



Who Is Your Game For?

Understanding, defining, and designing for your
target audience

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WHY UNDERSTAND YOUR PLAYER?



Games are for **everyone**



But **your** game is for a **segment** of the gaming audience.

Just because everyone **could** play your game, doesn't mean they **want** to play your game.



If you don't have a specific player in mind, how do you make the **right design decisions**?

Do you understand their **desires** and **motivations**?

WHY UNDERSTAND YOUR PLAYER?



Understanding your player becomes more important, the **further**
they are from yourself.

YOUR game is not for everyone

Design

*“Your job is to help your team ship the **right product** to your users. Your job is to figure out **who your users are**, what they want to be able to do, and what the right products are to help them do that.”*

Top reasons products fail:

1. Target audience didn't want it / react to it

"It's the assembly language programming game you never asked for!" - TIS-100

2. Flawed product

Wrong game for the wrong people. FAILURE.

This talk is about how to stop this happening.

In the 3 sections of this talk I will:

- Show you **how to understand** your target audience
- Explain why this is important to **making great games**

And also:

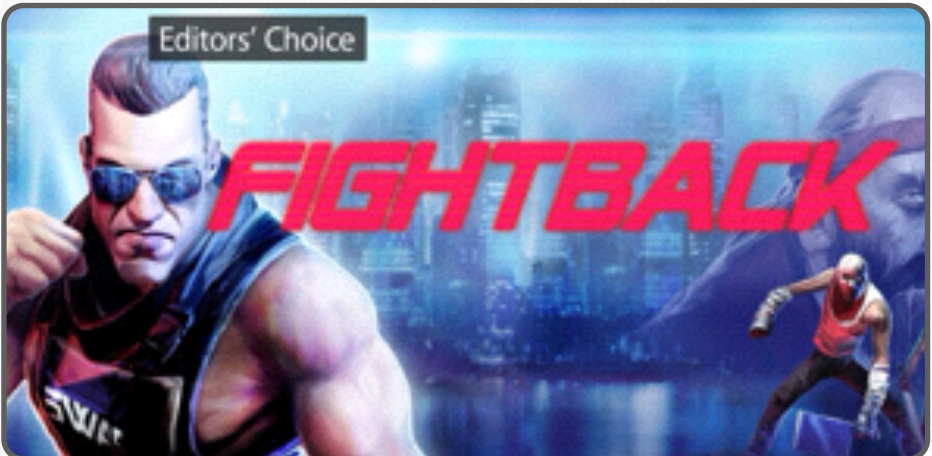
- Discuss why this makes you a **better game designer**
- Improve your game **development process**

1. **Understand** your target audience

2. **Define** your audience type

3. **Design** for your target audience

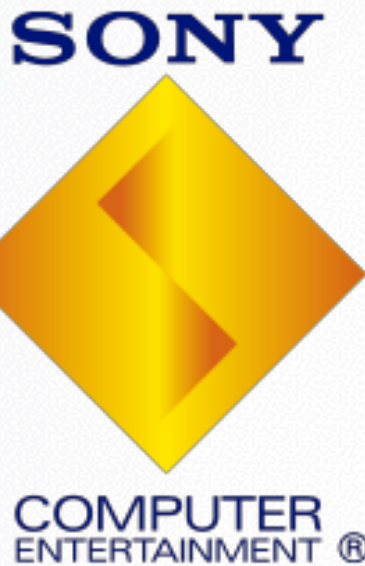
GAMES WE'VE WORKED ON




100%
of our
45+
iOS games featured
FRONT PAGE
on the Apple App Store



STUDIOS WE WORK WITH





EXPERT ANALYSIS: Additional information request

ABOUT THE GAME

	DETAILS
Name of game	
Platform(s)	
Development stage – how complete is the title?	
Brief overview of gameplay/genre	

REVIEW CONTENT AND LOGISTICS

	DETAILS
On which elements of the game would you like evaluation? e.g. Tutorial, first 3 levels, game flow, monetisation, usability?	
On which dates would you like the expert review process start, ideally?	
Which device(s) would you prefer us to test on?	
How do we reset the game and/or access the debug menu (if possible)?	
Do you have a review budget in mind?	

+

REVIEW AIMS

What would you like to get out of the review document, i.e. what questions or uncertainties should the review help you answer or improve?
Are there any 'known issues' within the game that you would prefer to be ignored, or addressed specifically?

ABOUT THE TARGET AUDIENCE

	DETAILS
Who is your target audience? e.g. Their age, previous games they should have played, fans of a particular brand etc.	

