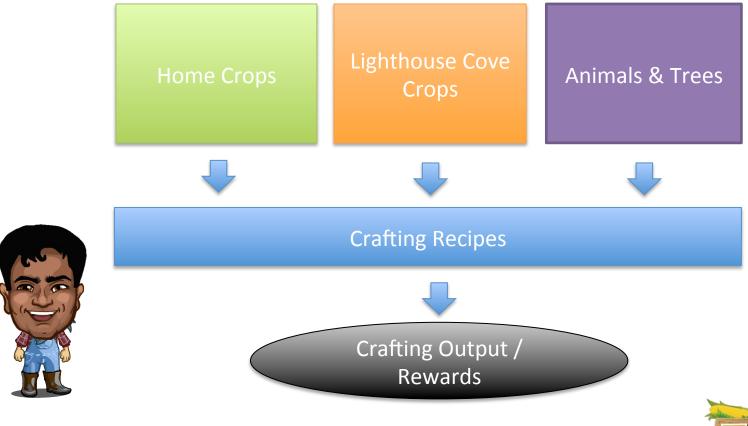
..and created an integrated economy between the farms

Home Crops	Lighthouse Cove Crops	Animals & Trees

Crafting Recipes

Crafting Output / Rewards

We also ensured that most old features worked in the new world

Provided a LOT of content for players...

FarmVille Lighthouse Cove Orchard
FarmVille Lighthouse Cove Barn
FarmVille Lighthouse Cove Chicken Coop
FarmVille Crafting Silo
FarmVille Lighthouse Cove Tool Shed
FarmVille Lighthouse Cove Garage
FarmVille Lighthouse Cove Flower Shed

...and safe venue to remove legacy features:

- BeeHive
- Was not driving core metrics anymore
- No significant player love either

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2 Core gameplay implications

We struggled but ultimately did not allow transfer of items from the home farm at launch

Danger that players would not engage with any of the new content, and just use their old collection

Planned a slow release of the feature:
      Paid license – 2 months post launch
      Free license – 4 months post launch

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3 Marketing and Adoption

Created significant hype in the game pre-launch

3   Marketing and Adoption

Provided early access to the expansion with extra value

And followed up by helping all players engage at least once

Maximum exposure for the new farm

Keep players "together" playing the same game

We managed pushback from casual, low-engaged players

1 Players can purchase bushels and goods across farms – as a player your friends don't disappear!

2 Parts/loot in expansions relevant on home farm also – clicks on Facebook still matter!

3 Made it easy to ignore the farm for uninterested players – did not add the expansion to the game's core loop
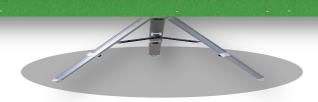
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FarmVille: LIGHTHOUSE COVE

Design Goals

- Give players a new place to collect and decorate
- Introduce new ways to play FarmVille
- Introduce new gameplay challenges
- Reveal delightful moments to players
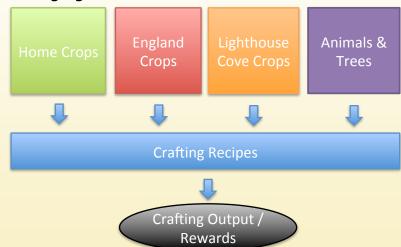- Tell a story that engages players over several weeks

Seasonal Themes

September	October	November

Autumn

Launch Expansion

Halloween

"The Mystery of Lighthouse Cove"

Thanksgiving

EOL Expansion Quests

2+ weeks of New England Autumn, then…
…1 full MONTH of Halloween – culminate story reveal on 10/31
EOL expansion on Thanksgiving 11/25

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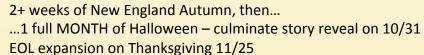
Bushel/Crafting Economy

- New crop, animal, and tree bushels
- New cove-specific bushels
- New craft recipes game-wide
- More exchanging of bushels with friends

| Home Crops | England Crops | Lighthouse Cove Crops | Animals & Trees |

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

Crafting Recipes

↓

Crafting Output / Rewards

Quest Lines

- Parallel quest lines in expansion and home farm
- Same consumable gifts on both quest lines to reinforce gift economy
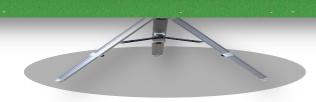- Quests expire on same interval to keep community together
- Converge on Holiday events

Lighthouse Cove Quest Line

Home Farm Quest Line

Halloween Event
In All Farms

Thanksgiving
Event in All Farms

Fiction / Story Outline

- Travel by boat to a vacation at a Coastal Bed & Breakfast in Autumn
- B&B Patron tells of goal to rebuild the farming village, preserving the charm
- Need your help to restore the cove, plant a farm, and create/decorate the village
- Beware of a corporate villain – reveal his mystery on Halloween
- Become the Mayor of Lighthouse Cove on Thanksgiving Day