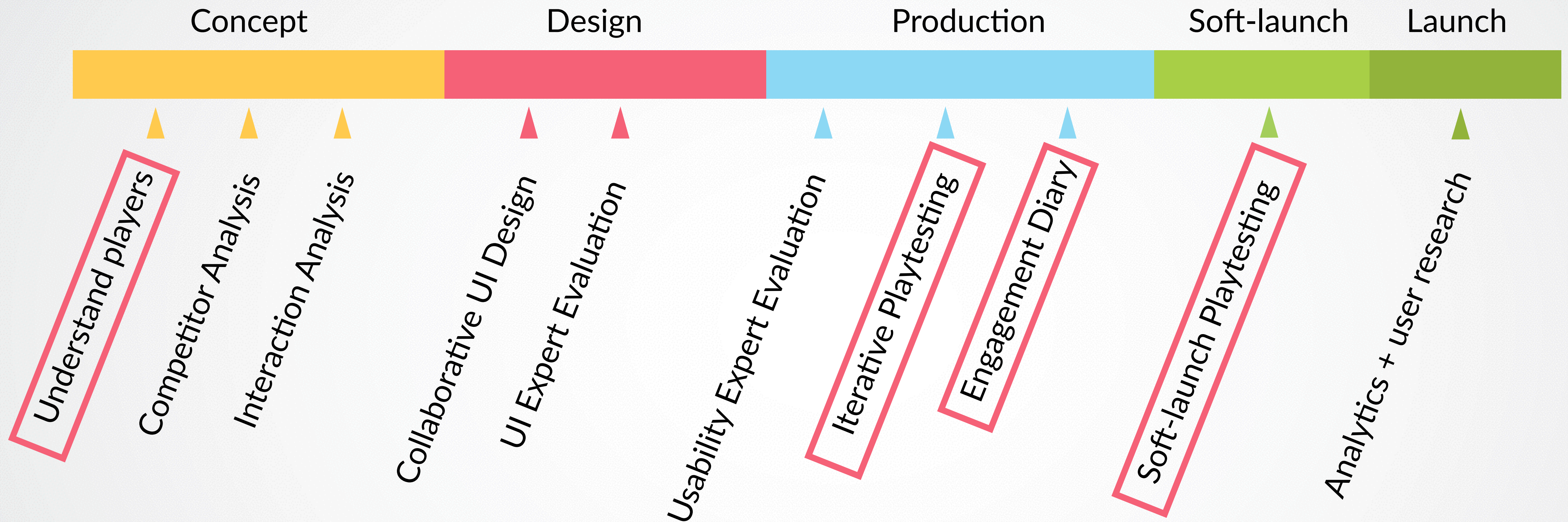
ABOUT THE TARGET AUDIENCE

	DETAILS
Who is your primary target audience for these playtests? e.g. Their age, previous games they should have played, fans of a particular brand etc.	Uncertainty
Who is your secondary target audience for these playtests?	

1. Understanding your audience
2. Defining your target audience
3. Designing for your target audience

In this section:

1. When in development can you **start** to understand the audience?
2. What can you **find out**?
3. Why is this **useful**?
4. How to **do it**?



You really should be starting **before** design begins.

Take learnings **into** the design phase.

- **Attitudes** - what do people think about certain genres, platforms, publishers, etc.?
- **Perceptions** - what do players think and say as a result of playing a game or seeing assets?
- **Behaviour** - what have players actually done in the past? Made an IAP? Completed a game? Abandoned early?
- **Memory** - What experiences do players recall from previous games?

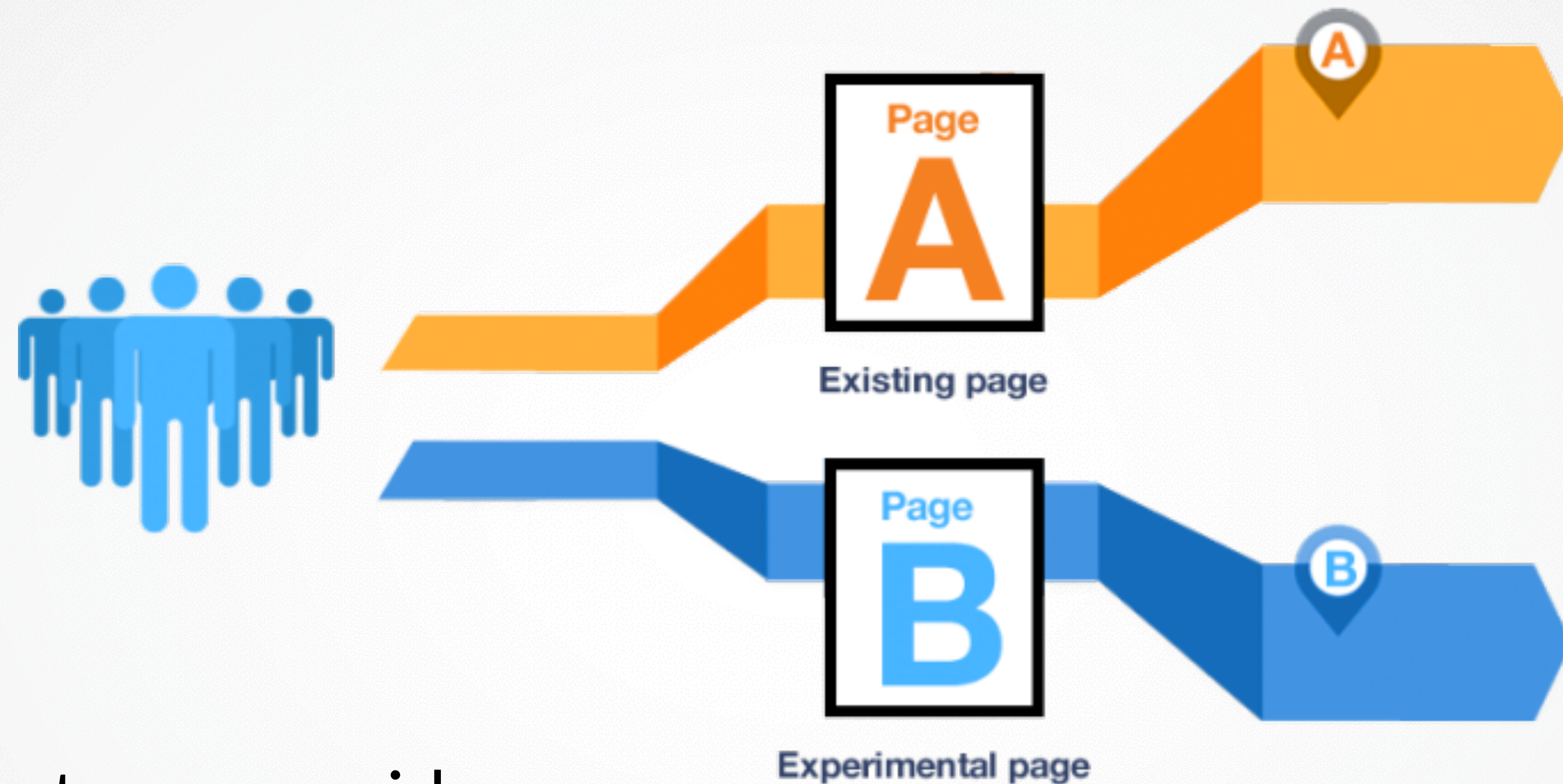
- **Confirm any assumptions** - your game design may be built on assumed knowledge, validate this early.
- **Fail early** - learn at a stage when it's easy to throw ideas away, not committed to them.
- **Uncover new issues** you weren't aware of.
- **Understand differences** between audience groups.

1. Concept Tests

2. Diary Studies

3. Quantitative methods

4. Playtesting



Useful for stronger evidence.

But late in development, carefully structured, and it doesn't tell you **why**.

Done in **small groups** (4-5 people)

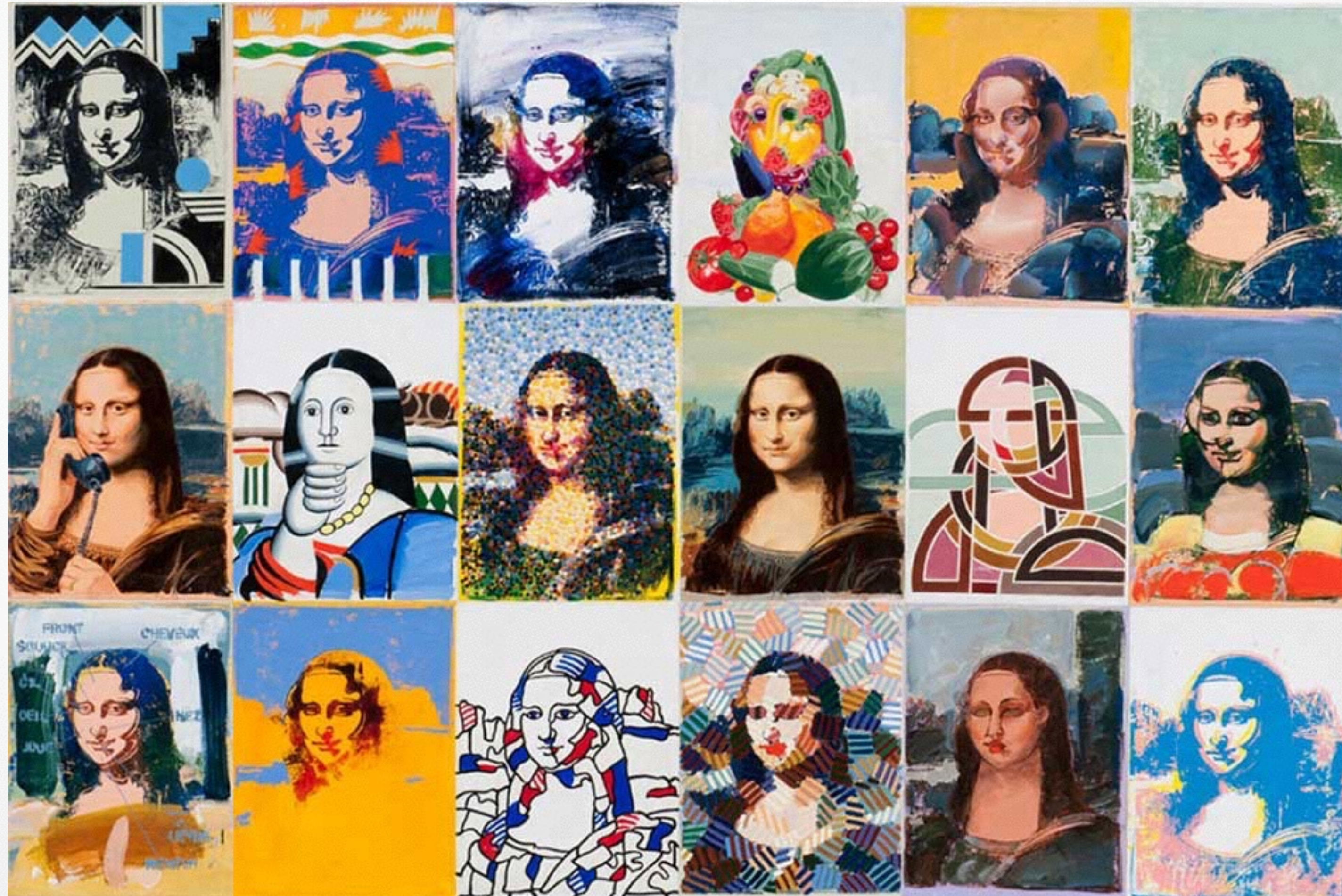
Groups should be **similar**, e.g. 5 female teens, 5 male CCG players 35-45 who have made IAPs etc.