Quest Story Map

Light Three-Act Story Structure to pull players through all quests

		Act 1		Act 2		Act 3	
Accelerate End of England Quests	Prelude Quests to Prep for Expansion Launch	Chapter 1: Story Intro	Chapter 2: New Crafts	Chapter 3,4: Expand the Cove	Chapter 5,6: Halloween	Chapter 8,9: Expand the Village	Chapter 10: Thanksgiving
August	Sept Week 1/2	Sept Week 3/4		Oct Week 1/2/3/4		Nov Week 1/2/3	

Each quest will expire on timed interval
Quest completers get rewards
All players, including non-completers, see story progress

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Results
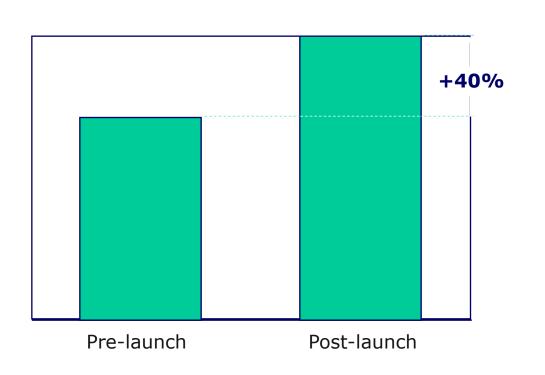
Mike's Lighthouse Cove Farm

What this can do for your game

Indexed monthly revenues

+40%

Pre-launch   Post-launch

- Measurable increase in player engagement

- Increase in viral metrics

- ~40% increase in revenue run-rate

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What this is unlikely to do for your game

1. Did not get new players to the game

2. Did not convince lapsers to come back

3. No significant impact to retention of current players

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Key Surprises: Business

- More lucrative than some new IP (especially ROI)
- Though initially successful, effect fades quickly
- Challenging to engage entire audience: 40% of players play expansion regularly

Key Surprises: Player Behavior

- Easily overwhelmed, sense of pressure
- Don't understand content considered "optional"
- Decoration behaviors unchanged
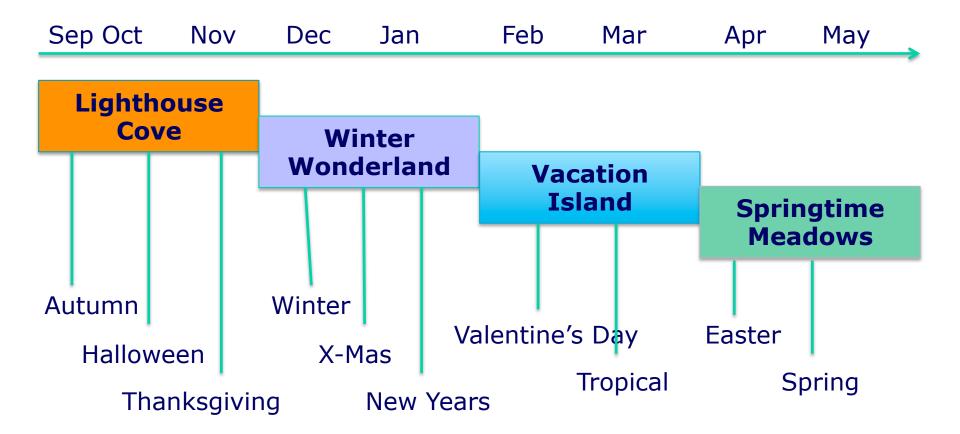
FarmVille's Creative Future