At least 8 groups (40 people in total)

Stats is not the aim, **insight** is.



Good for getting feedback on **multiple alternatives**.

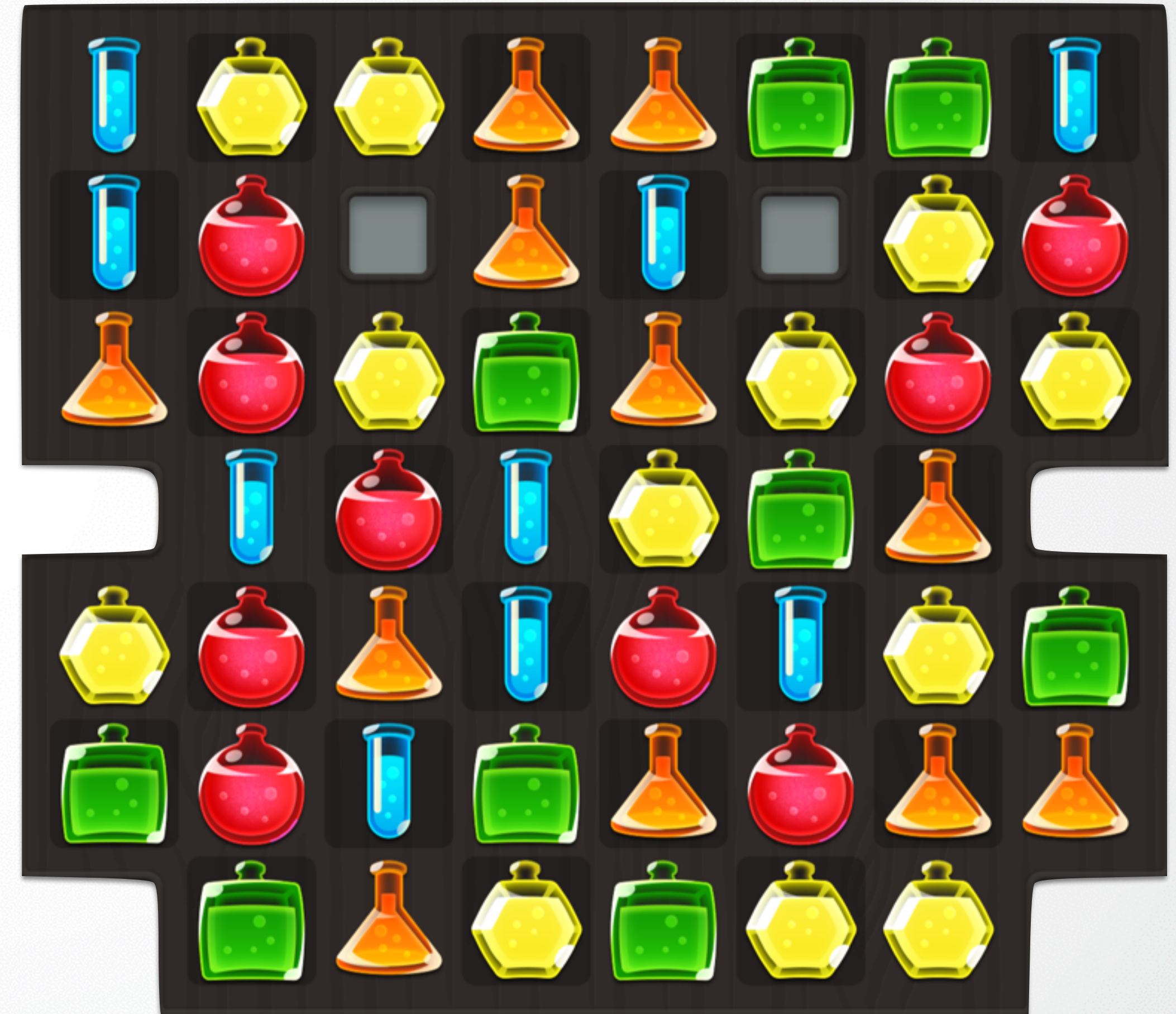


Video of **Potion Pop**

Consensus on one art style

Even a description of the animation was effective

Video of potion animations





“We had an early theme based around the French Art Deco style - **it didn't work out**”



What can you do in a concept test? Not just concept art.

Attitudes to a genre, brand, franchise, platform

Game **features**

Gauge **expectations**



Assessing **long-term** gameplay.

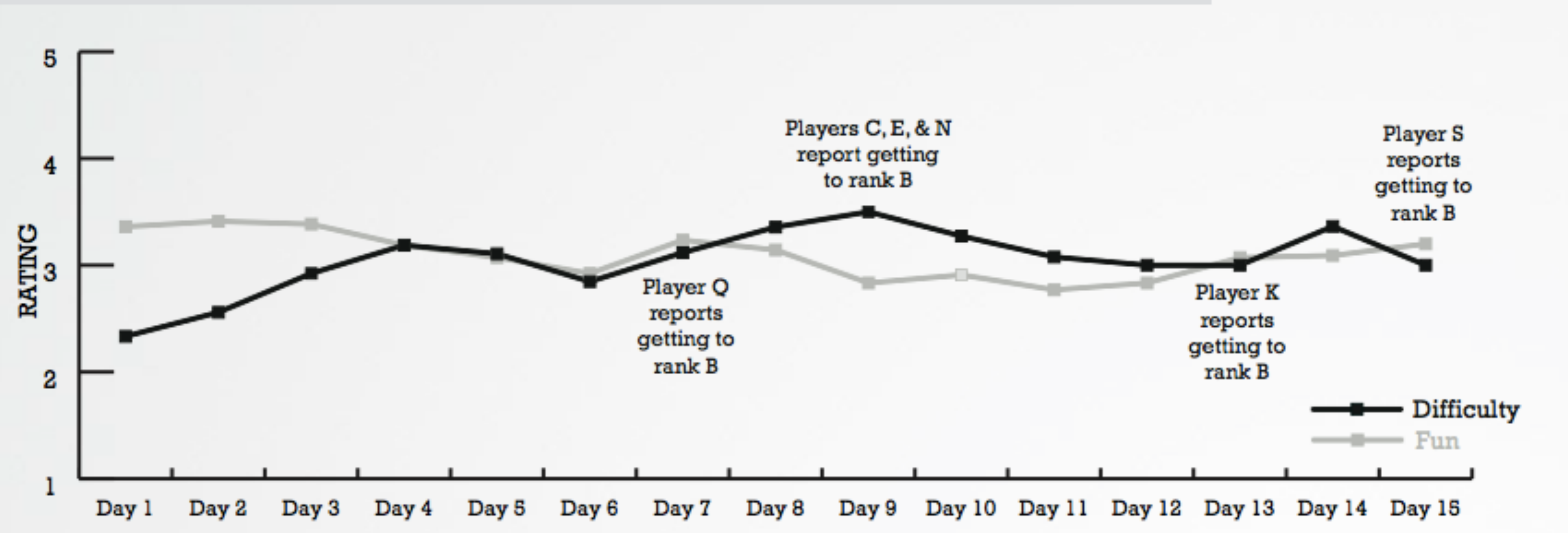
Most **qualitative** (text), some quantitative.

Time-consuming, but only way capture qualitative feedback long-term.