- Building an Expansion cadence

- Refreshing core FarmVille gameplay step-by-step within expansions

Establishing an Expansion Cadence

Sep Oct   Nov   Dec   Jan   Feb   Mar   Apr   May

Lighthouse Cove

Winter Wonderland

Vacation Island

Springtime Meadows

Autumn

Halloween

Thanksgiving

Winter

X-Mas

New Years

Valentine's Day

Tropical

Easter

Spring

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Refreshing Core Gameplay

- Reinvigorate systems that engage players
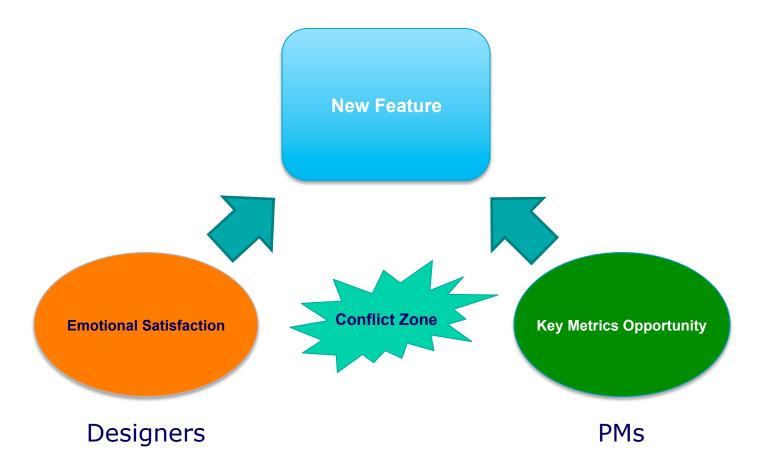- Provide the sense of excitement that is felt by new players
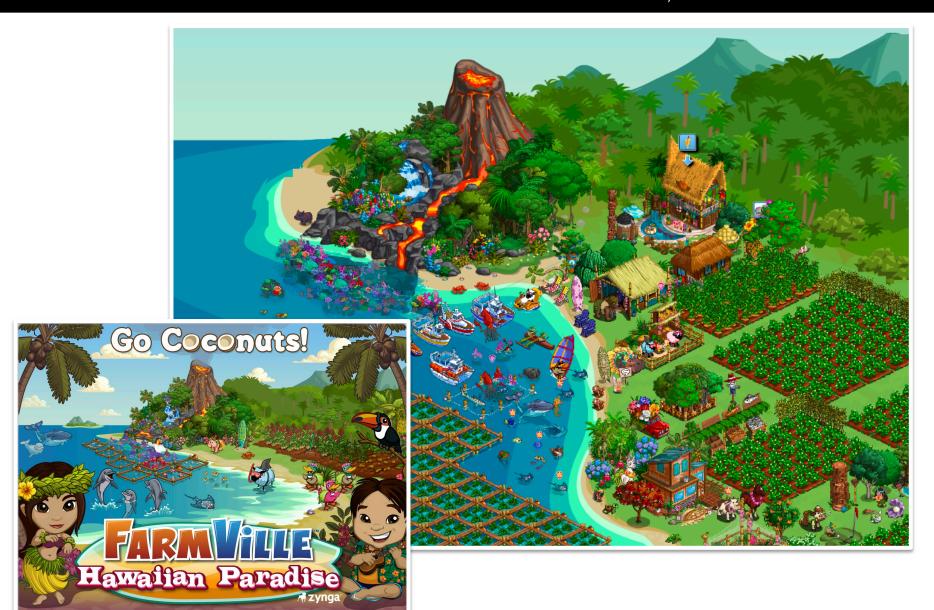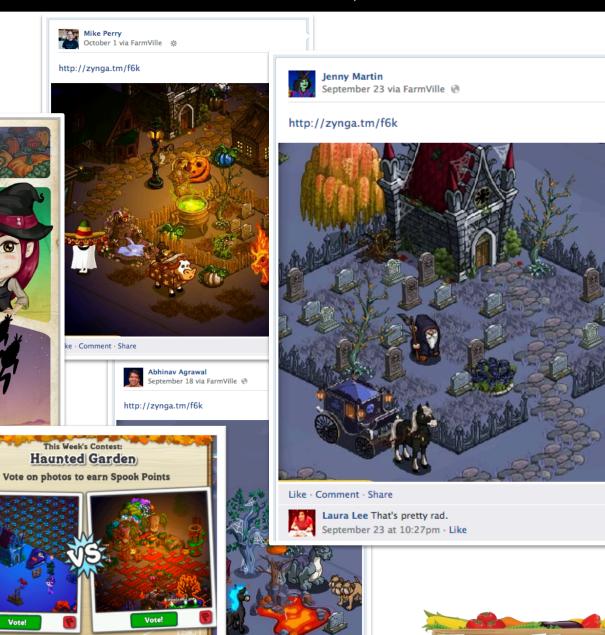
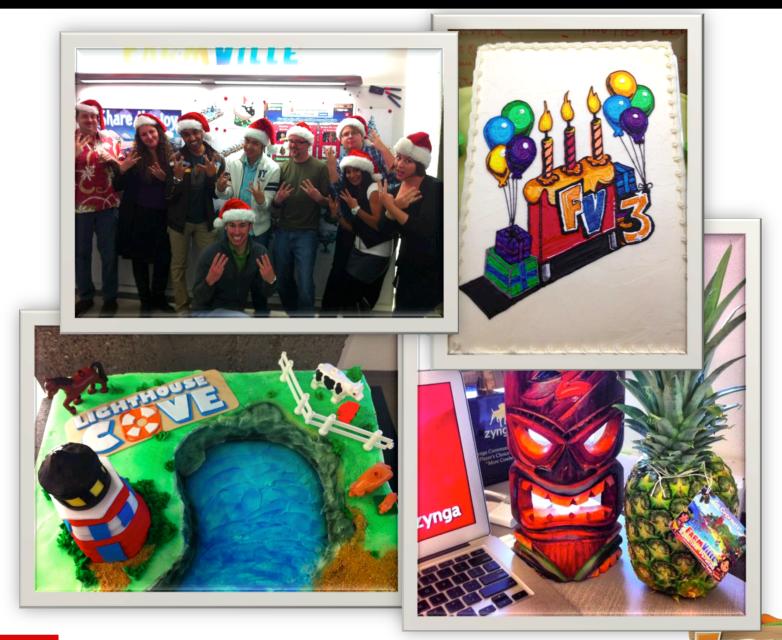# Business Results

Team

PM + Creative, Working Together

Working Together

- Strong partnership between PM and Creative forges success
- Play to our strengths
- Understand each other's motivation
- Respect each other's challenges
- Cross-training to learn vocabularies