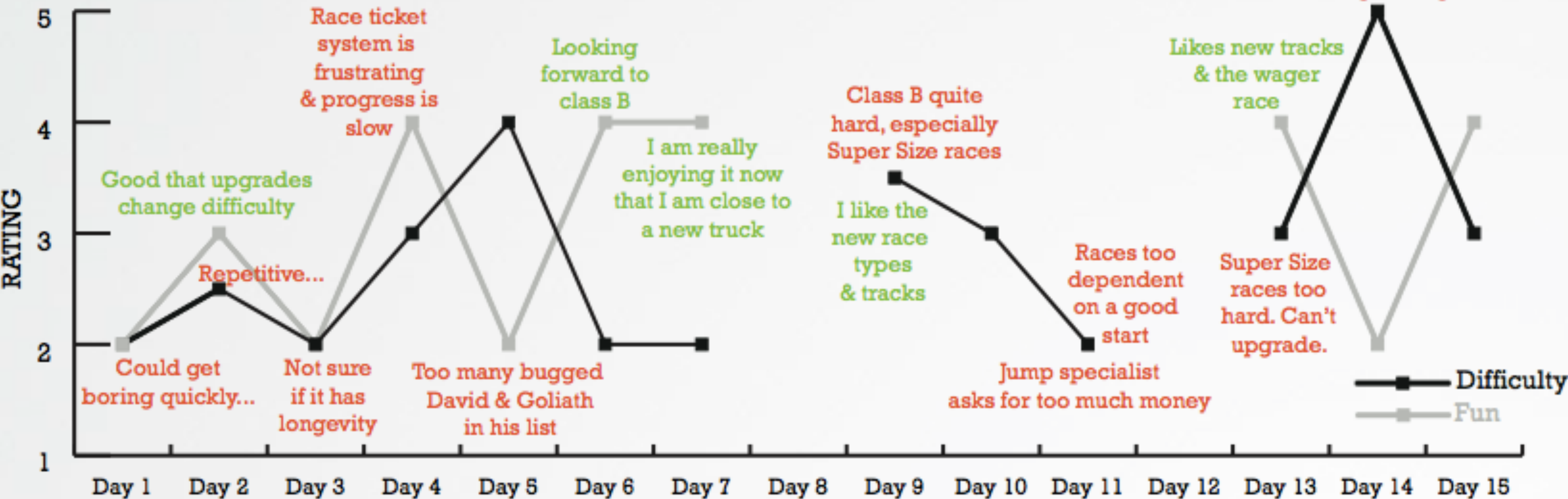
MMX

RACING



Quantitative measures

PLAYER C



Qualitative measures

What you've discovered:

1.Q.When in development can you start to understand the audience

A. **immediately.**

2.Q. What can you find out?

A. **Attitudes, perceptions towards art style, theme, story, characters, features, expectations, prototypes etc.**

3. Why is this useful?

Test assumptions, confirm target audience, prioritise development

4. How to do it?

Quantitative methods

Concept tests

Engagement diaries

This information is great, we now **better understand** our target audience...

... but how do we use it to **design better games?**

1. Understanding your target audience
2. Defining your target audience
3. Designing for your target audience

2. DEFINING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

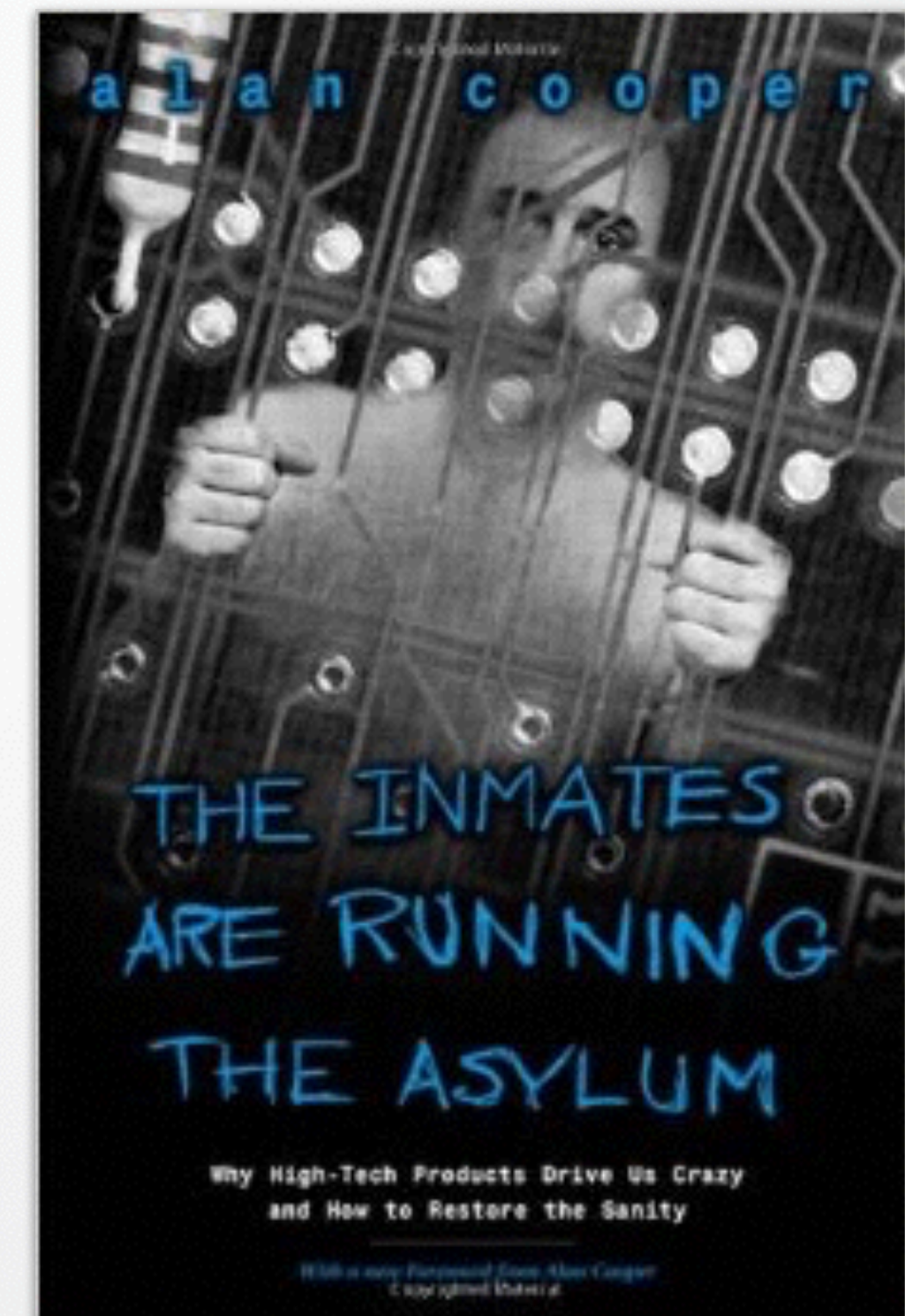
Based on all the feedback from the previous phase, this information is grouped into **PERSONAS**.

Important to remember this information emerged from **real people**, they are not fictional.

Came from the software industry - Alan Cooper

Programmers are the problem, 'designing for yourself'.

Needed a way of making better design decisions.



Collate the information from the 'understanding' phase.

Identify and prioritise who your **target audience** is.

Identify **key behaviours and assumptions** about that audience.

Examples of Personas



BBC
Persona

Ella

Age 5 - "I love taking pictures!"

Ella's 5 and has an **older brother Ethan who's 7**. They have some freedom to do what they like. Ella loves watching cartoons on TV. She remembers the number for the TV channel she likes entering this to go directly there then scrolls up and down through them all using the directional keys until she find something she likes.

If she manages to get hold of the family iPad before Ethan she'll sit on the floor start up and play Temple Run that she learnt to startup and play by copying Ethan. They'll sometimes both sit play games they can do together like **Toca Boca Hair**.

They both love taking videos and photos so Mum regularly needs to look through when they've gone to bed and delete things so they don't run out of space. When Ethan's hogging the iPad Ella finds Mum's iPhone to play games on her own like Peppa Pig. She looks for her favourite things remembering how to find them after being shown once but **regularly gets stuck** and needs to ask for help.

She uses the Nintendo DS that used to be Ethan's but doesn't like it because it has too many buttons and she can't remember what they all do.



Nintendo DS



Family iPad



Mum's iPhone



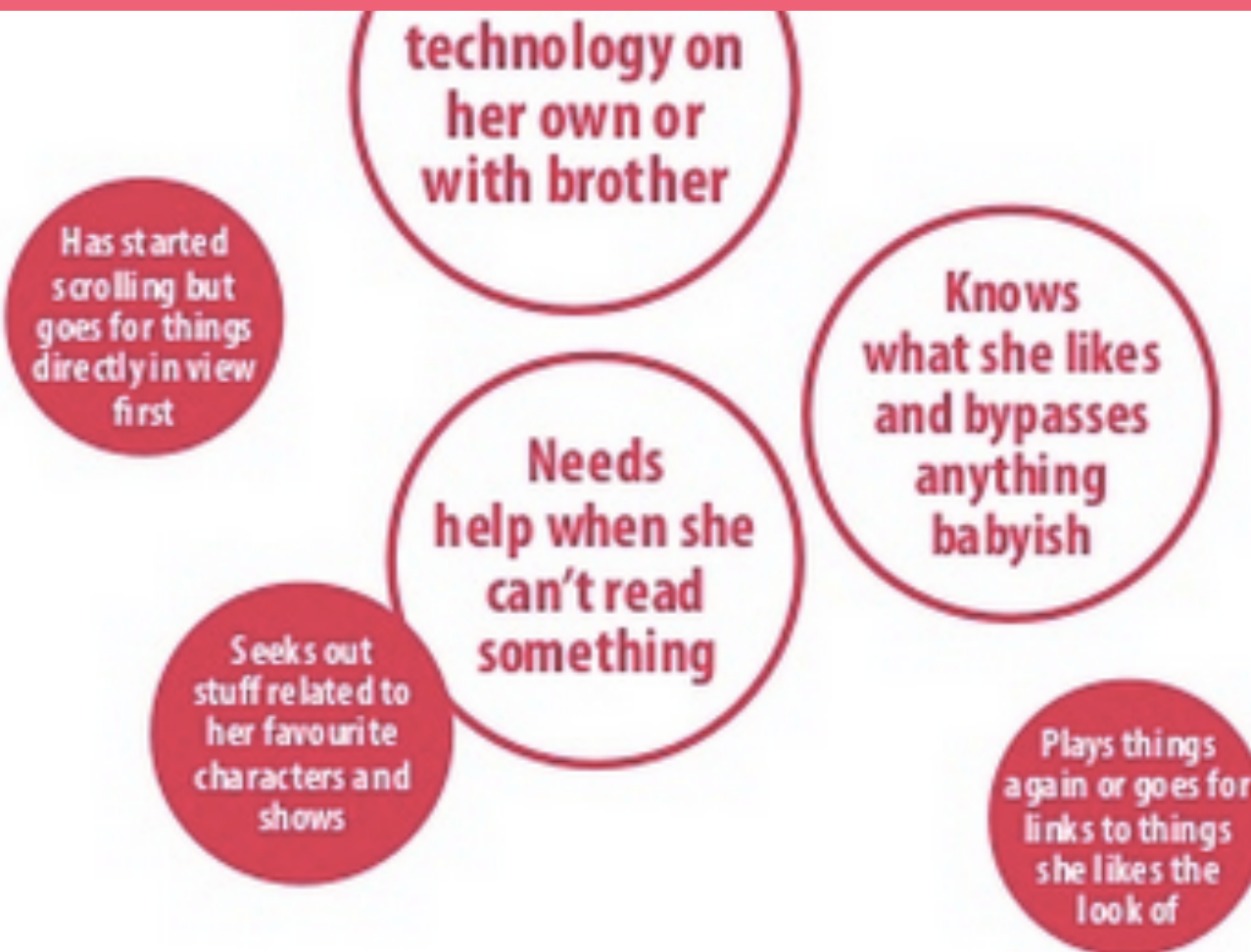
Virgin Tivo TV
with Netflix



Freeview TV
with a Wii



Family laptop



Cool with...

- Recognising and typing familiar letters and words, like her name
- Remembering TV cues to get to online content like URLs, but needs help getting there
- Navigating to websites from browser favourites or shortcuts set up by her parents
- Using two fingers on a laptop touchpad and can click and scroll pages
- Playing linear games on the laptop that use single controls
- Touchscreen gestures like tilt, swipe and tap. Playing two-handed using fingers or thumbs



Not cool with...

- Anything that needs her to type
- Finding her own way out of unfamiliar menus and screens
- Accurately hitting targets first time on touchscreen
- Games that rely on her to read text instructions
- Games that need combinations controls like mouse and keyboard



Ben

Age 9 - "I'm obsessed with this game, all my friends are on it!"

Ben's 9 and has an **older brother Kevin who's 13**. He likes playing computer games and sometimes plays football with his friends. He's **very confident** using technology and isn't afraid to explore new things. He's got an iPod Touch, but it's been gathering dust since he's obsessed with his new Nexus tablet. He spends most of his time sat on the sofa in the front room with the TV on playing Minecraft. He watches **endless Minecraft tutorials** and clips on YouTube and likes to connect to play with it with his friends over the wifi when they come over.

When not on Minecraft he's either browsing the app store for free apps or flicking between the latest ones he's downloaded. He also recently got into playing Call of Duty on the PS3 with Kevin in his room. **He's downloaded** loads of free apps that he flicks between.

He only uses the computer for school projects using google to search for specific things taking the quickest route. After finishing his homework he sometimes goes directly to Friv to play the games he used to love playing that he can't get on his tablet.



Ben does...

- Browse the app store, choosing games based on screenshots and reviews.
- Set up and play online Multiplayer games.
- Confidently navigate unfamiliar menu systems and programme guides
- Search and browse for both shows and channels using TV on demand
- Use Google to search for the website or game he's looking for
- Download lots of free apps, leaves them unsorted, & only deletes when out of space



Ben doesn't...

- Repeat play levels to collect trophies or achievements, unless he's really into the game.
- Register on websites without a clear benefit.
- Remember multiple website login details easily, gives up easily trying to recover them.
- Know the pin for the Tivo so has to ask Mum or Dad.
- Have his own email address so has to use his Dad's. He has to ask if he wants a paid app.



Nexus Tablet



iPod Touch



Desktop PC



Virgin TV



PS3

The team now **agree who the game is for.**

Make them **visible** around the studio.

Use them ...

1. Understanding your target audience
2. Defining your target audience
- 3. Designing for your target audience**

Examples of using personas to make better games:

1. Making **design decisions**
2. **Prioritising** Features
3. **Evidence** for new features
4. Acceptance of **new ideas**
5. **Team agreement**

Assess the decision against each persona type.

Evidence-based decision making.



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During the concept tests, you could ask each group to **rank features**.

When adding features to your game, do you know **who** they are for?

Primary Persona



Secondary Persona



When making decisions on potential new features, **assess against likes/dislikes.**

‘Zoe (11) doesn’t play online as much anymore.’



Zoe does...

- Download and use a handful of apps recommended by friends or her sister
- Play a few games on her phone she can easily dip in and out of.
- Browse the app store, looking at the top charts and reviews / ratings
- Register for new services using her own email address if the benefits are clear
- Watches on demand TV shows on the laptop as it has a bigger screen



Zoe doesn't...

- Play games online that her friends don't play anymore like Moshi Monsters and Club Penguin
- Arrange specific times to meet friends online to play together
- Spend as much time as she used to playing games on the internet
- Ask her sister, parents or friends for help if she gets stuck.



Pitching new ideas can often be met with **resistance**.

The idea can be presented as if it **comes from the users**, not a member of the design team.

‘We should use **more audio** for our younger audiences’



There may often be a difference in opinion.

Personas are often used to focus the team on the **player perspective**.

But design decisions needs to be validated

1. Understanding your target audience
2. Defining your target audience
3. Designing for your target audience
- 4. Playtesting**

Personas help when the player isn't around.

However, once a version of the game can be played, (even a rough prototype) **design decisions should be validated with a playtest.**

4. VALIDATING DESIGN DECISIONS



4. VALIDATING DESIGN DECISIONS



Summary

1. **Understand** your target audience - methods used in industry by Bungie and Riot
2. **Define** your audience type - Personas
3. **Design** for your target audience - and help team comms

These approaches have been used for over 20 years in the software industry with **success** ...

... they'll help to **improve your game** also.



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